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Dear Carl

Ref: Planning application 152041 as amended.
Land North of Ashperton Village Hall - Proposed residential development of 10 dwellings

Although Ashperton Parish Council is of the opinion that the revised application for 10 dwellings would result in some reduction to the harm to the character and appearance of the landscape and visual setting of the village, and other harm, it remains of the opinion that the detriment would remain severe and would outweigh any benefit in terms of additional housing. Furthermore, whilst the removal of the northern "cluster" of dwellings would mean that there would be reduced detriment to the living conditions of those residents opposite that part of the site, there would remain significant harm to the living conditions of occupiers of properties to the west of the A417 with regard to outlook.

The Parish Council therefore strongly OBJECTS to the proposed development and this objection replaces that dated 13th August. It is divided into three main sections, the objections, elaboration of objections 1 & 2 and a critique of the Amended Design and Access Statement (DAS), and in particular the Indicative Views.

SECTION 1 The objections

- 1) The application site forms a key element defining the rural character of Ashperton being continuously visible as an open green hillside in views along the approaching A417 from a point outside the 40MPH speed limit. The development would introduce visually intrusive development of a suburban appearance into the prominent elevated location compromising its essential contribution to the character, appearance and landscape setting of the small rural village of Ashperton.
- 2) A significant aspect of the character of Ashperton results from it having developed in a piecemeal manner to provide a variety of house sizes and styles but with common threads. Although the proposal has been reduced to one "cluster" of 10 dwellings, this would, nevertheless result in a significant influx of population in one tranche to a village with a central core of around 61 dwellings. The DAS describes the access and layout of the proposal as resulting in a "community" and, given that there would be no pedestrian interconnection with the village, the Parish Council is of the view that the proposal would result in an enclave of uncharacteristic dwellings standing apart from the remainder of the village.
- 3) Although the applicant now proposes fewer dwellings than in the original scheme, he maintains the original approach to drainage and has not addressed the concerns expressed by local residents and the results of the Council's own internal consultation as to the suitability of the surface water drainage strategy and the

(existing) risk of flooding of adjacent low lying properties. The Parish Council therefore considers that an acceptable form of surface water drainage has not been demonstrated. The ground does not drain naturally as can frequently be seen “on the ground” and as demonstrated by the applicant’s own percolation tests.

- 4) The proposed dwellings would be set considerably higher than the properties to the opposite side of the A417, some of which are lower than the road level. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is no “right to a view”, and that the indicative plan shows the properties nearest the road removed from the scheme, the proposed dwellings would be set up high above the level of the road such that they would appear overbearing and potentially intimidating, to the significant detriment of the living conditions of the occupiers of those dwellings, with particular regard to outlook.
- 5) Three of the buildings to the opposite side of the road, No. 42/43, No. 45/46 (Chandlers) and No. 47 [Note: NOT Pound House as indicated in the Village Analysis] are Grade II listed as is No. 52 (Walnut Cottage) on the Village Green. The applicant has provided no description of the significance of these heritage assets as required by paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework and, given the fundamental errors in the descriptions of listed buildings in the Amended Village Analysis it appears unlikely that any basic analysis can have been undertaken. (In addition to the error described above, the diagram of “Site Analysis – Historical Buildings” describes all listed buildings in the village, with the exception of the former Box Bush Inn, as being “timber frame with sandstone plinth, thatched”, including the Church!).

Whilst it may be that a proper assessment concludes that there is not substantial harm to the significance of these heritage assets and their setting, the effect on the setting, including that on views of No. 52 in views from the north, together with views from footpath AP33 where the roofscape would probably be visible in the background, is a matter which falls to be taken into account in determining the application as is the effect on listed buildings to the opposite side of the A417.

Without any evidence of proper consideration or evidence to the contrary, the Planning Committee is invited to agree that there would be an adverse effect on listed buildings and their setting and attribute appropriate weight to that harm.

- 6) The public right of way along the southern boundary of the application site (Footpath AP28) follows the route of Saxon lane from the village of Ashperton, itself Saxon or earlier in origin, to a long abandoned group of dwellings, known as Dognall End, and beyond. Land to the immediate south of the application site, behind the Village Hall, shows signs of potentially having been terraced. In the view of the Parish Council there is potential for archaeological remains on the application site and therefore any grant of planning permission should be subject to appropriate conditions.

