



Analysis of Pegasus' Landscape Justification Note and Indicative Development Framework for development proposals in the vicinity of Callendar Farm, Nuneaton

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Development Framework for Development Proposals in the vicinity of
Callendar Farm, Nuneaton**

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FIGURES

Figure 1: Specific Landscape Recommendations

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 TEP has been asked by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) to consider the Landscape Justification Note and Indicative Development Framework for development proposals in the vicinity of Callendar Farm on the northeast edge of Nuneaton, which have been prepared by Pegasus Landscape Design (Pegasus) on behalf of its client (Callendar Farm Ltd and the adjoining landowner). This short report provides an analysis of these proposals with reference to previous landscape assessment work undertaken by TEP for NBBC as part of a Land Use Designations Study. This report also provides some further specific landscape recommendations in light of Pegasus' proposals.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Land Use Designations Study

- 1.2 The following outlines the work previously carried out by TEP between 2011 and 2012 for NBBC as part of a Land Use Designations Study.

Stage 1

Volume 1: Nuneaton and Bedworth Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)¹

- 1.3 The LCA of Nuneaton and Bedworth involved a review and update of the borough's existing landscape character assessments to ensure complete up to date coverage. The assessment focused on land outside the urban area on land either covered by Green Belt, Area of Restraint or Countryside planning designations. The LCA provides important information to development control officers and developers in helping to assess and develop proposals which make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness of an area.

Volume 2: Policy Recommendations²

- 1.4 This Volume of the Land Use Designations Study provided recommendations for the application of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Landscape Character Assessment in the emerging Local Development Framework. The study reviewed the integrity of existing designations to assess whether they were still needed and appropriate to be carried forward to the Local Development Framework.

¹ Stage 1, Volume 1: Nuneaton and Bedworth Landscape Character Assessment, August 2012 (TEP doc. ref. 2534.016 Version 4.0)

² Stage 1, Volume 2: Policy Recommendations, June 2011 (TEP doc. ref. 2534.015 Version 3.0)

*Volume 3: Site Analysis and Selection*³

- 1.5 TEP's Site Analysis and Selection report was prepared in conjunction with the LCA and was undertaken to identify the likely constraints to development on land at the settlement edges of Nuneaton and Bedworth which lies outside Green Belt, and included an assessment of the land against the purposes of Green Belt and consideration of the landscape's capacity to accommodate change. Constraints to development including ecological and archaeological designations were also reviewed.

Stage 2: Individual Site Assessment⁴

- 1.6 NBBC reviewed the findings of the Stage 1 work and identified a number of Potential Development Areas (PDAs) on land at the settlement edges for further consideration by TEP as part of the Stage 2: Individual Site Assessment.
- 1.7 These PDAs included a parcel of farmland, including the farmstead at Callendar Farm, adjacent to existing residential development at St Nicholas Park and between the A47 The Long Shoot and Higham Lane on the northeast edge of Nuneaton (PDA 1: St Nicholas Park).
- 1.8 As part of the Stage 1: Site Analysis and Selection study TEP considered the landscape and visual qualities of the PDAs within the context of the wider landscape. The study also assessed the PDA's scope to accommodate mitigation, made a judgement in landscape terms of whether the site should be taken forward for development and if so, made landscape recommendations to guide future development.
- 1.9 TEP has prepared a short report which summarises the findings of its Land Use Designations Study in relation to the land in the vicinity of Callendar Farm, and provides further explanation of the landscape recommendations made for future development at this location as part of this study (see TEP ref. 5043.001).

³ Stage 1, Volume 3: Site Analysis and Selection, May 2011 (TEP doc. ref. 2534.017 Version 2.0)

⁴ Stage 2: Individual Site Assessment, February 2012 (TEP doc. ref. 2534.028 Version 3.0)

2 REVIEW OF PEGASUS' LANDSCAPE JUSTIFICATION NOTE AND INDICATIVE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

- 2.1 The introduction to Pegasus' Landscape Justification Note explains that it is specifically focused on the part of the proposed development area shown on their Indicative Development Framework that would extend beyond the North Nuneaton Strategic Housing Site (site reference SHS4), which is proposed in the submission version of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Plan Preferred Options 2013 (see Plate 1 presented in the Pegasus' report).

