

Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal

for

Land at Stamages Lane

Painswick

November 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 My name is [REDACTED]. I am a Chartered Member of The Landscape Institute and Director of Potterton Associates Ltd. I hold a BA Degree in Landscape Architecture (1982), a Diploma in Landscape Architecture (1983) – both from Gloucestershire College of Arts & Technology and have been practicing as a Landscape Architect since 1984. I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).
- 1.2 Potterton Associates Ltd was founded in 1992, is a Registered Member of the Landscape Institute and trades as a Limited Company. During this time, I have carried out a significant number of visual impact assessments and character appraisals on a wide variety of sites primarily in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. I have also worked on a number of Neighbourhood Development plans in this general area.
- 1.3 I am Chairman of the Conservation Advisory Panel, which advises Worcester City Council on matters affecting the 11 Conservation Areas across the City. I sit on the expert panel for MADE, the Design Review Panel in Birmingham.
- 1.4 I am also employed by Swindon Borough Council as a Consultant Landscape Architect. I prepare consultation responses for planning applications that are deemed likely to have an impact on the landscape. I regularly prepare Proofs of Evidence and act as Expert Witness in Public Inquiries. In the past I have represented a number of Local Authorities including Bath and North East Somerset, Herefordshire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Swindon Borough Council.
- 1.5 I am familiar with the area as I lived in Painswick whilst studying Landscape Architecture in Cheltenham. I have prepared a number of Landscape and Visual Impact and Sensitivity Assessments in the area as well as providing landscape input into a number of Neighbourhood Plans in the district.

1.6 During the preparation of this report, I have used the following research documents -

- National, local and strategic planning policy guidance
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd Edition)
- National Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England)
- Gloucestershire landscape character assessment (LDA 2006)
- Stroud Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (White Consultants Dec 2016)
- Stroud District Landscape Assessment (2000)
- Stroud District Local Plan (Nov 2015)
- Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA) Heritage Impact Appraisal SDC (May 2017)
- URS Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal (July 2013)
- Stroud District Local Plan Review Preferred Strategy Paper (Sept 2018)
- Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023 (Consultation draft)

1.7 My comments are made on the assumption that matters of planning policy, ownership, archaeology, ecology and highway engineering (amongst others) could be overcome i.e. we have not mentioned these unless they are an obvious issue or would have a direct impact on landscape matters.

1.8 This report has been prepared in line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 2013 Landscape Institute.

1.9 This application is for the construction of 8 units as shown on DJD Drg No k913-11 (A). See Fig 04. Please note this is illustrative at this stage and the exact layout may change.

2 Background and context

- 2.1 Painswick is a small town located in the heart of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is known as 'The Queen of the Cotswolds' and includes many notable features such as St Mary's Church and its 99 Yew trees.
- 2.2 It is a very popular location and boasts a wealth of old buildings. It has also expanded over recent years and includes some new development. It is a town that has embraced the need to develop and, as a 'Tier 2 town' is part of Stroud District Council's long term strategy for development in the district.
- 2.3 The town sits on a ridge formed by Painswick Valley to the east and Washbrook Valley to the immediate west. It is bisected on a north / south basis by the A46 Cheltenham / Stroud Rd. See Fig 1.
- 2.4 In this landscape particularly, local topography is a key element in dictating the direction and extent of any views to or from the site. In this case, the site is located to the east side of the A46 and sits on a south / south-eastern facing slope.

Fig 01. Diagram illustrating configuration of valleys & ridges

- 2.5 The site is generally rectangular in shape and is accessed from Stamages Lane via an existing agricultural access located to the west side of the site, between properties known as 'Atlanta' and 'Howbeg'.
- 2.6 The site is an open field of .819 hectares / 2.02 acres and is bisected by a Public Right of Way (Ref 'Painswick Footpath 162). The site slopes from north (approximately 116m AOD) to south (approximately 102m AOD).

Fig 02. Listed Buildings

- 2.7 As noted, the whole of Painswick is within the Cotswolds AONB. There are numerous Listed Buildings in Painswick, but none are located near this site. See Fig 02.
- 2.8 A large portion of the centre of Painswick is designated as a Conservation Area (CA). The site is located to the south, but is not inside or adjacent to the CA. See Fig 03. The Conservation Area was

first designated in December 1977. It was extended in June 1990 but does not currently have an adopted Conservation Area Statement.

