

Visual Impact Assessment

The University of Reading (UoR)

St Patrick's Hall

for

Willmore Iles

January 2018

THE **Landmark**
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The report which we have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by a Chartered Landscape Architect, informs the proposed extension of St Patrick's Hall within The University of Reading.
- 1.2 The report assesses the potential effects of the proposed development on the visual amenity of key receptors at the three preselected viewpoints listed below, and determines the need for and scope of any mitigation required to address identified adverse effects:
- Viewpoint 1: From the junction of Northcourt Avenue and Christchurch Road looking across to the site in a south westerly direction; and
 - Viewpoint 2: From the corner of Cintra Avenue/Warwick Road looking across to the site in a south easterly direction.
 - Viewpoint 3: From the east facing façade of the Grade II listed Whitely Park Farm House looking across to the site in a north easterly direction.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The Visual Impact Assessment was undertaken in accordance with the *"Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment"*, (Third Edition), Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, (2013) and covered the following stages:
- A site visit to assess the three pre selected viewpoints, which were consulted in advance with the Local Planning Authority;
 - Preparation of three wirelines indicating the location, mass and height of the development based on the above views; and
 - Identification of key visual receptors, an assessment of visual effects on these receptors and an overall conclusion.
- 2.2 Three wirelines were prepared based on a three dimensional wireframe computer model for the proposed development. The output for each included the existing viewpoint, the proposed building as wireframe photomontage and a wireframe photomontage of the development behind intervening vegetation and buildings (**Figures 1 to 3** within **Appendix A** refer).
- 2.3 Visual effects were assessed against visual sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance criteria (see **Appendix B** for further details), and considered effects during construction and after completion of the proposed development.
- 2.4 **Sensitivity:** Each receptor was assessed first in terms of its value and importance. This value was then combined with an assessment of each receptor's vulnerability to the changes proposed. This process provided the assessor with a rational basis on which to assign the receptor a level of sensitivity to changes in the visual environment.
- 2.5 In terms of visual receptors, views from high or medium designated landscapes, parks and gardens, Listed Buildings and well-used public rights of way (PRoWs) are considered to be very high / high. Views from a medium quality, non-designated but locally important landscape including outdoor sports and recreation are considered to be medium sensitivity, whilst views from major roads, non-designated but local landscapes and less well used

PRoWs are considered to be of low sensitivity. The sensitivity of views from residential properties is dependent on the number of visual receptors as well as their proximity and the orientation of the building / garden and associated windows to the site.

- 2.6 **Magnitude of change:** The sensitivity level was then combined with the predicted magnitude of change to the receptor arising from the development.
- 2.7 The nature of the effect, its duration and reversibility are all considered and used to determine the significance of the effect on each receptor resulting from the proposed development.
- 2.8 Magnitude of visual change is categorised as Very High, Medium, Low to Negligible / No Change. Receptors will be very high where there is a permanent loss of a highly valued view, high where development is visually dominant, medium where the development is clearly visible but not prominent in the view and low where the development does not introduce any uncharacteristic features. The magnitude of change will be negligible where development will be barely discernible. Similarly, and importantly, the magnitude of change may result in beneficial effects based on the same scale.
- 2.9 **Significance criteria:** The significance of effects was assessed using the appropriate national and international quality standards and professional judgement. For clarity and transparency criteria have been used to attribute levels of significance. Broadly, the significance is a function of the magnitude of change and the number and sensitivity of receptors. The reversibility and duration of the effect are also important considerations.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

Potential Visual Effects during Construction and Operation

- 3.1 The potential visual effects on visual receptors close to the three preselected viewpoints are outlined below.

Viewpoint 1

- 3.2 Key visual receptors include residents off Northcourt Avenue and south of Christchurch Road (A327), drivers, passengers and non road users along Northcourt Avenue, and workers and visitors to local shops. Whilst the majority of properties are two storeys there are some properties (largely apartments) which are up to four storeys in height. There are views across to the proposed development from lower and upper storey windows of properties' gable ends, and oblique views from front facing windows and gardens.
- 3.3 **Sensitivity:** Based on the criteria within **Appendix B**, the sensitivity of residents is considered to be High, Medium for drivers, passengers, non road users and Low for workers/visitors to shops.
- 3.4 **Magnitude of Change:** The development is considered to be Low to Negligible Adverse during construction. Cranes associated with the development may form skyline features through such structures will only be glimpsed through existing vegetation. It is considered

that the development will be Medium to Low Adverse in terms of magnitude of change after completion especially during winter months when trees are not in leaf.

