

# Summary Proof of Evidence of Mr Webster. Addressing Green Belt & Landscape Matters.

Land at Manor Farm, Poyle.

On behalf of Manor Farm Propco Limited (the Appellant).

**PINS Ref:** APP/J0350/W/25/3366043

**LPA Ref:** P/10076/013

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## Document Management.

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# 1. Summary Proof of Evidence.

- 1.1. I am instructed on behalf of Manor Farm Propco Limited, to present evidence relating to Green Belt, Landscape and Visual matters in respect of this planning appeal, submitted pursuant to Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, concerning development of Land at Manor Farm, Poyle.
- 1.2. The Appeal Site extends to approximately 8.16 ha and falls entirely within the administrative boundary of SBC. The Appeal Site lies entirely within the Green Belt and is within the locally designated Strategic Gap and part of the CVRP.
- 1.3. The Appeal Site is bounded by Poyle Road to the east, Poyle Channel and Hilton Hotel to the north and Poyle Poplars, a mature tree belt to the south. The west of the Appeal Site is defined by soil mounds and open fields, and the Colne Brook beyond. The Britannia Industrial Estate is located immediately to the east and forms the industrial back drop to the Appeal Site.
- 1.4. The Appeal Site is made up of both previously developed land (PDL) and undeveloped land.
- 1.5. Given the Appeal Site’s is location within the Green Belt, my evidence considers the Appeal Site’s potential to be reclassified as ‘Grey Belt’, and whether the Proposed Development would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt within the plan area.

## The Proposed Development

- 1.6. The Proposed Development consists of a hyperscale data centre within Parcel A and a Battery Energy Storage System (“BESS”) within Parcel B, with associated infrastructure and works.

## Grey Belt Appraisal

- 1.7. The most recent iteration of the NPPF defines Grey Belt to include land which does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) and (d). The NPPF also states that the Grey Belt definition excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.
- 1.8. In my judgement, the Appeal Site does **not** strongly contribute to Purposes (a), (b) or (d) and my Grey Belt assessment findings are summarised at **Table 1** (below):

Receptor	Purpose (a): Checking unrestricted sprawl	Purpose (b): Preventing the merging of towns	Purpose (d): Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns
The Appeal Site	<b>Moderate</b> contribution	<b>Weak</b> contribution	<b>No</b> contribution

Table 1: Summary of Grey Belt assessment

- 1.9. There are **no** identified Footnote 7 constraints that would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting the Proposed Development. As such, the Appeal Site is considered to meet all the requirements to be reclassified as Grey Belt land.

## Character & Appearance

- 1.10. I have carefully reviewed the LVIA findings and broadly agree with them; however, I find that within the 1km study area, LCA Horton and Wraysbury Lowlands represents an undesignated landscape including urban / rural fringe of unremarkable character. The landscape condition is often poor, with an evident lack of maintenance and areas of fly-tipping. There is significant traffic movement and built infrastructure, with noticeable absence of tranquillity. Overall, I conclude a Low value, with a Low susceptibility, given the detracting features within the LCA.
- 1.11. On this basis, I consider that the LCA has a **Low** sensitivity; however, I agree with the LVIA findings that the magnitude of change will be **Low**. I predict that the resultant landscape effects to be **Minor** (neutral) following the completion of the Proposed Development.
- 1.12. In relation to LCA Colne Valley: Harmondsworth to Stanwell Moor, I generally **agree** with the findings of the LVIA but take a slightly precautionary stance. My conclusions are summarised within **Table 2** (below):

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Overall Effect
LCA Horton and Wraysbury Lowlands	Low	Low	<b>Minor</b> (neutral)
LCA Colne Valley: Harmondsworth to Stanwell Moor	Low	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b> (neutral)

*Table 2: Summary of predicted effects on landscape character receptors*

- 1.13. I have carefully reviewed the LVIA analysis above and generally agree with the findings (at the time of the planning application); however, I note a **Negligible** (adverse) overall effect for on-site trees and vegetation to reflect the limited amount of vegetation removal / translocation required to facilitate the Proposed Development. My conclusions are summarised within in **Table 3** (below):

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Overall Effect
Parcel A	Low	High	<b>Moderate</b> (neutral)
Parcel B	Low	High	<b>Moderate</b> (adverse)
Trees & hedgerows on the Appeal Site and boundaries	Low	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b> (adverse)

*Table 3: Summary of predicted effects on the character of the Appeal Site*

- 1.14. Taking the Grey Belt appraisal approach, the return of unlawful use of land to agriculture within Parcel A increases its susceptibility from Low (current baseline) to Medium (future baseline). On this basis, the sensitivity of Parcel A increases to **Medium**.

