

Andrew Thompson

From: Julie Baxter
Sent: 27 April 2023 13:35
To: Andrew Thompson
Subject: FW: 23/00173/OUT - Land South of Green Lane, Chesterton

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for consulting the Landscape Team on the above proposal. Having looked over the submitted documents / plans I would like to suggest the following:

Overview of the Outline Application:

The development comprises of up to 147 homes, public open space, flexible recreational playing field area and sports pitches with associated car parking, alongside landscaping, ecological enhancements, SuDs, green/blue and hard infrastructure, with vehicular and pedestrian/cycle accesses, and all associated works (all matters reserved except for means of access).

The application site is approximately 14.9 hectares and comprises of two field parcels, which are currently used for agricultural purposes. The site is accessed via an opening at the northern boundary off Green Lane and is bounded by unnamed roads both to the west and east.

At a national level the study area straddles NCA 107 the Cotswolds and NCA 108 The Upper Thames Clay Vales. And at a regional level, the OWLS identifies the landscape types of which the Site is contained within the Wooded Estatelands - 'a rolling landscape characterised by the strong contrast between enclosed woodland and open downland'. Allen Pyke Associates have identified the site at a Local scale as LCZ1: Chesterton Arable - an open, medium scale arable landscape with moderate condition hedgerows containing occasional mature trees. The noise from the M40 and A41 detract from any remoteness or tranquillity. The land south of the Site is more intimate in scale and contains public rights of way which add local value. The landscape is relatively flat and exposed where field boundary vegetation is lacking or degraded. They note that it is not located within, nor openly visible from, any designated landscape. The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is over 10km to the west.

The Chesterton Conservation Area lies adjacent to the Site's eastern corner where it contains the Listed Bruern Abbey School and its walled grounds.

Notable land uses within 2km of the Site include: Recent residential development at Vespasian Way; The playing fields and community hall at 'The Green'; Bicester Golf Course and Spa and Bicester Sports Association (Sports Club and fields)

The Site's most valued landscape features are the mature hedgerows and trees which form its boundaries and provide a sense of containment from the wider, relatively flat landscape, whilst also filtering views from the village's southern edge.

Footpaths 161-5-10; 161-4-10 and 161-3-10 abut the Site boundary and the north western and eastern edges.

EXISTING TREES Existing trees along the northern and eastern boundary are to be retained, including an important cluster of boundary trees adjacent to the conservation area. There are a handful of trees to the southern extents of the site, including a category A Oak along the PROW which will have a root protection area overlapping the site.

ACCESS There is an existing opening towards the centre of the northern boundary on Green Lane that is proposed for access, that will not require the removal of any trees. The road which bounds the west of the site is a narrow single lane access road into Little Chesterton and would be unsuitable to introduce a new access onto the site. The

road which briefly edges the eastern corner of the site is unsuitable for a new access due to traffic and the visibility on the steep bend.

INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITY The site offers an opportunity to integrate well with the recreational facilities which it borders. **LOCAL COMMUNITY OFFER** The site connects to the existing community centre and offers an opportunity to further establish the community facilities at the heart of the village. The promotion of pleasant open spaces and pedestrian routes can attract greater use of the spaces and subsequently greater activation of the adjacent Community Centre

Function Landscape; Naturally shaped and landscaped detention basins within the green corridors, combined with rainwater harvesting and permeable paving on parking areas, collect, attenuate and clean rainwater runoff. The basins provide opportunity for an active, functional and resilient public realm for residents and the wider community to enjoy.

Therefore, it benefits from a range of existing services, including a nursery, primary school, a community centre, village hall, a public house and sports facilities. Bicester is readily accessible, via a 10 minute bike ride along a dedicated cycle route. Chesterton also lies in the vicinity of Bicester Park & Ride, from which regular bus services to Bicester and Oxford operate. The village is therefore accessible to further services and employment opportunities available at these larger settlements.

