

## **Land West of Churchfields, Devauden Landscape and Visual Briefing Note edp6590\_r002**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Briefing Note provides a preliminary appraisal of Land West of Churchfields, Devauden, to inform the early consideration of its design and its promotion in the planning process. This Briefing Note has been informed by a desk-based review of available data, landscape character publications and mapping, and by a site visit undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect in July 2021.



**Figure EDP 1:** Location Plan with site boundary shown in red and ownership boundary in blue.

### **2. Site Description and Landscape Character**

- 2.1 The site comprises a pocket of agricultural land adjacent to the western edge of the existing village of Devauden. The ownership boundary follows the alignment of an adjacent Public

Right of Way (PRoW) to the west, with the site sandwiched between this and existing housing at Churchfields to the east.



**Figure EDP 2:** Ordnance Survey map extract showing site location in relation to the PRoW network and village centre.

- 2.2 Fields within the ownership area are divided by hedgerows both from each other and from the PRoW to the west. The northern boundary of the site follows an arbitrary line within the northern field parcel and is currently undefined on the ground.
- 2.3 The following annotated photographs give a clearer indication of the existing condition and character (larger versions of each panorama are included at **Appendix EDP 1**. Note that as this is not a formal Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA), and given the early stage of the planning promotion process, these images do not conform to Landscape Institute guidance for 'Representative Views'.





**Onsite Viewpoint EDP 1:** View from the south-west corner of the site, looking north-east towards the point of access from Churchfields. The gable end of the westernmost house on Churchfields abuts the site boundary, though a single upper storey window overlooks the site with a ground floor window obscured by hedging.



**Onsite Viewpoint EDP 2:** View from the north-west corner of the blue land to the north of the site area. The westernmost house on Churchfields is again visible and the site character as a well maintained horse paddock is apparent. A small fenced enclosure at the centre of view contains a small shed structure presumed to be associated with the keeping of horses. A single bungalow, located on Wesley Gardens, has views in to the site (from a conservatory) through the gap in the taller hedging just to the right of centre of shot.



**Onsite Viewpoint EDP 3:** View from the Public Right of Way within the blue land to the south, looking north. Housing at Wesley Gardens is visible to the east and the site is largely screened by boundary vegetation in the centre of view. Agricultural structures within the view suggest this field is also used as a horse paddock.

- 2.4 The landform of the site is slopes from east to west, with the high point at 241m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the south-east corner, and the lowest at 229m aOD mid way along the western boundary. The site is located on the shallow eastern slope at the head of a local streamvalley which runs towards the south-west, eventually becoming the Pill Brook, which runs westwards to join the River Usk circa 10km away.
- 2.5 In spatial terms, the site is bounded and constrained by hedgerows with trees to the south, east and west. These are largely robust and in good condition with few gaps and low points. The northern boundary of the site follows an unmarked arbitrary line within the field. A further hedgerow, at the northern boundary of the field parcel, encloses the site in that direction. In total, the site measures circa 0.9 hectare (ha).
- 2.6 Beyond the site to the east and south lies existing development. Churchfields, to the east of the site is an 'executive' style development of large detached homes set in hedge lined streets with generous plot sizes and front gardens.



**Image EDP 1:** Large, detached 'executive' housing at Churchfields to the east of the site (Courtesy of Google Maps).

- 2.7 To the south of the site, Wesley Gardens provides a greater mix of dwelling sizes, styles and tenures, with some homes appearing to be ex-council house stock and some possibly still operating as 'affordable housing' through a Housing Association. There is a diverse mix of architecture within this small area including a range of bungalows and mono-pitch roof units.





**Image EDP 2:** Bungalows and semi-detached houses on Wesley Gardens (Courtesy of Google Maps).



**Image EDP 3:** Two storey terraced homes and single storey mono-pitch dwellings on Wesley Gardens (Courtesy of Google Maps).

- 2.8 To the west and north, the landscape is more open and rural with scattered farmsteads and individual homes set within a mosaic of pastural fields and woodland. A network of PRoW runs through this landscape, with those closest routes, visible in **Figure EDP 2** above, providing excellent connectivity between the site and the wider landscape.

- 2.9 In landscape terms, the mature hedges and trees on site are key landscape assets which provide both biodiversity and visual interest as well as screening/filtering views of the site from the wider landscape. These features should largely be protected and enhanced as part of any future development proposal.
- 2.10 Beyond these features, the site has no other distinguishing features and, while it conforms to the local landscape character its enclosure and lack of public access means it contributes little, if anything, to the perceived landscape character for anyone other than overlooking neighbours and the owners of the onsite horses.

### **3. Visual Amenity**

- 3.1 Due to the site's location on the western edge of Devauden, it is adjacent to well established modern development (latter half of the 20th century), which means that the site has the potential to integrate well with the existing settlement when seen in wider views. Development on this site would constitute a small extension to the existing settlement form, following on from the Churchfields development which appears to have been constructed in the late 1980's/early 1990's.
- 3.2 During the site visit the zone of visual influence of the site (i.e. those areas of the surrounding landscape which had potential views of the site) was established and then some key elements of these areas were visited to establish whether ground level views were accessible and, if so, how the site appeared.
- 3.3 There are close range views of the site from the existing properties to the east and south east (on Churchfields and Wesley Gardens) though only two individual dwellings were specifically noted as having windows overlooking the site. Views may also be obtained from the field gate at the end of Churchfields, from where it is presumed access will be created into any future development. All such views are either from private property or from the existing highways infrastructure; the former are highly sensitive receptors but private views are not protected by the planning system with residential amenity being the priority. This can be readily protected through appropriate design and separation between new and existing properties. Views from the highway/street are of low sensitivity given that these are already characterised by built form.
- 3.4 Further close range views are available from the PRoW network. To the south of the site these views are curtailed by existing hedging to the southern site boundary, though upper storeys of new homes may be visible above this vegetation. To the west, the public footpath runs very close to the south-west corner of the site and a glimpsed framed view into its interior is available here. This could be obscured through further planting though it would be preferable to retain the gap in the vegetation to allow access to the PRoW network in this direction. It is considered that this benefit outweighs any potential visual impact on receptors in this location.



