

# Landscape and Visual Matters

## Summary Proof of Evidence

### Gartree 2

On behalf of the Ministry of Justice

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# 1. Appeal proposals and landscape context

- 1.1. The appeal site is closely associated with HMP Gartree, being located adjacent to the existing prison to the north (including 3–4 storey houseblocks and security fencing). It is defined to the south and east by field boundaries, to the west by Welland Road and is set back from the residential area of Gartree by existing vegetation and agricultural field enclosures. This area of the appeal site broadly slopes from its eastern and western extents to a drainage ditch through the centre, along which there is mature tree cover. There is an area of remnant hardstanding across this part of the appeal site associated with its former use as part of RAF Market Harborough.
- 1.2. In terms of the 'western area' of the appeal site, this part of the site comprises two grassland paddocks defined by mature hedgerows and several trees. This area will be subject to selective lowland meadow seeding across the retained woodland, hedgerow and grassland as part of the wider biodiversity net gain proposals for the scheme.
- 1.3. In relation to the 'northern area', this area of land between the western boundary of HMP Gartree and the rear of properties along Welland Avenue is also proposed for selective lowland meadow seeding, as well as new woodland planting and serves as an offset between the existing residential properties and the proposed new prison development area further east.
- 1.4. Insofar as public access is concerned, public footpath A22 passes through the appeal site, from a point along the northern boundary of the 'western area', passing south–east across Welland Road, and along the south–western boundary of the new prison development area for approximately 145 metres.
- 1.5. To the north of the main appeal site, existing open space off Welland Avenue is proposed for community use.
- 1.6. Beyond the appeal site, the wider landscape forms part of the Welland valley; the landform broadly sloping south towards the River Welland from a ridgeline that extends generally in an east–west orientation north of the appeal site. A local high point along the ridgeline just south of Foxton (reaching ca. +133m AOD (above ordnance datum) along Foxton Road) serves to effectively contain the falling land of the appeal site and its immediate context from the wider landscape to the north and west.
- 1.7. To the south, Mill Hill (lying at ca. +121m AOD) forms a small outlier to the main ridgeline and provides some enclosure of the appeal site from the landscape to the south at a local level. South of Mill Hill, the settlement of Lubenham occupies lower land closer to the river corridor. To the east, the appeal site's eastern extent is generally contiguous with a topographical plateau that extends broadly from Gartree to Leicester Lane. The emerging north–eastern edge of Market Harborough and the Airfield Business Park are perceivable to a greater or lesser extent across the plateau.
- 1.8. Land use across the local context is generally agricultural, with a mix of grazing and arable field enclosures of varying scales; these being generally smaller scale grazing to the north of Lubenham and larger scale arable across the former airfield landscape between Gartree and Market Harborough. Vegetation patterns are generally reflective, with more frequent, mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees associated with smaller field enclosures and less

frequent vegetation where the field pattern has been interrupted historically by the former airfield.

