

Landscape and Visual

Note on the feasibility of extending development beyond the red line at Ensleigh

We conclude that the square playing field to the immediate boundary of the red line site, to the north, is sufficiently contained by mature trees and well related to the remaining site to have significant potential in landscape and visual terms to accommodate future development. This area/field is outside the AONB and Green Belt and shielded from it and from city approach views. Adverse effects on the setting of the AONB, the amenities of the Green Belt, on Beckford's Tower and on the OUV's of the Bath WHS could be avoided in this part of the area with further strengthening of the existing mature tree belts on field edges.

To the north and west of this area the landscape is more open and in its current state does have enough containment to accommodate development without it having significant adverse effects on the City approach on Lansdown Road and OUV's, including specifically, the impression of Bath contained within a bowl. THE OUV issue here relates to 'making sure the city remains concealed from the wider countryside'.

These fields, if developed would appear as fringe expansion into the countryside and are highly likely to, in our view, be contrary to the following Planning Policies:

BH.1 Impact of development on World Heritage Site of Bath or its setting
(Now to be B4)
SR.1A Protection of playing fields and recreational open space
BH.16 Village Buffers
GB.2 Visual amenities of the Green Belt
NE.2 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BH.2 Listed buildings and their settings

Viewpoints potentially affected by an expansion of development further to the west include sequential views from the Lansdown Road approach to the city, views from the Lansdown Battlefield, Views from the A46 Approach to the city. The key OUV issue with these views is the visible expansion of Bath outside its bowl into an area that is more open and exposed to adjoining nationally valued countryside than the current red line site and the square playing field area, mentioned above. At present, much of the land north of the Ensleigh Site currently contributes an open foreground setting to Beckford's Tower in some key City approach views. New buildings in this location would, in our view, detract on this positive approach sequence.

Potential for Mitigation

Whether issues such as the OUV's of the WHS site could be mitigated in the long term, through the planting of advanced mixed shelterbelts, is worth exploring further. But it would take a long time for new shelterbelts to become effective alongside two storey housing and there would be some loss of openness that contributes positively in strategic city approach views, on an historic route to the city. There is also a public footpath route running through the open area to the north of the Ensleigh Site and walkers will be sensitive, near view, receptors within the context on the Cotswolds AONB.