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STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND  
FOR LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL  
MATTERS;

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LAND AT OAKLEY FARM,  
CHELTENHAM

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BETWEEN

ROBERT HITCHINS LIMITED  
&  
CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appeal Reference: APP/G1605/W/21/3273053

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Signed:	Signed:
Name: Stuart David Ryder	Name: Paul Stuart Harris
On behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council	On behalf of MHP Design Ltd (acting on behalf of the Appellant)
Date: 25/8/21	Date: 25/8/21

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground for Landscape and Visual Matters has been prepared jointly by MHP Design Ltd on behalf of Robert Hitchins Ltd Limited (the Appellant) and Ryder Landscape Consultants on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.2 It relates to a Section 78 Planning Appeal for Land at Oakley Farm, Cheltenham (the Appeal site).
- 1.3 The purpose of this Statement of Common Ground for Landscape and Visual Matters is to identify the areas where the principal parties are in agreement and to narrow down the issues that remain in dispute. This will allow the Public Inquiry to focus on the most pertinent landscape and visual issues.
- 1.4 This Statement of Common Ground includes common descriptions of features of the appeal Site and its contextual area to assist with identification and orientation. Figure 1 has been included to identify features, roads residential areas and areas referred to by the Appellant and the Council in their respective appeal documents and at the inquiry. Fields within the appeal site have been referenced 1 to 6 to assist orientation at the appeal.

## **2 THE SITE AND CONTEXTUAL FEATURES OF THE LANDSCAPE**

### The Appeal Site

- 2.1 The appeal site comprises of an area of approximately 15.5ha of agricultural grassland with associated disused ancillary farm buildings of varying age, construction and appearance.
- 2.2 The land forms part of the lower north facing slope of Battledown Hill, which forms part of the Cotswold escarpment that lies to the immediate east and south of Cheltenham. As such the appeal site slopes from the south east to the north west across the site, descending from approximately 125m AOD to 80m AOD.
- 2.3 The appeal site is divided up in to 6 field parcels which are defined by established hedgerows and trees. Hedgerow also defines the edge of the site along its western, southern and part of the northern boundary. The site contains a number of mature native trees, many of which are clustered around the location of the former farm buildings. The field parcels, hedgerows, established trees and area of the former farmstead are identified on Figure 1.
- 2.4 Contextual features to the appeal site include the road at Harp Hill immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site and beyond that the linear settlement that lies on the south side of the road. To the east of the Site lies Hewlett's Reservoir with its range of above and below ground listed elements. These features are also identified on Figure 1.
- 2.5 To the north of the reservoir and east of the appeal site lies the recent residential development off Birdlip Road, Bream Court and Ledbury Court which adjoin the eastern and north eastern boundary of the appeal site. These form a recent phase of construction of the wider Oakley Grange settlement area.
- 2.6 To the immediate north of the appeal site is the wider Oakley Grange residential development. Dwellings fronting onto the appeal site are located off Pillowell Close and Brockweir Road. These are identified in Figure 1.
- 2.7 To the north west of the appeal site is the Sainsburys supermarket, petrol station and car park with access from Priors Road. The existing access track to the appeal site lies immediately to the south of the supermarket and its car park.

- 2.8 To the west of the appeal site and south of the access track is an area of established residential settlement with access off Hillview Road and Wessex Drive. Residential properties off Harp Hill adjoin the south west corner of the appeal site.
- 2.9 Public right of way (ZCH/86/1) is located to the immediate west of the appeal site and is identified on Figure 1. The public right of way extends along the entire western boundary of the appeal site and extends along the access track to Prior Road. The Cheltenham Circular Footpath is located to the east of the Oakley Grange development and its access off Birdlip Road.
- 2.10 It is agreed that there is no public right of way or access to the site.
- 2.11 The appeal site is located within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The boundary of the AONB is demarcated by Harp Hill to the south, the existing settlement boundary to the west and the boundary of the appeal site with Oakley Grange to the north. It is agreed that the former farm access track that provides existing access to the site, falls outside of the AONB designated area until the point at which it meets public right of way ZCH/86/1.

### **3 THE APPEAL PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 The appeal proposals are in outline and seek consent for up to 250 residential dwellings, to include provision of affordable housing, associated infrastructure, ancillary facilities, open space and landscaping. The appeal proposals also seek consent for the demolition of all existing buildings and the formation of a new vehicular access from Harp Hill.
- 3.2 It is agreed that all matters relating to appearance, scale, layout and landscaping are reserved for future consideration as reserved matters.
- 3.3 It is agreed that although the proposals are in outline, an illustrative masterplan and landscape strategy have been submitted as part of the application. These illustrate how the design principles set out in the submitted parameter plans can be interpreted.

