



**SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK
AUTHORITY**

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING

ACT 1990

(SECTION 78 PLANNING APPEAL)

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**SUMMARY
PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

Landscape and Visual Matters

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CONTENTS

Page

1.0 Introduction

3

2.0 Main Issues

3

3.0 Conclusion

5

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. My name is Ruth Childs, I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Oceanography with Geology (with honours) and a Masters of Science degree in Integrated Environmental Studies from the University of Southampton. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) since 2020 and I've worked within planning since 2012.

Scope

- 1.2. As landscape witness for the Authority, my Proof of Evidence highlights the main matters with respect of landscape and landscape character. In doing so, it follows the process of undertaking landscape-led or good contextual design. From understanding a site within its context to considering more and more detailed matters, I assess the proposals and their impact upon Selborne's distinctive landscape character.
- 1.3. In my Proof of Evidence, I break down the main matters into key steps as it is important to understand; the Site's; landscape character context, its character and the effect the scheme has upon these. Section 2 below summarises these.

2. MAIN ISSUES

Landscape Background

- 2.1. Landscape is everything. Frequently assumed to only be the 'green parts' of a place, landscape in fact includes all the cultural and natural aspects of a place, which come together to create character. This means landscape is roads, settlements, buildings, trees, fields, rivers, soils etc. These are called Elements.
- 2.2. Landscape Character is a framework, understood by identifying the consistent patterns of elements that make a place distinctive. Other topics considered in planning fit into this framework, such as Heritage, Ecology, Drainage etc. The role of planning is to guide the right development to the right place and landscape character is key to achieving this.
- 2.3. The South Downs Local Plan guides development to fit within this framework using SD4 and SD5, supported by the overarching Purposes, requiring an enhancement to landscape.
- 2.4. My Evidence focuses upon 4 key elements of landscape that are considered to determine character within Selborne and the Site.
- Buildings
 - Spaces
 - Routes
 - Vegetation

Context

2.5. The following table provides a summary of the main landscape characteristics of Selborne.

These provide the context to the Site and help determine which elements of the Site are contributing positively to this context, thus informing capacity and design decisions.

Landscape Element	Patterns that contribute to distinctive qualities of Selborne
Settlement and buildings	
	Linear settlement, buildings address roads
	Strong building hierarchy, along streets and across plots
	Small-scale historic buildings, local materials
	Buildings (blank elevations) enclose roads
Spaces	
	Linear pattern of spaces relating to buildings; gardens, parkland
	Within the village, spaces afford views out to the countryside
	One plot deep, gardens back onto countryside
	Spaces contribute a rural character to village and its setting
Routes	
	Strong route hierarchy – (one) primary and (many) secondary
	Narrow, winding routes
	Routes retain historic form and fabric within village
	Secondary routes; very narrow, lack pavements and informal
Vegetation	
	Trees follow/mark settlement edge
	Mature trees punctuate roofscape and provide backdrop to views
	Hanger woodland, a consistent visual link within the village
	Formal/specimen trees provide status to key buildings and their spaces

Fig. 01 Summary of context - Selborne's distinctive landscape character

Effects

2.6. The **buildings** proposed, by virtue of both their detailed siting and design, negatively impact upon landscape character. The proposal for the new buildings alters the Site's existing character imparting a formal and residential character to a currently informal 'working' or ancillary site.

2.7. The scale of buildings and their design together is not subservient, failing to integrate into the existing pattern of building hierarchy.

- 2.8. The loss of key **spaces** leads to a significant change to the character of the site and the context of, and relationship to, the non-designated heritage asset. When considered alongside the amount of development, the result is a cramped site, with insufficient space for characteristic mitigation of this change, generating an enhancement above this is also unmet.
- 2.9. The treatment of the **routes**; Huckers Lane and the tertiary access route at the rear of the site, introduce over-sized and engineered routes conflicting with the positive character of routes in Selborne, their hierarchy and resulting in their standardisation and suburbanisation.
- 2.10. **Vegetation** on site would not be conserved and enhanced by this proposal. The key retained Cypress trees would be constrained, having their roots impacted by construction and other planting and losing their historic association to the garden space. The loss of the tree-lined boundary to the Site has implications for key views and the ability of the site's changes to integrate into the village setting. An abrupt and uncharacteristic edge of settlement would result.
- 2.11. In **summary**, using evidence I show in the Proof of Evidence that each element proposed to change on this site has been poorly understood and designed within respect to the Site's landscape character context. I have highlighted that existing positive precedents found throughout Selborne have not influenced the design of the four key elements proposed to change.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. I agree with the previous Inspector that the wider appeal site makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Selborne. However, the evidence and assessment presented in my Proof of Evidence leads me to alternatively conclude that the proposals do not represent either the conservation or enhancement with respect to landscape character (SD4(1)) and design (SD5).
- 3.2. This site has the capacity to receive some new development, and the principles of some change have always been supported. However, as a result of the amount of development and the design approach, I cannot say that this scheme conserves and enhances this part of the National Park.