
Beccles Road, Loddon

Proposed residential development

Supplementary Landscape and Visual Appraisal

04 November 2020



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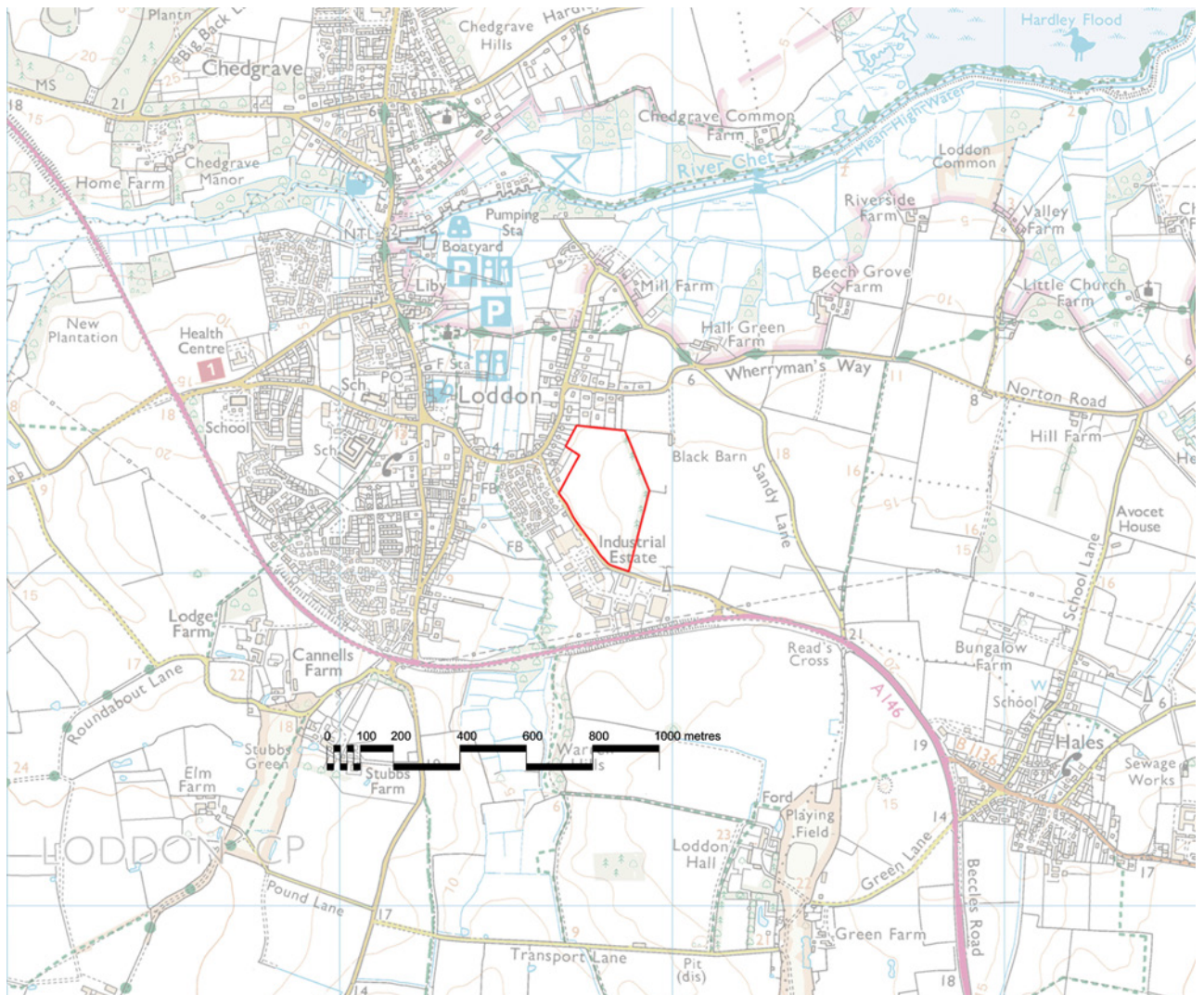
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2019, a preliminary Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal was prepared to guide and inform the development of proposals for new residential development at Beccles Road, Loddon by Hopkns Homes Ltd.