The Parish Council acknowledges that the provision of additional housing is at the core of Government Policy and that the Framework has a presumption in favour of sustainable development. However the Parish Council, having received the unanimous views of residents of the village at a special meeting of the Council on 30 March, consider that the proposal is environmentally unsustainable with the adverse effects significantly and demonstrably outweighing any benefit accruing from the provision of 10 additional dwellings.

Given the level of local opposition to the proposed development, and the potential impact on the landscape, the Parish Council requests that the application be determined by the Planning Committee and that a site visit takes place in advance. It is important that members are clear as to the actual impact and do not rely on sketch visualisations which may be misleading.

Section 2 Elaboration on objections 1 & 2

The applicant contends that the proposed development would be substantially screened by the roadside hedge and by the existing landform. This is blatantly not so as a site visit would clearly show. The “cluster” of 10 dwellings would be located either side of a “Homezone” access snaking up from the A417 in a shallow “S” shape from a point just outside the 30MPH speed limit towards the clearly visible Oak tree, with the uppermost property being located in the foreground of that tree in views from the north and from the access. The proposed dwellings would be in full view on rising land in many views above the hedgerow and through the gap in the hedgerow to provide highway visibility.

Furthermore, whilst the applicant states, in the Landscape Baseline Study, that the site is not visible from Footpath AP33 the Council consider that this claim has not been substantiated and that the roofscape would probably indeed be visible between hedgerow trees, extending back from the main road.

The applicant describes the site layout as being along a "Homezone" access. The concept of Homezones, as described by the Institute of Incorporated Highway Engineers in their Design Guidelines, is more applicable to larger suburban schemes where they provide access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists into and through residential development of generally larger scale. The proposal does not follow the Guidelines and the Parish Council suspect that this term may have been used loosely by the applicant to describe a shared surface access which, even so, would still appear suburban in nature and out of character in its elevated location on the edge of a rural village.

The application site is currently an elevated hillside open pasture which is a defining feature of the character, appearance and landscape setting of the village and its existing buildings. The development would be prominent and obtrusive and would result in a degradation or total loss of this crucial landscape feature. Its replacement with built development of a suburban nature would hijack views from the north when entering Ashperton. The suggested landscape planting, which is not included in the outline application and which no longer includes the "Community Orchard" proposed in the original scheme, would do little to screen these views, even after several years, and would, in itself be incongruous in its setting.

The development would NOT be in keeping with the linear nature of the existing village but would introduce in-depth development on rising ground in the form of a HIGHLY VISIBLE and OBTRUSIVE development of a suburban character into a small rural village and hence be ENVIRONMENTALLY UNSUSTAINABLE. The Parish Council contend that the development would cause severe permanent detriment to the character and appearance of Ashperton and its landscape setting, contrary to Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy SS6 and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework regarding protection of the built and natural environment.

Section 3 the Design and Access Statement

The Parish Council considers that the Statement aims merely to justify the scheme by stating, without justification, that it has been designed with careful consideration of the local context and vernacular. Given the many errors and shortcomings in the statement it is difficult to accept this claim. The text that follows does not attempt to identify all the errors and omissions in the Statement.

The Statement explains that the "vision" is new housing in Ashperton that is distinctively site specific, rural and "Herefordshire" in the design of housing, layout, orientation and landscape. The application is in outline with only access and layout for determination.

Whilst the application has been amended, unfortunately the Statement has been hastily edited and does not always reflect the amendments to the application, such as repeated references to the "northern cluster", the screening provided by the community orchard planting, the provision of the new village green area and the additional parking for the Village Hall, none of which form part of the current application.

Strangely, the Statement also refers to the proposal continuing the linear pattern of development in the village and repeatedly claims that it is located on lower ground, whereas the reality is that the proposal is for development in depth on rising ground to a ground level almost 5m above the road level at the access, at an approximately 45° angle to the main road, to a point around 100m from the A417. The depth of the development can be seen in the views that follow.

Similarly reference is made to analysis of the village context including listed buildings and village character. Given that no details of such analysis have been provided other than in a Village Analysis Study that refers to all the listed buildings, with the exception of the former Box Bush, as being timber framed and thatched (including the Church) and one of the listed buildings being incorrectly identified, very little faith can be given to this "study" or the claim that listed buildings have been taken into account in the development of the scheme.

