

Land North of A507, West of A10 Buntingford

Landscape Summary Proof of Evidence

of Natasha Jones BA(Hons) BLA CMLI

LPA Planning Application Ref: 3/24/0966/OUT

PINS Ref: 6008238

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Prepared for:
Hallam Land Management

Prepared by:
Stantec

Project Number:
331610261

Appeal against the Refusal of Outline Permission for:

Land North Of A507, West Of A10 Buntingford: Outline planning application for development of up to 600 dwellings (C3), up to 60 units of elderly accommodation (C3), Mixed Use Local Centre (including flexible use E, F and Sui Generis), First School, informal and formal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from the A507 and pedestrian bridges over the A10, with all matters reserved save for access.

Landscape Proof of Evidence of Natasha Jones, Director of Landscape Architecture at Stantec.

LPA Planning Reference: 3/24/0966/OUT

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Prepared on behalf of Hallam Land Management.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 My name is Natasha Jones, and I am a Director of Landscape Architecture at Stantec UK Limited. I have been Director since 2021 and am a leader of the UK Landscape Architecture team. I joined Stantec (formerly known as PBA) in 2013. Prior to that, I was Associate Director at Cooper Partnership Limited.
- 1.1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Arts with Honours degree in Landscape Design and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Post-graduate degree, both from Manchester Metropolitan University. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) since 1998.
- 1.1.3 I have over 27 years' post-chartership professional experience in landscape planning, landscape architecture and environmental matters. I have provided professional advice on townscape, landscape and visual impact assessment and for the strategic design, green infrastructure and landscape strategies of a wide variety of developments throughout the UK. These include small and strategic-scale residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, infrastructure, energy and renewable energy, and recreation proposals for local authorities, public and private companies. I have dealt with sites within and adjacent to National Parks, National Landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Strategic and Local Gaps and other local landscape designations. My professional experience includes the preparation of evidence and acting as an expert witness in relation to landscape matters at public inquiries, Development Consent Order (DCO) examinations, and local plan hearings.
- 1.1.4 I am familiar with the Appeal Site and its surroundings having overseen the production of the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) and landscape strategy associated with the Proposed Development. I most recently visited the Appeal Site on 19th May 2026.
- 1.1.5 I was instructed by Hallam Land Management to fill the role of landscape expert witness (the Appellants) in 2025. All conclusions are my own and based on my own professional opinion and experience.



1.1.6 The evidence that I have prepared and provide for this Inquiry in this Proof of Evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the Landscape Institute, irrespective of by whom I am instructed. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.



2 Summary

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 In my proof, I provide a review of historic maps, tracing Buntingford's growth from an original ribbon settlement along Ermine Street to a clustered settlement pattern. My key points include:

- Early maps show small fields behind settlement and ribbon development along the river and main road.
- Post-war and late 20th Century housing expanded the town to the west, east, and south, altering the settlement pattern to a cluster form. The Proposed Development would be a continuation of the growth of that cluster settlement pattern.
- The role of the A10 road opened in 1987 was for the purpose of diverting traffic out of the congested town centre, rather than acting as a boundary for development.
- I have shown that the alignment of the A10 does not respond to landform or historic landscape pattern, and that its purpose as a development-limiting boundary is a false construct.

2.1.2 I have analysed the relationship between the Appeal Site and Proposed Development and LCA 141 Cherry Green Arable Plateau. My key points are:

- LCA 141 is described as a large-scale, elevated plateau landscape, which is not rare or highly distinctive within the county.
- The part of LCA 141 near to the A507 and A10, within which the Appeal Site is located, is noted to have less of a quiet and remote feel due to the existing urban influences. The proposed built form would be concentrated in the central and eastern parts of the Appeal Site, with the western part proposed as country park open space.
- There is a greater extent of LCA 141 area which would not be subject to the theoretical visibility of the development, than the portion of LCA 141 which would have theoretical visibility.



- The urbanising effect of the Proposed Development upon LCA 141 would be limited and would not fundamentally alter or redefine the key characteristics of LCA 141 or affect the integrity of the distinctive features of LCA 141.

2.1.3 In my proof, I set out the reasonings for the findings of the assessment of landscape effects upon LCA 141 and the landscape character of the site and its immediate surroundings and noted the negative and positive effects that would arise. I also discuss the Rib valley landscape cell, defined by a series of landform spurs that wrap around and contain the valley floor of the River Rib, the associated valley slopes and Buntingford. My key points are:

- The Appeal Site is situated within the Rib valley landscape cell, and the Proposed Development would be contained within it, avoiding far-reaching impacts on the wider rural landscape and landscape character.
- The Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (BCANP) (CD 5.2) emphasises the importance of maintaining the town's valley setting and limiting development on higher ground, with Appendix 1 of the BCANP (CD 5.2) noting that new housing development should be within the valley setting. I consider that the Proposed Development would be within the valley setting as it is within the Rib valley landscape cell.
- Visualisations at Figure NJ5, Appendix A of my proof demonstrate mitigation planting would soften the appearance of new housing, helping to integrate it into the landscape over time. Additionally, the mitigation planting would soften the appearance of existing housing at the north of Buntingford.

2.1.4 In my proof, I describe areas in the Rib valley landscape cell which have the fewest mapped environmental and planning constraints and identified that the least constrained area and thus the greatest opportunity is the valley slopes below the western and northern spurs of landform, including the Appeal Site in LCA 141. Other areas with the least constraints are situated within LCA 142 High Rib Valley and LCA 143 Wyddial Plateau; both of which are identified as being of Moderate condition, whereas LCA 141 is identified as being of Poor condition.



- 2.1.5 In relation to NPPF Paragraph 187(b) (CD 5.16), I consider that the Appeal Site does not warrant a degree of protection at a high level because the Appeal Site does not lie within a National Landscape designation or local landscape designation, nor within any environmental designations.
- 2.1.6 It is my opinion that Proposed Development would be a settlement extension which is in keeping with the cluster pattern of settlement of Buntingford that has evolved. From a townscape perspective, the A10 would be perceived as a 40mph road within the extended settlement area which is crossed at appropriate points for community integration. New built form of the Proposed Development would be situated adjacent to the existing urban area that is within a small part of the northeastern area of LCA 141 and located where there is existing urban influence upon LCA 141. LCA 141 is described as a large-scale character area that is not rare or distinctive. Therefore, I consider the Proposed Development's urbanising effect on LCA 141 to be limited, which would not alter the key characteristics of the LCA.
- 2.1.7 The Proposed Development would be contained within the Rib valley landscape cell which includes the settlement of Buntingford. The Appeal Site is among the least constrained areas for development within the Rib valley landscape cell and there are limited alternative areas for development that are without environmental or planning constraints. I consider that sensitively designed new built form within the Rib valley landscape cell is an appropriate approach to avoid far reaching impacts on the wider rural landscape and landscape character. I also consider that mitigation planting would soften the appearance of new housing, helping to integrate it into the landscape over time.

