





Initial Landscape and Visual Impact Analysis

3372/P/01 rev b

Leicester Road, Hinckley

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fpcr
Lockington Hall, Lockington,
Derby, DE74 2RH, Tel: 01509 672772
Fax: 01509 674565, fpcr @ compuserve. com

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1.0 SITE CONTEXT

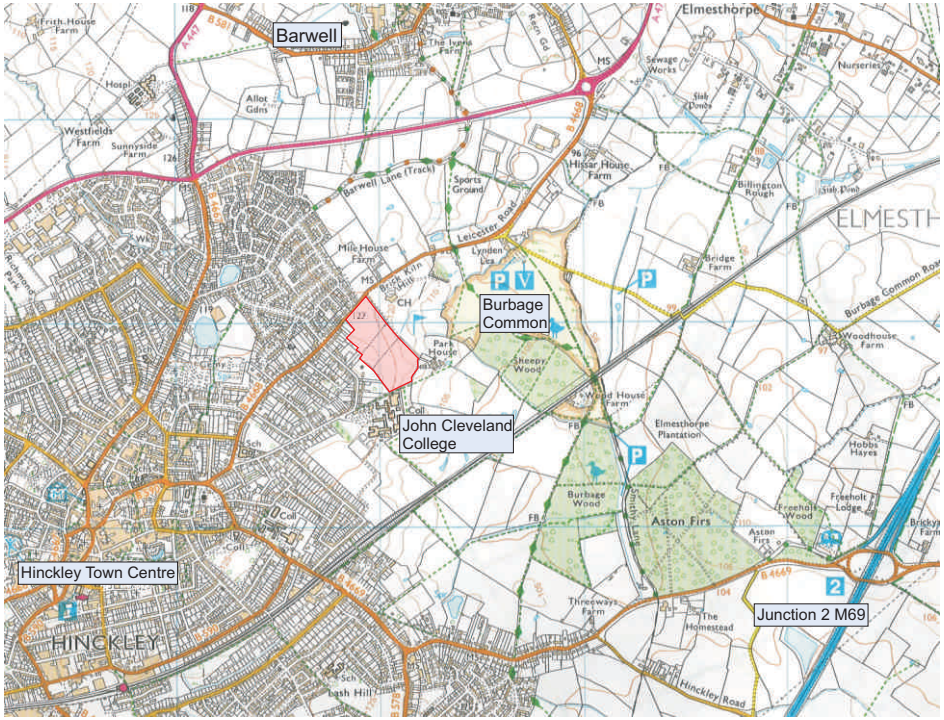
1.1 The site is situated on the north eastern edge of Hinckley, approximately 2 kilometres from the town centre and is within close proximity of similar sized settlements including Nuneaton and Tamworth and larger cities of Leicester and Birmingham. The existing settlement of Hinckley contains a range of local facilities including shops, schools and community buildings.

1.2 Leicester Road forms the northern boundary, mature hedgerows and Park House access track form the eastern boundary of the site. To the south mature hedgerows limit views to the golf course and countryside beyond. The western boundary is enclosed by existing and newly built residential properties off Bradgate Road and Bradgate Gardens.

1.3 The site consists of three separate fields, which are predominantly grassland. Some mature and semi-mature trees are scattered within the field boundaries. To the south and east of the site lies Hinckley Golf Club

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1.4 Vehicular access into the site is currently off Leicester Road. There are no public access points through the site. However, there are a number of footpaths in close proximity to the site which, run throughout Burbage Common and across the golf course along the southern boundary of the site linking Hinckley with the surrounding countryside and the villages of Barwell, Earl Shilton and Elmesthrope