- 3.5 The public footpath to the north of the site, running east-west and connecting back to the B4293, is obscured by existing vegetation. During the site visit the connection to the wider network to the west was obscured by scrub and tall ruderal vegetation.
- 3.6 No medium distance or long distance views were identified during the site visit with the local topography, woodland cover, existing built form and site boundary vegetation obscuring these in all directions.
- 3.7 Overall, this is a very well contained site with potential visual effects limited to just a small handful of private dwellings lying adjacent and to users of PRoW routes in the immediate vicinity who will already be aware of the existing settlement at Devauden.

#### **4. Development Recommendations**

- 4.1 At this early stage, this preliminary landscape and visual appraisal has identified a series of key principles for the design of future development which would assist in mitigating its landscape and visual effects to ensure any potential future development integrates effectively with the existing settlement form. These are as follows:
- Retain natural assets on site insofar as is possible, specifically the trees and hedges at the sites boundaries;
  - A new vegetated boundary should be created along the unmarked northern boundary. This should comprise a mixed native hedgerow with native tree species incorporated. If possible, this should be planted in a semi-mature condition utilising nursery stock such as 'ready hedge';
  - Give careful consideration to the amenity of adjacent residential properties, ensuring appropriate setback distances to protect privacy, light and minimise disturbance;
  - Ensure that the character of the development engages appropriately with that of Churchfields such that the transition between the existing and new built form is not jarring;
  - The layout of the site should seek to work with and respond to the site topography and site context. The site will drain naturally to the western edge and therefore this should be a suitable location for sustainable drainage attenuation features. These features should also be designed as attractive landscape components. Permanently or seasonally wet attenuation features could provide biodiversity enhancement in this part of the site;
  - Where possible, SuDS attenuation and conveyance features should be included within the streetscape, intercepting, slowing and filtering surface water flows as close to source as possible. Such features should be attractively design as part of an onsite Green

Infrastructure network to improve character, provide biodiversity and visual value and contribute to placemaking;

- The western elevation of any future layout should be designed to ‘face out’ in that direction to ensure any views into the site from the adjacent PRow are as attractive as possible. Other boundaries are less sensitive and ‘backing on’ may be appropriate;
- A new connection should be provided, if landownership allows, to the PRow to the west. This will allow new and existing residents to access the PRow network in the wider countryside through the site and strengthen its sense of place within the landscape; and
- Given the vernacular form and the potential for visibility over boundaries to the south, properties should generally be limited to 2 storeys and single or one-and-a-half storey (dorma) forms may be considered.

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The parcel of land containing the site is well enclosed by boundary vegetation and constrained to the east and south-east by existing housing.
- 5.2 Development on this site would, of course, fundamentally change the character of the site itself, however, development would not be seen as out of context when set against the immediate context of the neighbouring village, particularly as Churchfields is itself a relatively recent development.
- 5.3 Development on the site would be visible at close range from Churchfields, from residential dwellings on Churchfields and Wesley Gardens, and from a very small section of the PRow to the west. Upper storeys and rooftops may be visible above boundary vegetation in views from the PRow to the south. Wider views from middle and long distance vantagepoints were not identified due to the local topography, vegetation cover and existing built form.
- 5.4 The close-range views available from neighbouring properties which back onto the site offer the most sensitive receptors, though private views are not protected in policy terms. Residential amenity can and should be protected with any future scheme buffering neighbouring properties with rear gardens and seeking to provide an attractive, high quality development in architectural terms which complements the existing built form.
- 5.5 The site is adjacent to the PRow network to the west and, if land ownership allows, a new connection should be provided to this feature via the site.
- 5.6 Development of the site would provide an opportunity for new tree planting as well as betterment of existing quality landscape features. The longevity of such features could be ensured by a long-term management plan if the site was brought forward. The design of an attractive sustainable





drainage system could also contribute to the landscape assets of the site and the quality of the built environment.

- 5.7 Overall, this preliminary appraisal has identified no issues which suggest the site is undevelopable in landscape and visual terms subject to an appropriate design coming forward. The site is a logical next step for the provision of new homes in Devauden and, provided the natural assets of the site are largely retained, and any future scheme is sensitive to the existing settlement form and character, EDP see no reason why in landscape and visual terms this site could not be developed.
- 5.8 Any future development of the site should however be informed by a robust Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the findings of which should help shape the detail of the scheme.

**Appendix EDP 1**  
**Onsite Photoviewpoints**



**Onsite Viewpoint EDP 1:** View from the south-west corner of the site, looking north east towards the point of access from Churchlands.





**Onsite Viewpoint EDP 2:** View from the north-west corner of the blue land to the north of the site area.



**Onsite Viewpoint EDP 3:** View from the PRow within the blue land to the south, looking north. Housing at Wesley Gardens is visible to the east and the site is largely screened by boundary vegetation in the centre of view.