

Case Officer: Caroline Ford

Recommendation: Approval

Applicant: A2 Dominion

Proposal: Partial discharge of condition 31 (details of landscape design) of 10/01780/HYBRID

Expiry Date: 10 September 2019

Extension of Time:

1. APPLICATION SITE AND LOCALITY

1.1. The application relates to the Exemplar phase at NW Bicester now known as Elmsbrook and specifically two areas within the infrastructure phase, originally identified for landscaping along the river corridor and play space within proximity of the housing within phase 2 and the school. These areas of the site are complete and housing within phases 1 and 2 are mostly complete and occupied. The site was originally granted planning permission by 10/01780/HYBRID.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1. The application seeks to partially discharge planning condition 31 of 10/01780/HYBRID relating to the specific areas identified above. The details of the proposals will be explained in the planning history section below.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1. The relevant planning history is predominantly the original application that granted permission for the site – 10/01780/HYBRID. There have been a number of discharge of condition and non-material amendment applications pursuant to this application.

4. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

4.1 CDC LANDSCAPE: first response (play area) –

- The alignment and depth of the sewer and any easement/ distance required for tree planting should be confirmed.
- The seat should be relocated with a hornbeam hedge planted behind for defensible space allowing surveillance of the space
- The Scots Pine should be relocated towards the centre of the space.
- The ornamental birch trees should be replaced with native silver birch because of the association with insect species
- Comments provided regarding how trees should be planted.

4.2 In response to an amended plan received, relating to the play area, the Landscape Officer commented:

- The design layout is fine but there needs to be more detail in respect of supplied plant sizes and hedge planting distances. A protective buffer around the Silver Birches to prevent mowing damage would be advantageous.

- The native wildflowers seed type should be stated.

4.3 Following receipt of a second amended plan for the play area, the Landscape Officer confirmed this to be acceptable.

5. APPRAISAL

5.1. Planning Condition 31 requires schemes of landscaping to be approved within each phase prior to commencement and it details a number of points required to be covered within that landscape scheme. The reason for the imposition of the condition is in the interests of the visual amenities of the area and to ensure the creation of a pleasant environment for the development.

5.2. The overall landscaping schemes for each of the five phases (infrastructure and the four residential phases) have been approved. This application seeks a re-discharge of condition 31 relating to two specific areas.

5.3. The first relates to the river corridor. The river corridor is mainly landscaped by a wildflower mix and it contains a number of drainage features. Whilst not approved, fencing has been erected alongside the pathway leading through the river corridor restricting access for members of the public to the pathway only. The river corridor is the main public open space on Elmsbrook and so upon review, it was felt that greater public access should be provided to this area. However, this needs to be balanced against the planting in this area as well as the need to maintain a safe environment with the present drainage features.

5.4. The applicant has therefore proposed to remove the fencing in two places, provide a mown path to access the area and to provide two oak sleeper benches within the river corridor area. The Landscape Officer has not commented on these proposals.

5.5. Whilst this does not provide full access to the area, it does strike a balance between allowing access for some use whilst retaining the character of the river corridor area. On balance therefore, I consider this proposal to be acceptable.

5.6. The second area relates to the central open space area outside the primary school. This area was originally identified as a location for a Local Equipped Area of Play. Phases 1 and 2 of Elmsbrook are relatively light on play space other than the NEAP which is positioned to the east of the road bridge adjacent to Phase 1 and the position of the planned local centre. Through design development, this open space area was reduced in size due to highway requirements and, following some initial designs for the play area and taking account of requirements from the landscape team (such as which way the gates needed to open), a review of the suitability of this location for a play area was undertaken which raised a number of detailed safety concerns. The detailed proposals for a play area were therefore not approved and a decision was made to deal with this matter separately.

5.7. A scheme is now submitted for approval and has been amended through this application process to reflect comments received. The scheme does not propose a formal equipped area of play but rather a landscaped area to give a space with some opportunities for natural play. Essentially the scheme includes a central Norway Spruce tree, which will be visible along Charlotte Avenue as well as deciduous native silver birch trees. It will also include hedges, grass and some wildflower areas. Whilst this is not necessarily providing specific play features, it is considered to represent a suitable and interesting landscaping scheme for this area and given its proximity to the school, is likely to be an area that could be used at the pick up and drop off times of the day as well as at other times as a break out area.

On balance, the scheme now presented and with the level of detail provided is considered acceptable.

- 5.8. The original application was EIA development. The EIA is dated now; however it is unlikely that the EIA would have been so detailed so as to consider the specific landscaping schemes for the site however it may have considered the requirements for children's play areas. Nevertheless, the area has some value through the landscaping scheme in terms of play value therefore it has a role, albeit not as originally intended in this respect. The EIA is however still considered sufficient for the purpose of considering the information provided for this condition and it has been taken into account in considering this subsequent application.

6. RECOMMENDATION

That Planning Condition 31 be partially re-discharged for the areas identified on the submitted plans in accordance with the following:

Condition 31

Approval is given for the details shown on drawing numbers 2.2 titled 'Eco Village Riverside revised' received with the application and 1.4 titled 'Revised Landscape Plan' received on the 26/02/2020 with email of the same date also containing information regarding the wildflower mix proposed.

Planning note

This decision has been considered in the context of the information contained within the Exemplar Environmental Statement Report (report no. 0505-UA001881-UP31R-01 dated November 2010 prepared by Hyder Consulting) and the Exemplar Environmental Statement Addendum (report no. 0513-UA001881-UP31R-01 dated April 2011 prepared by Hyder Consulting) which is considered sufficient for the purpose of considering the information provided and has therefore been taken into account.

Case Officer: Caroline Ford

DATE: 31/03/2020

Checked By: Alex Keen

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