Significance of effects during Construction

- 3.5 During construction residents, drivers, passengers, non road users, workers and shoppers off Northcourt Avenue may have glimpsed views of cranes assisting in the construction of St Patrick's Hall beyond intervening vegetation and buildings in the foreground, including buildings associated with the university. Works may include lighting to aid construction activity especially in winter months. It is considered that the development whilst generating a slight alteration to the composition of the view will be barely discernible in the landscape. Such views will generate Low to Negligible Adverse in effects on all receptors during the summer and winter months.

Significance of effects on Completion

- 3.6 On completion of the proposed development there will be a small degradation of views generating a Minor to Negligible Adverse effect (winter to summer respectively) on residents and remaining users. Views will be partial, and of the fourth, fifth and six floor of the proposed development. Views will be interrupted by existing vegetation which will be more effective during summer months.

Viewpoint 2

- 3.7 Key visual receptors include residents off Warwick Road, Cintra Park, Cintra Avenue and south of Christchurch Road (A327), drivers, passengers and non road users along these roads as well as visitors to Cintra Park. Whilst the majority of properties are two storeys there are some properties flanking the edge of the park which are up to four storeys in height.
- 3.8 ***Sensitivity:*** Based on criteria within **Appendix B**, the sensitivity of residents is High, and Medium for drivers, passengers, non road users and receptors utilising the park.
- 3.9 ***Magnitude of Change:*** The development is considered to be Negligible Adverse in terms of magnitude of change during construction and Negligible Adverse/No Change on completion.

Significance of effects during Construction

- 3.10 During construction residents, drivers, passengers, non road users and users of Cintra Park may have glimpsed views of cranes assisting in the construction of St Patrick's Hall beyond intervening vegetation and buildings in the foreground, including buildings associated with the university. Works whilst generating a slight alteration to the composition of the view, will be barely discernible in the landscape. Such views will generate Negligible Adverse to No Change in effects on all receptors during the summer and winter months.

Significance of effects on Completion

- 3.11 On completion of the proposed development there will be No Change in effects on all receptors from this viewpoint. Views of the development will be screened by intervening vegetation and existing buildings.¹

Viewpoint 3

- 3.12 Key visual receptors include residents of Whitely Park Farm House, residents using the open space to the east of the Farm House and drivers, passengers and non road users using the campus estate road.
- 3.13 This Visual Appraisal sets out an assessment of the visual effects of the proposed development on this receptor. The heritage significance and /or effects on the setting of Whitely Park Farm House are detailed within the Heritage Statement paragraph 5.2.2.1 (White Young Green, 2017) and are therefore not assessed within this report.
- 3.14 ***Sensitivity:*** Based on criteria within **Appendix B**, the sensitivity of residents is High, and Medium for drivers, passengers, non road users and receptors utilising the open space around the pond.
- 3.15 ***Magnitude of Change:*** The proposed development is considered to be Medium-Low Adverse in terms of magnitude of change during construction. The magnitude of change will also be Medium-Low Adverse on completion.

Significance of effects during Construction

- 3.16 During construction residents, drivers, passengers, non road users and users of the open space will experience views of cranes and high level construction features as they will break the existing skyline. The existing band of trees within the mid ground of the view will provide some seasonal screening of the lower floors of the development during construction. Views will generate a Moderate-Minor Adverse effect on all receptors during the summer and winter months.

Significance of effects on Completion

- 3.17 On completion of the proposed development there will be Moderate-Minor Adverse effects on all receptors from this viewpoint as although the development does not introduce an uncharacteristic feature in the view it is clearly visible and alters the existing skyline. Existing vegetation does assist in screening the lower floors of the development and assists in partially filtering views of the top two levels, this filtering will increase over time. It should be noted that the existing modern campus buildings to the left of the view provide some detracting from the completed development.

¹ It should be noted that the Tree Survey relating to Cintra Park was reviewed and it is considered that the presence of existing trees edging Cintra Park to the south will not affect Viewpoint 2 due to the height of an existing building forming part of The University of Reading in the foreground.

4.0 VISUAL MITIGATION

- 4.1 The mitigation which can be defined as “inherent” or “primary” is incorporated into the scheme design. Below are the secondary mitigation measures recommended as a result of this assessment.

