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Note on Heritage Impact:

Land east of Lutterworth Road, Brinklow

Introduction

- 1.1 This Note has been prepared for Manor Oak Homes in order to provide initial advice on the potential impact on heritage assets arising from the proposed residential development of land at Lutterworth Road, Brinklow. The site has been allocated as suitable for development in Rugby Borough Council's Draft Local Plan, which is currently undergoing examination by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.2 In Appendix 5 ('Site Conclusions') of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2015, no reference is made to heritage assets as a constraint in relation to this site (identified therein as S14/065B). Appendix 2 ('Red Amber Green Assessment and Conclusions') of the updated SHLAA 2016, wherein the site is identified as S16071, awards the site 'green' under 'Conservation Areas' and 'Heritage Assets'. The overall suitability assessment conclusion (which is positive) makes no reference to any heritage constraints.
- 1.3 The Heritage Review Assessment (HRA) produced for the Local Plan sites for the Council by JS Conservation Management & Town Planning Ltd. in September 2016 provides an assessment of potential impact arising from the development of the site (under its initial reference S14/065B) on Brinklow Motte and Bailey Castle (a Scheduled Ancient Monument); the Church of St John the Baptist (Grade II* listed); Morgan's Bridge on the Oxford Canal (Grade II listed); and

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the Brinklow Conservation Area. Its overall conclusions are that development of the site *'has the ability to impact negatively on how the heritage assets...are experienced'*. All of the potential harm identified is considered to be 'less than substantial' under the terms of the NPPF and it is caveated to some degree by the statement that *'There is potential to mitigate some harm by screening to soften the impact caused by the extensive urbanisation of the site and the potential layout of the site...'*

- 1.4 This Note contains my own professional view of the potential impact on these heritage assets. It is prepared primarily on the basis of a site visit in March 2018, alongside reference to the Historic England National Heritage List and the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) for Brinklow. I have also had regard to the 'Initial Landscape and Visual Appraisal Briefing Note' prepared for Manor Oak Homes by Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd. in October 2016 and the photographed views contained therein (referred to hereafter as the ILVA).
- 1.5 The site comprises a single arable field of irregular shape, bounded by the Smite Brook and a hedgerow and trees on the north; an established mature tree belt on the east; the disused Brinklow Arm of the Oxford Canal on the south (the main canal lies c.100m east of the site's eastern boundary) and mature tree belt on its northern side; and Lutterworth Road on the west, against which there is mature vegetation and existing residential development. Historic Ordnance Survey maps show that the site has historically comprised agricultural fields. The cemetery against its western boundary was present by 1887.
- 1.6 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site boundaries and the site does not fall within or immediately adjacent to any conservation area. The northern boundary of the Brinklow Conservation Area lies some 250m to the south.

Brinklow Castle (Scheduled Monument No.1011368)

- 1.7 This Scheduled Monument (SM) lies c.250m south of the site. It consists of a well-preserved Norman motte and bailey castle, comprising a conical mound of 15m in height with a double bailey to the west, all surrounded by wide ditches. Land containing ridge and furrow earthworks immediately to the east and south-east of the motte is also included in the scheduling. The castle occupies a

commanding position on a short elevated ridge running east-west, and was built to command the line of the Fosse Way (represented by Lutterworth Road), a Roman road of considerable military importance. There are thus 360-degree long-distance views over the surrounding area from the top of the mound.

- 1.8 These views to the horizon are very extensive and contribute to the fundamental significance of the monument as a castle in an elevated position (there would have been a watchtower atop the mound) with the ability to spot approaching trouble from any direction. A real sense of this can still be gained when standing on the summit of the mound.
- 1.9 Of secondary significance to this is what lies within the compass of those views. First in terms of importance to the SM and its setting are the views to the west, south-west and north-west, where glimpsed views of the historic settlement of Brinklow wrapping around the western side of the castle provide important historic context; the medieval Church of St John the Baptist, standing only 30m north-west of the outer bailey, contributes particularly to the context and setting of the SM, and vice versa.
- 1.10 Second, the expansive open views over countryside to the south, south-east and east include, within the closest fields to the motte, the earthwork remains of medieval ridge and furrow; this, in providing physical and visual evidence of the stratigraphic relationship between the monument and surrounding historic land use, makes a particular contribution to its setting.
- 1.11 Third, to the north and north-east the view takes in a more rolling landscape of agricultural fields, divided from the SM by Ell Lane and vegetated boundaries. Beyond the first field, the east-west ridge falls away to the north, and this landform combined with the trees along Ell Lane, makes views in this direction less open than those to the east and south-east (even in the winter months). Views to the north also take in existing modern housing development on Ell Lane and Lutterworth Road.
- 1.12 The linear form of the Fosse Way/Lutterworth Road can also be glimpsed in views north, heading north on rising ground towards the railway. The Fosse Way obviously has a historic strategic relationship with the SM and is important to its setting; otherwise, views in this direction and to the north-east are of a lesser degree of sensitivity in terms of what they contribute to the significance of the SM and its setting than are the other views described to west, south and east.