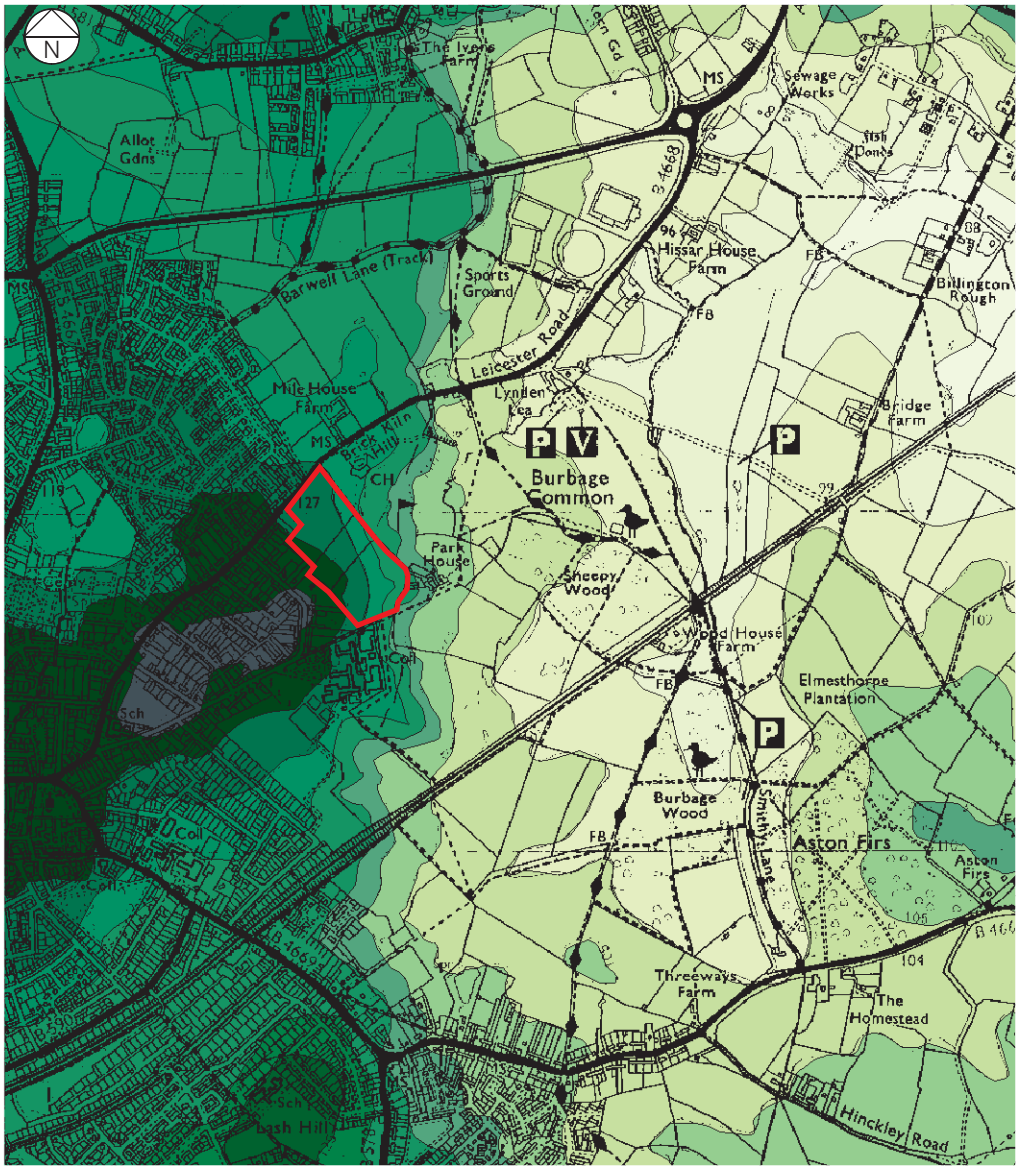


2.0 TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 The site lies on the eastern facing slope of a broad undulating valley of a minor tributary leading towards the River Soar. To the west of the site the land continues to rise towards a high point at within the centre of Hinckley.

2.2 The land falls across the site from west to east from a high point of 107.1m AOD along the western boundary to a low point of 89.9m AOD at the south eastern boundary adjacent to Park House.

2.3 Due to the undulating topography of the area and the mature woodlands to the west views into the site are restricted, primarily being from the adjacent properties to the west on Bradgate Road and with some distant partial views of the site from properties within Elmesthrope . The sloping topography and mature hedgerows screen much of the available views to the northern edge of the site.



KEY

135-140m AOD	115-120m AOD	95 - 100m AOD
130-135m AOD	110-115m AOD	90 - 95m AOD
125-130m AOD	105-110m AOD	85 - 90m AOD
120-125m AOD	100-105m AOD	Site Boundary

