

Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal

**For Residential Development of 500 -700 Houses
(HSG 20)**

**Cammo Residents Association
June 2013**



LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes the existing environment and provides an overview of the predicted impact of any future residential development on the proposed HSG 20 site, in terms of its effect on both views (i.e. visual impact) and the landscape.
- 1.2 The approach to this overview has been to consider the impacts arising from a future planned residential development on the physical structure and aesthetic character of the landscape and the impacts on the visual amenity of those experiencing views of the site.
- 1.3 The methodology comprised an initial desk top study of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and planning documents followed by a site survey in **May 2013**.
- 1.4 The overview has been undertaken in line with guidance contained in **Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** published by the **Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment** in association with **The Landscape Institute**.
- 1.5 In preparing this Landscape Overview, reference has been made to the local planning policy included in the **Edinburgh Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan, March 2013**.

2.0 Site Location

- 2.1 The proposed site is located on the north western edge of the City of Edinburgh. The broadly triangular shaped site is defined by the busy arterial route, Maybury Road (A902) to the east, an enclave of low density residential housing to the north and the western boundary partly abuts the parkland and wooded grounds of the Cammo Estate. Further to the north and east lies the suburbs of Cramond and East Craigs and the context to the south and south west comprises rolling agricultural land with the Pentland Hills and Corstorphine Hill providing attractive backdrops.

3.0 Landscape Policy Context

- 3.1 The subject lands are located within Green Belt land, are designated as Prime Agricultural Land

and lie outwith the settlement boundary of the City of Edinburgh. In addition, the Cammo Estate which partly abuts the western edge to the site is designated as a Country Park and is listed on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland. As such, the Cammo Estate Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) is regarded as worthy of protection through National Planning Guidance (NPPG18 Planning and the Historic Environment 1999) and the development plan. The northern part of the Cammo Estate is also designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Given the local and national status of the Cammo Estate, the opportunities it provides for recreation and its biodiversity and conservation importance, Cammo Estate and its extended parkland has a low capacity for change and **its setting has a high sensitivity** to change.

- 3.2 Furthermore, the Cammo Estate and Turnhouse Golf Course which wraps around the western, southern and eastern boundaries to the GDL are designated as an Area of Outstanding Landscape Quality (AOLQ). The eastern boundary extends along the Bughtlin Burn and abuts the western and southern boundaries to the proposed site.
- 3.3 In policy terms, it is therefore assessed that any future planned residential-led development on the proposed site would not be favourable. It is acknowledged that the proposed site itself is not subject to any of the landscape designations above. However, the subject lands are designated as Green Belt and Prime Agricultural Land and the well-utilised agricultural fields comprising the site are integral to the setting of the Cammo Estate GDL and the AOLQ, particularly when viewed from the western urban edge. Indeed, the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan 2006, **Policy E8** states: *"When determining applications for planning permission for development within these areas, a major consideration will be the impact of proposed development on those landscape features which contribute to the quality of the landscape. Development will not be permitted where it would adversely affect the special scenic qualities and integrity of the Area of Great Landscape Value or Areas of Outstanding Landscape Quality. These landscape features include:*
- *the patterns of woodland, fields, hedgerows and trees;*
 - *the special qualities of rivers and lochs; and*
 - *Skylines and hill features, including prominent views."*
- 3.4 It is considered that development of the site would lead to a breach of the local skyline created by the woodland areas across the GDL and the River Almond corridor to the north and Maudsley Hill to the south.
- 3.5 In addition, any future development would impact on the role of the Green Belt and the overall

status and integrity of the AOLQ. In this regard, it is considered that the landscape fabric would be eroded and the open and semi-rural character and setting to the Cammo Estate would be lost.

