



11D Milton Park
Milton
Abingdon
Oxon
OX14 4RS

Tel: 01235 438900
Fax: 01235 438909

www.adas.co.uk

Shaza Mark (Planning) Policy Officer
Planning and Performance
Melton Borough Council
Council Offices
Nottingham Road
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire
LE13 0UL

8 April 2011

Dear Shaza,

Re: Briefing note on difference between LCA & LVIA

As requested, the note below has been drafted to help explain the difference between a landscape character assessment (e.g. Melton Landscape Character Assessment 2006 LCA) and the impact of new development on the landscape and visual character of the landscape (e.g. the new building for the John Ferneley School).

Landscape character assessments (LCA) are an important part of the forward planning process and aim to capture the nature of the current landscape in a given area. The assessment looks at all the elements that exist within a landscape and seeks out patterns and characteristics that make an area distinct. This type of assessment is essentially 'broad brush' and takes a strategic look at the landscape dividing it up into character areas that are then described and mapped.

In contrast, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) is a tool in the development control process and is used to assess the potential impact of a particular development on its surrounding landscape. LVIAs start off by capturing information on the landscape character in the area around a proposed development and use this information to assess whether the development is likely to have an effect (direct or indirect) on the landscape or visual amenity of the area.

When updating a landscape character assessment the main objective is to identify whether any significant changes in the landscape (since the LCA was last published) have resulted in a material change in the patterns and characteristics that make an area distinct. Development may have occurred in the intervening years, but it will need to have sufficiently changed the key characteristics to have an effect on the nature of a character area.

The John Ferneley School lies within the 2006 LCA character area named Melton Farmland Fringes (LCA 20). The area already has a distinctly urban fringe character and contains the following distinct characteristics: Rolling landscape of fields and hedges; mixed pasture and arable land; clear distinction between urban edge and countryside; housing estates remain unscreened; some industrial and other land uses (e.g. MoD). Whilst it is recognised that the new school buildings are visually apparent from a number of viewing points, the farmland fringe description is still valid. The new school buildings were also developed within the

existing school grounds and therefore had no direct impact on the physical characteristics of the surrounding area. The rolling landscape of fields and hedges and the mixed pasture and arable land remain unaffected by the development.

The evaluation of the landscape sensitivity around Melton Mowbray (2006 LCA) ranked twelve 'development search areas' according to their potential sensitivity to new development. The ranking decisions were based on the following:

- the degree to which the landscape in question was considered robust, in that it might be able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character.
- whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss through disturbance.
- whether or not the significant characteristic elements could easily be restored. Whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change. Consideration was also given to the addition of new elements, which may also have a significant influence on character.

In the 2006 LCA the sensitivity of Zone A (the John Ferneley school lies within this Zone) was described as having the highest quality landscape surrounding the town - an area of farmland with a strong pattern of fields with few visual detractors. Although the ridgelines have high visibility, the interface between town and country is well defined.

The 2011 field survey identified the school buildings as a new development within this zone. However, whilst the visibility of the new buildings was recognised, the assessment considered that the new development had not diminished the overall sensitivity of the landscape within Zone A and it remained a highly sensitive landscape. For example, there had been no impact on the underlying landscape structure and the new development sits on the fringe of the town with an urban backdrop.

In the context of the decision tree above:

- the key landscape characteristics of Zone A remain unchanged and therefore it was considered that the landscape would still not be robust if significant change in landscape character were to occur.
- the significant characteristic elements of the landscape would still be liable to loss through disturbance.
- the significant characteristic elements would not easily be restored as they are linked to historic field patterns and features such as ridge and furrow that cannot be replaced. Important aesthetic aspects of character such as traditional pastoral farmland with a strong pattern of fields enclosed by hedgerows and scattered mature trees would remain sensitive to change. New elements may also have an influence on character, but they would need to be numerous or take up a significant proportion of the zone.

The Melton Landscape Character Assessment Update 2011 therefore considered all the above points and concluded that LCA 20 would not require any additional description and the Sensitivity of Zone A would remain ranked High despite the new buildings for the John Ferneley School.

Yours Sincerely,



Keith Rowe BA(Hons) MA MSc MLI