Baseline

- 2.2 Generally Pegasus provides an accurate description of site context and character in the baseline section of its report. At paragraph 2.1, the baseline assessment explains that: *'the northern site boundary is formed by a well maintained field boundary with occasional hedgerow trees. The site and surrounding landscape are in agricultural use and the flat topography and well maintained hedgerow mean that large scale open views of the countryside can be gained from the A5 corridor'*. In addition paragraph 2.2 states that: *'As the A5 corridor passes north of the Callendar Farm site its route is with open countryside either side of it and is generally considered as being rural.'*
- 2.3 The latter part of paragraph 2.1 suggests that: *'the A5 is characterised by a number of properties along its length, including residential units and retail outlets which increase in density as you reach the urban edge of Nuneaton'*. It is not clear which length of the A5 this is referring to and where it is that residential units and retail units increase in density.
- 2.4 Overall the views from the section of the A5 between Atherstone in the west and the A5 junction with the A47 The Long Shoot (at the urban edge of Nuneaton) are rural in character and this is supported by paragraph 2.7 of the Pegasus report, which explains that, for a distance of approximately 7.5km to the west of Nuneaton, the A5 crosses an agricultural landscape with very limited views of built form. There is a short section of ribbon development, which is detached from the northeast edge of Nuneaton, on the north side of the A5 between the junction with Higham Lane and Change Brook. This ribbon development consists of houses, with some industrial units and a car sales business. The A5 meets the urban edge of Nuneaton at its junction with the A47 The Long Shoot. There is some residential ribbon development here either side of the A5 and along the A47 and the 'A5 Aquatics Centre' is detached from this urban edge, approximately 0.2km to the west. East of the A5 junction with the A47 The Long Shoot, there is development to the north of the A5 which is associated with the urban edge of Hinckley (rather than Nuneaton). Views from the section of the A5 between the junction with the A47 The Long Shoot and the junction with the M69 to the west are of open agricultural land to the south, with

intermittent views of built development on the urban edge of Hinckley to the north, interspersed with some green space and vegetation screening.

- 2.5 TEP agrees with the observation at paragraphs 2.5 and 2.8 of Pegasus' report, that from the A5 the urban edge of Nuneaton is more visible from the section east of the 'A5 Aquatics'.
- 2.6 Paragraph 2.6 of the Pegasus' report makes the point that the broadly flat nature of the topography means that the existing urban edge of Nuneaton is not readily apparent from the A5, but that the extent or depth of agricultural fields looking south at this point also is not apparent. It is noted that Pegasus highlights the land to the south of Callendar Farm in particular as being not readily apparent (not the land to the north).
- 2.7 Pegasus argues that drivers and passengers in vehicles on the A5 are less likely to appreciate the extent of existing farmland when looking south toward Callendar Farm and suggests that this has formed an important part of its identification of a northern limit to development which it considers acceptable.

Landscape Strategy

- 2.8 Paragraph 3.1 of Pegasus' Landscape Justification Note refers to the Indicative Development Framework (reference: Bir.3173_31D) and Plate 7, which illustrates the Landscape Buffer Strategy. The proposals would extend built form further north from that shown in the Council's Preferred Options Borough Plan. This would extend development into the 'sensitive landscape' identified by TEP as part of its 'Stage 1, Volume 3: Site Analysis and Selection' study for NBBC.
- 2.9 Plate 7 in the Pegasus report identifies an area of 'open countryside character' which includes the majority of the Callendar Farm site and 'long range views which are influenced by open countryside', which are consistent with its baseline assessment which reports on the rural and open character of landscape on the northeast edge of Nuneaton as viewed from the A5. However paragraph 3.2 explains that this buffer will contain woodland belts and structural planting and this is illustrated on the Indicative Development Framework as 'proposed woodland copse and planting belts'. In TEP's view, the reduction in buffer width (to 75m west of the 'A5 Aquatics', see paragraph 3.3) compared to that proposed by NBBC in its Preferred Options Borough Plan, means that substantial woodland planting is being proposed within the buffer to help filter and limit views of the built development. These proposals are contrary to the recommendations made by TEP in its 'Stage 2: Individual Site Assessment', which was that a farmland buffer be retained between the A5 and the settlement edge. The proposed development in combination with woodland copse and planting belts (once established) would enclose and limit views, particularly from the A5 west of the 'A5 Aquatics'. The landscape buffer proposed would not appear as agricultural fields, a key characteristic of LCA 2 – Anker Valley Estate Farmlands, and this would be to the detriment of the local landscape character and settlement setting of Nuneaton.

