

Nurton Developments Limited

**Land West of Magna Park,
Cross in Hand, Rugby**

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



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landscape statement

Cross in Hand, Rugby

1.0 Introduction:

- 1.1 This Landscape Statement has been prepared by Bea Landscape Design Ltd on behalf of Nurton Developments Ltd (NDL), in support of potential land allocation as part of the Local Plan review for Land West of Magna Park, Cross in Hand, Rugby ('the Site').
- 1.2 The Site Currently consists of undeveloped farmland primarily used for agricultural purposes and lies within the administrative boundary of Rugby Borough Council. The Site offers potential for large scale industrial and logistics development, particularly due to its location approximately 250m west of Magna Park.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to promote the Site allocation and consider the potential impact of the future use and development will have on the landscape, both in terms of the individual landscape elements but also the visual aspects of the proposals.
- 1.4 At this stage of the planning process a full LVIA has not been undertaken and this report is only to provide a baseline examination of the site and try to identify potential landscape and visual opportunities and constraints.

2.0 Site Context:

- 2.1 The Site is located to the west of Lutterworth, the A5 and south west of the recently expanded Magna Park, marketed as Europe's Premier Logistics Park .

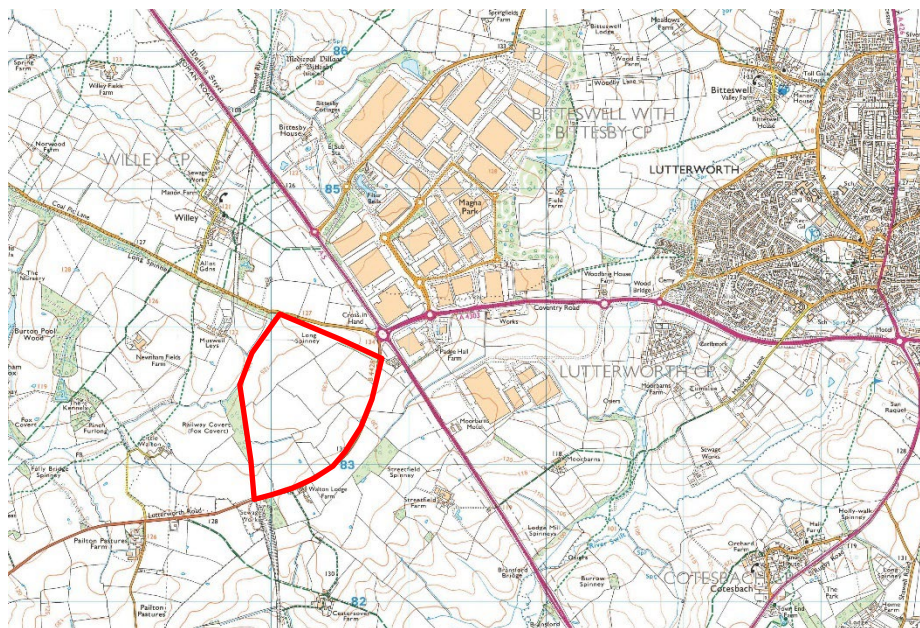


Figure 1. Location Plan



Figure 2. Aerial

3.0 Site Description:

3.1 The Site is 92 Hectares in size and located at a height of 131m AOD, on the boundary of Lutterworth Road on its southern boundary, with a gradual fall to the north west corner of the Site at 118 AOD. See Figure 3



Figure 3. Topography

- 3.2 The Site is currently part of an agricultural holding and is made up of a number of fields some under arable production and others, those to the west, used as pasture. See Figure 2