Fig 03. Conservation Area

Fig 04. Outline scheme layout

3 Landscape Appraisal

3.1 The guidelines state that there is no standard methodology for the quantification of landscape and visual impacts. The methodology therefore needs to be appropriate and proportionate to the specific site and needs to be established incorporating the necessary degree of professional judgment. This assessment will therefore consider impacts upon:

- the physical landscape resources of the site and its immediate surroundings
- the visual amenity of views towards the site
- the consequential effects on the surrounding landscape or settlement character.

3.2 The scheme is likely to have effects upon the physical landscape attributes of the site, on the visual amenity of views from and towards the site and consequential effects on the landscape character of the surrounding areas.

3.3 These effects may be positive or negative depending on the baseline conditions of the receiving environment. In accordance with the published guidance, landscape (elements and character) and visual impacts are assessed separately.

3.4 There will be no loss of vegetation with the proposals and no loss or damage to perimeter walling or railings. I understand that the existing entrance will be retained.

3.5 The PROW will be retained in its original alignment albeit within a new context.

3.6 Landscape Character

3.7 This is a key consideration in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - the contribution of landscape character to sense of place and quality of life for all, and the way that change may affect individual components of the landscape.

- 3.8 Land use is a critical element in the formation of the character of a landscape and topography is probably the key factor in determining how areas of land are used. For example, steeper slopes are usually either wooded or used for sheep grazing, whereas flatter areas can be used for crops and grazing cattle.
- 3.9 In this instance, the wider topography is particularly complex as it is formed by five valleys which converge at Stroud. These are -
- Frome Valley (known as the "Golden Valley" above Stroud)
 - Nailsworth Valley
 - Toadsmoor Valley
 - Slad Valley
 - Painswick Valley
- 3.10 Landscape sensitivity is a general indication of the extent to which a landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character. These sensitive receptors include
- Users of all outdoor recreational facilities including Public Rights of Way whose attention may be focused on the landscape,
 - Communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or valued views enjoyed by the community,
 - Occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development.
- 3.11 Painswick sits in National Character Area 107 Cotswolds; The dominant pattern of the Cotswold landscape is of a steep scarp crowned by a high, open wold; the beginning of a long and rolling dip slope cut by a series of increasingly wooded valleys. The scarp provides a backdrop to the major settlement of Stroud and provides expansive views. Smaller towns and villages nestle at the scarp foot, in the valley bottoms and on the gentler valley sides at spring lines.
- 3.12 The Cotswold AONB Character Assessment describes this as part of Area 8, High Wold Valley. It is specifically allocated as 8B, part of the Painswick and Slad Valley which describes (some of) its key characteristics as -

- Predominantly dry or ephemeral flow headwater valleys with generally broad valley form and shallow slope profiles;
- Incised valley form below heads of valleys with often steep, convoluted valley sides dissected by minor watercourses and distinctive convex profile at transition with the High Wold;
- Intermittent stone built villages occupying secluded locations in valley bottoms, often in association with a bridging point, and on valley sides;
- Deeply incised and inaccessible wooded slopes extending across some valley sections; and
- Sheltered, visually contained and intimate setting of remote upper reaches of valleys.

3.13 It also describes the Painswick and Slad Valleys as -

- Wider and complex valley form to Painswick Valley and its tributaries, but with steep and convoluted slopes, separated by intermediate ridges that project into the main valley form;
- Rich pastoral and secluded rural character with intermittent consolidated areas of arable land; and significant areas of registered common land and ancient semi-natural woodland in the upper reaches of the Painswick and Slad Valleys.

3.14 The Stroud District Landscape Assessment then identifies the landscape character of the area that the Parish sits within as 'Secluded Valleys'. Key characteristics described for this area include:

- Enclosed, secluded character;
- Steep sides, concave narrow valley form; steep upper slopes forming abrupt break of slope with Wold Tops landscape;
- Complex interlocking valley / ridge forms;
- Extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims.

