Landscape Sensitivity Area statement

Proposed new residential development
land at Rayner’s Way
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appendix A | Excerpt from Breckland Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment
1.0 introduction

1.0.0 This statement has been commissioned by our clients to evaluate the ‘sensitive area’ status associated with Rayner’s Way in Mattishall with a view to informing the design of proposals to provide five new and one replacement dwelling on land leading off the roadway in this location.

1.0.1 The property is located within landscape area E5: Central Breckland Plateau (Landscape report 2007) and MA2: Mattishall Hall Small Scale Plateau (Breckland Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment).

1.0.2 The following report will focus on identifying elements within the application site which could be considered characteristic or valued within the local landscape as set out within the local landscape assessments listed above.

1.0.3 The perceived sensitivity of the local area will be assessed along with the characteristics and situation of the site itself. This assessment will then be used to provide an informed determination of the suitability and potential effects of the proposed development and whether or not the local landscape can accommodate such a scheme within it, without unduly compromising the overriding feel of the identified landscape area.
Landscape report 2007 – Area E5 – Central Breckland Plateau

2.0.0 The landscape in this area is predominated by arable agriculture which, by its nature, lends the landscape a large scale, open character. Mature, well treed field boundary’s and ditches provide regularity to the landscape with a simple geometric pattern. Small blocks of mature woodland and linear scots pine shelterbelts are also present, which act to frame and breakup individual views without unduly dominating the openness of the landscape. The horizon is also a prominent feature with large uninterrupted expanses framing wide open expanses of sky.

2.0.1 This landscape area is raised above its surroundings on a gently undulating plateau approximately 60 – 70m AOD. This provides a certain feeling of remoteness as views from surrounding areas are often limited to the edges of the plateau. A number of winding roads cross the plateau bringing with them movement and a certain level of separation. The landscape for the most part however feels still with a number of remote areas still present.

2.0.2 Key defining characteristics of this landscape have been defined as:
   - Open sparse arable landscape
   - Few structural landscape features
   - Large scale geometric field pattern
   - Divided by mature mixed hedgerows heavily studded with large field oaks
   - Predominantly linear settlement strung out along country roads
   - Interspersed with remnant blocks of Ancient Woodland
   - Wide open skies with long uninterrupted skylines and far reaching views
   - Muted, predominantly natural, colour palette

Settlement fringe report 2007 - Area MA2 - Mattishall Hall Small Scale Tributary Farmland

2.0.3 This area echoes the wider landscape character as being dominated by managed agricultural land. The main feature of the area is the largely intact network of dense field boundary hedgerows and vegetated hedgerows with the main structural features being hedgerow oaks. This creates a clearly defined, regular landscape of significant quality which, given the length of time necessary to establish, is considered inherently sensitive to change.

2.0.4 The field boundary network provides a somewhat contained feel to the landscape which is seen in a comparatively small scale when compared to the wider landscape area described above. The land cover pattern in the area also lends a more deeply textured quality to the local landscape adding to the feeling of enclosure.

2.0.5 The area is defined by a mixed palette of building materials and styles which includes traditional red brick and clay pantiles and more modern brick built development. Mattishall
Hall is also noted as a defining feature, being an 18th Century ‘Gothic’ house with later classical and Victorian additions.

2.0.6 The southwestern edge of the settlement is defined by later (1970’s) brick built cul-de-sac development, with the larger detached properties centred further to the west along Norwich Road. This area of the settlement is well wooded in character, with the only exposed location being the westernmost point to the north of Norwich Road. This wooded nature integrates well with the surrounding landscape to the south and southwest and is therefore deemed to be sensitive to change.

2.0.7 General Views from the settlement of the wider landscape are limited due to the network of field boundary vegetation and the gently undulating landform. The density of field boundary hedgerow vegetation also limits intervisibility with adjacent character areas. Due to the containment provided by the field boundary vegetation, these views are not considered inherently sensitive provided effective screening is maintained.

2.0.8 Views of the settlement edge are limited to partial views from Old Hall Lane, where parts of the development at Norwich Road are visible as are some rooflines along the southwestern edge.

2.0.9 Sensitivity to change has been assessed by the Settlement Fringe Report (2007) to be moderate-high overall, due predominantly to the intactness of the land cover and field boundary pattern.

2.0.10 However, owing to the large number of field boundary hedgerows, hedgerows and hedgerow oaks, objects such as buildings in the wider view are often masked to a high degree. Due to this density of structural vegetation, mitigation potential for new development is considered by the report to be relatively high.