- 1.13 In these views to the north, the site itself, being low-lying within a localised valley beyond the east-west ridge, is only visible in part, with glimpses available through the tree cover in winter (compare plate 1 with View 10 in the ILVA).
- 1.14 Likewise, from certain parts of the site, for instance its north-east corner and points along its eastern boundary, there are partial sightlines towards the mound (see plate 2; which is taken from the north-eastern corner of the site) which, in the summer months, are substantially reduced by the existing tree cover (see View 5 of the ILVA).
- 1.15 The simple fact of some limited inter-visibility does not *ipso facto* equate to harm. While parts of the development would be visible from the castle in winter (and much less so in the summer months), it would be seen in the context of existing residential development on Lutterworth Road and Ell Lane and would not affect any feature or sightline of particular significance to the setting of the SM in what can be considered the least sensitive of the panoramic views from its summit.
- 1.16 There would be no impact on the experience of the SM's relationship with the historic settlement (which is best appreciated from the summit of the mound looking west) and no impact on the important relationship with the historically cultivated land immediately south and east. The existing views of the SM from the site are incidental and of limited value; the mound is certainly better appreciated in its wider landscape setting in the public views available from Rugby Road to the south-east or Cathiron Lane to the south-east (see plates 3 and 4).
- 1.17 The HRA suggests that 'less than substantial harm' could arise to the SM from 'urbanising' the environment with new housing, although it caveats this with 'depending on how the site was developed'. It says, 'The main harm caused is to the evidential, historic, and aesthetic values, by the intrusion of a large number of dwellings into the landscape'.
- 1.18 In fact, the residential development of the site would have no impact on any of these identified values of the SM as they are set out and described in the HRA. The HRA does not explain how these individual values would be so affected or assess the relative importance of different elements of the SM's wider setting, insofar as it contributes to the latter's significance. Neither does it account for the limited visibility of the allocation site in the landscape

- 1.19 I am entirely satisfied on the basis of my own assessment that the site has capacity for residential development that would not have a harmful impact on Brinklow Castle or its setting.

Listed buildings and structures

- 1.20 The only statutorily listed building considered individually in the HRA as being relevant to this assessment is the 15th-century Grade II* listed parish Church of St John the Baptist. This is stated to be because of its prominent position in the settlement. Indeed, it is also my view that other listed and 'important unlisted' buildings in the village are better covered in separate consideration of the conservation area as the collective heritage asset in which they all stand.
- 1.21 The church stands on elevated ground immediately west of the outer bailey of Brinklow Castle and has a very strong visual relationship with this monument as well as being prominent in the village. Its elevated position also gives it prominence in village views.
- 1.22 However, the church has no inter-visibility at all with the allocation site, from which it is separated by distance and intervening development. While it is possible to see the top stage of the church tower and glimpses of the site from the same viewing point on the summit of the castle mound, this involves a change of viewing direction and focus, and the two elements do not form part of a single coherent view – the church is viewed across the double bailey and experienced in context with this and the historic core of the settlement to the west.
- 1.23 It is therefore quite clear that the residential development of the site would have no impact on the way in which the church is experienced, either from within the settlement or from the castle site. On this point, I concur entirely with the conclusions of the HRA.
- 1.24 Morgan's Bridge is a Grade II listed canal bridge erected in the 1830s and situated at the junction of the Oxford Canal with the disused Brinklow Arm, carrying the main canal towpath over the branch arm. The bridge is a fine example of such a structure, with openwork parapet of moulded cast-iron railings forming a regular attenuated diamond pattern.