Summary and Conclusions

2.10 Paragraph 4.1 states that:

'The extent of the proposed development responds to the landscape and visual analysis that has been undertaken on the northern section of the site. It is considered that in landscape and visual terms the key element of character that ensures this part of the A5 route is a rural one, is retained and potentially enhanced with the inclusion of a more structured landscape design in the open space.'

2.11 As previously described, the baseline assessment explains that the broadly flat nature of the topography means that the existing urban edge of Nuneaton is not readily apparent from the A5 and that road users on the A5 are less likely to appreciate the extent of existing farmland when looking south toward Callendar Farm. However Pegasus' report does not provide clear justification for the reason for the proposed buffer widths of 75m west of the 'A5 Aquatics' and 65m to the east, particularly in light of the observation made in the baseline assessment that it is the land to the south of Callendar Farm in particular which is not readily apparent (not the land to the north).

2.12 Whilst Pegasus' baseline assessment acknowledges the rural landscape character of the land in the vicinity of Callendar Farm, which comprises *'large scale agricultural fields'* and that there are *'large scale open views which can be gained from the A5 corridor'*, the conclusion at paragraph 4.1 suggests that the key element of rural character will be retained, and potentially even enhanced, by the 75m wide landscape buffer which includes woodland belts and structural planting allowing filtered views through the development site. It is not explained how woodland belts and structural planting contribute to retaining the key characteristic of the local landscape comprising open agricultural fields.

3 TEP'S SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In light of Pegasus' Indicative Development Framework, TEP has considered further specific landscape recommendations with the aim of accommodating new built development whilst minimising effects on local landscape character and improving settlement setting.
- 3.2 The specific landscape recommendations should be read in conjunction with the accompanying **Figure 1**, which has prepared to aid spatial understanding.

Proposals in Relation to the Retention and Loss of Open Farmland

- 3.3 The open fields immediately adjacent and to the south of the A5 and west of the A5 Aquatics Centre should be retained (see Figure 1). Opportunities should be sought to locate open space at the edge of development, with new housing addressing green space, thus maximising the green buffer between the A5 and new built form (see **paragraph 3.5** below regarding open space at Callendar farmstead).
- 3.4 There is existing built development at the A5 Aquatics Centre, the existing ribbon development east of this on the A5 and A147, and the outline planning approval for residential development to the rear of existing houses on the A47 The Long Shoot (planning app. ref. 032438). In this context it is not inappropriate in landscape terms for proposed residential development to extend around the A5 Aquatics Centre and close to the highway on the short section of the A5, between the A5 Aquatics Centre and residential ribbon development to the east. It is not considered that an open space buffer as large as 60m (as suggested at paragraph 3.4 of Pegasus' Landscape Justification Note) would be required here, but it would be beneficial if this new residential development could be largely screened from view by some linear woodland planting in order to minimise urban intrusion on the A5 and so that it softens the transition between Nuneaton's rural setting and arrival at the settlement. If this part of existing farmland is to be developed then new screen planting on the eastern and southern boundary of the A5 Aquatics Centre also would help to improve settlement setting.

Retention of Callendar Farmstead at the Settlement Edge

- 3.5 The principal open space to serve the proposed development should be provided to the immediate northwest and northeast of Callendar farmstead, in order that the farmstead is retained in views toward the settlement edge from the north. As shown on **Figure 1** this could be achieved by re-locating the principal open spaces and by positioning the proposed mixed-use community hub to the southeast corner of the adjacent field parcel. The location of open space associated with the Primary School, including the proposal for school gardens and community allotments, should be to the north to maximise openness adjacent to the retained agricultural fields. The principal access route should be re-aligned through the site accordingly and to coincide with retained field boundaries wherever possible. From a preliminary review of levels it would appear that the positioning of principal open space, at the northern edge of the proposed development, would be no less suitable for accommodating

SUDs attenuation areas. The open space shown on **Figure 1** would be an approximate maximum 5 minutes walking time from the parcels of residential development. Small copses or short linear woodland should be planted adjacent to the larger agricultural units within Callendar Farm farmstead.

