

3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

3.1 Introduction:

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been prepared in support of a planning application for the construction of four holiday lodges on land north west of Leicester Road, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire. The purpose of this appraisal is to consider the likely effects of the proposed development on the landscape character of the site and the surrounding area and to demonstrate how careful design and landscaping can minimise visual effects. This document should be read alongside the Design and Access Statement and the proposed Landscape Master Plan.

3.2 Site Context:

The application site lies on the north-western side of Leicester Road on the edge of Earl Shilton. The site is currently undeveloped and comprises open land enclosed in part by established hedgerows and mature trees.

The surrounding area includes:

- open agricultural land;
- roadside hedgerows;
- scattered vegetation;
- development associated with the edge of Earl Shilton;
- the wider rolling countryside beyond.

The site occupies a transition between the urban edge and the rural landscape.

3.3 Existing Landscape Features:

The most significant landscape features include:

Boundary Hedgerows

The site benefits from mature hedgerows along much of its perimeter.

These provide:

- natural enclosure;
- visual screening;
- wildlife habitat;
- landscape structure.

All existing healthy hedgerows should be retained.

Existing Trees:

Existing mature trees make an important contribution to the landscape character.

They should be protected throughout construction in accordance with British Standard BS5837.

Landform:

The site gently follows the surrounding topography.

There are no dramatic landform changes that would require significant engineering works

The natural contours should be retained wherever possible.

3.4 Landscape Character:

The wider landscape is characterised by:

- gently undulating countryside;
- agricultural fields;
- mature hedgerows;
- occasional woodland;
- scattered rural development.

The proposed development has therefore been designed to reflect these characteristics.

3.5 Visual Receptors:

Potential visual receptors include:

Road Users:

Motorists travelling along Leicester Road.

Due to vehicle speeds and the existing vegetation, views are generally brief.

Public Rights of Way:

Where public footpaths exist nearby, walkers may obtain views towards the site.

These views are partially filtered by vegetation and would be further softened by proposed landscaping

Nearby Properties:

Properties on the edge of Earl Shilton may experience limited views towards parts of the development. The separation distances together with retained hedgerows significantly reduce potential visual impact.

3.6 Landscape Design Principles:

The proposal has been designed around five key landscape principles.

Principle 1:

Retain existing landscape features.

Existing hedgerows and mature trees form the backbone of the landscape strategy.

Principle 2:

Strengthen landscape boundaries.

Additional native hedgerow planting will reinforce existing boundaries.

Species may include:

- Hawthorn
- Blackthorn
- Hazel
- Field Maple
- Holly
- Dog Rose

Principle 3:

Increase tree cover.

Native tree planting should include species appropriate to Leicestershire including:

- English Oak
- Small-leaved Lime
- Field Maple
- Silver Birch
- Wild Cherry
- Rowan

Principle 4:

Reduce visual impact.

Lodges should sit within planting rather than appearing prominently within the landscape.

Principle 5

Increase biodiversity.

Landscape proposals should create:

- wildflower meadow;
- nectar-rich planting;
- bird habitat;
- bat habitat;
- hedgehog corridors;
- pollinator habitat.

3.7 Visual Mitigation:

A comprehensive landscaping strategy is proposed.
This includes:

Structural Planting

Native woodland planting around the site perimeter where required.

Hedgerow Reinforcement

Infill planting where gaps currently exist. (where fire damage is visible)

Meadow Areas:

Species-rich grassland replacing areas of low ecological value.

Low Lighting Strategy:

External lighting will be:

- downward facing;
- low intensity;
- timer controlled where appropriate.

This reduces visual intrusion and protects nocturnal wildlife.

3.8 Seasonal Effects:

During winter months some additional views may be available through deciduous vegetation.

However:

- retained evergreen planting;
 - mature hedgerows;
 - proposed woodland planting
- will continue to provide substantial filtering.
As planting matures the visual impact will reduce further.

3.9 Construction Effects:

Construction activities would be temporary.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan should include:

- tree protection fencing;
- dust suppression;
- restricted working hours;
- storage compounds positioned away from retained vegetation.

Temporary impacts would cease following completion.

3.10 Long-Term Landscape Benefits:

The proposal delivers significant long-term improvements.

These include:

- increased tree cover;
- enhanced hedgerows;
- improved biodiversity;
- enhanced landscape quality;
- stronger ecological connectivity.

The site will become greener than its current condition.

3.11 Overall Landscape Effects:

The proposal has deliberately been restricted to four holiday lodges.

The limited scale enables the development to sit comfortably within the landscape.

The combination of:

- retained vegetation;
- additional native planting;
- careful building positioning;
- natural materials;
- low building heights

Will substantially reduce visual prominence. As planting matures, the development will become increasingly integrated into the surrounding countryside.

3.12 Conclusion:

The proposed development has been designed to work with the existing landscape rather than against it.

The retention of mature landscape features, combined with extensive native planting and a low-density layout, provides a robust strategy for minimising visual effects.

Subject to detailed planting and ongoing landscape management, the proposal has the potential to deliver a net enhancement to the site's landscape character while providing high-quality tourism accommodation.