



**Sandown Park  
Racecourse, Esher**

Summary Proof of Evidence of:

**Ben Connolley**

BSc (Hons), PG DipLA, CMLI

In respect of:

**Landscape Matters**

On behalf of:

**The Jockey Club  
Racecourses Ltd**

**PINS REF:**

APP/K3605/W/20/3249790

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**SUMMARY OF CASE**

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### Volume II: Summary of Case

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r013a	BC	-	-	FJ 221020

## Summary of Case

- S1 My name is Ben Connolley. I am an Associate Landscape Architect at The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP). I have been instructed by the appellant, The Jockey Club Racecourses Ltd, to provide advice, evidence and expert opinion with regard to the effects, in landscape and visual terms, of the appeal proposals including their impact on the character of the area, on the open character of the Green Belt and the visual impact on openness, in so far as this is relevant in this case. I rely upon the evidence of Robert Clarke of Rapleys in relation to planning evidence including in relation to interpretation and application of Green Belt policy. In addition, I rely upon the submitted evidence on ecology and arboriculture.
- S2 From the outset, my impression of the appeal site was that it has very positive credentials as a location to deliver the scale of development proposed, while maintaining the key characteristics of a Racecourse, rather than 'open countryside'. It is land that had never been identified as meriting special designatory status in landscape or scenic terms; it is private land with no rights of way across it and although there is some degree of open character within it, in the wider context it is effectively enclosed by existing built form, solid fencing and mature tree and other cover. Its status as Green Belt was, and remains, a significant policy constraint not a landscape designation.
- S3 While views from publicly accessible areas are often limited by urban form, large built form within the Racecourse, namely the Grandstand and Eclipse buildings, affords private long-distance views over London for its visitors and are visible from a length of Portsmouth Road. Moreover, it was, in a landscape character sense, very well related to the urban area of Esher. The character of the land within the Racecourse boundary is that of a racecourse, with all that that entails. The open land within the Racecourse boundary can be categorised as semi-urban, with buildings, structures, fencing, jumps and other forms of development used for sport and recreation within the central area, land used for car parking, with the larger Grandstand, Eclipse and other buildings adjacent.
- S4 As the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013) (GLVIA3), reminds us, the landscape context for this proposal is not simply the open land of the appeal site; it includes the urban context of central Esher and the wider built context which provides the setting for these proposals. So while we are all inclined to value open character and 'naturalness' over built form, that inclination should not be a blindfold to the prospects for re-use in a different form which is sometimes a necessary and inevitable pressure on the landscape resource, subject of course to an appropriately sensitive design.
- S5 The application has clearly been preceded by comprehensive assessment of topics relevant to landscape including its habitats, protected species, landscape and townscape character, visual amenity, hydrology, tree and hedgerow stock; it conserves wherever possible existing landscape features with minimal losses (heavily compensated for with the planting of c.225 trees); it substantially enhances the overall

habitats and fabric of the appeal site; delivers enhanced long term management of existing and new landscape features and enhances social landscape value through increased public enjoyment and access to land which is currently privately owned.

- S6 Following the maturation of the landscape mitigation proposals, there are no elevated adverse effects arising from the proposed development upon landscape designations or the underlying townscape or wider landscape character. There may be some intervisibility experienced by residents when viewed from locations adjacent to the Racecourse, but the existing nature of the townscape context, and the use proposed, would be considered to moderate any effect accordingly. The long-term impact of the proposal on the local townscape and wider landscape context would be no greater than moderate/minor, with both adverse and beneficial elements within the proposals, resulting from a slight and non-fundamental alteration.
- S7 In combination with the overall moderate/minor effect arising from the appeal proposals, it is the case that any appreciation of new built form would be experienced from a very localised area, essentially from a short section of Portsmouth Road and from a short section of More Lane. Overall, views of the appeal proposals would be within an area of less than 200m radius from the Racecourse. Beyond 200m, baseline landscape or townscape character and visual amenity are only marginally affected, if at all.
- S8 It is not my role to undertake the overall planning balance, but from a strictly landscape perspective and recognising that the application for the built development is in outline, my professional opinion is that the proposals as now formulated in the Design and Access Statement in particular would, overall, be entirely in keeping with current landscape and townscape characteristics of the area. It is, as stated above, relevant that notable effects of the proposed development on townscape and visual receptors are contained within an area of less than 200m from the Racecourse boundary and for much of the perimeter, confined to the Racecourse itself, in itself largely visually confined private land without public rights of access, The so-called 'gap' would remain. The changes proposed would not change the character of the racecourse as a racecourse nor would they have material wider landscape or townscape consequences.
- S9 The above comments are relevant when considering, first, the impact on the character of the area, second, the impact on the open character of the Green Belt, in so far as this is different, and third, the visual impact on openness of the Green Belt, in so far as relevant in this case. The impact of the proposals in each respect is wholly acceptable and there is no harm as a consequence of the development to any of them. I therefore reject the reasons for refusal relevant to landscape and visual considerations.
- S10 I believe this scheme represents a positive addition to the area in landscape and townscape terms and one which is compliant with relevant guidance and policy when read as a whole. I respectfully recommend that insofar as landscape, townscape and visual matters pertain to the determination of this appeal, that planning permission should be granted.



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