3.15 Within that document, key priorities are identified for the character area to include;

- Ensure that careful and stringent planning controls on the siting and design of new development are provided to maintain the character of this landscape type and to protect the AONB landscape;
- Encourage continued protection of important wildlife habitats;

- Protect remnant pastures and small woodlands both on the valleys sides and valley floors within the more urban pressured areas.
- 3.16 The Cotswolds Conservation Board was established by Parliament in 2004 and its primary purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.
- 3.17 One of the key special qualities that the AONB is noted for is its '*distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular, high architectural quality and integrity*'.
- 3.18 Landscape impacts relate to physical changes to the nature and quality of the individual landscape elements and characteristics on the site itself and the consequential effect of these changes on the landscape or townscape character of the surrounding areas.
- 3.19 Landscape Receptors are elements or groups of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. These elements consist of natural and cultural factors and include topography, vegetation, watercourses, public rights of way, buildings, historic features and land use, and the effects that these have on the character of the site.

- 3.20 Changes to landscape character are generally measured by combining **sensitivity** of the receptor and the **magnitude** of change to determine the **significance** of the impact.
- 3.21 For the purpose of this study all elements of the landscape are deemed to be of high sensitivity.
- 3.22 The magnitude of any impacts on landscape character is dependent on the scale and nature of the physical changes arising from the proposals and the degree to which these changes affect the perceptions of the overall amenity and character of an area.
- 3.23 The criteria used to assess the magnitude of the landscape impacts are set out below –

Magnitude	Impact
Major	<i>Dominant or total change to baseline character or condition</i>
Moderate	<i>Clearly noticeable change to baseline character or condition</i>
Low	<i>Perceptible change to baseline character or condition</i>
Negligible	<i>Barely perceptible change to baseline character or condition</i>

- 3.24 The significance can be determined using this matrix -

3.25 The significance can be described as being one of the following -

Impact	Criteria
Major adverse	<i>The proposals would be at considerable variance with the local landscape. They would degrade, diminish or destroy a highly valued landscape or its characteristics, features or elements.</i>
Moderate adverse	<i>The proposals would noticeably conflict and be at odds with the local landscape. They would leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristics, features or elements.</i>
Minor adverse	<i>The proposals would not quite fit into the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape. They would affect an area or elements of character of recognised quality and importance.</i>
Neutral	<i>The proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the character of the existing character and quality.</i>
Minor beneficial	<i>The proposal would slightly enhance the existing quality and character, being in scale with the landscape and strengthening existing patterns.</i>
Moderate beneficial	<i>The proposals would enhance the existing landscape character, improving the quality of the landscape through the removal of damage caused by existing detractors or by adding new element sensitive to the prevailing landscape pattern.</i>

3.26 It is clear that the development will change the baseline character of the site from an open field to residential and that primary change is inevitable with all such developments. This field is one of a number of undeveloped spaces within the village and is generally well hidden from view except if one is looking back towards the village. This is assessed further in the visual section of this report.

- 3.27 Therefore, in terms of the changes to the site itself, it is clear that high sensitivity x high magnitude = major impact.
- 3.28 Importantly, consent has already been granted for a new single dwelling located below Howbeg and towards the original access.
- 3.29 In terms of the wider landscape, whilst the sensitivity remains high, the magnitude of change reduces to low (*a perceptible change to baseline character or condition*) as I do not consider that the change to the site would affect the overall character or value of the village itself. I do not consider that this scheme would have an adverse effect on the character of the wider landscape or the aims and objectives of the AONB.

4 Visual Impact

- 4.1 I have visited the site and the surrounding countryside on several occasions in October and November 2018 for this assessment.
- 4.2 Based on knowledge of the area and this particular study I have selected a number of locations, at a range of distances and differing elevation, where the site can be seen. A photographs of the view from each of these is included.
- 4.3 I carried out an assessment of the effect of the likely visual impact caused by the proposed scheme when experienced from these viewpoints.
- 4.4 As a general rule of thumb the visual impacts of the construction phase will be greater than those of the finished development due to the lack of any mitigation planting and the degree of immediate change. However, as this would be a temporary phase, I have restricted my comments to the final built development.
- 4.5 The sensitivity of visual receptors and views is dependent upon the location and context of the viewpoints and the expectations,

occupation or activity of the receptor. It is important to remember that visual receptors are exclusively human.

