

# Land South of Town House Road, Costessey

## Landscape and Visual Summary Note



March 2018

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This Landscape and Visual Summary Note has been prepared by CSA Environmental in respect of the land south of Town House Road, Costessey. It outlines the key landscape and visual issues associated with the Site together with an overview of landscape and visual principals to be considered when developing the proposals.

Taylor Wimpey is promoting the Site for residential development and is considering a number of potential development options. These include a relatively small scale development contained within the paddocks to the east of the Site, together with options for an expanded scheme which includes parts of the arable field to the west. The different options are shown on the Concept Masterplans (Option 1 – 3) which accompany this submission.

The Site has been visited by suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architects on several occasions, most recently in March 2018. The Site has been viewed both in the summer months and in winter, when the deciduous vegetation is out of leaf and it is at its most visible in views from the surrounding area.

### **Pertinent Landscape Planning Policy**

**Policy DM4.5 Landscape Character and River Valleys** of the Development Management Policies Document for South Norfolk (2011) states that all development should respect, conserve and enhance the surrounding landscape character, with particular regard to protecting the distinctive characteristics, special qualities and geographical extents of the identified rural river valleys, including the River Tud Valley in which the Site is located. It goes on to state that development proposals which cause a significant adverse impact on the distinctive landscape character of an area will be refused.

### **Site Description and Context**

The Site lies to the south of Town House Road and includes a rectangular field, used as paddocks and an area of arable farmland. To the east of the Site is a residential estate at Lime Tree Avenue and Green Hills Close. To the north-west of the Site is the Grade II listed Church of Our Lady & Saint Walstan, which is well contained by mature trees within its grounds. West of the church is a

recent housing estate at Cleves Way and Husenbeth Close, which is enclosed to the south by a band of young woodland.

At the northern edge of Town House Road, are several properties from the late twentieth century. To the east of these is the mature woodland at Green Hills which occupies the rising ground above Town House Road.

To the south of the Site the land falls towards the route of the River Tud, beyond which it rises towards the edge of New Costessey. The intervening landscape is characterised by arable farmland along the floor of the valley, and by a dense band of woodland at East Hills which follows the ridgeline along the top of the southern valleyside. Poplar shelterbelts are a prominent feature within the valley.

### **Landscape Quality and Sensitivity**

The Site occupies a rectangular field and part of an adjacent field to the south of Town House Road and east of Longwater Lane. It is bordered by existing housing in the town to the north, east and west and by the church of Our Lady and St Walston to the north-west. There are no notable landscape features contained within the Site save a small number of mature hedgerow trees and the established hedgerow field boundaries.

The Site lies on the middle slopes of the Tud River Valley and forms part of the wider farmland which occupies the lower slopes and valley floor. It shares some of the attributes associated with the Tud Rural River Valley LCA as described in the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment. Despite this, due to the Site's proximity to the existing settlement, its rural character is somewhat eroded by neighbouring housing development. The Site is therefore considered to be of **medium** landscape quality and sensitivity.

To the south of the Site is mixed farmland which occupies the base of the valley floor and rises to the woodland at East Hills which occupies the ridge to the south. There are a number of bands of mature poplar trees which define nearby field boundaries which are also characteristic of the river valley character area. Overall the wider landscape to the south of the Site is considered to be of **medium** landscape quality and **medium - high** sensitivity to residential development.

### **Visual Overview**

The Site is well contained by neighbouring development, woodland and topography in views from the north, east and west. Opportunities to view the Site from the River Tud Valley to the south are restricted by the limited public access to this area.

The key representative views are as follows:

- Views from a section of Town House Road;
- Views from approximately 7 properties to the north of Town House Road;
- Filtered / partial views from the grounds of The Catholic Church of Our Lady and Saint Walstan and existing properties on Cleves Way;
- Views from rear, upper floor windows of the dwellings which border the Site to the east;
- Views from the access road leading to several bungalows to the east of Longwater Lane. Views are filtered by the intervening poplar trees, particularly in the summer months;
- Views from the publicly accessible woodland at East Hills are extremely limited by the dense vegetation which encloses the trodden routes through the woodland. The Site is more visible in the winter when the vegetation is out of leaf;
- There are heavily filtered views of western Site boundary vegetation from the upper floors of the properties to the east of Longwater Lane; and
- Glimpsed views towards the Site from a section of Longwater Lane in proximity to the recreation grounds are largely prevented by intervening vegetation.