Retention and Enhancement of Other Landscape Features

- 3.6 In order to minimise effects on landscape character and improve settlement setting, the northern edge of built development should not extend right up to existing field boundaries, but some linear green space (most likely associated with access lanes to the frontages of properties) should be retained. This will allow space for planting along field boundaries to be strengthened, with additional tree or hedgerow tree planting used to soften views of the settlement edge.
- 3.7 TEP supports the approach to retaining the field pattern within the proposed development, as shown on Pegasus' Indicative Development Framework, allowing the retention of existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees as part of the Green Infrastructure network. Sufficient space should be allowed for their retention and for additional hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting to strengthen these features and interrupt views of built development. As shown on **Figure 1** there is the potential to add to existing network of hedgerows by re-planting along former historic field boundaries.
- 3.8 Pegasus' Indicative Development Framework also shows the retention of the existing Public Right of Way at the western boundary of the proposed development, with the potential addition of a cycleway connection adjacent.
- 3.9 TEP considers that Pegasus' proposal to extend linear woodland south of the A5 and along the western boundary of the A5 Aquatics Centre would not be an inappropriate addition to the landscape, and would help to screen and soften views of the proposed development, as well as providing a potentially useful pedestrian link to the south. This proposal would not interfere with the retention of open views of farmland and Callendar Farm farmstead in the northwest part of Callendar Farm Ltd's study area.

Nature of New Built Form

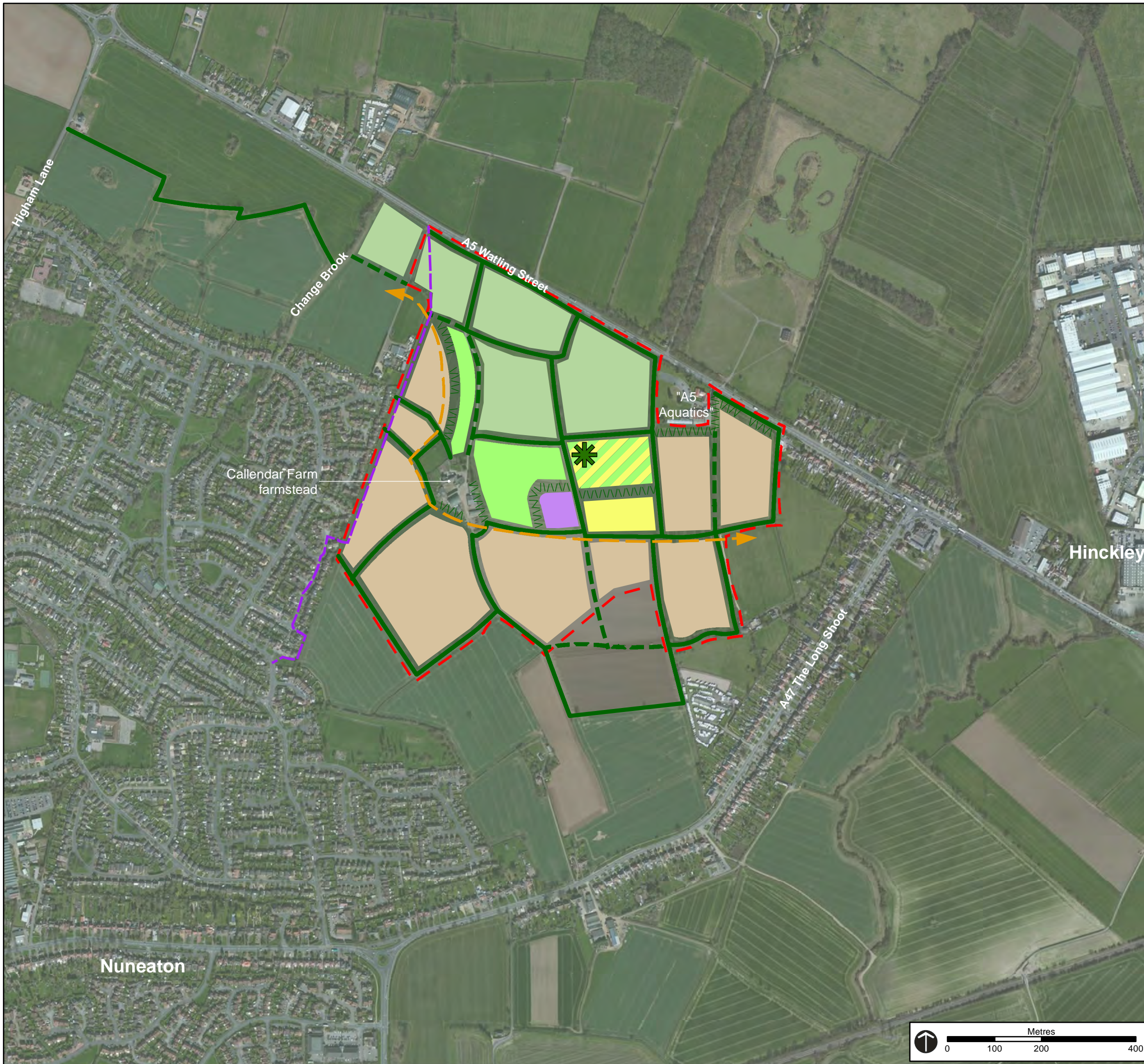
- 3.10 The buildings within the mixed use community hub and primary school, shown at the northern edge of the proposed development on **Figure 1**, would require careful design to minimise their prominence on the urban edge. There could be an opportunity for the cluster of buildings to reflect the form and arrangement of a farmstead, to aid integration into the landscape.
- 3.11 In addition, the previous recommendations for residential built development made as part of the Stage 2: Individual Site Assessment remain, which were:
- *Ensure a sensitive treatment of the urban edge, with variation in built form to create an attractive, high quality settlement setting. This could be achieved through variation in building heights, house types and orientation of dwellings, to avoid a monotonous and straight-lined urban edge.*