The Statement suggests that the density of housing proposed is 12.5 d.p.h. as opposed to 30 d.p.h. in the Herefordshire UDP. The Core Strategy refers to an average NET density across the County with local variation. The figure of 12.5 is a gross figure which does not take into the landscaping area (which it is inferred would be public open space) or the access (See Proposed Adoption Plan). A realistic net figure would be more near to 25 d.p.h. The diagram in the Statement clearly shows that the density proposed is higher than that prevailing in the village. Note that the diagram also shows existing outbuildings, barns etc. which gives a distorted impression of residential density.

The Statement claims that the proposal has been designed with sensitively (sic) with gables rather than main elevations facing the road. Such an arrangement would be generally uncharacteristic of Ashperton but, in any event, the layout clearly shows the dwellings aligned alongside either side of the access which runs at approximately 45° to the A417.

In the pages that follow each of the indicative views included in the Statement is compared with a Google Streetview image from, as near as possible, the same viewpoint. It can be clearly seen that the claims as to the scheme continuing the linear development of the village, avoiding higher ground and maintaining views are without foundation.

Yours Sincerely

J L Chester

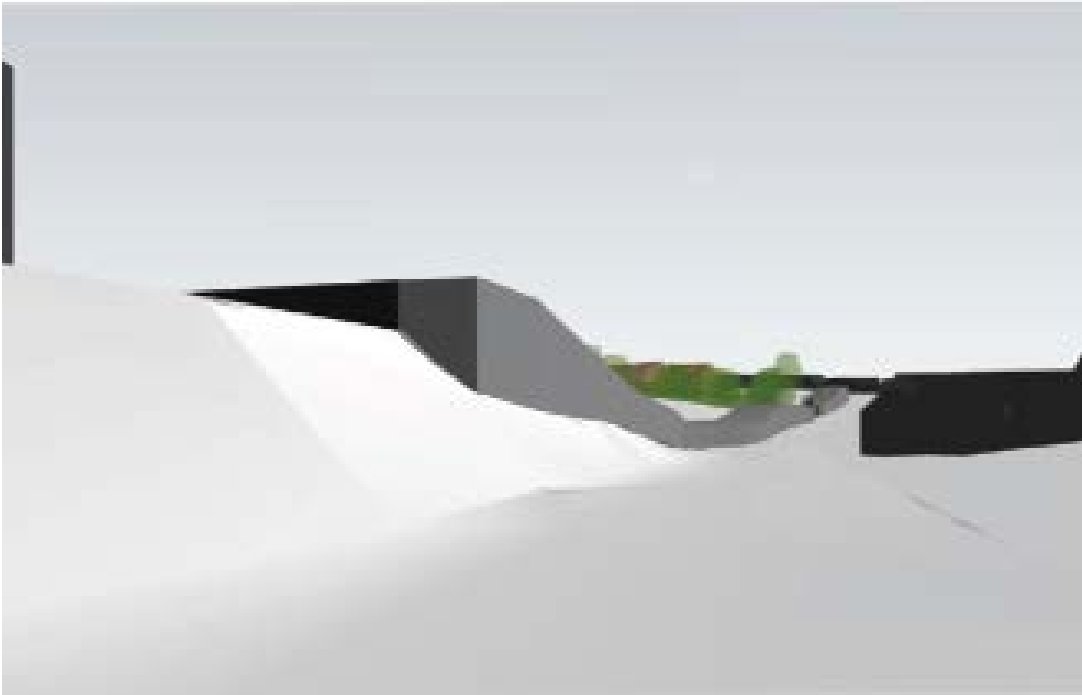
Janet Chester
Clerk to Ashperton Parish Council



Indicative view from north 1. This view cannot be reproduced. As soon as buildings to the right side of the road come into view the "Old Police House" on the left cannot be seen. As with all the indicative views the existing buildings are shown in solid black/grey which exaggerates their bulk and mass whilst the proposed dwellings are shown in pastel orange which lessens their apparent impact. Compare with Google Streetview image from the same point on the road.



