

**Sustainable Growth
Executive Director Patsy Dell**



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REF: 5/2022/0599
DATE: 05 MAY 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

REFERENCE: 5/2022/0599
PROPOSAL: Outline application (means of access sought) for up to 45 dwellings including new affordable homes, with areas of landscaping and public open space, including points of access, and associated infrastructure works
ADDRESS: Land To Rear Of 96 To 106 High Street Colney Heath Hertfordshire

Thank you for consulting the landscape planning advisory service on the above proposal. The following comments are given with regards to landscape matters in line with national and local policy requirements, British Standards, and industry accepted good practice guidance.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK¹

The National Planning Policy Framework² confirms that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes,³ and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Decisions should also ensure that new developments, are sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, support healthy lifestyles through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure and an appropriate amount and mix of green and other public space, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout, and appropriate and effective landscaping.

¹ Note: The list of national and local policies and guidelines is not comprehensive, refer to the national planning policy framework, planning practice guidance, local development plan, and other relevant strategies and guidance documents for all relevant policies and guidelines

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, July 2021

³ In a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan

The NPPF recognises that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and serves to ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

SUBMITTED INFORMATION

The following submitted documents and plans have been reviewed:

- Design and Access Statement produced by Turley, dated February 2022
- Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy produced by BSP, Ref CHSA-BSP-ZZ-XX-RP-C-0001-P02_Flood_Risk_Assessment, dated 27 Jan 2022
- Ecological Impact Assessment produced by Ramm Sanderson, Ref RSE_5500_R1_V2_LECIA, dated January 2022
- Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) and Green Belt Appraisal, Ref TARC3006, dated January 2022
- Phase 1 Desk Study Report produced by BSP Consulting, Ref CHSA-BSP-ZZ-XX-RP-C-P02_Phase_1_Desk_Study_Report, dated 27 Jan 2022
- Tree Survey produced by Ramm Sanderson, Ref RSE_5500_01_V1, dated January 2022
- Site Location Plan produced by Turley, Ref TARC3006 1001 Rev B, dated 14/01/2022
- Concept Masterplan produced by Turley, Ref TARC3006 3001 Rev D, dated 20/01/2022
- Illustrative Layout produced by Turley, Ref TARC3006 4001 Rev E, dated 26/01/2022
- Tree Constraints Plan produced by Ramm Sanderson, Drg No. RSE_5500_TCP Rev V1, dated 31/01/2022
- Tree Protection Plan produced by Ramm Sanderson, Drg No. RSE_5500_TPP Rev V1, dated 31/01/2022
- BIA Baseline produced by Ramm Sanderson, Drawing No. RSE_5500_BIA Rev V2, dated 27/01/2022
- BIA Proposals produced by Ramm Sanderson, Drawing No. RSE_5500_BIA Rev V2, dated 27/01/2022

ARBORICUTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT⁴

- The arboricultural information confirms that the existing trees are located along the site boundaries and proposes to remove two individual trees (T9 and T10) and sections of three tree groups (G3, H2 and H3) to accommodate the development (gaps along the south-eastern site boundary).

However the submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS) also shows the removal of the western end of a tree group (G5) to accommodate the access road. The impact assessment and methodology should be updated to reflect this.

- The report states that *'The proposed building layout at the northwest corner of the development interferes with the root protection areas of T2, T3, and T5. It is recommended that the layout of this area is altered so that foundations are not dug within this zone, compromising the structural integrity of these trees.'*

This recommendation is supported in order to ensure the retention and protection of these category C trees.

⁴ Comments are given in line with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations

- The tree protection plan does not appear to show any tree protection fencing to the vegetation along the south-east site boundary – this is required.

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LVIA)⁵

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

- Note: Table 4.1 identifies the value of 'LCA 30: Colney Heath' and 'trees and vegetation' as 'medium-high,' however table 7.1 notes them as 'medium.'
- The landscape assessment at operation concludes that the most significant effects arise from the change in land use, from an open arable field to a residential development. However the area affected is relatively well contained within the existing field pattern and well related to the existing settlement edge. In order to help mitigate the impact upon landscape it is proposed to enhance and create planting along the site boundaries which would benefit these characteristic features in the long term.
- The **above conclusion is broadly supported**, providing that the proposed mitigation is effectively delivered within the masterplan. (See comments with regards to 'Illustrative Masterplan')

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- The visual assessment concludes that the area from which there are potential views of the site is relatively limited due to the screening effect of the school grounds and woodland to the north, and the existing settlement of Colney Heath to the west.

The most sensitive views that experience the most significant effects are from the public rights of way that criss-cross the open, flat, arable landscape to the east and south (viewpoints 7, 8 and 9). In order to mitigate the impact upon views it is proposed to enhance and create structural planting along the north-east and south-east boundaries, and to locate the public open space to the western edge of the site to provide a transition between the development and the wider landscape.

- The **above conclusion is broadly supported**, providing that the proposed mitigation is effectively delivered within the masterplan. (See comments with regards to 'Illustrative Masterplan')

ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

- Note: Within the DAS, the existing hedgerow along the southern site boundary appears to be noted as intact' on page 29, however is shown as 'defunct' on page 33.
- There is concern for the proposal to locate all the public open space at the eastern end of the site. It is understood that it has been located here to mitigate the impact of the urban edge upon the wider landscape, however this could be achieved by other measures, such as a tree belt. **Overall, it is suggested that there should be a better balance of open space provision permeating throughout the residential development**

⁵ Comments are given in line with industry good practice 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition,' Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental management and Assessment (GLVIA3).'

area, to accommodate large scale structural planting, and deliver a range of benefits for amenity, microclimate, and wildlife etc.

- The public open space appears to be dominated by the SuDS attenuation/detention basin, which is also proposed to serve as an area for biodiversity enhancement and informal open space provision and appears to be shown as an area of wetland on the emerging masterplan.

There is concern that the attenuation/detention basin will actually need to remain predominantly dry and free of any impediments (such as planting) in order to maintain the required capacity for flooding events, and will therefore appear as an unattractive, bare depression in the ground. This is in conflict with the objectives for habitat creation and informal open space provision here.

Further information is required to understand the constraints of the SuDS features and to ensure that objectives for biodiversity and recreation can actually be achieved, supported by case studies.

- It is proposed to enhance and create structural planting along the north-east and south-east boundaries. It is advised that typical cross sections should demonstrate the minimum and maximum widths and the approach to the treatment of these sensitive boundaries.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

- The arboricultural information should be updated to include impact assessment and methodology for G5, and methodology for protection of vegetation along the south-east site boundary. The north west corner of the development layout should avoid and protect T2 – T5.
- The proposed development should not give rise to any unacceptable landscape and visual effects, and is therefore supported in principle, providing that the proposed mitigation is effectively delivered within the masterplan.
- Typical cross sections are required to demonstrate the minimum and maximum widths and the approach to the treatment of the sensitive north-east and south-east boundaries.
- Further consideration is required for the character and function of the open space typologies to ensure that they are located and sized appropriately, throughout the development, and can realistically be delivered on the ground.
- Further information is required to understand the constraints of the SuDS features and to ensure that objectives for biodiversity and recreation can actually be achieved, supported by case studies.

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer Owen

Building Futures & Landscape Team Leader, Herts LEADS (Landscape Ecology Archaeology Design Sustainability)