Landscape Assessment

4.0 Landscape Baseline

Tree Survey

- 4.1 A pre-development tree survey has been carried out by Bea Landscape Design Ltd, which confirms that the trees within the site are not protected by any Tree Preservation Order and that they are not within a Conservation Area.
- 4.2 The majority of the trees surveyed within the boundary of the site are located on the boundaries of the fields and within the hedgerows. To the boundaries of the Site and just outside are a number of established and mature woodlands. The majority of the individual trees are large mature ash trees, which have in the majority of cases reached maturity and are starting to decline.
- 4.3 The tree survey identifies 3 Woodlands, 1 Group and 1 Tree as A Grade High Quality, 2 Groups and 28 Trees as Category B Moderate Quality, 2 Groups and 18 Trees of C Category Low quality and 1 Group and 20 Trees that are U Category, unsuitable for retention.
- 4.4 The hedges surveyed within the survey area are also of mixed ages, but there are several sections of hedgerows which have the characteristics of being species rich and associated with ditches. Some of these older hedgerows do show signs of having been laid but in recent years they have all been maintained by mechanical means. The result of this is that some of the older hedgerows are now quite gappy at the base.

Designations

- 4.5 The Site is not located within a World Heritage Site, National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of Great Landscape Value or a Registered Park or Garden.
- 4.6 The only designation associated with the Site is that it is located, in part, within the Princethorpe Biodiversity Opportunity Expansion Area.

Green Belt

- 4.7 The Site is located just to the east of Coventry/ Borough of Rugby Green Belt and runs adjacent to its western boundary.

Registered Parks and Gardens

- 4.8 Newnham Paddox (Grade II) Registered Park and Garden is located approximately 1km to the west of the site. The woodland blocks along the eastern boundary of the garden block most of the views towards the site.

Scheduled Monuments

- 4.9 There are no Scheduled Monuments or other above ground Heritage Assets within the Site

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 4.10 There are no PRoW within the Site with the closest being Footpath 228 R296/3#1 which is located to the southern side of Lutterworth Road, which forms the southern boundary of the Site. Footpath 228 R60/1 is located some 385m to the north west of the Site. See Figure 1.

Vegetation and Land Use

- 4.11 The Site is made up of a number of individual fields currently all used as part of an agricultural holding. Some of the fields are currently used for cereal production while others are set out as pasture.
- 4.12 The fields are divided by hedgerows and wire fencing. The hedgerows are interspersed with a number of mature and overmature trees, mainly Ash and which are suffering from fungal infection and are in decline. The hedgerows vary in quality and age but all have been mechanically managed for a number of years.
- 4.13 Along the southern boundary adjacent to Lutterworth Road are a number of high quality oak trees. The Site also benefits from existing woodlands on its north-eastern and western edges. To the north-east there is a separated section of the historic Long Spinney, a tree belt associated with the A5. To the west is a triangular wood, Railway Covert, which is just outside of the Site and forms part of the western boundary. To the south of the Site and Lutterworth Road are two further woodlands Streetfield Spinney and an unnamed woodland, associated with the dismantled railway line.

Hydrology

- 4.14 There are no rivers or streams within the Site, but a number of the hedgerows are associated with deep drainage ditches that fall to the north and drain the land into a small brook that runs adjacent to the northern boundary and which in turn feed into Smite Brook to the west.
- 4.15 There are a number of small dew ponds within the site.

5.0 **Landscape Character:**

National Landscape Character

5.1 At the national level, the Site and the whole of the study area is located within the 94 Leicestershire Vales National Character Area (NCA). The NCA is described as:

'Leicestershire Vales National Character Area (NCA) shares many characteristics with the neighbouring Northamptonshire Vales NCA. The Leicestershire Vales extend between the town of Hinckley in the west to Leicester in the northeast and southwards towards Market Harborough and Lutterworth. This is a large, relatively open, uniform landscape composed of low-lying clay vales interrupted by a range of varied river valleys'.

5.2 Due to the extent and coverage of the above landscape character areas their relevance to the specific proposed Site is limited.

County Landscape Character

5.3 Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines Dunsmore, High Cross Plateau, Mease Lowlands (1993) defines the landscape character of part of Warwickshire. The site falls within the High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau Landscape Character Area (LCA).