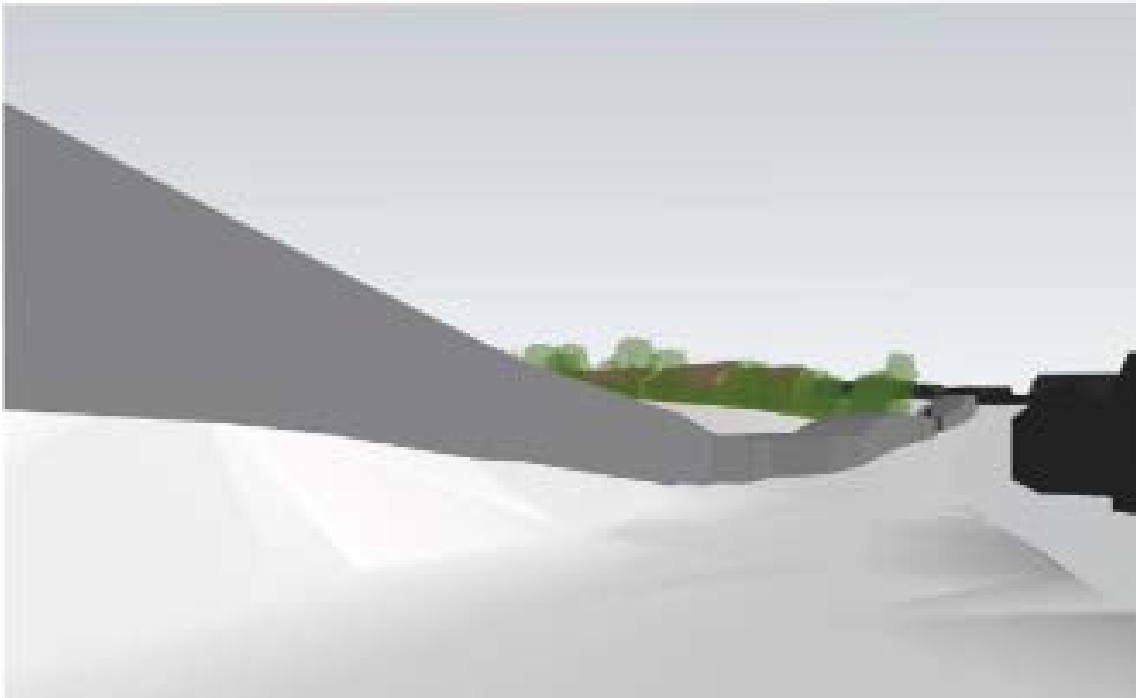
Note the dwellings on the right hand side of the road are screened from view and do not have the same appearance as indicated in the indicative view. The proposed dwellings would extend back from the road from a point in front of the Village Hall (indicated by blue arrow) across the view of No 52 (grade II listed) (indicated by orange arrow). Approximate extent of development indicated by the black line. Most of the iconic green sward would be lost.



Indicative view from north 2. Again massing and colouring of existing dwellings is deceptive. Effect of hedge exaggerated.



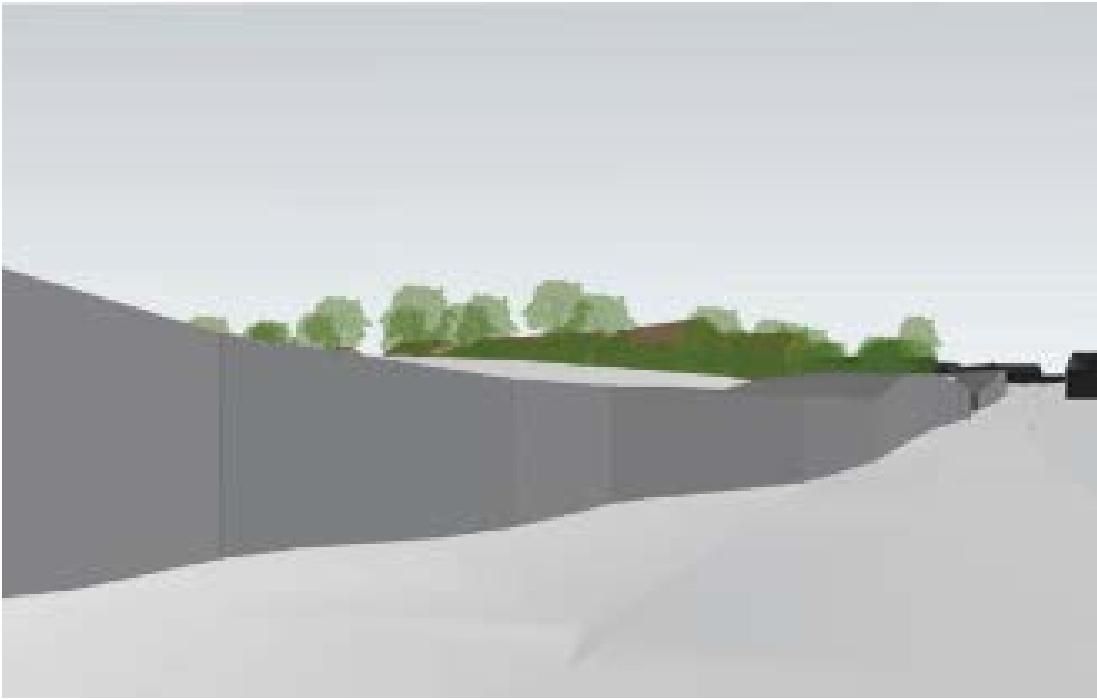
Same viewpoint as indicative view 2. Note existing buildings on right not visible let alone dominant in the view. Proposed dwellings would be highly visible extending back in depth from the main road.



