

**LAND AT UPNOR ROAD, UPPER UPNOR  
APPEAL REFERENCE APP/A2280/W/21/3276221**

**Appellants Response to recently published Hoo Landscape Sensitivity & Capacity Study Draft - A review of Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and other Potential Development Sites for an enlarged settlement at Hoo St Werburgh - Internal Consultation Draft V2 Medway Council - February 2019**

The below comments respond to the recently published document which was uploaded onto Medway District Council's planning portal on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021. It is still a draft document and will be subject to consultation over the coming months and forms supporting information to the Pre - Submission Draft Local Plan.

The comments refer to areas of the document which relate to the Hogmarsh Valley area including the associated plan for the Hogmarsh Valley at page 78 of the document. Pages 72-74 refer at 5.2 to the Landscape Framework Guidelines Development guidelines + Edge of settlement guidelines for the area. It is noted that the purpose of the document focuses on the wider growth proposals in Hoo.

The comments below highlighted in ***bold italic*** text are considered to be the areas pertinent to the Appellants case.

It should be noted that the approach we have taken to the current LVIA or our conclusions contained therein would not have altered if this document formed the published evidence base at the time of the preparation of the application submission.

Description

It states under 1.1 description that in many ways ***this parcel is more closely linked to the urban edges of Wainscott and Frindsbury than the more rural characteristics of the Hoo Peninsula.***

***Bald Top Hill north of the Four Elms roundabout is noted for its strategic role as a welcoming green gateway into Medway,*** maintaining an attractive and valuable buffer separating the more densely



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occupied urban areas to the south west from the quieter and more remote outlying settlements along the estuary and across the wider Hoo Peninsula.

This land parcel contains a number of SLAA sites and is under considerable development pressure. For the reasons given above, ***this character area has been considered in its entirety.***

Appellant Response : All the above points are consistent with how we have analysed the character area in evidence and in Mr Chards Proof of Evidence. Note it does not mention the A289 as the gateway feature.

#### Characteristics

Under 1.2 it states that this area contributes to an important strategic green buffer separating the Medway urban areas from the Upnors and estuary shoreline; separates Wainscott from Chattenden and helps to retain the rural identity of settlements and countryside on the Hoo Peninsula

***It offers significant multi-functional Green Infrastructure opportunities, including community access, flood alleviation, public health in close proximity to dense urban areas***

It states that the settlement edges to the east are 20th/21st Century - ***apart from the Castle Street development which is prominent in long views across the valley,*** most edges on this side are more sensitively screened by vegetation and topography.

It also refers to Islingham Farm (see parcel 2) which ***preserves the character of a traditional farmstead,***

Appellant Response : All the above points are consistent with how we have analysed the character area in evidence and in Mr Chards Proof of Evidence. Note it doesn't mention views across the valley but along the valley.

#### Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Features: ***Broad valley floor with gentle slopes and strong wooded framework to slopes along eastern edges;*** water and hydrology strong features that have shaped and define the character of this valley; arable farmland ***with mixed uses (including recreation, boot fair sites and allotments);*** provides attractive and welcoming green gateway with generous sense of space for arrival into Medway urban areas; includes pockets of relative tranquillity away from infrastructure. ***A289 and Four Elms Hill (including***

**layby area), RSME facilities and sewage works are all adverse influences; despite this the area has an overall sense of visual coherence and intactness and retains its semi-rural sense of place (eg. arable farmland to north of cricket ground and tennis courts; rural character eroded along western edges by urban edges and to south at Frindsbury quarry (includes temporary approval quarry haul road); Medway City Estate; heavily trafficked and noisy road network – all introducing strong and adverse urban influences**

Function of Area: Provides major benefit as anti-coalescent green buffer between urban areas and the Upnors and separation between Wainscott from Chattenden - helping to protect rural identity of wider Hoo Peninsula; **provides considerable GI opportunities - especially relating to ecology, water, public access and public health (clean air and exercise close to urban areas) benefits - all linking and strengthening communities;** retains rural sense of place and provides agricultural value/benefits - linking town to countryside. Provides buffer to SSSI areas

Mutual interdependence : Strong inter-relationship between this and Bald Top Hill parcels; to lesser extent (because of topography and vegetation buffers) but connects also with Cockham Farm Ridge and Hoo Farmland parcels

Sense of Place : Overall sense of place intact and coherent and predominantly rural **but suffers from many adverse influences;** strongest character away from roads and infrastructure; **urban pressures greatest to south as development intensifies; tranquillity and remoteness strongest to north** - eg. adjacent Islingham Farm, Noke Street and Haven Street

Landscape Sensitivity **High**

Appellant Response : All the above highlighted points are consistent with how we have analysed the character area in evidence and in Mr Chards Proof of Evidence.

