



**Land South of Burford  
Road, Minster Lovell**

Proof of Evidence of:

**Charles Mylchreest**

PG DipLA CMLI AIEMA

In respect of:

**Landscape Matters**

On behalf of:

**Catesby Strategic Land**

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**Summary**

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## **Section 1**

### **Summary of Proof of Evidence**

- 1.1 My name is Charles Mylchreest. I have been instructed by the appellant, Catesby Estates Limited, to provide advice, evidence, and expert opinion with regard to the effects, in landscape and visual terms, of the appeal proposals at Minster Lovell. Specifically, my evidence addresses the first Reasons for Refusal (RfR), which purports several landscape-related planning policy conflicts and harms.
- 1.2 My evidence explores the landscape matters embedded in RfR 1 and is structured around the main issues that I have derived from a review of third-party representations, matters raised by Officers as summarised in the Committee Report, the various Proofs of Evidence and my own appeal site appraisals. My evidence attempts to provide a focussed case based upon the draft LSoCG at the point of exchange.
- 1.3 In this section, I summarise my own evidence on the level of landscape and visual harm, and provide my conclusions based upon this. This is based upon the key strands to the Council's case, which I take to be (1) the extent of localised landscape and visual harm arising as a result of the appeal proposals, and (2) the impacts to the identity/setting of Minster Lovell. I address these in summary below.
  1. It is agreed that the appeal site does not form part of a Valued Landscape for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 180 (a) and therefore the proposals are required to 'recognise' the landscape rather than 'protect and enhance' it. This means any residual harm carries proportionately less weight;
  2. The appeal site does not have any statutory status or identified quality in the development plan and is technically unconstrained and undesignated in environmental and landscape terms. It is therefore nowhere near special enough to preclude development in principle;
  3. I find that the proposals have taken account of the prevailing topography, the existing settlement pattern (by echoing settlement pattern to the east), the existing vegetation framework, and the key perceptual sensitivities of the underlying landscape. On this basis, I consider the agreed very localised harm to the site character and its immediate surroundings, to be acceptable;
  4. The appeal site's location benefits from containment to the east (by the built fabric of Minster Lovell), to the west (by detached dwellings and vegetation) and to the north (by vegetation along the appeal site boundary and the northern side of Burford Road), and as such realises acceptable levels of impact to both the CNL and its setting, within which the appeal site lies;
  5. The appeal site comprises parts of two rectilinear arable agricultural field parcels, with a hedgerow running north to south between them and one, which follows round a private dwelling, forming the western boundary. A tree line borders Burford Road which forms the northern site boundary. Some minimal loss will occur to the northern site

boundary and internal hedgerow to facilitate the appeal site and internal access points. The remaining vegetation in the site boundaries will be retained and enhanced;

6. The Landscape Strategy shows how the appeal proposals will provide significant additional landscaping and vegetation, including (illustratively) 225 new native trees, c.0.9km of new native hedgerows, and over 3ha of new grassland. This will bring significant biodiversity benefits and provide attractive areas of POS within the residential layout. The landscaping and POS proposals will provide a high-quality setting to the new housing development and the new settlement edge of Minster Lovell, which will provide a contiguous and consistent, and soft, relationship between the settlement and surrounding countryside;
7. The eastern boundary to the northern part of the appeal site comprises existing residential dwellings within the new Bovis development (and their curtilage) on the edge of Minster Lovell, with the western part of the southern part of the site sitting adjacent to dwellings on Ripley Avenue. Residential form exerts a prominent influence across the appeal site, and I do not agree with the Council's contention that the appeal site is *"an important part of the rural setting of the historic rural village of Minster Lovell (Charterville)"* nor that *"the proposal would involve the loss of an important green open space that has become more important following the building out of the Bovis site"*;
8. I consider above in evidence the different facets of the appeal site which might contribute to the setting of the village and conclude that there is no evidence to suggest it plays a particularly important or prominent role in this regard. There will be some harm through developing on the open countryside on the edge of the (expanding) village, but this is partly mitigated by the form of the proposals, by modern built influences and by the lack of any characteristics of the appeal site which might take it beyond the ordinary;
9. In this respect I consider that the proposals would protect the setting of Minster Lovell as it is experienced from the approaches and surroundings to it. The broad character of the settlement will remain (as a mixture of linear and nucleated settlement, as set out in the West Oxfordshire Design Guide), and the existence of the village as a settlement within a predominantly agricultural landscape will remain. Indeed, the landscape framework within which the built development sits will ensure the proposals respect the juxtaposition of the settlement and its western hinterland, whilst the extensive areas of POS and landscaping will provide an attractive and valuable feature for new and existing residents; and
10. My evidence demonstrates that the appeal proposals would effectively just move the edge of the village westwards into an area of unremarkable agricultural land which is already influenced by the existing settlement edge. There would be a limited level of (inevitable) harm to the landscape character of the appeal site and its immediate context, and to local visual receptors.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- 1.4 The proposed change from open grazing land to residential uses will inevitably (and unavoidably) alter the character of the appeal site and result in change at the local level. Both the LVA and my evidence concur that such change is inevitable and should not preclude development as a matter of principle – especially where there is a pressing need for housing. This is the case for all green field development sites and is an inevitable consequence of provision of new housing beyond settlement boundaries.
- 1.5 The hinterland of Minster Lovell will change, but this change I have shown to be consistent with the current identity of the village, and into an area of landscape at the lower end of the hierarchy as established in the NPPF. The settlement edge will be ‘moved’ c.240m to the west, but the landscaping incorporated within the proposals ensure that the integration with the surrounding landscape will be effective, and that the presence of the village as a settlement within an agricultural landscape will remain.
- 1.6 For the above reasons, my evidence is that there are no landscape-related reasons why the appeal proposals should be refused planning permission.



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