- 4.6 The most sensitive receptors may include users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape, communities where the development results in changes to the landscape, setting of important buildings of landscapes which may include valued views enjoyed by the community.
- 4.7 In this case, I have categorised all receptors to be of high sensitivity.
- 4.8 Criteria used to assess the **magnitude** of the visual effects include -

Magnitude	Impact
Major	Dominant or total change to composition of baseline view
Medium	Clearly noticeable to composition of baseline view
Low	Perceptible to composition of baseline view
Negligible	Barely perceptible change to composition of baseline view
No Change	No change to View

- 4.9 The significance of the impacts is determined by a combination of the sensitivity of the receptor or receiving environment and the magnitude of the predicted changes.

4.10 Significance Matrix -

4.11 The objective of the impact assessment is to identify any significant impacts that are likely to arise as result of the proposals.

4.12 The definition as to what the various levels of significance mean is as follows –

Significance	Criteria
Major adverse	The proposals would cause total permanent loss or major alteration to key elements and features of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements that are wholly uncharacteristic in the surrounding landscape. The proposals would be visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views both into and across the area.
Moderate adverse	The proposals would cause substantial permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements that are prominent but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape. The Development would be visually intrusive and would adversely effect upon the landscape.
Minor adverse	The proposals would cause minor permanent and/or temporary loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features of the landscape, to

include the introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The proposals would cause limited visual intrusion.

Neutral The proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the balance in the existing view.

Minor beneficial The proposals would slightly enhance the existing view, being in scale with the landscape and strengthening existing patterns.

Moderate beneficial The proposals would enhance the existing view, improving the quality of the landscape through the removal of damage caused by existing detractors.

- 4.13 The general topography of this area i.e. a valley, very much dictates the angle and extent of views to and from the site. In this case, the site is facing south-east and on the eastern side of a ridge, meaning the 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' is rather limited. See below.
- 4.14 I have chosen a number of viewpoints within this area in order to establish the type and extent of the impact this development might have. It is important to understand that these are representative views and not exhaustive i.e. it is fully accepted that there are many other locations where the site may be seen from.

Fig 05. Zone of Theoretical Visibility & viewpoints 1-4

- 4.15 This diagram shows that views to the site are generally from the opposite valley side where there are views of most of the village. The site is recognisable as one of the undeveloped spaces within the village envelope.
- 4.16 A description of each of these views, and a description of the likely impact, is given below.
- 4.17 **View 01.** At a gateway at the start of PROW 'Painswick Footpath 60', just off Stepping Stone Lane. Midway up the valley side, effectively the same level as the site and with a clear view northwards to the site.

4.18 The site is clearly visible from this location and is surrounded by existing houses. From this distance, whilst the overall composition of the view would change, I would categorise the significance follows ...high sensitivity x medium magnitude = moderate adverse.

4.19 **View 02.** A similar view to No 1, from a field gate on Yokehouse Lane, looking North-west towards the site.

- 4.20 As with View 1, the site is visible from this location and is surrounded by existing houses. Slightly more of the village is visible from here.
- 4.21 From this distance, whilst the overall composition of the view would change, I would categorise the significance follows ...high sensitivity x low magnitude = moderate adverse.
- 4.22 **View 03.** This is a view, also from a similar elevation as 1 and 2, but located further to the north of the village. This is an un-named road but is effectively the extension of Yokehouse Lane as it leads towards Sheepscombe in the north-east.
- 4.23 As the village is aligned in a north-south axis along the slope and the site is at the southern end, then logically views of the site from this orientation become more oblique and the site is much less obvious.
- 4.24 From this angle, there are also longer distance views out of this immediate valley, towards Pitchcombe and beyond.

- 4.25 From this distance, whilst the overall composition of the view would change, I would categorise the significance follows ...high sensitivity x negligible magnitude = minor adverse.
- 4.26 **View 04.** This view is from the road at Cockshoot, looking south-west towards the village.

- 4.27 There are other distracting elements in the wider view and the site is generally not discernable. I would categorise the significance follows ...high sensitivity x negligible magnitude = minor adverse and the scheme would cause very limited visual impact.
- 4.28 More locally, I have chosen a further 3 locations to help illustrate the likely impact of the scheme.

4.29 **View 05** is from Knapp Lane, the road to the east of the site. The northern edge of the site i.e. the railings, are visible, but, as with most housing in the village, the topography is such that the adjacent property generally sits either higher or lower than its neighbour, meaning there are still views out and over the roof to the valley side opposite.