During construction

- 4.2 Existing trees and hedgerows that are to be retained within the development will be protected during construction activity in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations.
- 4.3 Lighting may be necessary during the winter months but, to minimise sky glow, light spill and glare the following mitigation measures should be applied:
- Lighting should only focus on the area needed for construction activity, public amenity and safety;
 - Vertical light spillage will be kept to a minimum. Lighting equipment should be chosen to minimise the upward spread of light where possible, minimising the use of lighting columns; and
 - To reduce the glare of lighting, the main beam angle should be adjusted so as not to be directed towards potential observers.

After Completion

The built form

- 4.4 Proposed lighting should, where possible, be low level and unobtrusive to reduce night glow and effects on adjacent residents.
- 4.5 Introduction of a management and maintenance strategy to protect existing and proposed trees, and to ensure their long term survival.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Visual Impact Assessment considered that the effects of the proposed development on the three viewpoints were Medium-Low to No Change during construction, and Medium-Minor Adverse to No Change after completion.
- 5.2 Lighting during construction and after completion should be carefully considered in relation to these three viewpoints alongside the retention and long term survival of existing trees to screen the development from view.

APPENDIX A: Figures

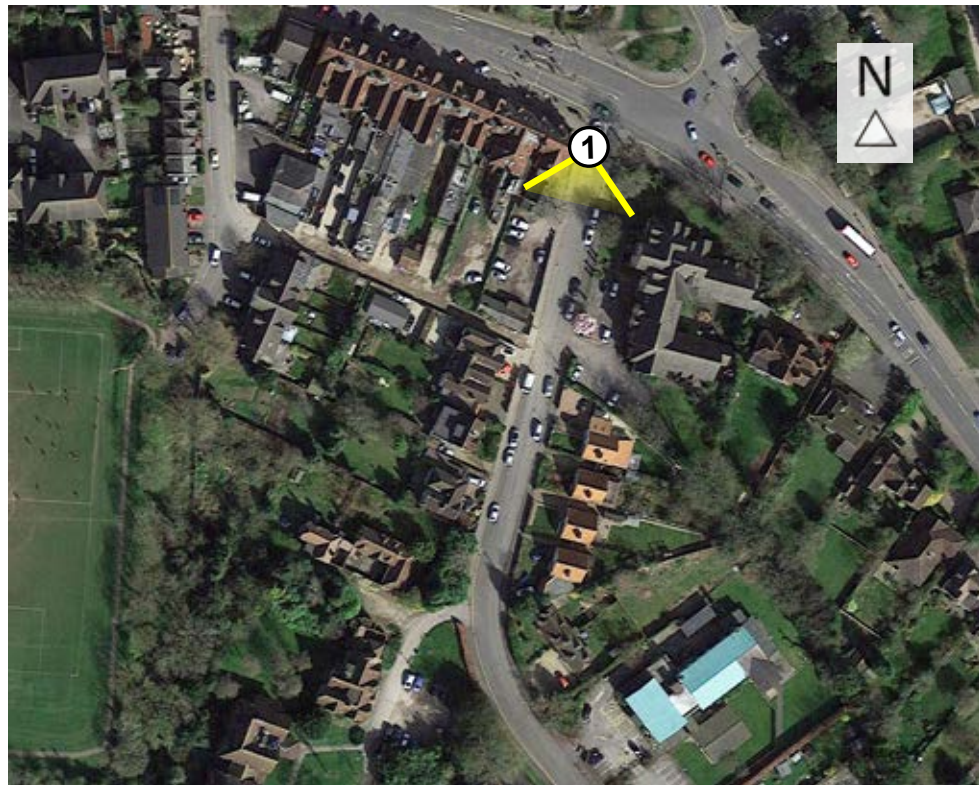
Viewpoint 1 - Off junction between Northcourt Avenue and Shinfield Road, looking southwesterly



Existing view



Occluded wireframe photomontage



VIEWPOINT: 1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 24 October 17 @ 12:13
GRID REF: SU 72726 72035
BEARING: 196° SW
GROUND LEVEL ELEVATION: 69 m AOD
DISTANCE TO SITE: 131 m
CAMERA: Nikon D3200
CAMERA/VIEWER HEIGHT: 1.6m
CAMERA FOCAL LENGTH: 50 mm
HORIZONTAL FOV: 86°
PAPER SIZE: A1
RECOMMENDED VIEWING DISTANCE: 400 mm



Massing (for reference only)

Viewpoint 2 - View looking across Cintra Park towards St Patricks Hall in a southeasterly direction