2.0.11 The report also sets out a number of landscape management and design principles, aimed at maintaining and enhancing the character of the landscape and to guide future land use planning, including changes to the settlement edge:

- Conserve and enhance the existing network of field boundary hedgerows to the south and west of Old Hall Lane to ensure a dense structure for wildlife corridors;
- Gap up existing hedgerows where appropriate with native species (e.g. at Old Hall Lane) to reinforce the landscape structure;
- Conserve existing mature hedgerow trees through active arboricultural management to prolong their lifespan, and plant new native hedgerow trees to ensure sustained continuity of tree cover.

Principles in relation to Development

- Development should have a porous and transitional edge to ensure integration with the surrounding landscape, e.g. as at Old Hall Lane and Thynnes Lane;
- Avoid garden boundary treatments which could have a sub urbanising influence.
3.0.0 The application site encompasses a small agricultural field up to and including the exiting field boundaries.

Figure D1. a) Overview map of site location (red box) and b) insert map showing site detail.

3.0.1 The site is currently agricultural land and, using historical OS maps made available from the Library of Scotland, no evidence of other land uses can be seen for this site dating back to 1882.

3.0.2 The site interior is currently an open field containing two small ponds and a small number of trees associated with the ponds. The site boundary is also marked by a mature hedgerow.
4.0 Impact of proposals

4.1 Proposed development

4.1.0 This section should be read in conjunction with drawing numbers:
- 2342 : 10/01
- 2342 : 10/02

4.1.1 The development proposes the construction of 5 new residential dwellings and one replacement dwelling on a small parcel of land currently used for pasture, leading off Rayner’s Way in Mattishall.

4.1.2 The development comprises two-storey detached dwellings, each with large gardens, oriented towards a central gravel driveway.

4.2 Perceived impacts and mitigation measures

4.2.0 The development site is bounded on all sides by mature, tree studded field boundary hedgerow. This is an element of the site that is considered highly characteristic of the local area and has therefore been assessed to be both highly sensitive and valuable, from both a landscape and a visual perspective.

4.2.1 The proposed development however will have a negligible effect on this element of the site as all the existing field boundary hedgerow will be retained within the development. Please note that the creation of the opening for the scheme access does not impact on existing hedge lines. This is in order to conserve the characteristics of the local landscape and to provide a practical and attractive green garden boundary treatment.

4.2.2 The development will include buildings two stories in height, the rooflines of which may be visible to those living on Rayner’s Way and those travelling along Old Hall Road.

4.2.3 This however is considered to be a very low impact as views of this type are currently observable form both roadways, as noted above. The presence of intervening high level vegetation (hedgerows, established trees, site boundary hedgerows) will also acts to minimise and soften any potential views of the roof areas. The roofing materials used in construction will also be matched to existing buildings in the vicinity, in order to echo the prevailing character of the local area.
4.2.4 The proposals also include expanding an existing irrigation pond to the north of the site in order to provide a wider access road and for surface water management purposes. This element of the site is not considered characteristic of the local area as the presence of small ponds is not mentioned in either of Breckland District Councils landscape character assessments. This element is therefore considered to be of low landscape value.

4.2.5 The proposed alterations have been assessed to have the potential for a minor positive effect due to the addition and management of new landscaping vegetation and the expansion of the pond itself. This will act to emphasise an element of the site which is currently neglected by creating a feature and drawing more emphasis to the element for the enjoyment of future residents.
5.0 conclusions

5.0.0 The proposed development has been assessed to provide the potential for both minor negative and minor positive impacts. This has been assessed to balance well within the local landscape as the area benefits from high mitigation potential which the development has made full use of within the design.

5.0.1 The development itself is considered to be in keeping with the local landscape as it is comparable in scale with other local properties, will utilise similar building materials and colour palettes and will maintain existing vegetation within the site.

5.0.2 The moderate / high sensitivity designation that covers the application area is strongly related to the length of time taken for the characteristic vegetation to grow and the regularity and completeness of the field pattern in the area. These sensitivity indicators will not be affected by the proposed development as the majority of hedgerow vegetation will be retained and the site boundary will remain intact.

5.0.3 It is concluded therefore that the proposed development is acceptable from a landscape and visual perspective.
6.0 Reference sources

- Breckland District Council Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment (2007) and Landscape Character Assessment (2007) [online] both Available at: https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/2455/Documents-Library-Publications
Appendix B: Maps