- 4.30 The viewer is of high sensitivity, but the scheme would generally not be visible from this specific viewpoint. It is understood that the adjacent houses (Knapp End, Halebourne and Honeysuckle Lodge in particular) would have views of the site. In case of the latter two properties, views to this site are to the side and not to the front of the property.
- 4.31 There is also intervening vegetation between the site and the adjacent properties.
- 4.32 From this location there would be no discernable impact.
- 4.33 **View 06.** This is a view from the remnant of a lane / Public Footpath 'Painswick Footpath 167' to the north of the site and includes the view from the memorial stone. It is a locally valued view.
- 4.34 The path will be kept in its current alignment and the railings will be retained. The scheme will obviously significantly change the view i.e. there will be new housing and garages in the view but, as with the majority of other housing in the village, there will still be longer

distance view between buildings and over the roofs to the valley beyond. A new dwelling has already been permitted to the right hand side of this view.

4.35 The changes would cause a moderate adverse impact albeit for a relatively few receptors.

4.36 Properties located above the site (Little Rudge and Fairings) in particular will retain the majority of their view over the hedging surrounding their gardens and will retain a view of the wider landscape beyond. There is substantial hedging, fencing and walling to the north of this path and views of the actual site from the gardens or ground floor windows of these properties would be restricted.

4.37 **View 07.** This is from Stamages Lane, looking east into the entrance of the site.

4.38 A new single dwelling has already been permitted just to the field side of this gate, so any changes needed to this access point are already known and approved.

- 4.39 Note how the site falls away steeply from the gateway. The nearest new house (that might be visible) is located some 50m into the site and it is likely that only the very top of the roof might be visible from here.
- 4.40 For users of Stamages Lane, this would be a fleeting, glimpsed view only and would cause no discernable impact.
- 4.41 Residents of Howbeg would have a closer view of the proposals but perimeter vegetation would remain and, as with other properties, longer distance views of the valley side opposite would generally remain.
- 4.42 The general findings of the visual element of this appraisal is as set out below -
- 4.43 Views from the south – there are glimpsed views from the very narrow lanes running down or along the valleys. Drivers are generally very focused on the road. The main views are from pedestrian rights of way and whilst the site is clearly visible when walking towards the village, it sits within existing developed area. Whilst there will be a change to the view, I consider this would be minor adverse as the site would be ameliorated in the general view of the village.
- 4.44 Views from the north – the edge of the village curves along the valley side so these are generally restricted to a narrow funnel of views from the opposite side of the valley. There are no views from the main residential areas of the village and only very localised views from beside the site (see view 5).
- 4.45 Views from the west – again, given the topography there are no views of the site from the west other than those from immediately beside the site or glimpsed through the entrance off Stamages Lane.
- 4.46 Views from the east – this would be the major grouping of views from the valley side opposite. Generally the site, whilst visible from PROWs the change in the overall view would be small and the scheme would be ameliorated into the view.

- 4.47 Views from local PROWs – there would be a significant change for users of the PROW crossing the site. Other than that, users of the PROWs on the valleyside opposite would be aware of the scheme if they were facing towards the village, but in general I do not consider it would affect their wider enjoyment of the view.
- 4.48 Views from adjacent residential properties – views from any properties located to the south of the scheme will generally not change that much as their primary view is to the valleyside below and beyond.
- 4.49 Properties adjacent to the site on either side also have primary views to the valleyside but will obviously be aware of the changes to the site.
- 4.50 Properties located immediately above the site actually have limited views of the site and, for the most part, whilst there will be the introduction of a new roofscape, this, as explained, is part of the characteristic of the village i.e. there are generally always views over adjacent rooftops and views of the valleyside beyond. This will be the case here.
- 4.51 In my opinion, the primary change will be to users of the PROW that crosses the site (Painswick Footpath 162) and that which runs across the top of the site (Painswick Footpath 167). There will be a significant change to the view, but this is generally a relatively small group of receptors and a relatively short duration i.e. +/- 100m in each case.
- 4.52 Overall, there will be a change in character from open paddock to residential development and this will be noticeable in a localised context, but I do not consider that the scheme would cause unacceptable and wider visual harm. It would not have an unacceptable effect on the primary characteristics of the AONB.