Proposed Landscaped Features include:

- Lanes which are defined from the access road by a change to a shared stone surface and with a less formal sense of boundary and ownership between a handful of homes which share the lane as an access. They are intended to have a more rural and intimate character, with low level planting and stone garden walls. The shared surface lanes will be paved in resin bound surface with trims and accentuating bands in small unit concrete or granite paving setts in silver grey.
- The meadow walks are linear green parks between the lanes of housing which provide communal amenity space with biodiversity opportunities and basin for sustainable drainage. The linear green spaces provide open access for the development across a variety of grassland types with meandering, low key material footpaths. Benches in strategic locations, where access from the surrounding residential streets is most likely, will provide incidental meeting spaces.
- The existing line of trees to Green Lane and the western corner of the site are to be reinforced with further mature trees to provide a natural screen to the development on approach to the village from the west. Tree screening is also proposed to the northern edge shared with the new estate.
- A new area of mosaic shrub/woodland is proposed to the southern extents of the site is intended to provide a soft boundary to the development and village beyond. This also provides a definitive limit to any development of the village southwards. The woodland will also provide a positive noise pollution buffer for the village from the nearby M40 and A41.
- With community recreation located on the eastern corner, it provides a more sensitive edge close to the conservation area and village extents. The communal facilities are to be free to use for the village and surrounding areas. There is opportunity to provide a NEAP between the playing fields and northern meadow, with the community car park to the west and existing, enhanced boundary vegetation beyond.

Comments:

Design and Access Statement

The Design Considerations of which includes: The overarching principles of the proposals are: • To integrate development sensitively into the landscape. • Respect the rural edge setting and create a new distinct but soft edge to the village of Chesterton. • Protect the wildlife and natural elements in the landscape. • Provide attractive streetscapes, edges and open spaces. • Improve the wildlife and amenity benefits of the site to the wider community. • Improve permeability and connectivity. • Create a high quality development that will enhance the lives of existing and future residents. The outline application comprises proposals for up to 147 homes, including the access and associated open spaces. The proposed scheme will provide a variety of amenity landscape areas: •

Meadow Walks permeating the residential parcels and providing car-free green corridors. • Southern Fields retaining visual separation from the wider countryside; providing community assets including woodland, playing fields and growing space.

Illustrative Masterplan:

The design intends to draw on the character of the local area to reinforce local distinctiveness, help to define a sense of place and assist in creating an attractive development. Approximately two thirds of dwellings have been positioned so their primary aspect front onto green space or the public realm and with each dwelling a private gardens which is provided for all. A proposed mosaic shrub/woodland area to the south and recreation facilities to the east help to structure the development, providing attractive visual and physical amenity space. The aspiration is that these areas will act as a catalyst for social interaction and contain imaginative children's play areas. Walking routes and cycle paths will also provide links to the village centre.

Recreational Sports / Playing Fields, LEAPs and NEAP

The landscape design has included several play areas to include provision of a NEAP. This large play facility should ideally be integrated within the housing development to promote overlooking and passive surveillance, as well as being accessed easily. It's important also to consider access for adjacent developments and villages to use the facilities, so a connection from the existing community centre / playing fields would be of benefit.

Play facilities provide valuable open space within residential developments so it is essential that the evolving masterplan takes great consideration of play provision and where best it sits within the overall design. I appreciate however that there are smaller LEAPs located within the build development, however consideration should be made to explore this further.

The current location of the play areas are close to proposed attenuation areas, so there need some careful consideration over safety.

Existing and Proposed Watercourses

Around the perimeter of the application site there a number of ditches. I note that it mentions that these will be improved and new drainage features will be introduced. How are these features going to be maintained? And if 1 in 3 banks are introduced into the landscape, how will these be features enhance the site?

I note that indicative recreational routes are shown, however a sufficient depth of POS with footpaths to the entire outer edge should be incorporated into the scheme to ensure these landscape features are maintained and managed.

The proposed attenuation basins will need some form of signage / protective fencing to discourage dogs and pedestrians from encroaching onto the marginal zones and into the ponds themself.