5.4 This LCA is described as: *This is a remote rural landscape lying along the north-eastern boundary of the county between Rugby and Hinckley. For the most part the Open plateau is a large-scale rolling landscape characterised by wide views and a strong impression of 'emptiness' and space.*

5.5 This character area also covers a large area, but unlike the NCA it does form the basis of the Rugby local character assessment and so does have relevance to the Site.

District Landscape Character

Harborough

5.6 Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment (2007) defines the landscape character of Harborough. The site is adjacent to the Lutterworth Lowlands LCA.

5.7 This LCA is described as: *The Lutterworth Lowlands is an area of predominantly open, gently rolling pasture. Regular, medium sized fields are divided by mature hedgerows that appear to be declining in extent in places. There is little woodland of any significant size within the character area and where it does feature, it appears to be concentrated around the parkland estates towards the north of the area. The area is characterised by open views across the flatter expanses of the area. Lutterworth, in the south of the area, is the area's main town with the expanding villages of Fleckney and Kibworth towards the north east of the area.*

Rugby

5.8 Landscape Assessment of the Borough of Rugby Sensitivity and Condition Study (2006) locates the Site within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau. This report was undertaken to: ... *examine the character of the landscape around the town, its sensitivity to change, the condition of the countryside abutting Rugby's urban fringe and beyond, and to demonstrate how the outcomes could be used as a decision tool in the development planning process.* This report had the following findings about the High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau LCT:

5.9 *Sensitivity – Fragility: Whilst the Open Plateau is a planned landscape, the cultural sensitivity varies with the central plateau summit having a more consistent pattern than the rest.*

Ecological fragility is low across the whole LCT.

Sensitivity – Visibility: The rolling topography gives rise to a moderate sensitivity, but on the plateau summit the more gently rolling landform, together with the presence of very distinctive shelterbelts, results in reduced visibility. The area between Harborough Magna, and Cosford, north of Newbold on Avon, has a high visual sensitivity due to lack of tree cover.

5.10 The above report identifies that the Site is located within an area of Moderate Fragility and Sensitivity with the Visibility being identified as being Low.

5.11 It should be noted that the above landscape character assessments were all published before the full implementation of the approved Magna Park, a large logistics centre, some 250m to the east of the Site.

5.12 The development of the above logistics park has a significant effect on the identified local landscape characters both due to the physical size of the development but also the visual impact that it has on its immediate location but also the surrounding landscape character areas.

6.0 Visual Assessment

6.1 At this stage of the project the visual assessment is limited to the identification of the extent that the Site may be visible within the surrounding landscape.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

6.2 The purpose of identifying the ZTV is to define the extent or zone within which the proposed development may be visible. The ZTV is the preferred term as it indicates those locations from which the proposed development may appear as a component of the view.

6.3 The ZTV does not guarantee that a development will definitely be, or not be, visible from any given location, nor is it representative of the sensitivity to change, the magnitude of change or the significance of impact at any receptor location.

- 6.4 The ZTV is based on the site layout plan produced by UMC Architects 22411-UMC-SI-DR-A-0606 using a range of heights of the proposed units from 18m, for the smaller units to 24m for the larger units.
- 6.5 As the visual impact of potential filtered views will decrease with distance from the site, these areas are faded beyond 2km from the centre of the site. The centre of the site is marked with a single site marker, which does not relate directly to the placements of individual reference points, which are shown on separate drawings. Radius lines are shown from the site marker. The analysis is produced over black and white base mapping (which is better for precisely identifying shaded areas of predicted visibility).
- 6.6 This ZTV shows all potential unobstructed views shaded according to what percentage of the reference point are predicted as visible. This is produced over a black and white base map to improve legibility.

