CARLY TINKLER CMLI
Landscape, Environmental and Colour Consultancy

[redacted]

The Clerk, Cradley Parish Council: For the attention of Tanya Lloyd-Jones

9th November 2014

Dear Tanya,

Cradley Neighbourhood Development Plan: Landscape Assessment

Thank you for inviting me on behalf of Cradley Parish Council to submit a fee proposal for the above commission. My understanding is that the work is to be divided into two stages: the first will be funded by the Malvern Hills AONB Unit, the second by Cradley Parish Council. The processes for each stage are set out below.

The objective of the commission is to assess the suitability of potential locations for future development in and around the existing settlement boundaries of Cradley and Westfields, from a landscape and environmental perspective, and to deliver an independent, evidence-based study which can be used by Cradley Parish Council and other stakeholders / interested parties in the preparation of Cradley's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

The study will consider in particular the landscape and scenic beauty of the area, which is within the AONB. It will evaluate landscape sensitivity and identify potential constraints to development. Potential opportunities to enhance the existing qualities and characteristics of the study area will also be identified. This information will be used to help determine the line of the future settlement boundaries.

The consultant is expected to make reference to key local documents including the AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, and to carry out the landscape assessments in accordance with published guidance and current best practice.

I consider that the most appropriate process to use to achieve these objectives is Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA).

LSCA is a systematic process providing a robust, objective, impartial and transparent system for assessing the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate change (usually in the form of social and / or economic expansion), whilst also retaining the aspects of the environment which – for a variety of reasons – are valued.

The advantages of this process include:

- A detailed understanding of the often very complex environmental constraints and opportunities of specific sites coming forward for consideration;
- Production of documents and maps setting out the findings of the assessment which can be 'interrogated' as necessary to a) understand the reasons behind the value judgements; b) inform and justify any proposed revisions to the settlement boundary; and c) inform comments on planning applications - the findings can be used as part of the process for considering the appropriateness or otherwise of applications for new development in the area;

- Recording the baseline and assessment information in a format which can easily be updated in the future if further information becomes available or anything changes (e.g. planning policy, designations, built development, physical features etc.);
- Other relevant topics such as Green Infrastructure, recreational opportunities, biodiversity, archaeology / cultural heritage and access / servicing can also be factored in to the process to provide a fuller picture of the sites' sensitivity and capacity for development;
- Maps can be produced using a system such as GIS (Geographic Information System), which allows for layers of information to be superimposed and analysed; again, this can be modified over time;
- LSCA-based processes are excellent vehicles for education and community participation; for example, locals can be involved in information-gathering, recording and monitoring. This often promotes interest from groups who would not normally get involved in planning issues, such as teenagers, and offers opportunities for different generations to work together. Other projects and initiatives could stem from this, which could in turn open doors to other sources of funding.

Proposed Methodology

The methodology for the LSCA would be based on published guidance; however this guidance is now slightly out of date, having evolved over the last few years as studies have been completed and put into use. I propose to use the method and criteria which I have developed for the work I am currently undertaking for other villages and also for HC – a review of 300 new sites which have come forwards during the latest SHLAA.

The assessment would adopt a more fine-grained approach than the simple three-point 'traffic light' capacity scale (red = no development, amber = development possible but subject to constraints, and green = development acceptable) often used in landscape assessments. In this case, the sites' sensitivity and capacity for development (in landscape terms) is graded on a five-point scale from Very High to Very Low with the possibility of 'split' categories in between. This means that small variations in sensitivity and capacity are taken into account and a clear hierarchy established. This more in-depth approach is most appropriate for differentiating between sites in designated landscapes such as AONBs, which are automatically of high value.

In terms of the number of sites, there appear to be several old SHLAA sites on the map, plus one new one, and two or three others either not identified but subject to pre-application advice or currently the subject of applications. There are other unidentified sites around the settlements which I feel could potentially be of interest to developers in the future and it would therefore make sense to include those in this assessment so I have allowed them in my fee proposal, and have assumed that the total number of individual sites to be assessed is approximately 30.