- *Consider an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare as appropriate for this PDA, with lower densities concentrated toward the new urban edge.*
- *Ensure buildings of maximum height of 3 storeys are sited toward the existing urban edge, with 1 to 2 storey dwellings at the edge of farmland.*
- *Use varied building materials which make reference to the local vernacular to break-up the mass of development in views. Generally, roof materials should be in recessive colours to help reduce the prominence of urban edges.*

4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Pegasus' Indicative Development Framework and landscape strategy contained in its Landscape Justification Note is contrary to the Council's Preferred Options Borough Plan which was informed by the Land Use Designations Study carried out by TEP for NBBC. Specifically, the indicative proposals presented by Pegasus would extend development into the 'sensitive landscape' identified by TEP as part of its 'Stage 1, Volume 3: Site Analysis and Selection' study for NBBC. These proposals are also contrary to the recommendations made by TEP in its 'Stage 2: Individual Site Assessment', which was that a farmland buffer be retained between the A5 and the settlement edge.
- 4.2 Pegasus' baseline assessment acknowledges the rural landscape character of the land in the vicinity of Callendar Farm, which comprises large scale agricultural fields. The baseline assessment also reports on the open views currently available to the south from this part of the A5. However, Pegasus proposes a 65m to 75m wide landscape buffer adjacent to the A5, which include woodland belts and structural planting, allowing filtered views through to built development south of the buffer. Pegasus' Landscape Justification Note does not provide clear justification for the proposed buffer widths. TEP cannot agree with Pegasus' conclusion (at paragraph 4.1) that *'the key element of character that ensures this part of the A5 route is a rural one, is retained, and potentially even enhanced'* by these proposals. It is TEP's opinion that the replacement of open farmland with a linear and wooded landscape buffer, with built development beyond, would have an adverse effect on local landscape character and the settlement setting.
- 4.3 In light of Pegasus' Indicative Development Framework, TEP has considered further specific landscape recommendations with the aim of accommodating built development whilst minimising effects on local landscape character and improving settlement setting. TEP considers that there is scope to extend built development further north toward the A5 in the eastern part of the Callendar Farm study area, but in order to minimise adverse effects on local landscape character and as part of an overall improvement to settlement setting, some open farmland west of the 'A5 Aquatics' should be retained. In addition, the principal open space serving the proposed development should be located to the northeast and northwest of Callendar farmstead so that its association with the wider agricultural landscape can be retained and it can continue to contribute to settlement setting.

Figure 1



- Key**
- Callendar Farm Ltd's study area
 - Agricultural fields to be retained adjacent to A5
 - Mixed use community hub
 - Open space
 - Open space associated with primary school
 - Residential development
 - Primary school (built form)
 - Existing hedgerow (to be strengthened)
 - Former field boundaries (to be defined by planting where possible)
 - Buffer planting
 - Existing Public Right of Way
 - Indicative alignment of principal access route
 - Suggested location for potential school gardens/ community allotments

Aerial Base Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

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Project: Callendar Farm, Nuneaton
 Landscape Advice

Title: Figure 1:
 Specific Landscape Recommendations

Drawing No: **G5043.001**

Scale: 1:8,000 @ A3	Date: 17/03/2015
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