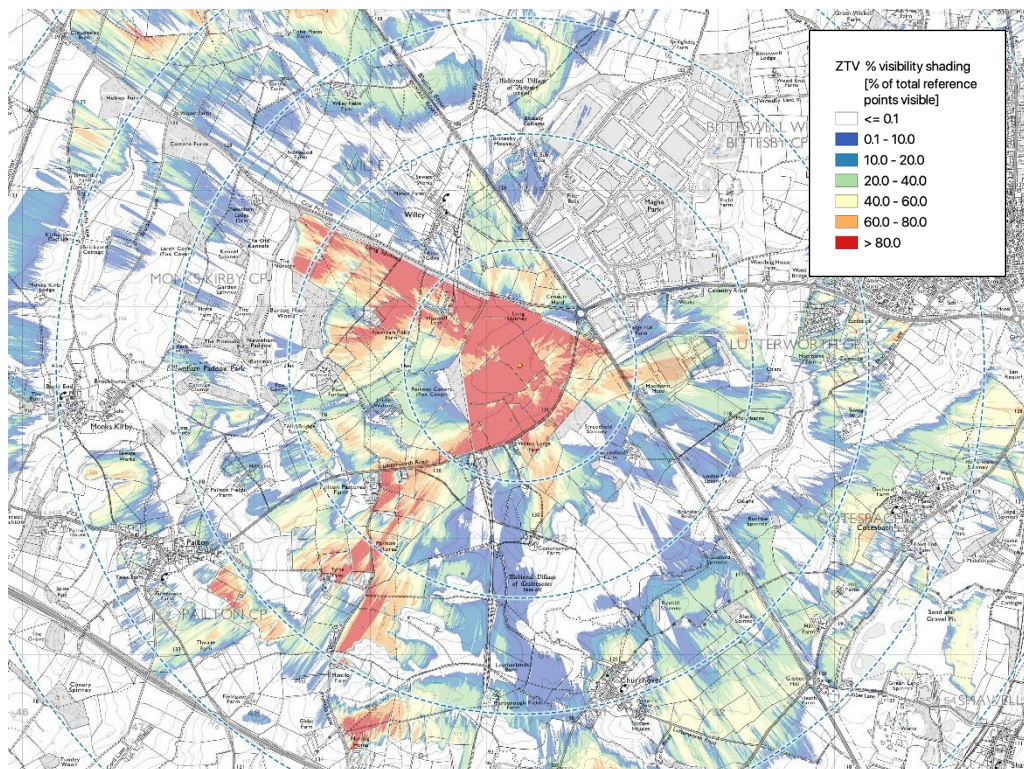


Figure 4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 6.7 The ZTV shows that the potential main views (the red areas) of the proposed development are to the west and south, with the existing woodland blocks filtering these views and only allowing limited views of the development.
- 6.8 To the north east the views are restricted by the existing Magna Park, which has been extended further south and north but for which digital data is not yet available and thus would restrict views further.
- 6.9 To the north the line of the Long Spinney clearly shows how views are restricted in this direction.

7.0 Development Proposals

7.1 The masterplan conceives a multi-unit industrial and logistics development of just under 300,000 sq m (3.2 million sq ft) in an attractive landscaped setting.

7.2 The masterplan is indicative. Its purpose is to show how development proposals could respond to and respect the inherent characteristics of the site and the requirements for mitigating infrastructure.

Landscape Strategy:

7.3 The landscape strategy has been developed in consultation with architects, ecologists, engineers and hydrologists to develop a scheme that can satisfy the needs of the development but within an exemplar landscape setting.

7.4 The landscape strategy incorporates a number of landscape led design principles. These help to provide a balanced scheme that not only satisfies employment and commercial requirements but also provides social and environmental benefits.