Indicative view from north 3. The accompanying text suggests that "The orchard planting screens the southern (*sic*) cluster". The orchard planting no longer forms part of the application. Colouring again deceptive.



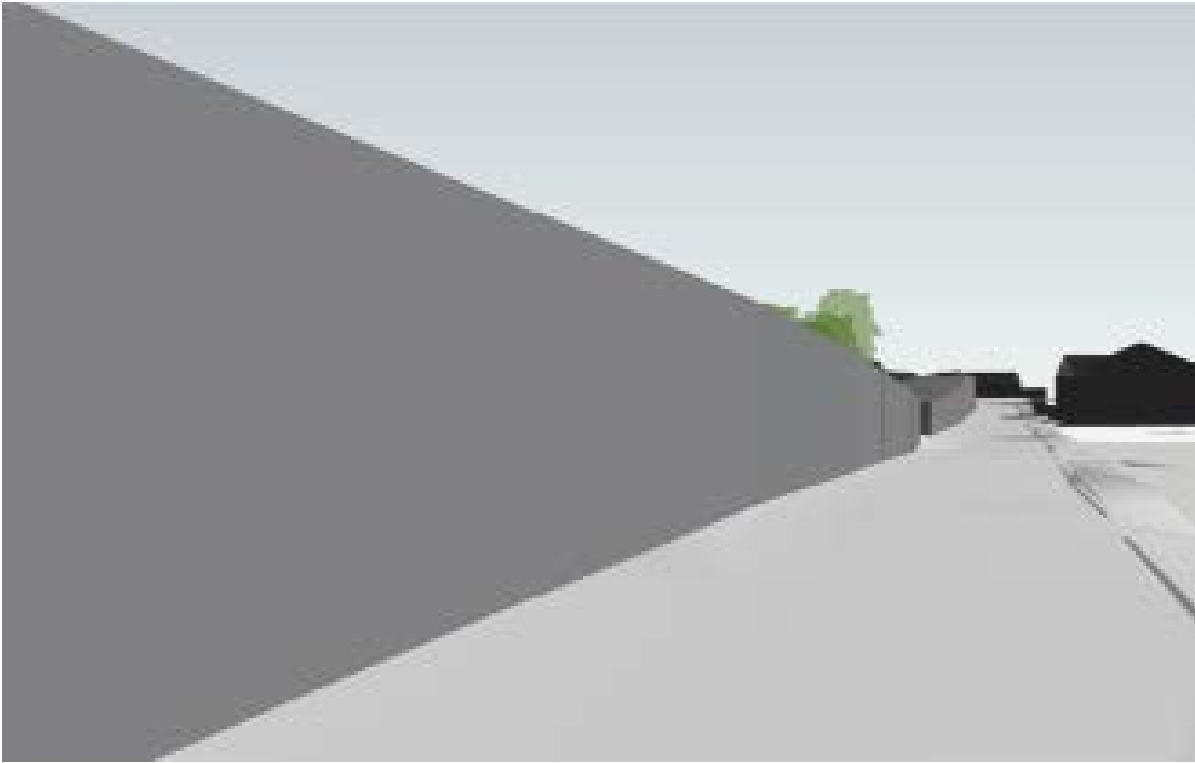
Looking south from the same viewpoint. The most easterly dwelling would be in front of the oak indicated by the green arrow not the one indicated by the red arrow which is in the field beyond. Note lack of screening by hedge and the depth of the proposed development. The proposed development would appear to cover most of the width of the sward.



Indicative view from north 4. Compare with Streetview.



Whilst the floor level of some of the houses would be obscured by the highest ground, the highest point is only around 2m above the floor level of the most easterly of the dwellings and around the same level as the highest of the dwellings.