4.0 Landscape Character

- 4.1 The immediate context to the site has an attractive semi-rural parkland setting framed by policy woodland belts which merge with the wooded corridor of the River Avon as it winds its way through the conservation area of Cramond to the north. To the south west, Maudsley Hill and Turnhouse Golf Course add to the parkland setting and to the immediate east lies the suburbs of East Craigs. A dense and mature woodland belt provides a green buffer between the Maybury Road and the urban area of East Craigs. Collectively, these well-established parkland and woodland features frame the setting to the western fringes of Edinburgh and add to the area's character and qualities.
- 4.2 The 2 agricultural fields comprising the subject lands also significantly add to the character and setting of this area and indeed, to the setting of the Cammo Estate GDL. Due to the lack of field boundary vegetation along the eastern boundary to the site, and adjacent to the Maybury Road, the subject lands have an open character allowing inter-visibility with the wider setting.
- 4.3 This setting is clearly evident on the approach road towards the Barnton junction (Viewpoint 2, Figure 1) where the existing settlement is seen to 'fit' into the existing landscape framework with long established mature tree cover providing an effective and attractive backdrop.
- 4.4 The subject lands rise from the northern boundary towards the south and the local ridgeline of Maudsley Hill. Therefore, new built forms will potentially break not only the existing skyline of the urban edge of Cammo but also the skyline created by the mature tree canopy when viewed from the south. Viewpoint 1, Figure 1 illustrates the local ridgeline to the south of the site.
- 4.5 It is considered that any future planned development on the subject lands will erode this intrinsic character and qualities of the immediate setting and there will be an impact to the local landscape character where the open character and inter-visibility towards the sea to the north and views to the west towards Cammo tower and the Cammo Estate, will be lost.

5.0 Visibility

- 5.1 In assessing the visual impact of future development on the landscape, full consideration has been given to all viewpoints, their location and distance from the site, the quality of each view and, the impact that any future housing development will have on its setting. A selection of photographic viewpoints is illustrated in **Figure 1**. The viewpoints represent important views on the approach to and from the north western edge of Edinburgh. The location of these viewpoints is presented in **Figure 2**.
- 5.2 It is acknowledged that the policy woodland belts, groups and single specimen mature trees, the wooded banks of the River Almond as well as the well vegetated grounds of the existing settlement form within the immediate context, contribute to the intimate character of the wider context to the proposed site and combine with the general topography to create a relatively tight visual envelope with opportunities for only local views.
- 5.3 Due to the lack of vegetation along the eastern boundary to the site, there is an almost continuous length of visibility across the site from the northern section of the Maybury Road, albeit filtered in a few small sections by the occasional field boundary tree. The dense woodland belt creates an enclosed nature to the East Craigs suburbs on the eastern side of the Maybury Road. This mature woodland belt further emphasises the openness created by the subject lands where views are channelled away from the road corridor and drawn towards the Cammo water tower on the fringes of the Cammo Estate and in close proximity to the proposed site. This is illustrated in Viewpoint 1.
- 5.4 This vertical element provides an important historic reference within the local and wider landscape. It is considered that safeguarding views towards this focal feature is paramount to the character of this urban fringe setting and gateway location into the western edge of the City. In addition, panoramic views are available out of the Cammo Estate towards Corstorphine Hill further to the east. New development will contain the majority of these views for receptors visiting the Country Park and GDL.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The immediate context to the south and west comprises an historic landscape of high quality which significantly contributes to the recreational and nature conservation value within the area. This is reflected in the landscape designations and policies that apply to this area.
- 6.2 Whilst it is acknowledged that the site itself is not subject to any landscape designations, the

subject lands are within Green Belt and are classed as Prime Agricultural Land. In addition, the subject lands are seen as a highly important area of green space which provides the setting to the historic Cammo Estate and to the western suburbs of Edinburgh. In this regard, it is considered that future development will prejudice the parkland setting to the Cammo Estate and the status and visual amenity of the Green Belt at this location.

- 6.3 Due to the local landform of the site, future housing will break the existing skyline to the north and potentially the skyline created by Maudsley Hill to the south. In turn, intervisibility along the A902 across the subject lands towards the Cammo water tower and wider estate and across the settled urban fringes of the city and to the Firth beyond will be compromised. From within the Country Park and GDL views out to the surrounding area including Corstorphine Hill will also be limited by new development.
- 6.4 Overall, it is anticipated that the impact of new development will be detrimental to the semi-rural parkland setting and settled nature of this urban edge location. In this regard, major long-term negative landscape and visual impacts are predicted to arise from future planned development of the proposed site.