3.0 LANDSCAPE & TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

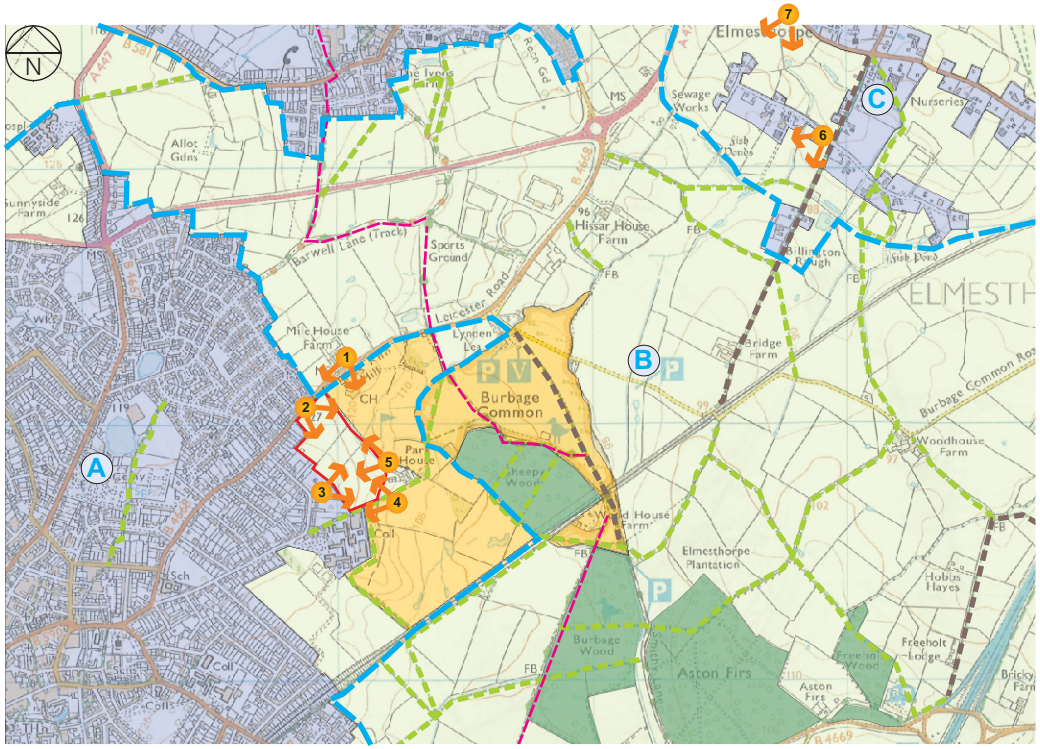
3.1 Hinckley and the site lie within the western edge of the Leicestershire Vales Landscape Character Area as defined by the Countryside Agency in the Character Map of England - Area 94. Key characteristics of the area include; 'Frequent small towns and large villages, often characterised by red brick buildings. A great diversity of landscape and settlement pattern with many subunits'

3.2 At a Borough level, the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Landscape Assessment focuses upon the Hinckley, Barwell and Burbage Urban Fringe as a specific character area within the Leicestershire Vales, acknowledging that 'The landscape is heavily influenced by established settlements, often situated on higher ground with masts and poles predominate. Localised containment provided by woodland but urban areas frequently visible on ridge lines'. On capacity and sensitivity the document states that sensitivity varies across the diverse urban fringe character area. Burbage Common is particularly distinctive and sensitive. Other areas are important due to their openness and consequent role in preventing urban coalescence.

3.3 An assessment of the character of the local area has identified three character areas.

3.4 **Hinckley Urban Area** - This character area consists of predominantly residential properties covering a broad range of style and density.

3.5 To the urban edge of Hinckley the landform begins to drop gently



KEY

- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Long Distance Footpath
- Photo viewpoints With Reference
- Residential
- Agricultural
- Woodland Plantation
- Recreational Open Space
- A Hinckley Urban Area
- B Agricultural Land and Clustered Woodland
- C Dispersed Residential
- Site Boundary

allowing distant views across the broad valley to Barwell and Earl Shilton and several scattered dwellings enclosed by a wooded skyline.

3.6 Building materials are predominately red brick interspersed with some rendered properties. Roofing materials are a mixture of grey and red ceramic tiles.

The site itself falls within this character area and consists of three medium sized arable fields. Although the sloping landscape is predominately open countryside the area is heavily influenced by the existing residential development to the western boundary and further urbanised by the existing golf course enclosing the site to the west and south. The mature woodland plantations and hedgerow trees limit views into and from the site.

3.7 **Agricultural Land and Clustered Woodland** - Hinckley abuts open countryside to the west with the main land use typified by arable land with numerous mature hedgerows and clustered mature woodland plantations with several scattered farmsteads. A network of A and B-roads link Hinckley to surrounding settlements of Barwell, Earl Shilton and Elmesthorpe along with an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways including the Leicestershire Round long distance footpath.