- 1.25 The significance of the bridge lies in its design and detailing (and associations with the consulting engineer William Cubitt). Its primary setting is of course the Oxford Canal corridor.
- 1.26 There is a glimpsed view into the site from the top of the bridge in the winter months, available through a gap in the vegetation. This gap opens onto the field between the canal and the allocation site, beyond which there is another gap in the vegetation of the eastern boundary of the site, enabling this view –the Lutterworth Road cemetery wall can just be seen in the distance. Plates 5 & 6 show this view, which should be compared to the same view included at View 6 of the ILVA, taken when the trees are in leaf, when there is no view at all into the site.
- 1.27 This glimpsed incidental and seasonal view adds nothing of significance to the experience of the canal bridge in its primary context.
- 1.28 Given this, and the statement in the HRA that the bridge's 'communal value' lies in its acting '*as a gateway entrance for the settlement of goods and people arriving on the canal*', and that '*It is therefore the visual landmark and gateway to the village and the importance of the canal network for the growth of the village*', I do not see any conflict with the seasonal ability to glimpse aspects of that settlement from the bridge.
- 1.29 On this basis I cannot agree with the conclusion in the HRA that this very limited winter view will '*affect the evidential, historic and aesthetic values of the significance of the bridge*' by changing the experience of the bridge in its context through increased urbanisation. The presence of additional residential development will barely be discernible from here and, when it is, will not affect the experience of being on the bridge or canal network, that experience relating primarily to the walking of the canal towpath and views along the canal. Limited evidence of built development in Brinklow is not inappropriate from this point given the presence of the Brinklow Arm.

Brinklow Conservation Area

- 1.30 The historic core of Brinklow is of linear form, focused on the B4455 (Lutterworth Road/Fosse Way) corridor as it passes through the village, where there are linear village greens along the roadside. South of the historic settlement core (south of Coventry Road) there is a substantial area of 20th-

century development that is excluded from the conservation area. The latter extends north as far as Ell Lane to include the Brinklow Castle site.

- 1.31 As the CAA notes, the approaches to the village from the north, east and west pass through rural landscape, but once within the village there are only glimpses out to these surroundings because of the high density of built form.
- 1.32 The site lies on the northern approach into the village, at a point where the presence of the village is apparent ahead. The first built form seen (opposite the site) is later ribbon development and is not part of the conservation area. There are no direct views into the conservation area from here because of the bend in the road to the south-west as it approaches the junction with Ell Lane. The church tower becomes visible from the bend, but it is only when at the junction that the rest of the village core opens out to view. By this point, the site has been passed and has no direct effect on the experience of entering the heart of the settlement.
- 1.33 I acknowledge the assessment in the HRA that development of the site will have some effect on the way the conservation area is experienced in the landscape, in the sense that the new development will appear before entering the historic core when approaching from the north, and that this is already an effect experienced when entering from the south. However, this is not atypical of historic settlements that spread outwards, and is already present to a degree on the north side.
- 1.34 This additional effect can be mitigated by the way in which the site is laid out, including the location of retained open green spaces on the undevelopable land in the northern part of the site (which lies in a flood zone), and the retention and enhancement of existing vegetation screening. In addition, the existing cemetery (with its many mature trees) will play a significant role in 'breaking up' the way in which new development is experienced on the approach to the village from the north (and when leaving).
- 1.35 In summary therefore, it is my view that the site has the capacity to accommodate residential development without harming the significance and experience of nearby heritage assets and their settings.

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Plate 1: View north towards the site from the summit of Brinklow Castle mound (the tall conifer in the centre can be used as a reference point in comparing this image with View 10 in the ILVA)



Plate 2: View south/south-west from the north-eastern corner of the site: Brinklow Castle mound can be seen to the right of the image before the tall conifers in the cemetery. This winter view can be compared with View 5 of the ILVA, taken with the trees in leaf



Plate 3: View north from Rugby Road towards Brinklow Castle (Google Streetview image)



Plate 4: View north-west towards Brinklow Castle from Cathiron Road (Google Streetview image)



Plate 5: View west/north-west from Morgan's Bridge through gap in canal-side vegetation; the first field visible lies east of the site. This view can be compared with View 6 of the ILVA; the ivy-covered tree to the right of the gap provides a reference point.



Plate 6: Magnified view as above; the site is the field just visible beyond the second hedgeline.