Existing view



Occluded wireframe photomontage



VIEWPOINT: 2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 24 October 17 @ 12:21
GRID REF: SU 72400 71955
BEARING: 112° SE
GROUND LEVEL ELEVATION: 68 m AOD
DISTANCE TO SITE: 233 m
CAMERA: Nikon D3200
CAMERA/VIEWER HEIGHT: 1.6m
CAMERA FOCAL LENGTH: 50 mm
HORIZONTAL FOV: 104°
PAPER SIZE: A1
RECOMMENDED VIEWING DISTANCE: 350 mm



Massing (for reference only)

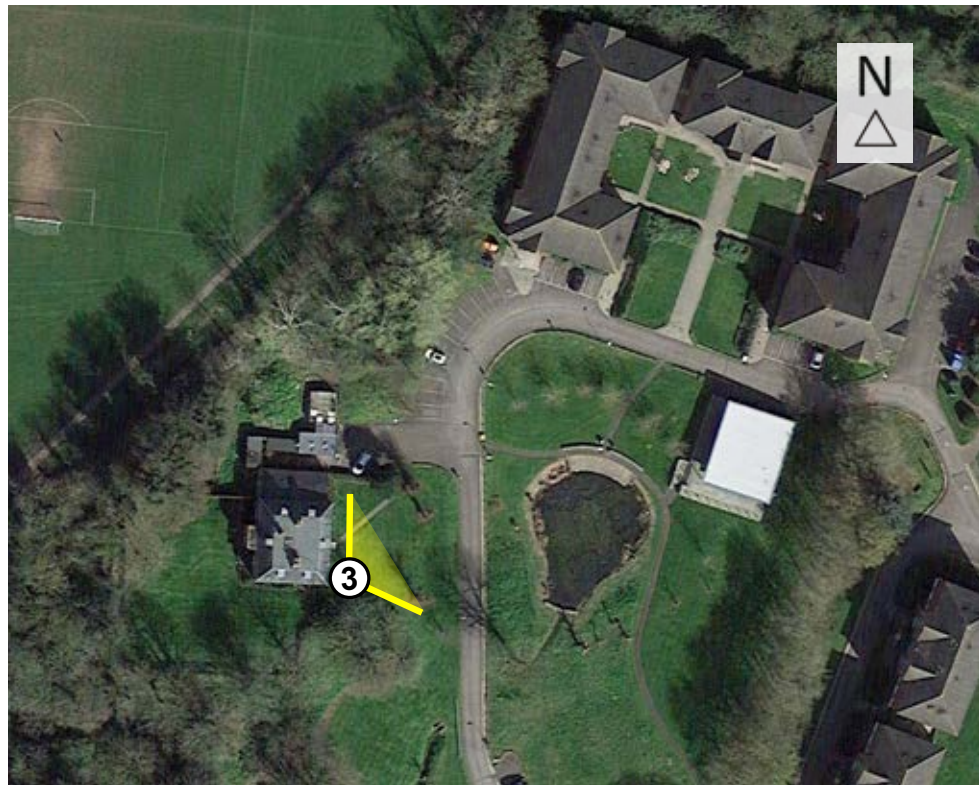
Viewpoint 3 - From listed farmhouse south of Cintra Park, looking in a northeasterly direction.



Existing view



Occluded wireframe photomontage



VIEWPOINT: 3
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 24 October 17 @ 11:54
GRID REF: SU 72487 71780
BEARING: 62° NE
GROUND LEVEL ELEVATION: 65 m AOD
DISTANCE TO SITE: 115 m
CAMERA: Nikon D3200
CAMERA/VIEWER HEIGHT: 1.6m
CAMERA FOCAL LENGTH: 50 mm
HORIZONTAL FOV: 104°
PAPER SIZE: A1
RECOMMENDED VIEWING DISTANCE: 350 mm



Massing (for reference only)