Street Tree Planting

Street trees must be in a verge and after transfer maintained by the local authority or management company for the amenity and continuity. These should as such be located along primary streets and on both sides and planted into adequately wide landscaped grass verges. Where they are located along or close to lay areas, ensure also that suitable species are selected (canopy size) and adequate spacing is allowed for to ensure good visual surveillance.

Landscape and Visual Effects

The LVA is comprehensive and proportionate and within the report a sufficient selection of viewpoints demonstrate the degree to which the Site and the proposals may be visible in the near, middle and longer distance views. The majority of views (VP 1-11) are contained to within 1km of the Site boundary. Beyond that the views are distant and filtered / obscured by intervening vegetation associated with the level landscape. These include: VP 12 which is within a 2km radius, VP 13 and 15 which are within a 3km radius and VP 14 which is within a 4km radius. Having

walked and driven several of the PRoW and connecting roads I confirm that the selected 15 representative views have incorporated the obvious elevated views whereby the development site may be seen.

It is evident that the Site is mainly visible from residents at Vespasian Way and road users along Green Lane and the unnamed access road to Little Chesterton. There are limited views from the edge of the Chesterton Conservation Area which abuts the Site along its north eastern edge. In the wider landscape potential views of the new development may be possible from the footpaths leading to Little Chesterton; the Bicester and North Oxfordshire Cricket Club and the grounds of Bicester Health Club and Spa. Viewpoints as described below:

View 1 from Vespasian Way, looking south. The site will initially be in full view at this point. Screening will eventually lessen the impact in summer.

View 2 from Green Lane, adjacent to The Woodlands. Due to the lack of vegetation to the NE boundary, residents and pedestrians will have clear views of the dwellings on the development.

View 3 from Green Lane, adjacent to the Site's northern boundary. Cyclists, horse riders and motorists will have glimpsed views through existing vegetation of a large part of the development, in particular where the access point is located.

View 4 from lane to Little Chesterton. Due to the lack of existing, mature vegetation cyclists, horse riders and motorists will have clear views of the western section of the proposed access road and housing.

View 5 from the edge of the recreation ground looking south west towards the eastern half of the Site. Possible glimpses of the development could be seen through intervening hedgerow and tree belts.

View 6 from Public Footpath 161-3-10. The development's recreational sports / playing fields would be in the foreground with the southern edge of upper floors and rooftops visible above intervening hedgerows from the PRoW

View 7 from Public Footpath 161-4-10. Glimpsed views of the southern section of the housing development will be visible through existing hedgerows and tree belts.

View 8 from edge of Little Chesterton looking north. Possible distant views of the southern section of the development of upper floors and rooftops (of 8m high) being visible along through intermittent vegetation.

View 9 from Bicester Sports Ground. Proposed development would not be clearly visible due to intervening existing vegetation, plus most receptors here as mentioned in the LVA will be playing sport.

View 10 from Clubhouse balcony at Bicester Golf Club. Site development unlikely to be visible due to intervening vegetation

View 11 from gap in roadside vegetation along unnamed road towards Penrose Gardens. Site is unlikely to be visible due to intervening vegetation, however the receptor could experience closer views when travelling south along the lane.

View 12 from edge of recent developments off Vendee Drive. More than 1km away. Site not visible due to intervening vegetation.

View 13 from edge of recent developments at Graven Hill. More than 1km away. Site not visible due to distance and intervening vegetation.

View 14 from a public footpath at the edge of the village of Merton. More than 1km away. Site not visible due to distance and intervening vegetation.

View 15 from the B430 (Northampton Road) looking east across the level open landscape surrounding the Weston on the Green Airfield. More than 1km away. Site not visible due to distance and intervening vegetation.