1.15. In common with the LVIA, I consider that the introduction of the Proposed Development would increase the quantum of built form within Parcel A creating a new character typology. The magnitude of change experienced would therefore be High; however, there are number of beneficial effects arising from the proposed landscape strategy. On this basis, I judge that the overall level of effect would be **Major** (adverse).

1.16. On this basis, the predicted landscape effects in relation to the future baseline for the Appeal Site are summarised at **Table 4** (below):

Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Overall Effect
Parcel A	Medium	High	<b>Major</b> (adverse)
Parcel B	Medium	Medium	<b>Moderate</b> (adverse)
Trees & hedgerows	Medium	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b> (adverse)

*Table 4: Summary of predicted effects on the character of the Appeal Site*

1.17. It is also common ground that the LVIA states that views towards the Appeal Site are screened and/or filtered from several publicly accessible viewpoints and that following the completion of the Proposed Development (§7.56):

- Users of Horton Bridleway 4 to the west of the Appeal Site will experience **Minor** effects.
- Users of the PRow passing through Poyle Poplars will experience **Negligible** effects.
- Visitors to the Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve will **not** experience any adverse effects.
- Users of Poyle Road will experience **Minor** effects.
- Residents of Floroma and Poyle Farmhouse will experience **Minor** effects.
- Residents of properties on Poyle Road to the north of the Appeal Site will **not** experience any adverse effects.

1.18. Following the completion of the Proposed Development, some local views towards Parcel A would change, given the increased visibility of the proposed data centre when compared to the existing low-quality built form which currently occupies the Appeal Site. In general, views are restricted to the immediate vicinity of the Appeal Site, where the worst-case effects are agreed to be Minor.

1.19. In the wider context, there is a degree of intervisibility from Copper’s Hill, Runnymede and Datchet Sailing Club; however, the **Moderate** (adverse) levels of harm experienced by receptors reflects the overlooking nature of both views and the High sensitivity of receptors at Runnymede.

## Openness

- 1.20. With regard to the effect of the Proposed Development on the openness of Green Belt, I consider that there would be **Substantial** harm to the spatial aspect and **Limited** harm to the visual aspect. With regard duration of development and remediability there would be **Substantial** harm. In terms of degree of activity, the proposal would result **Limited** harm.
- 1.21. When considered in the round, as basket of effects, the Proposed Development would result in an overall **Substantial** level of harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

## Purposes of the Green Belt

- 1.22. The Proposed Development would **not** conflict with Purposes (d) and (e) of the Green Belt and would result in **Limited** harm to Purpose (b) in relation to the merging of neighbouring towns, and **Moderate** harm to Purposes (a) and (c) in relation to unrestricted sprawl and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 1.23. These conclusions are summarised at **Table 5** (below):

Receptor	Purpose (a): Checking unrestricted sprawl	Purpose (b): Preventing the merging of towns	Purpose (c): Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Purpose (d): Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns	Purpose (e): Assisting urban regeneration
Proposed Development	<b>Moderate</b> conflict	<b>Limited</b> harm	<b>Moderate</b> harm	<b>No</b> conflict	<b>No</b> conflict

*Table 5: Summary of impact on remainder of the Green Belt*

## Planning Policy Context

- 1.24. The Appeal Site is located within the Green Belt, the Strategic Gap, and the CVRP, and therefore the policies above apply to the Proposed Development. The degraded nature of Parcel A and enclosed character of Parcel B limits the potential harm arising from the Proposed Development. The potential for landscape mitigation measures to embed and contain the data centre, whilst also introducing landscape and ecological enhancements, add further support to the Proposed Development.
- 1.25. The Proposed Development is materially compliant with Policy CP1, Policy CP2, and Saved Policy CG9. It is fully compliant with Policy CG1, and I note that the Colne Valley Park Trust have not objected to the Proposed Development.

## Summary & Conclusions

- 1.26. For the reasons articulated in the preceding paragraphs, it is my judgement that the Appeal Site should be classified as Grey Belt land. If the Inspector were to decide that the land remained Green Belt, development of the Appeal Site would result in localised **Substantial** harm to the spatial aspect of openness; however, there would only be **Limited** harm to the visual aspect of openness given the restricted visual envelope associated with the Proposed Development.



- 1.27. When considered in the round, as basket of effects, the Proposed Development would result in an overall **Substantial** level of harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 1.28. The Proposed Development would also conflict to a **Moderate** degree with Purposes (a) and (c) of the Green Belt relating to unrestricted sprawl and encroachment in the countryside and to a **Limited** degree in relation to Purpose (b) in relation to the merging of towns. The Proposed Development would not conflict with the two remaining purposes.
- 1.29. In light of the preceding analysis, I respectfully request that the Inspector upholds this appeal in relation to Green Belt, Landscape and Visual matters.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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