Purposes of the Document

1.2 The purpose of this document is to explain how the appraisal of landscape, visual and cultural impacts has informed the development of the latest Concept Masterplan.



Site location - Beccles Road, Loddon

2. Site description

- 2.1 The site off Beccles Road Loddon is located on sloping ground on the eastern side of a tributary of the River Chet, which runs directly South to North and joins the Chet approximately 400 metres north-east of the town centre. The site is currently a single arable field of approximately 7.6 hectares, bounded on the Eastern and North-eastern sides by a 20 metre-wide tree plantation. The plantation is approximately 20 years old and of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees about 8 metres high. Along the eastern side of the plantation are a number of mature Oak trees, marking the former historic field boundary.
- 2.2 The site fronts onto Beccles Road with an established hedgerow, primarily Hawthorn, and maintained at a height of approximately 2 metres. Between the hedgerow and the highway is a footpath/cycleway and a 2 metre-wide grass verge.



Aerial view of the application site

3. Summary of the 2019 Appraisal

- 3.1 The 2019 Landscape and Visual Appraisal reviewed the setting of the proposed development as a tool for informing the emerging masterplan.
- 3.2 The two parish churches were noted as occupying prominent positions each side of the river, and from these vantage points there are expansive views over the landscape.
- 3.3 The centre of Loddon is closely related to the surrounding countryside and river from which it owes its development. The principal streets are urban in character, yet they link a series of open spaces - The Staithe, The Plain and Farthing Green - which further emphasises the essentially rural nature of the town. These are themselves linked by footpaths and access ways to the meadows to the east.
- 3.4 Outside the Conservation Area boundary, along Beccles Road, the grain becomes much looser and of a less defined character. The southern side of Beccles Road comprises a mix of offices warehouses and parking areas associated with the industrial estate here. The road, however, retains remnant stretches of hedgerow which help to break and soften up the hard appearance of the buildings, protecting the generally rural or semi-rural character. The northern side of the road, including the application site comprises medium to large arable fields on the sloping land which rises up from the tributary of the Chet.
- 3.5 The appraisal noted that the eastern and south-eastern boundary of the application site has a 20 metre-wide modern plantation comprising mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. Analysis of historic mapping shows that this plantation was not present in 1988, and includes some veteran Oak trees on the south-eastern limb. These veteran trees indicate field boundary shown on the earliest maps and add to the rural character of the area. The new plantation has established well and is forming an important landscape feature on a gentle ridge, enclosing the application site. It is currently around 8 metres in height but should ultimately reach 15 metres or more. This plantation is visible for higher and more distant parts of the neighbourhood, and makes an important contribution to the wooded skyline.
- 3.6 The northern side of the Beccles Road is bounded by a mature hedgerow maintained at a height of 2 - 3 metres. Although possibly of recent origin, it contains a number of shrubby species and is of a dense habit and important as a landscape and wildlife feature.