### **Ability of the Site to Accommodate Development**

The following key landscape and visual principles should be taken into account when developing the Site proposals. These are shown on the Concept Masterplan options and include:

- Retention and reinforcement of existing boundary vegetation;
- New tree belt planting to define the southern boundary, creating a defensible edge to the settlement;
- Vehicular access from Town House Road and new pedestrian and cycle links;
- Open space in the north of the Site to respect the setting of the listed church and to provide an attractive frontage to the new housing area and to the south of the Site to form a sensitive edge to the river valley;
- Create framed views from Town House Road and vantage points within the new public realm to the river valley; and
- Sensitive siting and design of buildings alongside the southern edge with the adjoining countryside.

### Relationship to Existing Development

The Site is well related to existing housing within the settlement of Costessey, with development bordering it to the north, east and west. The settlement centre and associated facilities, including shops and a public house lie

approximately 200 metres to the north west, and The Costessey Centre with associated park and community facilities lies a short distance to the west on Longwater Lane.

### Visual Effects

The visual assessment identified that the Site is well contained in views from the north, east and west by a combination of built development, woodland and rising topography. Furthermore, although housing will be visible from the countryside to the south, there are limited opportunities for views from public vantage points. The key public views are discussed below, beyond these visual effects will be limited.

Development will impact on views from a section of Town House Road. Housing in this location will continue development along the southern edge of the highway and will not appear discordant given the surrounding settlement pattern. Development will however impact on the existing view across the Site to the adjoining valley landscape. To address this, proposals should make provision for framed views through the development area to the valley floor from areas of open space and the new public realm.

Views from the woodland at East Hills are largely prevented by the density of vegetative cover in the summer months, although the site is more visible in winter. In the limited locations where breaks in the vegetation occur, there will be heavily filtered, glimpsed views of housing at the Site. In these views, development will be seen in the context of the existing settlement in Costessey, will not be intrusive and will not impact materially on the amenity and enjoyment of this woodland walk.

### Landscape Effects

The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. It lies within the Tud Rural River Valley Character Area and is subject to **Policy DM4.5 Landscape Character and River Valleys** which states that development will have particular regard to protecting the distinctive characteristics, special qualities and geographical extents of the identified rural river valleys.

The settlement of Costessey is contained by the River Valleys of the Tud and the Wensum, with the boundaries of the character areas following the built extents at the edge of the settlement. Built development at the edge of Costessey would therefore inevitably lie within one of the defined rural river valley character areas.

The Site comprises an area of farmland which occupies the valley sides above the River Tud. It is closely associated with existing housing and development within the settlement at Costessey which border it to the north, east and west and it does not possess the remote rural character found elsewhere within the

character area. The eastern part of the Site comprises an area of paddocks, whilst to the west the Site lies within part of a wider arable field.

In respect of development to the south of Town House Road, the following points are of relevance:

- Development would be well related to existing housing and would extend no further south into the valley than existing development at Lime Tree Avenue or east of Longwater Lane;
- Development would not intrude on the sensitive pastoral landscape of the valley floor;
- Development would not result in coalescence with New Costessey;
- There are limited opportunities to view development from public vantage points within the farmland to the south of the Site;
- Development can retain the majority of the existing landscape features and makes provision for new tree planting to add to the overall wooded character of the valley; and
- Development would make provision for new landscaping along the southern edge of the Site which would provide an appropriate edge to the development and assist in anchoring the proposals within the existing settlement at Costessey.

Development at the Site would result in the loss of an area of paddocks and arable farmland on the valley slopes above the River Tud. Notwithstanding this, housing in this location would be consistent with the existing settlement pattern and would not intrude significantly on the adjoining landscape of the valley floor.

Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd is exploring different options for development at the Site. Option 1 is for a discrete housing development located in the paddocks in the eastern part of the Site. In terms of character, this part of the Site differs from the wider arable farmland which is characteristic of the river valley. Development here would be located within the existing field hedgerow structure and would form a logical extension to the settlement.

Options 2 and 3 are for a more comprehensive development and would result in the loss of part of an arable field which extends into the river valley floor. Despite this, housing here would remain closely related to existing housing and facilities in the settlement and new landscaping to the south would provide a robust landscape framework for the development proposals in due course.

## **Conclusion**

Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd is promoting land to the south of Costessey Road for residential development. The Site comprises an area of farmland on the rising ground above the Tud River Valley.

A number of development options have been prepared which show how new housing can be delivered at the Site. These show that development would be closely related to the existing settlement pattern in Costessey and could be accommodated in a manner which respects the setting and character of the adjoining River Valley.