

## MEMORANDUM

To : **SIOBHAN RIDDLE, SENIOR PLANNING OFFICER**

From : **MANDY NEILL, SENIOR LANDSCAPE OFFICER**

Tel : **01432 260150** My Ref : **FORWARD PLANNIG**

Date : **20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2010** Your Ref :

*Revision A – 9/11/2010 – Integration para 1 amended to clarify location of new road.*

*Revision B – 10/11/2010 – Field 1 label relocated and text updated.*

*Revision C – 11/07/2012 – Additional comments in relation to a relief road and employment site at Porthouse Farm*

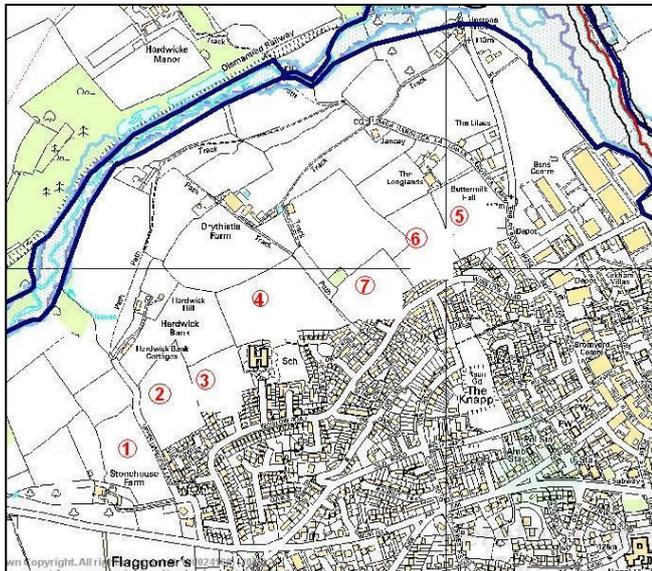
*Revision D – 26/09/2012 – Additional comments in relation to alternative houses and employment locations, following full day site visit in August 2012*

### BROMYARD FORWARD PLANNING - LANDSCAPE RESPONSE

**SITE:** BROMYARD

**PROPOSAL:** NORTHERN RESIDENTIAL EXTENSION AND LINTON EMPLOYMENT SITE

#### Landscape Character



Plan 1: Initial residential extension proposals (October 2010)

The land being considered for future housing in the Core Strategy is located on the northern edge of Bromyard. This is an area of high ground, which slopes steeply to the north and west, down to the valley of the River Frome. The fields marked number 2 and 3 opposite are some of the highest points in Bromyard, at 170m. These fields all fall within the Character Area of Timbered Plateau Farmlands. The adjoining residential area is defined as Urban character.

The dominant landform is one of the most prominent characteristics and tends to override the patterns of tree cover and field shape. The topography in this area contributes to three more localised character areas:- the west facing slopes of fields 2,3 and 4; the east facing slopes of field 5, 6 and 7; and the lower corridor of the river itself. **Any housing development should therefore respect and work with the existing slopes and local character.**

## Visual Impact

Variations in topography in this area create a changing sequence of visual perspectives. The field boundary hedgerows are often thrown into visual prominence by the landform. Housing construction on all of the fields (other than 1) will be visible from the north west (for example at Rowden Abbey) and the east (Bromyard Downs). **Mitigation** for the impact of new housing on such long distance views would have to include **conservation and enhancement of hedgerows, with new planting to include hedgerow oak trees**. While linear woodlands are a feature of this type of landscape character, they are usually restricted to the valley bottom and would therefore look out of place in this location.

## Possible Housing Sites – Integration and Access

Fields 2 and 3 are the most enclosed, with areas of level ground that could be suitable for development. They are currently defined as High-medium sensitivity. These fields already have some visual relationship with existing built development, being at a similar elevation. Development on field 4 has difficulties of access and integration with the existing town and will have a large landscape impact.

Upper Hardwick Lane currently marks a definite western edge to the settlement. Development on field 1, with access from the A44, will extend the urban area beyond this and it will be hard to integrate with the existing town due to the rural nature of the lane.