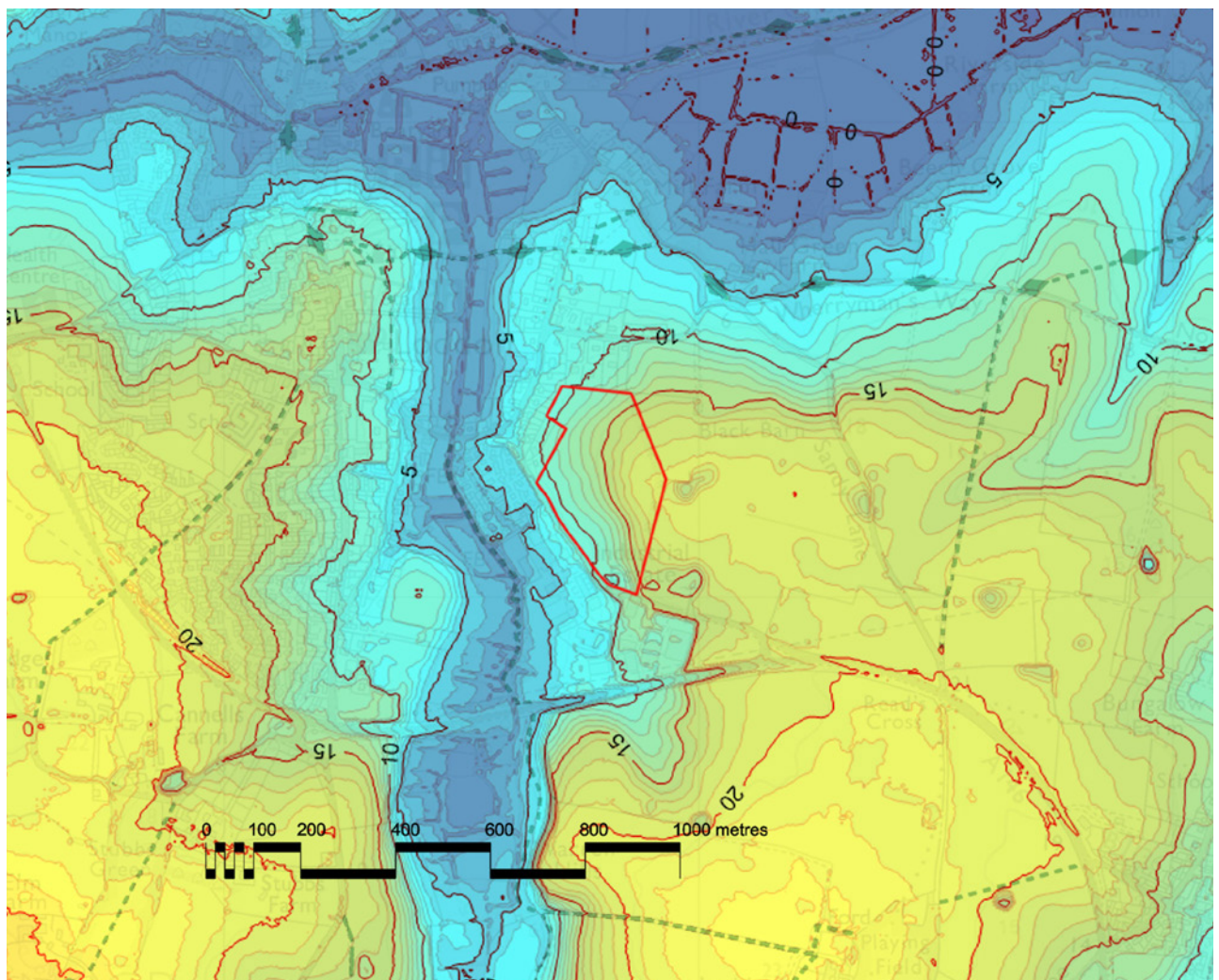
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- 3.7 The District Landscape Character Assessment notes the important views within this character area are to the neighbouring Broads at Loddon and Chedgrave and to round and square village church towers that are distinctive features within the rural landscape.
- 3.8 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') and the Local Plan Proposals Map indicate that the Site is not covered by any statutory or local designations for landscape character or quality
- 3.9 The appraisal concluded that the site was suitable in principle for development of the type proposed.



Beccles Road, Loddon. Aerial view westwards

4. Topography

- 4.1 An analysis of the topography demonstrates the district topography of the area.
- 4.2 The Site slopes gently down roughly from south east to north west, with levels of just over 19m AOD (above Ordnance Datum, or mean sea level) on the eastern side, falling to around 10m AOD along Beccles Road to the west. It is located on the eastern side of the valley of a stream which drains into the River Chet to the north.
- 4.3 As noted in the District Landscape Character Assessment this is an area with landform which slopes gradually upwards from the River Chet and low-lying Broads in the north east at Loddon and Chedgrave to higher ground towards the south and south west. The small tributary river has an obvious influence in the landscape, with associated features include pockets of pasture, road bridges, village ponds and willow trees.