3.8 The mature woodland plantations are an important feature within the area effectively screening the open countryside beyond from the urban influences of Hinckley. Creating a series of spaces framed by woodland edges most significant in terms of landscape amenity and wildlife is Burbage Common .

3.9 **Dispersed Residential -** The landform begins to rise to form the western facing slope of the broad undulating valley towards the village of Elmesthorpe part of the Land Settlement Association initiative. The dispersed dwellings are located along a narrow track in a cross formation. Properties are of varying sizes and styles.

3.10 From the landscape and townscape character assessment a number of conclusions have been drawn in relation to the potential development site:

- The townscape character of Hinckley is typified by a range of dwellings the proposed development could therefore accommodate a variety of densities and dwelling types.
- Existing mature hedgerows and woodland should be reinforced with additional planting to improve the existing rural edge of the settlement and to integrate the proposed development with the adjacent countryside.
- There are no significant landscape components that would be lost as a result of development. Whilst the built development would inevitably alter the physical appearance of the site, significant opportunities arise to enhance the landscape character by softening the existing development edge, improving the approach into Hinckley from the east and enhancing the existing eastern boundary vegetation adjacent to the golf course.

4.0 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 1: VIEW SOUTH WEST FROM LEICESTER ROAD. Feb 2010



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 2: VIEW SOUTH FROM LEICESTER ROAD. Feb 2010

4.0 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 3: VIEW WEST FROM BRADGATE GARDENS. Feb 2010



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 4: VIEW EAST FROM HINCKLEY GOLF COURSE. Feb 2010

4.0 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 5: VIEW NORTH WEST FROM PARK HOUSE ENTRANCE. Feb 2010

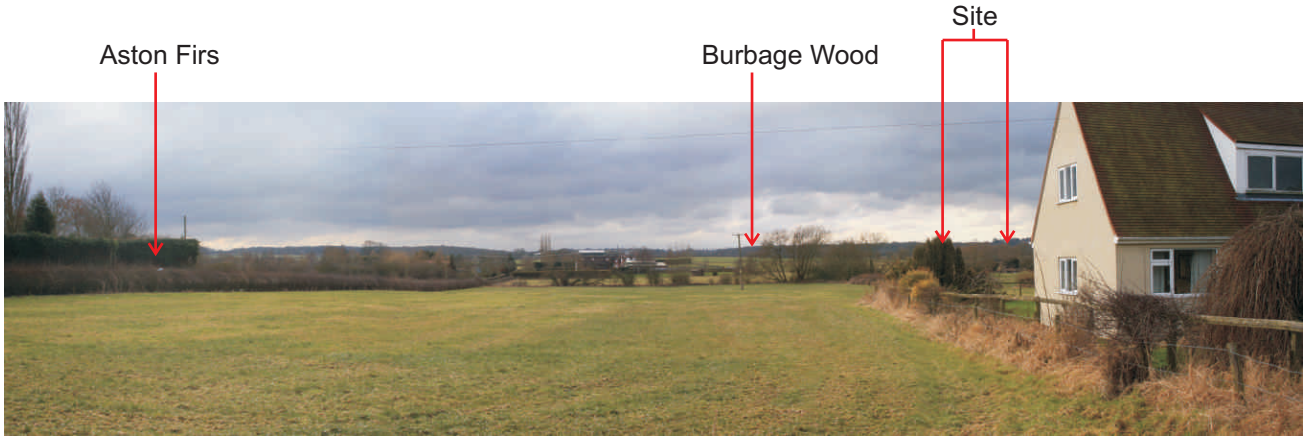


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 6: VIEW SOUTH WEST FROM ELMESTHORPE ESTATE. Feb 2010

4.0 PHOTO VIEWPOINTS



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 7: VIEW SOUTH FROM ELMESTHORPE LANE. Feb 2010

4.1 The viewpoints highlight the following key aspects:

- Existing residential properties within Bradgate Road and Bradgate Gardens overlook the site's western boundary. A restricted number of dwellings on Leicester Road will also have limited views of the northern edge of the development.
- There are no significant views from the north east due to existing mature hedgerow vegetation effectively screening views from surrounding roads and footpaths.
- The broad undulating landscape rises to the east allowing some long distant partial views to the highest point of the site on the western boundary. However where views of the site are possible they are always seen in relation to existing dwellings on the edge of Bradgate Gardens.