## **Visual Sensitivity**

Visual Amenity: Largely undeveloped and visually welcoming land parcel has strong sense of place; overall intactness, coherence and pastoral quality but with strong urban pressures; valuable green lung into urban areas, links countryside into town; **good open views of farmland from elevated areas, public rights of way** and road network - all provide strong sense of relief and openness from urban pressures; **views to south include Medway City Estate industrial and waterfront infrastructure as well as Chatham**

***Dockyard listed sheds***; water strong but visually hidden feature that would benefit from being opened up;  
***wooded backdrops to east frame and lend distinctive character to parcel***

Receptors: Within parcel · Recreation users using PRoW's within area; users of sports facilities, allotments and boot fair; ***opportunities to enhance access especially north south along the Hogmarsh stream valley floor- this would strengthen links from the urban areas into the wider countryside*** · Residents, road users and people at place of work - residents at Castle Street; along A289, Four Elms Hill, Upnor Road,

Strategic Viewpoints: ***Castle Street looking west · Frindsbury Hill near Sans Pareil roundabout looking south towards Whitewall Creek and Dockyard · Pedestrian bridge over A289 - views looking north, south and east · PRoW from Wainscott to Upnor Road - views looking north and south · Elevated section of Upchat Road PRoW heading west towards Four Elms Hill - panoramic view*** · Woodfield Way from edge of ponderosa looking south - panorama · Islingham Farm Road - looking east / Higham Road - looking north · Haven Street - looking north and south

Visual Effects: Adverse effects - any development that diminishes the openness and overall coherence of this land parcel would reduce its benefits as a strategic gap that helps to define the local identity of the separate communities at Upnor and Chattenden; its distinctive character would be eroded and there would be adverse impacts on the significant GI opportunities that the area offers.

Visual Sensitivity **High**

Appellant Response : All the above points are consistent with how we have analysed the visual amenity and sensitivity of the character area in evidence and in Mr Chards Proof of Evidence.

**Overall Sensitivity High**

Landscape Value

Rare elements or features: ***No rare elements***

Sense of place: Yes - broad river valley with strong overall sense of coherence and intactness; ***strongest sense of place towards northern parts of parcel*** (so not at south in vicinity of site)

Landscape condition - includes intactness and coherence: Overall sense of intactness and coherence; farmed areas in fair condition, **poorer around RSME facilities, boot fair site, sewage works** and edges of Whitewall Creek. **Overall condition moderate**

Public Recreation - access opportunities: **Considerable opportunity to enhance access through this area, including strengthening the PRow network** and opening up access to the water that makes this area so distinctive

Distinctive or promoted views: **Includes long views up and down the valley** with opportunities to strengthen, enhance and extend these views. (*Doesn't mention across the valley*)

Wildness, tranquillity and remoteness: **Most tranquil and remote to north west corner**, area still retains rural character despite urban pressures (*so not in southern area*)

Landscape Value: **Medium**

Appellant Response : All the above points are consistent with how we have analysed the landscape value of the character area in evidence and in Mr Chards Proof of Evidence.

Landscape Capacity **Medium High** - The parcel can accommodate the proposed type of development / an extension of the proposed type of development only in defined limited situations without significant character change

1.6 Key characteristics and issues : This area plays an important functional role - as a strategic gap between the Medway urban areas and the sensitive estuary landscape and settlements at the Upnors; as a strategic gap between Wainscott and Chattenden, protecting the distinctive rural identity of the Hoo Peninsula; as a green and welcoming gateway into Medway's urban areas

**Distinctive landscape features of the area include the wooded backdrops to the east** and the green backdrop to the north at Bald Top Hill; the Hogmarsh stream is a hidden feature that runs along the valley floor

Taking these important functional roles and constraints into account there are limited opportunities to introduce development into this area without significant adverse impacts on the area's character and strategic role

## Development Guidelines

Soften and frame adverse effects of urbanised western edges by introducing native planting including hedgerows and blocks of woodland; seek to strengthen rural character of valley

***Protect views and characteristics of prominent green wooded backdrops to east*** and green backdrop to north at Bald Top Hill

***Open up the Hogmarsh stream and wetland areas as stronger and more accessible landscape features whilst protecting and enhancing their biodiversity value***; explore potential for new waterside walks along the valley floor · Seek to retain agricultural uses within this area and ***soften and screen urban fringe pressures, focussing particularly on central area***, southern and western edges

It is recommended that this area is protected from any substantial development and that strategies and processes are put in place to strengthen the area's rural character and openness

***The proposed new road scheme to the north of this parcel (see Islingham Farm area) will have a significant impact on the character and functioning of this area***; a full assessment will be required and adverse impacts mitigated. See also Bald Top Hill parcel assessment.

Appellant Response : All the above points are consistent with how we have analysed the opportunities for reinforcing the landscape structure of the character area in evidence and in Mr Chards Proof of Evidence.

Prepared by Matthew Chard  
on behalf of Esquire Developments  
19<sup>th</sup> October 2021