Indicative view from the north 5. Screening by hedge grossly exaggerated. Reference in text to the orchard being visible behind the hedge.



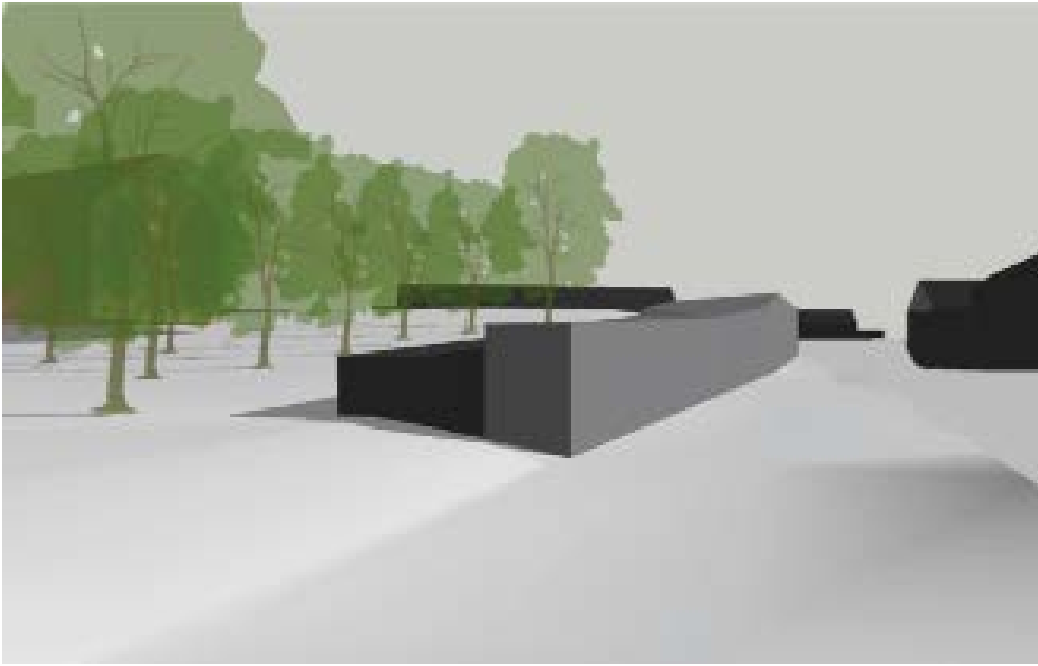
Development would be clearly visible behind/above hedge. Hedge would be cut back to provide visibility for the entrance in the approximate location of the car.



Indicative view from the north 6. Screening from hedge exaggerated. Text refers to the additional village green area which no longer forms part of the application.



Similar viewpoint. Note level of hedge and lack of prominence of existing buildings.



Indicative view from north 7. Cut back of hedge for visibility not shown and screening effect of proposed trees (in full leaf) appears exaggerated. Compare with view below which looks slightly more to the left.