4.2 Recommendations:

- Integrating existing properties with the proposed development by providing gateway / frontage landscapes, which will also accommodate footpath/cycle links through the site. Particular attention should be given to improve the gateway to Hinckley from the east.
- Existing tree and hedgerow planting within the site should be retained, and reinforced with additional planting to create an improved rural edge and a softer transition between the built development and surrounding countryside.
- Proposed development in the highest area should be carefully controlled.

5.0 RESPONSE TO LOCAL CONTEXT & CHARACTER

5.1 The landscape & townscape analysis highlighted the diverse character of the existing residential development within Hinckley. The proposed development off Leicester Road will draw on the character and form of the existing residential properties from Bradgate Avenue and surrounding roads such as Butt Lane enhancing the existing settlement edge of Hinckley, improving the assimilation of the development with the surrounding landscape. Design principles used in surrounding developments can be reflected within the proposed development to ensure continuity without copying the style of the existing dwellings.



Bradgate Gardens - new development to the southwestern boundary of the proposed site shows a range of detached dwelling styles.



Hinckley town centre showing a broad range of building ages and styles.



Small garden frontages of the detached dwellings are fenced with decorative metal railings.

5.0 RESPONSE TO LOCAL CONTEXT & CHARACTER

5.2 **Proposals should:**

- Be sensitive to the setting of Hinckley and the wider rural landscape. In particular, the development should help to define the settlement boundary around Hinckley by improving the rural edge to the north east and using woodland planting to integrate the development within the wider rural landscape.

- Assimilate into the landscape and urban form of Hinckley. Creating a gateway landscape into Hinckley from the east.

- Inform the layout of the development by reference to existing hedgerow boundaries and mature trees, and emphasise the existing pedestrian routes linking Hinckley to the countryside and beyond.

- Use of vernacular materials such as red brick and painted render at key gateways and mixture of slate and ceramic tile roofs similar to that of the existing developments within Bradgate Road and Bradgate Gardens as a basis for the selection of materials, building form and features to create an integrated urban form .



Large decorative features on detached and terraced dwellings



Stone detailing around windows on Butt Lane



Brick and timber detailing on large bay windows



Building materials predominately red brick with occasional rendered properties



Mature hedges or brick walls delineating property boundaries.

6.0 VISUAL CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 **Constraints include:**

- Potential views into site from the countryside to the east, although these are limited by contours and vegetation.
- Existing footpaths along the southern boundary should be enhanced and incorporated into the green infrastructure of the development.
- Potential views from existing residential properties to the west and north, screening should be provided where necessary and buildings should be sited to minimise affects on the amenity of the occupiers.
- Existing trees and hedgerows within site should be retained where possible within the development.
- Watercourse to the eastern boundary edge containing wildlife potential.
- Limited vehicular access points into site - access gained from links off Leicester Road.



6.0 CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

6.2 **Opportunities include:**

- Creating gateway / frontage landscapes and streetscapes where existing residential properties front the site to integrate the existing and proposed and improve the gateway landscape to Hinckley.
- The use of local vernacular building materials such as red brick and painted render with slate or ceramic tiled roofs and bay window detailing on key entrance buildings to create a strong relationship between dwellings and linkages.
- Reinforcing the hedgerow boundary with additional tree planting along the western perimeter to improve the rural edge of Hinckley as viewed from Elmesthorpe and Earl Shilton. to increase woodland cover and
- Retaining mature trees and hedgerows as key features within the layout and to strengthen existing hedgerow network.
- Improve the green network with the site and provide additional attractive pedestrian links through the development to the countryside beyond.
- Opening up of existing public footpath on southern boundary through selective thinning of vegetation and improved links to green infrastructure within the development site.



Existing public footpath between site boundary and John Cleveland College could be enhanced and linked to the green infrastructure within the site



Opportunity to improve the gateway to Hinckley from the east.



Potential to improve pedestrian links from Hinckley to surrounding countryside



Existing site boundary vegetation could be enhanced through additional planting to improve the urban edge of Hinckley.

7.0 SUMMARY

7.1 The initial landscape character and visual assessment has shown that the majority of the study area is visually well contained. The broad undulating valley to the east of Hinckley combines with a number of woodland blocks and tree belts to create a robust framework for the town.

7.2 In visual terms the site can accommodate new development without encroaching upon the rural landscape to the east. The only exception to this lies across to the village of Elmesthorpe where longer views of the highest points of the proposed development site from the west are possible, these are however viewed with the backdrop of residential properties of Bradgate Road and Bradgate Gardens towards the skyline of Hinckley.

7.3 The initial assessment demonstrates that the site has the capacity to accommodate development without significant detrimental impact upon the wider landscape and visual resources.