#### **4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & SENSITIVITY**

- 4.1 It is agreed that the appeal site falls within the National Landscape Character Area NCA 106: Severn and Avon Vales and within the Landscape Character Area LCA: 2D Coopers Hill to Winchcombe within the LCT: 2 Escarpment Landscape Character Type as identified within the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment.
- 4.2 It is agreed that new development is a 'Local Force for Change' identified within the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for the Escarpment landscape character type.
- 4.3 The Landscape Character, Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment of the Cotswolds AONB within Cheltenham Borough was prepared in 2015 as part of a review of the AONB in support of the emerging Cheltenham Plan. The assessment identifies the appeal site as falling within Local Character Area 7.1 Oakley Farm Pasture Slopes.
- 4.4 It is agreed that the purpose of the Cotswold AONB Management Plan 2018 -2023 is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and to increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.
- 4.5 It is agreed that the key landscape features of the appeal site consist of sloping improved pasture, divided into 6no. small to medium scale fields, some of which display ridge and furrow patterning, demarcated by hedges and mature trees. These inform the character of the site along with a number of buildings that formed part of the former Oakley Farm.
- 4.6 It is agreed that the appeal site adjoins areas of established residential development which predominately lies to the west, north and south of the appeal site boundaries. It is agreed that the settled context of the appeal site, also has an influence on the character of the appeal site. The extent of this influence on the site character remains a matter in dispute.
- 4.7 It is agreed that the appeal site forms part of a valued landscape due to the AONB designation.
- 4.8 It is agreed that the AONB designation indicates a high value to the landscape of the appeal site but it remains a matter in dispute that all areas of the appeal site have the same level of

landscape sensitivity. It is also a matter in dispute that the appeal site makes the same level of contribution to the value of the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB as other areas of the escarpment landscape.

4.9 It is agreed that the appeal site does contains areas of high landscape sensitivity.



## **5 VISUAL RECEPTORS, VIEWS & VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

5.1 It is agreed that local visual receptors include:

- Residents along the northern boundary of the site (along Pillowell Close and Brockweir Road)
- Residents along the north east boundary of the site (along Ledbury Court, Bream Court and Birdlip Road)
- Residents along the southern boundary adjoining Harp Hill
- Road users of the road at Harp Hill
- Walkers using public right of way ZCH/86/1 to the immediate west of the appeal site.

5.2 It is agreed that medium distance visual receptors include:

- Road users on Priors Road approximately west of the Sainsburys supermarket
- Users of the Sainsbury's car park and petrol station
- Users of Imjin Road playing fields and surrounding area
- Users of public rights of way on Aggs Hill

5.3 It is agreed that long distance visual receptors include:

- Walkers on the mid and upper escarpment to the north and north east of the site from Cleeve Common to Aggs Hill. Views are not continuous but are found where topography and landcover permit.

5.4 It is agreed that the above list of visual receptors is not exhaustive.

5.5 It is agreed that the appeal site is seen in panoramic views from the Cotswold escarpment to the north and north east in which the site is seen in the context of the town. It is also agreed that there are panoramic views experienced across the site from residential properties on Harp Hill and the public right of way to the west of the site.

5.6 It is agreed that panoramic and long distance views are available from the appeal site in which the setting of the town in the context of the escarpment can be experienced.

5.7 It remains a matter in dispute that all of the appeal site has the same level of high visual sensitivity.

## **6 TREES AND HEDGEROWS**

- 6.1 It is agreed that an arboricultural Survey to BS 5837: 2012 & Statement with Parameters Plan was submitted as appendix 6.2 of the landscape chapter 6 of the Environmental Statement.
- 6.2 It is agreed that the mature trees are to be retained on the indicative proposals and subject to final detailed agreement with the Council's Tree Officers there is the intention and potential to retain all mature tree stock internally to the Site in adequate space to protect canopy and root systems.
- 6.3 It is a matter remaining in dispute that a change to the setting of the existing trees would result in harm to them as a character of the appeal site.

## **7 MATTERS REMAINING IN DISPUTE**

7.1 There are six areas remaining in dispute between parties as listed below;

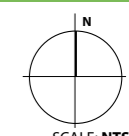
- 1 Site landscape and visual sensitivity.
- 2 The value of the site within the Cotswolds AONB.
- 3 The value of the site to the setting of Cheltenham.
- 4 The extent and nature of landscape character change.
- 5 The extent and nature of visual harm.
- 6 The value of the proposed open space and its use for recreational purposes.

## Figure 1



Notes:  
Aerial photography date: 25/7/17

Base Image source: **Google Earth Pro.**  
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SCALE: NTS

Project Name:  
**Oakley Farm, Cheltenham**

MHP Reference:  
**APP/B1605/W/21/3273053**

Revision:      Status:      Date:  
24/08/2021

**Landscape Statement of Common Ground**  
**Figure 1** Site and Contextual features