7.5 These principles are (in no particular order of significance or importance):

- Retain and enhance where feasible existing landscape features.
- Provide a landscape infrastructure that is capable of being implemented in the initial phase of the development but allows for phased development of the commercial aspects.
- Provide biodiversity net gain on Site as part of a wider strategy to achieve minimum of 10%.
- Replace landscape features that are appropriate to the local character of the area.
- Provide a Green and Blue infrastructure network that allows for the creation of a multi-functional spaces including public and private spaces for general recreation and wellbeing.
- Include and develop a sustainable drainage strategy that allows for water neutrality and introduces areas of open water and other SUDS features as part of the Green and Blue infrastructure network.
- Provide a Green and Blue infrastructure network that is resilient to climate change and minimize's the Sites impact with respect to air, soil, light, noise and water.
- Provide a Green and Blue landscape infrastructure that is able to be utilized by all abilities, during all seasons by the use of both hard and soft landscaping.
- Provide a Green and Blue landscape network that connects existing landscape features and habitats outside of the Site.
- Create linkages with the wider landscape including the provision of new footpaths and links to existing PRoW's.
- Create a landscape that minimizes adverse effects on the visual amenity of identified receptors.

7.6 Using the above principles the landscape strategy plan Bea 2393-03-P01, has been developed and refined to incorporate all of the above principles but also more specifically.

- 7.9 The woodland to the west just outside of the site, known as Railway Covert is identified as ecosite 18/48x. This is to be retained and linked by a proposed new woodland along the northern boundary to the above ecosite on the north eastern boundary. Not only will this provide a substantial ecological corridor and network between the above ecosites but will also provide a substantial visual buffer to the northern boundary of the site
- 7.10 Railway Covert forms a good visual and ecological buffer the north western part of the site and the landscape strategy proposes a new woodland that will provide a continuation of this habitat all the way along the western boundary and link to the retained hedgerow along the northern side of Lutterworth Road.
- 7.11 The new access proposed off Lutterworth Road is designed to allow for the creation of a gateway feature into the Site. The creation of a landscaped spine road provides links to the different development plots as well as the Green and Blue network. This spine road also provides and allows access to new recreational areas and facilities including new cycle and footpath routes
- 7.12 The above routes not only provide access around the site but also internally. To the north and south this network of routes is linked into the wider PRow footpath network. These routes utilize the retained species rich hedgerows and wet ditches which themselves are enhanced by the development of the drainage strategy by the creation of new ponds and swales.
- 7.13 New native hedgerows are also proposed between plots and associated with new scrub planting provides for new habitat creation and internal separation of developments.
- 7.14 As part of the earthworks and cut and fill strategy the existing topsoil is to be retained on site and used within the on-site landscaping areas. Where there is excess soil this is to be used to create mounds around the site and in particular to the boundary of the Site. When combined with the proposed woodland planting this not only maximizes the screening of the proposals from day one and in winter but will also provide ecological and topographical interest.
- 7.15 This mounding, which ranges from ground level to 8m high, is to take the form of gentle slopes of no greater than 1 in 3 slopes so that maintenance and management is not restricted and that they take on a more natural appearance.

Indicative planting palette

7.15 The palette of indicative species takes into consideration the native species present in the vicinity of the site. Planting stock used in any detailed landscape proposals should be native and, wherever feasible, locally sourced. Proposed trees would be sized appropriate to their location. In the more formal areas of the proposed development, non-native trees and shrubs more appropriate to their sitting would be used.

7.16 Tree, shrub and hedgerow species to be used in the strategic tree and shrub planting areas in the landscape design should include the following species, reflecting locally distinctive vegetation in the landscape:

- Pedunculate Oak, Silver Birch, Downy Birch and Aspen, Field Maple, Hornbeam, Rowan, Whitebeam, Wild Cherry and Apple.
- Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Elder, Dogwood, Dog Rose and Guelder Rose.