The process would be as follows:

STAGE 1 - Evaluate overall landscape sensitivity of landscape character and visual amenity of wider and local area:

i. Preliminary meeting to agree final details of process, defining 'type' of development for study, agreeing unidentified sites to add to the review, timescale, reporting / lines of communication, consultation requirements, access etc.;

ii. Preparation of base maps (likely to be at 1:25,000 and either 1:10,000 or 1:5,000 scales), establishment of desktop study area boundaries;

iii. Desktop review of available background information including studies, reports, planning policy, strategies, designations and other relevant landscape-related matters (including

baseline information not included in the current studies if required, such as GI assets, UK BAP Priority habitats, TPOs and so on);

iv. Mark up base maps with baseline information (preliminary constraints and opportunities @ 1:25k and 1:10k or 1:5k);

v. Establish desktop level of value of landscape / villagescape character and visual amenity;

vi. Carry out assessment 'on the ground' of a) landscape / villagescape character and b) visual and public amenity of wider and local area, including potential GI assets especially recreation, biodiversity, cultural heritage / heritage assets etc.;

vii. Define local landscape character zones including character of, and relationship to, settlement edge, and wider landscape function of zones;

viii. Establish visual envelopes, areas of influence, sensitive receptors etc. and apply levels of quality and value to character and views;

ix. Summarise *relevant* key constraints and issues from desktop and on-the-ground studies relating to landscape / villagescape and visual sensitivity which require further consideration;

x. Establish level of Landscape Character Sensitivity;

xi. Establish level of Visual Sensitivity;

xii. Establish Overall Landscape Sensitivity (i.e. level of Landscape Character Sensitivity + level of Visual Sensitivity);

xiii. Note level of potential for loss / change to give rise to adverse effects & possible level of significance;

xiv. Baseline information, potential constraints and assessment of overall sensitivity are to be in a format which can easily be transferred to site-specific assessment checksheets which will be part of the Capacity Assessment process to follow;

xv. Stage 1 output will be a) written summary to include baseline information, potential constraints and brief reporting of assessment of overall landscape sensitivity; and b) map/s at 1:25,000 and either 1:10,000 or 1:5,000 scales with hand-drawn information which will be scanned.

STAGE 2 – Identify individual sites and evaluate landscape capacity:

xvi. Identify individual sites for capacity assessment;

xvii. Set up site checksheets – summarise relevant desktop baseline information / issues / constraints / values etc. identified in Stage 1 on checksheet for each site;

xviii. Carry out Steps 4 – 7 above for each site;

xix. Evaluate sites' Capacity (i.e. Overall Landscape Sensitivity of site + Landscape Value of site).

xx. Consider other relevant factors such as mitigation / restoration / enhancement opportunities, or potential cumulative effects with other development sites;

xxi. Stage 2 output will be a report summarising the Stage 1 and Stage 2 findings. It will set out the LSCA methodology and processes followed specifically for the Cradley commission. It will explain the landscape assessment findings, and will present the results in the form of Summary Tables of Overall Area Sensitivity & Capacity, and an Overall Area

Landscape Capacity Plan. Further recommendations for each site will be made if appropriate;

xxii. The individual site summary sheets and the criteria used to determine levels of Quality, Value, Sensitivity and Capacity will be in appendices to the report;

xxiii. Meeting to discuss final draft, revisions, final output etc.;

xxiv. Submission of final report (please note I have assumed that all information will be submitted digitally).

A further stage could be considered to take the presentation of the information from a basic format (as only hand drawn and scanned maps will be provided at this stage) to a more manageable digital format such as GIS.

Please let me know if you would like me to give you a budget cost for these, or if I should factor in more meetings (I assume that if the need for additional work / time is identified during the process it will not be possible to apply for extra funding?). Also, as I mentioned, there is an opportunity for the LSCA process to be 'collaborative', for example built up with input from the community and identifying local projects and initiatives. It is difficult to estimate the time and costs of this and to do so it would be necessary to discuss it further with you.

Total cost of Stage 1 as set out in i – xv above = [redacted]

Total cost of Stage 2 as set out in xvi – xxiv above = [redacted]

The above are inclusive of all costs apart from the acquisition of digital OS mapping. VAT is not applicable.

<u>Overall cost of project</u>

[redacted]

In terms of timescale, realistically at least 6 - 8 weeks should be allowed to take into account the need for clear dry weather for the on-site work and for review of the draft report.

If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me, otherwise I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Carly

CARLY TINKLER