Local topography

5. Initial site proposals

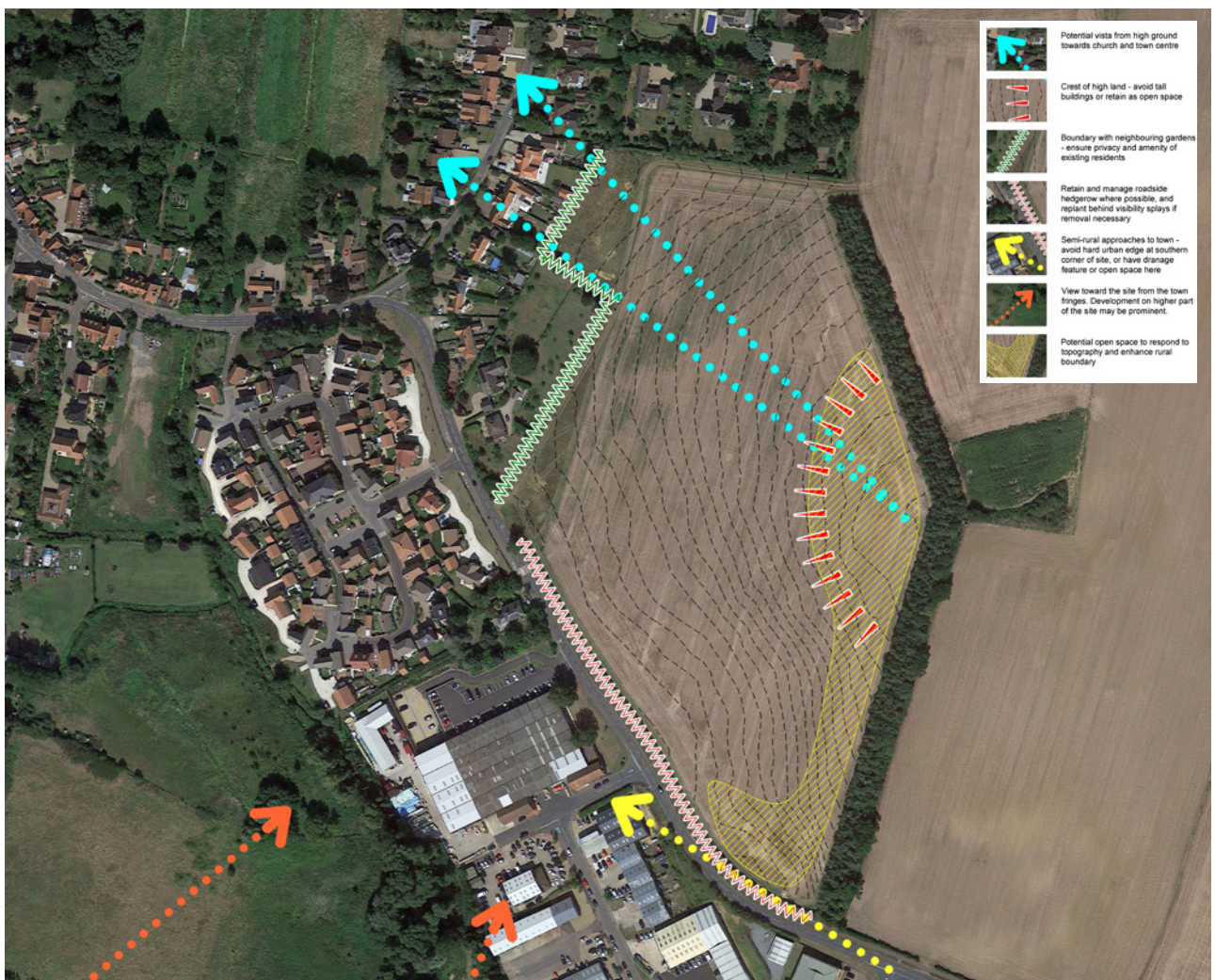
- 5.1 Initial site proposals comprised residential development, open space, gardens and associated road and path infrastructure for approximately 180 dwellings. The indicative layout is shown on the following page.
- 5.2 The total site area is approximately 7.63 hectares, of which 0.79 ha is proposed public open space
- 5.3 The proposed housing mix comprises the following: 18 no. 1 Bedroom, 54 no. 2 Bedrooms, 72 no. 3 bedrooms, 36 no. 4 bedrooms



Initial site proposals

6. Opportunities and Constraints

- 6.1 There are relatively few site constraints, the site being arable field, and the key issues relate to the topography. The site is of inherently limited ecological importance, with major ecological interest limited to the semi-improved grassland and boundary habitats. The woodland plantation and boundary hedgerows will be retained and the development provides an opportunity to enhance the value of the site for wildlife.
- 6.2 The high land on the eastern boundary of the site is potentially prominent from a wide area, so any development here could be particularly visible. Holy Trinity Church is visible from the middle and upper reaches of the site. It is typically seen within the context of post-war housing. However, the views from the elevated land do allow it to be appreciated as a standalone church within a rural context. There is a potential to have part of this area as open space, with the building layout allowing glimpses through to, say, the church.