A new access road from the Tenbury Road would be partly screened from distant views by the industrial estate opposite and seen in context with the existing housing, which is a clearly visible sharp edge in the landscape. Residential development on the lower fields (5 and 6) has been ruled out during the preferred options consultation – therefore an access road at this location would be divorced from the existing town and the new development; a scar on the landscape that is not linked to the urban area.

There are a number of public footpaths across the fields to the north of Bromyard (WR1, WR2, WR3 and WR16). These should be integrated into any new developments and utilised as easy access, sustainable walking and cycle links into the town. They can be incorporated into new public open space and offer recreational opportunities through links to the river and the disused railway.



Photo 1: View of northern edge of Bromyard from the B4203 (approx. 150m elevation).



Photo 2: View of northern edge of Bromyard from Bromyard Downs (approx. 210m elevation).

## Linton Industrial Estate



Photo 3: View of quarry pool north of Linton Industrial Estate

The existing location of this employment site is not ideal – being approx. 1km away from the town, along a busy, fast road. It is also highly visible in an otherwise rural area. Any extension to the existing area will have a further adverse visual impact, a fundamental change in landscape character, likely loss of hedgerows and new extensive earthworks. Any form of mitigation would have only a limited, localised effect. Part of the land previously allocated in the UDP includes Linton Tile Works Local Geological Site (provisional). Photograph 3 shows that this area is not suitable for any development due to its geological, landscape, historic and ecologic value.

## Other Comments

Development proposals will need to include ecological assessments and should take into consideration the necessary mitigation measures from an early stage in design. The design should also be informed by a detailed Landscape Character and Visual Assessment.

## Relief Road

An alternative option for Bromyard development has been put forward by the Town Council that includes a relief road running in a north easterly direction around a proposed northern residential extension (beyond fields marked 1-5 above). This would provide access from the A44 to a potential employment site at Porthouse, avoiding the sensitive town centre. An informal comment from the Area Engineer states that this would need to be 7.3m wide, with associated structures, earthworks and accommodation. The land is very sloping in these areas and a maximum gradient of 1 in 20 would be required.

In landscape terms this road would have to be designed as an integral part of a residential extension. Without a new residential area to link it to the town it would simply cut a scar across the landscape, without any relation to the existing topography or landscape setting. If designed following best practice guidelines for sensitive design and landscape mitigation, then it could possibly be integrated with new housing to create a suitable new northern edge to the town. It does not appear, however, that housing would be required on all 7 fields and therefore sections of the road are likely to remain divorced from the settlement. Any development of this scale could not be screened or hidden in the landscape. The significant landscape impacts would require full assessment, acknowledgement of the changes and suitable design / mitigation.

## Existing Porthouse allocated housing site as 'new industry Porthouse Farm'

This area has been identified for landscape change, whether to housing or industry, within the boundary of the B4214 and the historic railway line. It would not be appropriate for any development outside of this area, as the land is characterised as riverside meadows and should remain open. In landscape terms this site would have fewer negative impacts from industrial development than extending the Linton site. It would be seen as a linear development extending from the town. It is relatively flat therefore would appear to require less intrusive ground engineering work than at Linton.

Negative landscape impact could come from the increased HGV traffic. If accommodated on a route through the town there would be increased noise and pollution in the sensitive conservation area and

likely degrade the street scape experience. If accommodated on a new relief road, then the landscape issues addressed above must be considered. Without integrating a new road with residential development it would have a significant negative landscape impact.

#### Alternative site assessments (See plan 2, reference A – J)

##### **A**

Previously put forward and assessed as above (fields marked 1 -4). Fields 2 and 3 are considered suitable for housing development, provided they could be accessed from the existing residential development. Field 1 is visually prominent on the edge of the town and any development here would significantly alter the landscape character of Stonehouse Farm. Any new road access from the A44 to the north would have a negative impact on Upper Hardwick Lane (as previously stated). Field 4, to the north of the primary school was assessed in more detail, particularly in views from Bromyard Downs. Development on this field would be visible from the Bromyard Downs and this is considered to be a negative landscape impact, given the existing form of the town and the landscape sensitivity of the Bromyard Downs.