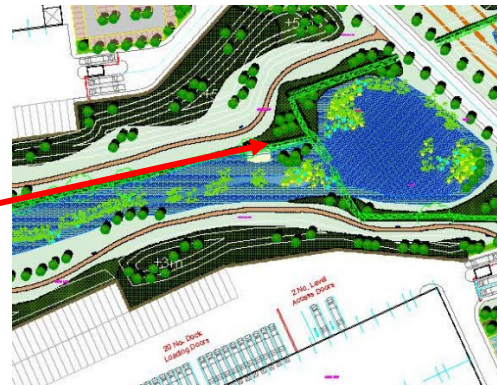
Proposed mounding with woodland planting



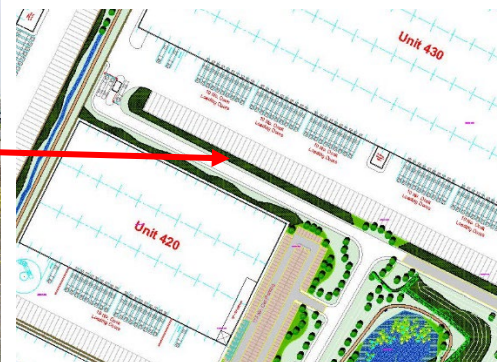
Blue Green infrastructure with plots set within the landscape and by using suitable materials allows access by all abilities throughout the year.



Blue Green infrastructure including balancing ponds, mounding and woodland planting.



Native hedgerow planting associated with native scrub and tree planting providing biodiversity and potential habitat creation as well as separation of on-site developments.



Native hedgerows and ornamental planting to service yards and car parking areas.



Creation of new footpath network set within Green Blue infrastructure providing formal and informal recreation and wellbeing spaces.



Landscape features set within the Green Blue infrastructure to provide formal and informal recreation along with a sense of place.



Ornamental planting used at key point locations to provide wayfinding and all year colour and interest.

8.0 Summary

8.1 With regards to the landscape elements of the assessment the following are identified:

- The Site is not located within any designated Landscape.
- The Site is not located within the Green Belt. (This is not a landscape designation)
- The Site is under agricultural production and existing landscape features are minimal.
- There are minimal hydrological features on Site.
- There are no Public Rights of Way within the Site.
- The Local Landscape Character Type is High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau.
- The Site is identified as having Moderate Fragility and Sensitivity.
- The Site is identified as having Low Visibility.
- The Site is located adjacent to Magna Park, Europe's premiere logistics park.

8.2 With regards to the Visual assessment the following key points are identified.

- Proposed mounding is introduced to screen and contain the development from day one and in winter.
- Woodland planting is introduced to replace sections that have been lost but also link up existing eco sites outside and inside of the Site.
- The mounding is planted up with proposed native woodland to further enhance the screening of the proposals.
- Native scrub, hedgerows and wildflower planting will help to create an environment that both integrates the development into the surrounding landscape but also increase biodiversity.

8.0 Summary

8.1 With regards to the landscape elements of the assessment the following are identified:

- 8.2
- The Site is not located within any designated Landscape.
 - The Site is not located within the Green Belt. (This is not a landscape designation)
 - The Site is under agricultural production and existing landscape and ecological features are minimal.
 - There are minimal hydrological features on Site.
 - There are no Public Rights of Way within the Site.
 - The Local Landscape Character Type is High Cross Plateau, Open Plateau.
 - The Site is identified as having Moderate Fragility and Sensitivity.
 - The Site is identified as having Low Visibility.
 - The Site is located adjacent to Magna Park, Europe's premiere logistics park.

8.3 With regards to the Visual assessment the following key points are identified.

- 8.4
- Proposed mounding is introduced to the north west and south west areas of the Site to help screen the proposals as identified in the ZTV.
 - Woodland planting is introduced to replace historic sections that have been lost but also link up existing eco sites outside and inside of the Site.
 - The mounding is planted up with proposed native woodland to further enhance the screening of the proposals.
 - Native scrub, hedgerows and wildflower planting will help to create an environment that both integrates the development into the surrounding landscape but also increases biodiversity.

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