## 2. Effects on landscape character and visual amenity

- 2.1. In summary, with respect to impacts on physical landscape resources, the physical landscape impacts of the appeal proposals are considered to be direct and will be limited to the extent of the appeal site only. There will be no additional direct impacts on the wider landscape context.
- 2.2. The setting of the appeal site within an area characterised by an existing prison, comprising large-scale houseblocks similar to that proposed, has an influence on the landscape's capacity to accommodate this type of development.
- 2.3. In relation to landscape effects therefore, there will be a moderate adverse effect in the short term on the local landscape. In the longer term, this will reduce to a minor to moderate adverse effect.
- 2.4. In relation to impacts on visual amenity, notwithstanding the greater impacts on visual receptors in close proximity to the appeal proposals, the assessment of visual effects at Year 15 as set out in the LVIA serves to illustrate the likely visual effects from receptors at middle distances range between neutral to minor to moderate adverse, with the exception of Viewpoints 9 and 8, where receptors are either in closer proximity to the main built form of the appeal proposals or at an elevation looking down into them respectively. For receptors at distance, (Viewpoints 13 and 16) effects are either nil or neutral.
- 2.5. In summary, notwithstanding a small number of moderate to major adverse visual effects in the longer term, these are limited when taken in the round.
- 2.6. Similarly, whilst the appeal proposals will interrupt the skyline from some locations in close proximity, these impacts are apparent at a localised level only. In addition, there are no identified 'protected' or 'important' views or skylines across the landscape in this location.
- 2.7. In relation to potential lighting impacts, overall, notwithstanding the scale of lighting that is required for a modern prison environment, this would fit within the context of the existing wider prisons 'complex'. The lighting specification includes the use of down-lit LED lamps to reduce light spill as far as possible. Added to this is the inherent mitigation of the appeal proposal, including existing and proposed green infrastructure which have been shown to effectively reduce the impact of lighting. As such I do not consider lighting effects to be significant.
- 2.8. Overall, whilst the appeal proposals comprise areas of large scale built form, which in any landscape will result in higher magnitudes of impact; there is a robust scheme of mitigation embedded in the design. This will go a considerable way to minimising these impacts. Environmental mitigation and enhancement across the wider appeal site adds further to the package of mitigation in respect of landscape character and views/visual amenity and these measures complement strategies and guidelines relevant to the area.

- 2.9. Together, these are adequate to address the potential landscape and visual impacts of the new prison development. Notwithstanding the loss of some mature vegetation and the change from an area of agricultural land use and implementation of new prison built form, in the context of the existing HMP Gartree developed area, these measures are the reason why I consider the appeal proposals strike an appropriate balance between impact and mitigation.

### **3. Area of Separation (AoS)**

- 3.1. In relation to physical separation, the introduction of the appeal proposals would see ca. 6.7 ha of the total 209 ha Area of Separation become new prison built form. This equates to 3.2% of the total AoS and is therefore in physical terms a minor incursion.
- 3.2. In relation to visual separation, my evidence demonstrates that from the majority of locations within the AoS and in views looking into and across it, there are very limited instances where both Gartree and Lubenham can be perceived together. At the very limited locations where this is possible to the south-east of the AoS, the reduction in visual separation will be very small.
- 3.3. In terms of locations across the AoS where both Gartree and the existing/emerging edge of Market Harborough are visible, this is possible from the local public right of way network. Overall, whilst the appeal proposals will extend new development across the landscape to some extent in views between the two settlements, from the majority of locations this will be limited by the presence of existing and proposed vegetation. My analysis does not identify any locations where the appeal proposals would result in the visual 'coalescence' of the two settlements. Furthermore, even with the appeal proposals in place, from the public routes and locations identified, open views across the agricultural landscape in this location will remain.
- 3.4. The proposed landscape mitigation will be effective in minimising the potential introduction of built development into the landscape, thereby helping to protect landscape character and minimising the visibility of the appeal proposals. This inherent mitigation will be successful in ensuring that the 'open character' of the AoS, outside of the new prison site is maintained.
- 3.5. Overall, I consider that in landscape and visual terms, notwithstanding that the appeal proposals will impede a small area of the AoS along its north-western edge, the appeal site does not perform a significant role in respect of any of the AoS functions identified. In addition, the appeal proposals are likely to result in a limited impact on these functions.

### **4. Response to policy**

- 4.1. With respect to Policies GD3 and GD5 of the Harborough District Local Plan and Policies LNPO1 and LNPI6 of the Lubenham Neighbourhood Plan, noting the residual landscape and visual effects which will occur for this scale of development in any case, the appeal proposals include mitigation inherent in its design. Consequently, impacts are minimised.

## 5. Overall conclusion

- 5.1. In respect of the appeal proposals, notwithstanding the loss of some mature vegetation and the change from an area of agricultural land use and the implementation of new prison built form, in the context of the existing HMP Gartree and the substantial mitigation proposals and the consequent limited influence that the appeal proposals will have in terms of the Lubenham Area of Separation, I consider they strike an appropriate balance between impact and mitigation and that landscape and visual effects are overall, not significant.





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