Response to Planning comments re: South West Bicester Sports Village

Cherwell District Council

Report Date: May 2011

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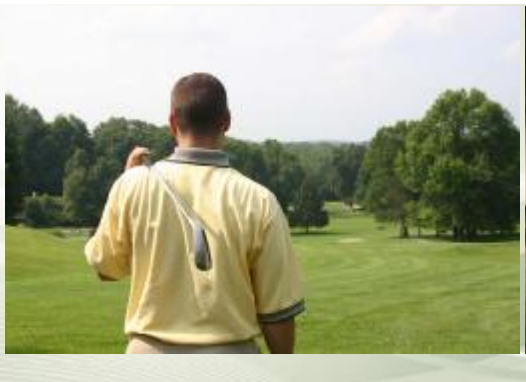


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Introduction

The following report is a direct response to comments received from Cherwell District Council regarding the proposed Sports Village development within an area of agricultural land in south west Bicester. The report responds to each issue in turn, highlighting actions to be taken and providing the supplementary information required to sufficiently bolster the initial documentation submitted to Cherwell District Council April 2011.

Response

1. Q: A mown strip, between the path and the new hedgerow on the northern boundary would be advantageous to reduce overgrowing of branches onto the path. The strip must be at least 1 m wide for a push mower.

   A: Strip is now included on accompanying revised drawing (Appendix 1).

2. Q: Protection of existing trees and hedgerows during construction
   On the north east boundary the roots of the mature tree impacted upon by the proposed cycle path as it turns the corner by the football pitch. Likewise the retained tree immediately to the east of the rugby pitches could be affected.

   The root protection areas of the aforementioned trees must be drawn on the plan and the cycle path alignment amended to avoid the root protection zone. In accordance with *BS 5837:2005 Trees in relation to construction* the diameter of the tree is measured at 1.5 m above ground level. This diameter is then multiplied by a factor of 12 in order to determine the distance from the stem of the tree. The BS advocates the use of protective steel fencing to protect the root protection zones of the retained trees and hedgerows, (I am unsure as to whether the STRI have included this item in the bill of quantities and a cost provided). I would recommend that the STRI show the root protection areas on their drawing this information to be gleamed from TBA's Tree Protection drawing - to be forwarded on to you. The root protection areas are to be indicated on site by means agreed with this council. Regular monitoring of these areas by CDC's landscape/arboriculture officer will be necessary to ensure no encroachment and damage by site plant. Any surface grading with associated machinery affecting the RPA to be agreed with arboriculture officer prior to works commencing on site.

A: All trees within close proximity of the development footprint have has tree protection zones indicated on the accompanying revised drawing in accordance with BS5837:2005 *Trees in Relation to Construction* using chestnut paling fencing around the rootzone of each tree. Where possible, the cycle track route has been amended to avoid the tree protection zones. Where this has not been possible, it is proposed that trial digs are undertaken in the area to determine root depth (required excavation depths would not exceed 300mm). Should roots be found at a depth of less than 300mm, the cycle track will be built up to ensure tree roots are protected. Root protection will be provided before commencement of any works and if fencing is removed for grading works i.e. within the vicinity of the tall oak then on-site supervision will be provided by the retained Ecologist or not before informing CDC's Landscape Arboricultural Officer. Any grading work will remain at least 7 m from the trunk of any tree. The aim of the root protection fencing as well as to reduce compaction will be to prevent inadvertent damage of aerial branches by heavier equipment.

3. Q: The compound /storage areas is to be defined on the drawing, especially if it is to be in the vicinity of new woodland W2, The ground will have to be decontaminated I.e all building materials and diesel/oil spillages removed off site. stripped topsoil deposited graded and cultivate on topsoil of subsoil that has been deep ripped to alleviate compaction, improve drainage etc.

   A: The compound / storage area has been defined on a separate drawing (Appendix 2).

4. Planting Operations

   Q: All planting supply, plant handling, planting operations and establishment is to be in accordance with the National Plant Specification or the current British Standards. We need to ensure that they implement the planting in accordance with best practice in order to get a good landscape scheme. We would usually require a detailed specification and maintenance schedule.

   A planting schedule would be advantageous with:

   The number of plant species must be shown Nursery-supplied sizes of the trees and hedgerow plants and whether bare root, bagged or container grown.

   Planting densities for the woodland planting i.e 2 m centres. The inclusion of hedgerow trees in the 'introduced' hedgerows will provide amenity and reintroduce the character of the retained hedgerows. I recommend Standard Trees supplied as 12-14 cm girth, staked. The tree species are to be native oak (Quercus robur) and native ash (Fraxinus excelsior). Trees to be located away from cycle path entrances/exits. Smaller trees such Field Maple (Acer campestre) are to be planted where Additional costs mitigated by removed trees from the Woodland areas to accomplish standard tree planting to introduced hedgerows. See below for response.