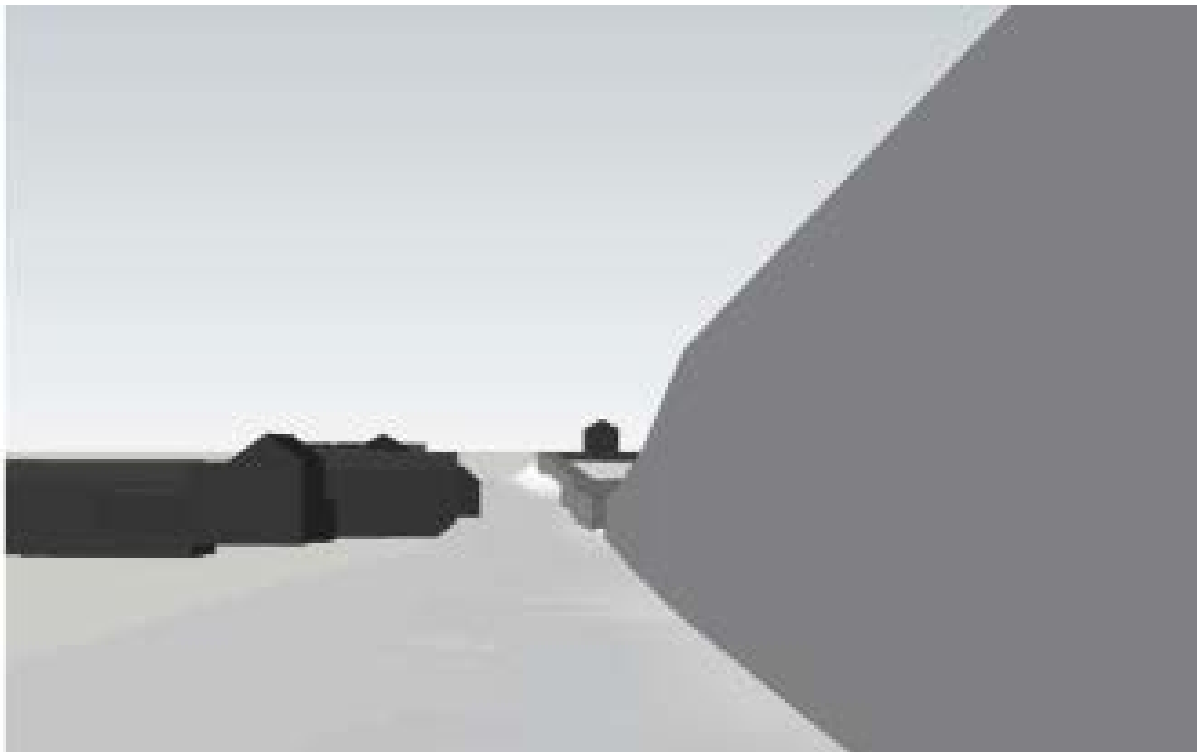
The access "Homezone" driveway would climb to a point approximately as indicated by the red arrow, almost 5m above the road at this point, with dwellings on either side. The most easterly dwelling would be located in front of the oak tree indicated by the green arrow.



Indicative view from the south 1

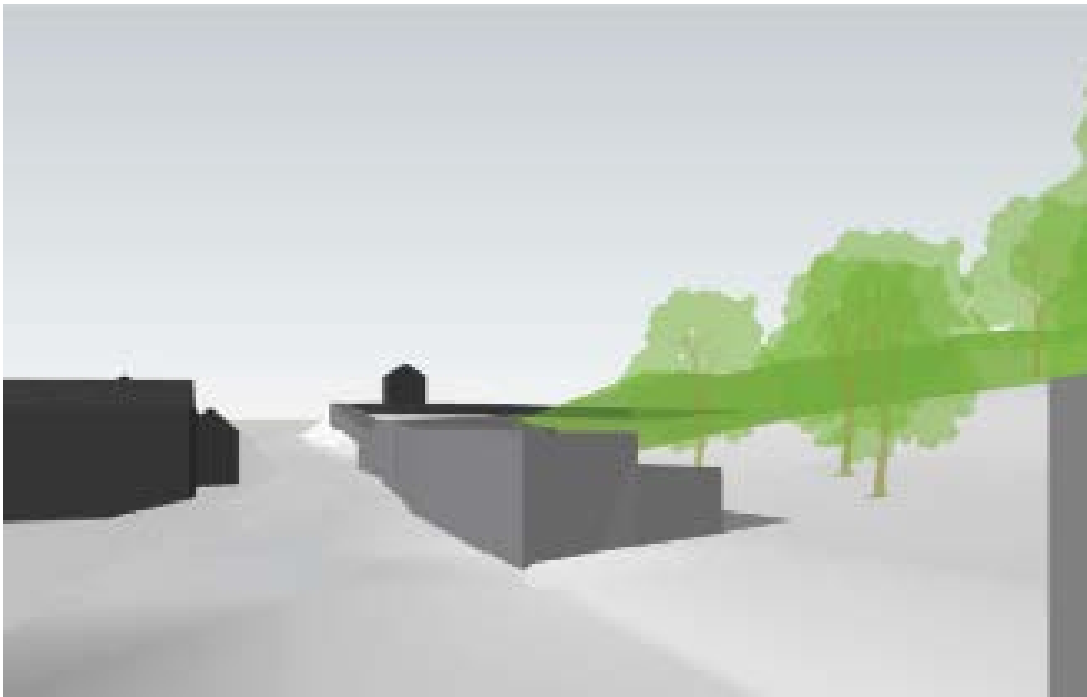


Similar viewpoint but northbound lane.



Indicative view from the south 2. Text refers to the northern cluster. Screening of hedge again exaggerated as is the massing of properties to the opposite side of the road.





Indicative view from the south 3. Visibility splay not shown. Text refers to elevations of buildings being visible but these are not shown.

