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LANDSCAPE SUMMARY NOTE – BRIARY FARM, HARLESTON

The Site

The Site is located to the south-east of the village of Harleston in Norfolk. The Site is irregular in shape and occupies an approximate total area of 26.5 hectares.

The Site is comprised of a number of arable fields, lying between the settlement edge of Harleston to the west and the A143 to the east. The Angles Way Long Distance Recreational Route cuts across the middle of the Site from east to west, following an established farm track.

The Proposals

The Site proposals comprise the creation of a new residential development within the western section of the Site, with an area designated for employment opportunities in the southern section.

A large proportion of the eastern section is proposed to be retained as open space, including a woodland belt along the Site's eastern boundary, and the potential for a play area. The very southern section of the Site is proposed to be comprised of allotments, in order to extend the existing allotment plot adjacent to the southern boundary.

Landscape Character

The Site lies within the South Norfolk and High Suffolk National Character Area (NCA) and is sub-categorised within the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment as lying within the Rural River Valley Landscape Character Type (LCT) and the Waveney Rural River Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA).

The Rural River Valley Landscape LCT is broadly characterised by its glacial valley landform and floodplains. The Site is considered to be less representative of this LCT on account of its arable land use and settlement edge location. However the Site is considered to be more representative of the Waveney Rural River Valley LCA, which describes the pastoral and arable nature of the area, the market town character of Harleston and the presence of the road network cutting across the character area.

The Site is strongly characterised by its arable land use with generally flat open fields, with a gradual rise in topography towards the east. The strong presence of the existing settlement edge of Harleston is also a characterising feature of the Site, particularly within the western section.

The principal sensitivities of the Waveney Rural River Valley LCA which are considered relevant to this Site include:

- Visual sensitivities associated with open views to churches and the valley crest skyline and the threat of intrusion of development into these views, and
- The local rural vernacular and market town quality. The compact and contained settlements could be eroded by residential or linear development along the major roads.

The Site is relatively well contained by the existing vegetation structure along the A143 road corridor to the east of the Site, and on account of the flat topography where existing hedgerows and trees provide good cover. As a result, the Site is not anticipated to intrude into sensitive views.

The historic settlement of Harleston is focused along Redenhall Road and London Road, however has seen a large expansion of both residential and commercial development within the eastern section of the town pushing the settlement edge further east. The proposed Site lies within this expansion area, however development is proposed to be focused along the existing settlement edge, with a large area of open space to be retained to the east.

Visual Environment

On account of the generally flat topography across the Site, the existing vegetation structure along the Site's eastern boundary adjoining the A143 road corridor, serves to contain much of the view further east beyond the Site. With the presence of the A143 and its existing roadside vegetation structure, it is considered that views of the proposed development from the countryside to the east would be limited.

However, outward views from the existing settlement edge are considered to be significant, with those receptors anticipated to be most likely impacted listed as follows:

- Briar's Farm
- Jay's Green;
- Martin Road;
- Harvest Way, and
- Mendham Lane.

Vegetation along the Site's eastern boundary is variable and non-existent in places and would require strengthening to create a robust edge.

Recommendations

- Create an area of open space with landscaped areas within the eastern section of the Site, to concentrate development along the settlement edge and retain a green corridor along the A143;
- Retain and enhance all boundary vegetation, in particular the enhancement of vegetation along the Site's eastern boundary, to ensure that the Site is seen within an existing green infrastructure;
- Promote and maintain the Angles Way Long Distance Recreational Route through the proposed development, with interpretation signage and landscaped areas, including potential ecological habitat creation;
- Include good quality tree, hedgerow and shrub planting within the development to help integrate the development into the receiving environment, and
- Promote the use of locally native plant species, where appropriate, to ensure that the proposals are in keeping with the character of the Site, its setting and the wider landscape context.

Summary and Conclusions

Whilst the proposals will result in a degree of change to that which currently exists, it is anticipated that this change could be accommodated within this context.

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