##### **B**

Previously assessed as above (fields marked 5, 6 and 7). These are steeply sloping and east facing. Any development would be visible from the Bromyard Downs and would require significant ground engineering. Development on these fields would have a significant negative impact.

##### **C, D, E, F**

These sites are all to the east of the town, separated by the floodplain of the River Frome. It is this physical and visual distance from the existing built development and infrastructure that makes them unsuitable for development in landscape terms. None of these sites would be viewed as an extension of the town, more an isolated development in open countryside with little relationship to any existing infrastructure or suitable integration with the rural setting.

##### **G**

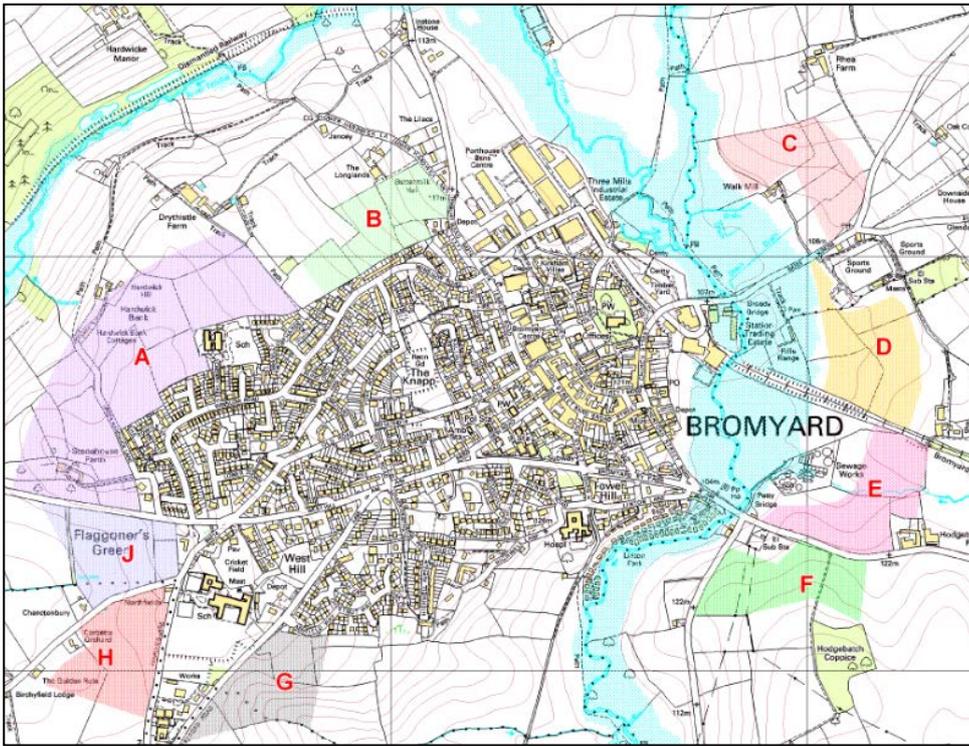
This is a steeply sloping, east facing field. It forms part of the River Frome valley side. Any development on this site would require significant ground engineering and would be visually intrusive. It would not integrate well with the existing development, which currently has strong tree cover around the small fields adjacent to the housing.

##### **H and J**

These sites are not closely integrated with the town centre, however H is adjacent to existing industrial, business and educational land uses between Panniers Lane and Hereford Road. The northern boundary of J is highly degraded by the large, busy infrastructure of the A44. Much of site H is relatively flat. Site J slopes from east down to the west and a buffer zone would be required to protect the existing residential development. Both sites are open to long distance views to the west, however there is not the same landscape value in this direction (compared to the Bromyard Downs to the east). Large scale agricultural buildings at Birchyfield, adjacent to H, are already visible in views towards the town from the west.

#### Conclusion

Historic patterns of settlement are a key determinant of landscape character and it is important that land use change should, where possible, respect these patterns. The spread of development at Bromyard has been clearly constrained by the natural feature of the River From valley. This, together with conserving existing views from the Bromyard Downs, have led this landscape assessment to determine that any new development would be most suitable to the **west** edge of Bromyard.



Plan 2: Alternative extension proposals for residential and employment combined (August 2012)