Beccles Road, Loddon. Opportunities and constraints

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- 6.3 The eastern and south-eastern boundary of the application site has a 20 metre-wide modern plantation comprising mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. Analysis of historic mapping shows that this plantation was not present in 1988, but includes some veteran Oak trees on the south-eastern limb. These veteran trees indicate field boundary shown on the earliest maps and add to the cultural history and rural character of the area. The new plantation has established well and is forming an important landscape feature on a gentle ridge, enclosing the application site. It is currently around 8 metres in height but should ultimately reach 15 metres or more. This plantation is visible for higher and more distant parts of the neighbourhood, and makes an important contribution to the wooded skyline.
- 6.4 The two parish churches occupy prominent positions each side of the river, and from these vantage points, wide views can be experienced.
- 6.5 The centre of Loddon is closely related to the surrounding countryside and river from which it owes its development. The principle streets are urban in character, yet they link a series of open spaces - The Staithe, The Plain and Farthing Green - which further emphasises the essentially rural nature of the town. These are themselves linked by footpaths and access ways to the meadows to the east.
- 6.6 Outside the Conservation Area boundary, along Beccles Road, the grain becomes much looser and of a less defined character. The southern side of Beccles Road comprises a mix of offices warehouses and parking areas associated with the industrial estate here. The road, however, retains remnant stretches of hedgerow which help to break and soften up the hard appearance of the buildings, protecting the generally rural or semi-rural character. The northern side of the road, including the application site comprises medium to large arable fields on the sloping land which rises up from the tributary of the Chet.
- 6.7 The semi-rural character of the road is an important character of the approaches to the town, so the roadside hedge retained and enhanced, and the built form reflecting the more rural character here.
- 6.8 The strong topography is an opportunity to exploit the contours and make a particularly interesting development.

7. Latest Concept Masterplan

7.1 The updated masterplan illustrated below and overleaf comprises the following proposals:

- 121 Private units comprising 48 no. 2 Bed, 36 no. 3 Bed, 37 no. 4 & 5 Bed, and 59 affordable units comprising 14 no. 1 Bed, 23 no. 2 Bed, 22 no. 3 & 4 Bed
- 1m deep infiltration basins with natural shallow slopes, to create semi-rural approach towards town centre. 2m wide maintenance strip around perimeter of infiltration basin with additional area around basin to tie back to existing levels.
- Existing roadside hedgerow to be retained and managed.
- New 6m wide site access with 2.4 x 43m visibility splays off Beccles Road, plus separate emergency access and cycleway / footpath link on to Beccles road.
- New hedging to enhance existing retained boundary hedgerow to ensure privacy for existing residents.
- Open space to respond to topography and enhance existing woodland.



Masterplan in context



Beccles Road, Loddon. Final site proposals

8. Appraisal of current proposals

8.1 It is considered that the current masterplan has responded to the assessment of opportunities and constraints, and demonstrates some key positive urban design aspects, namely:

- The area of open space on the higher land will provide the opportunity to take advantage of vistas here. It will also reduce the risk of roof lines breaking the skyline and enhancing the beneficial effect of the boundary tree belt. A looser layout in these upper areas will help to protect views particularly to Holy Trinity Church.
- Creating a linear open space area with a path around the boundary, incorporating a woodland walk through part of the boundary plantation, fully utilises the existing topography and landscape features and demonstrates how it is possible to create an interesting and varied public space within a relatively small area. There is good interconnectivity of the green spaces which enhances biodiversity and recreational value.
- Overall, the topography of the site will help to create an interesting gateway to the town. The layout clearly responds to the site topography, with the streets generally following the site contours and the building heights responding to vistas and elevation.
- The wide open green space and sustainable drainage feature along the frontage, together with the maximum retention of the roadside hedgerow, will create an attractive foreground setting to the development.

8.2 Overall, the scheme demonstrates a well-coordinated landscape-led approach with an imaginative use of green links, maximising the opportunities provided by the topography, and incorporating existing landscape features such as hedgerow and veteran trees.

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