APPENDIX B: Sensitivity, magnitude of change and significance criteria

Table B1 Visual Receptor Sensitivity

VISUAL RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY	DEFINITION
Very high	- Views from within internationally and nationally designated high quality landscapes (National Parks, AONB), Scheduled Monuments or Grade 1 listed buildings and their setting, where views from, or near to public rights of way/public roads (where the attractive nature of the environment is a significant factor in the enjoyment of the visit - typically National Trails and Long Distance Footpaths). - Views from large numbers of residential properties in the same location (typically 100+).
High	- Views from within high or medium high quality designated landscapes (Areas of Great Landscape Value, Areas of Attractive Landscape and Strategic Gaps), parks or gardens listed in the National Gardens Register, Grade II* and II listed buildings and their settings. - Views recognised /important viewpoints including tourist destinations and marked on maps. - Views from well used public rights of way including long distance trails (where the attractive nature of the countryside is a significant factor in the enjoyment of the walk). - Views from Open Access Land and National Trust land. - Views from residential properties – views from properties within a similar location typically between 10-100))
Medium	- Views from within medium quality non-designated but locally important landscapes, outdoor sports or recreation (where the landscape is not a factor in the enjoyment of the sport). - Views from public rights of way / footpaths used locally and passing through attractive rural landscapes and well used footpaths within urban areas - Views from or near to residential properties, from passenger trains, or people within cars on local roads. - Views from residential properties – views from single or small groups of residential properties (less than 10). - Views from those working outside associated with nurseries and stables - Views from places of worship and associated grounds and schools - Views from those playing or spectating at outdoor sports or undertaking formal outdoor recreation. - Views from users of local roads where there are clear / open views across the landscape and low levels of traffic.
Low	- Views from within medium-low non-designated but locally important landscapes. - Views from less well used public rights of way which pass through less attractive landscapes or townscape and are not used for enjoyment of the scenery. - Views from or near to motorways, major roads, or business premises. - Views from users of main roads travelling at speed or local roads where the focus is upon the road ahead owing to traffic conditions and the context / composition of the view.
Negligible	Views from within unattractive non-designated landscapes of local importance.

Table B2: Magnitude of Visual Change

VISUAL IMPACT MAGNITUDE	DEFINITION
Very high	Adverse: Proposals result in the total, permanent loss of a highly valued view. Total and complete change in the composition of the view with the introduction of features and elements not present in the locality.
	Beneficial: Proposals reinstate a formerly lost valued view. Development introduces a valued landmark or feature within views from a recognised vantage point.
High	Adverse: Proposals introduce dominant, discordant elements altering the composition and balance of the view. Development interrupts or detracts from the focus of a recognised important view or vista. Proposals introduce features not present in skyline views of the area.
	Beneficial: Development introducing positive elements that enhance legibility and composition of degraded views. Proposals remove existing visual detractors and introduce development that respects the scale, form and layout of existing visual components.
Medium	Adverse: Development is clearly visible, but not prominent in views. Proposals may introduce some uncharacteristic elements that are incongruous in limited localised views. Development may form skyline features amongst existing development and / or vegetation where skyline views are not typical.
	Beneficial: Proposals enhance the visual setting and complement the composition of the view and the scale and form of development within it.
Low	Adverse: Development does not introduce uncharacteristic or incongruent features into the view. Proposals do not alter the composition of the view or the dominance or balance of elements within it. Development does not protrude above existing elements to be dominate on the skyline. Views of the proposals are filtered or seen in partial glimpsed views between existing development or vegetation. Views of development are brief and fleeting as seen from moving vehicles.
	Beneficial: Development compliments the composition and balance of elements within existing views.
Negligible/ No Change	The development would be barely discernible in views. Proposals perceived as a background component in views or are subservient to other elements within it.

Table B3: Significance Criteria

Significance	Definition
Major adverse	The proposed development will cause substantial degradation of the existing views. These adverse effects are key factors in the decision-making process. These effects are generally, but not exclusively, associated with sites or features of international, national or regional importance that are likely to suffer a most damaging impact and loss of resource integrity. However, a major change in a site or feature of local importance may also enter this category.
Moderate adverse	The proposed development will cause noticeable degradation of the existing views. These adverse effects may be important, but are not likely to be key decision-making factors. The cumulative effects of such factors may influence decision-making if they lead to an increase in the overall adverse effect on a particular resource or receptor.
Minor adverse	The proposed development will cause small degradation of the existing views. These adverse effects may be raised as local factors. They are unlikely to be critical in the decision-making process, but are important in enhancing the subsequent design of the project.
Negligible adverse	The proposed development will cause barely perceptible degradation of the existing views.
Neutral	Beneficial effects balance out adverse effects such that there is no overall beneficial or adverse effect
No change	No effects or those that are beneath levels of perception, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.
Negligible beneficial	The proposed development will cause barely perceptible improvement to the existing views.
Minor beneficial	The proposed development will cause a small improvement to the existing views.
Moderate beneficial	The proposed development will cause noticeable improvement to the existing views.
Major beneficial	The proposed development will cause substantial improvement in existing views. In making a decision about the proposal this advantageous effect may be considered to compensate to some degree for other, non-landscape, adverse effects.