Planting Specification

All plants will be purchased in accordance with BS3936 (Specification for Forestry Trees) and BS5236 (Recommendations for Cultivation and Planting of Standard Trees). All trees will be of local guaranteed provenance and on delivery will either be planted with immediate effect or healed in using straw and soil adequately watered until such times as their planting can be accommodated. Whilst we acknowledge the request for the use of standard trees we would suggest there is little benefit from this to the development. Aside from the clear significant financial implications associated with standard trees, given that the site is not to be used for around 2 years, and the frequent tendency for standard trees to suffer from transplant shock in the early stages of establishment, I see the use of standard trees as a high risk, high cost strategy, that may result in the creation of woodland blocks that have a quite artificial appearance, because of the potential inflexibilities surrounding planting and management regimes. All trees over the site will be purchased as 1+1 45-60 cm forestry transplants. The hedge will be planted using trees identified in the planting schedule, these to be introduced in a double staggered row at close 45 cm spacings, both along and between rows. All trees will be planted in single species groupings (multiples of three i.e 3, 6, 12 etc) to ensure naturalness and to avoid unnecessary competition. Hawthorn will form the dominant species within the hedge.

The forestry transplants will be notch planted with no fertiliser added to the rootzone. Prior to planting the ground will be ripped (rotovated to reduce the weed content) and the trees will be planted to the height of the root collars. The ground to be firmed with a foot thereafter.

Forestry transplants will be utilised through all wooded areas utilising trees as indicated in the planting schedule (see drawing) field maple only will be introduced into woodland 1.

The three larger woodland blocks (W1, W2 and W3) will be planted with 45-60 cm 1+1 forestry transplants at maximum 2 m spacings in single species groupings (multiples of three) with each tree being root dipped into a proven mycorrhizal suspension to provide a boost to early establishment. Indeed mycorrhizal suspension such as that available through Symbio have proven to be extremely effective wherever used, often accelerating growth by 50-75% within the first year.

Site Protection

The hedgerows will be protected using 0.5 m spiral guards and post and chicken wire fencing along the entire run. The woodlands will be protected using 1 m high tree cubes with cane and tie wrap with each area demarcated using post and chicken wire fencing to reduce inadvertent trespass and rabbit grazing.

Tree Numbers

Woodland 1 - 121 field maple specimens planted at maximum 2 m spacing.
Woodlands 2 - 920 oak, ash, small leaved lime, whitebeam, birch, alder and field at 2 m spacings.
Woodland 3 - 360 oak, ash, small leaved lime, whitebeam, birch, alder and field at 2 m spacings

Protection During the Grown In/Establishment Phase

All trees will be monitored on an annual basis (first three years only) whereupon a full beat up will be applied. An annual check of all trees will be made between August and the end of September for any signs of weakness or for any damaged, dead or dying trees. The check will provide an opportunity for all trees to be re-straightened, re-firmed or repositioned following any inadvertent damage that may have arisen.

Glyphosate will be considered (first two years only) to reduce weed ingress around the trees. Glyphosate will be used to control weed growth this to be applied in strict accordance with the label and statutory recommendations using a lance with shield on a spot basis. Treatment will be given to 300 mm radius around the base of any tree.

The hedgerows will be excluded from any glyphosate treatment given the length and potential for run-off and damage to adjacent trees.

5. Q: Woodland W1 is located at the end of the Rugby pitch and will it provide an obstacle for viewing the game and present a potential hazard for rugby players. It may be best to relocate this planting; some it should go to the NE corner where it can provide extra buffering for Whiteland's Farm and stop the need to mow grass in the corner. A portion of the W1 could go to plug the gap between the proposal hedgerows in the opposite corner.

   A: We are happy to bolster planting to the NE corner of the site however do feel that the planting (W1) should remain. Its purpose is for health and safety reasons, with a view to keeping the public away from the degenerate oak specimen here which has been observed shedding significantly sized pieces of debris and looks set to continue to do so in the future. The planting here can be managed at low level if necessary to reduce the visual impact however I would stress the need to retain its presence in this area.

6. Q: At the southwest corner of the field there is a gap. This should be closed off by extension of the hedgerow.
   A: This has been amended on the accompanying drawing (Appendix 1)

7. Q: Woodland species should be planted in species drifts/grouping to improve visual impact and reduce competition between vigorous and less vigorous species. The oak groups will require more shelter to establish themselves and the more vigorous species like ash can achieve this.
   A:Agreed.

8. Q: Notch planting of larger bare root trees in to existing soil will not be sufficient to establish themselves. Tree pits will have to be dug in accordance with best practice. The hedgerow and woodland planting areas will require the application/s of glyphosate herbicide to kill off completive weeds and grasses prior to planting.
   A:Notch planting is the preferred planting method for forestry transplant trees. Tree pits apply to standard trees. Glyphosate will be required for weed and grass control.

9. Q:Regular maintenance visits by landscape contractor to eradicate weeds and water during periods of drought is essential for the survival and establishment of the plants. Biodegradable mulch mats should be fixed in position of each plant to conserve soil moisture and restrict weed growth. Plants must be checked for wind rock or frost heave and firmed in if necessary. These methods will be covered in the National Plant Specification.
   A: Agreed.

10. Q: The hedgerow proposals are acceptable, but are there any thoughts the use of a protective post and wire fence? If this is going to have cost implications fencing could be installed along perceived desire lines, perhaps to adjoin access routes.
    A: Agreed.

11. Q: Grassland Establishment
    I would like to see a more detailed specification and maintenance on how the grassland is to be successfully established. The finished gradients and level are to be appropriate for ride-on mowing.
    A: In addition to the recommendations made in the initial report, we recommend guidance is taken from the Natural England publication, Seed Sources for Grassland Restoration and Re-creation in Environmental Stewardship, attached as Appendix 3.

12. Q: Playing Field Establishment
    I think it would be appropriate for the qualitative specification part of the contract to be submitted as part of the planning approval.
    A: Agreed.

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