I am in agreement with the LVA that the most sensitive Visual Receptors are those overlooking the Site at Vespasian Way, from Green Lane and walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorists passing the Site on its northern and western boundaries. It seems that the majority of views are contained to within 1km of the Site boundary. Beyond that the views are distant and filtered / obscured by intervening vegetation associated with the level landscape. Of the 16 Visual Receptors, 7-16 are seen as having a Poor View of the Site, with a Low - Medium Susceptibility of Change, of Moderate Value and Low - Moderate Sensitivity of VR. However VR 1, 2 and 5 have a High Susceptibility of Change and with a High Sensitivity of VR.

The overall the visibility of the site from the PRoW is as mentioned in the report is limited due to the site's existing boundary vegetation and the typical field boundaries within the local landscape. While there are views from the wider countryside looking towards the site, these would see the site within the wider landscape and within the context of the adjacent settlement boundary and development edge which has a urbanising influence on the site.

Although the park and ride is approximately 1.6 miles away and 4 minutes in the car (possibly longer if cycled) it would be another car-dependent dormitory. The current tree belt to the north of the development forms a strong, clear boundary between the village and countryside which visually demarcates the village from open countryside. This is an existing natural edge and should be protected and maintained for landscape and visual reasons.

Settlement Character

The inter-relationship between the landscape and newly built form would be seen as a significant change, certainly when receptors approach the village. The land of the proposed development forms the landscape setting for the gateway into the village from the western end. Additional screening is proposed for this development and this in itself suggests that if this is necessary then the development will not fit easily into the landscape. And as is clearly apparent, building on this site invariably pushes development further out into open countryside, whilst adding another relatively busy access point off Green Lane and two further access points for pedestrians.

Being an extension beyond existing boundaries will alter the interpretation and approach from the open landscape and into the village which will have a detrimental impact on the settlement and landscape character, but will also add further pressure onto existing facilities and infrastructure.

The last Census suggests that the population in Chesterton was around 850 in 2011 and since this time there have been two developments, each with 45 homes. Based on the 2.49 average household calculation, this makes an additional 224, so a current population of around 1,074. If another 147 homes are added to the village this pushes the population further by an additional 366 which makes a consequential 34% increase. The proposals include additional recreational facilities and new footpaths to help accommodate this number, however the cumulative effects that the new development would impose on the village may be too significant to counterbalance.

Please Note; The mentioned Landscape Strategy Document was not available to access and review for comment.

Should the Application proceed to the Reserved Matters and Conditions Clearance stages, the detailed landscape design proposals of the Site should respond to National and Local Planning Policy Guidance as well as the Supplementary Planning Guidance. The landscape architects should address the advice received, with the following supporting material to be submitted:

It's understood that minimal existing vegetation is proposed to be removed, however a comprehensive BS5837 tree survey will be necessary at the earliest stage to inform the design development with a Tree Retention/Removal Plan with details of any required facilitation pruning. This will then enable a full assessment of the proposals to be undertaken to include:

- Topographical Survey
- Arboricultural Report & Method Statement
- Ecological Appraisal
- Landscape Design Layout
- Detailed Hard and Soft Landscape Proposals
- Detailed specifications drawings

The landscaping layout should be submitted as detailed Planting Plans, all at 1:200 at A1 with a full plant schedule breakdown (also showing the height / spread, size, habit, root info) as well as illustrating how the shrubs and hedgerows are being grouped. Tree pit details, a landscape management plan / LEMP and hard landscape details are to be submitted along with a product specification.

The landscape proposals should suggest retaining the existing native boundary hedges / trees which will be enhanced with native interplanting to reinforce any gaps. With a mixture of native and semi-native trees to be planted around the peripheral areas of the site to create an extra buffer with an informal recreational routes through it to access the PRow and neighbouring community facilities whilst complementing the existing mature trees and native hedgerows and enhance habitat diversity.


I hope this offers some assistance with your decision on the above planning application.

Kind regards,

Julie.

Julie Baxter

Landscape Architect
Landscape & Street Scene
Cherwell District Council

 Direct Dial 01295 221936 Mobile 07935 770588

www.cherwell.gov.uk

Follow us:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/cherwelldistrictcouncil

Twitter: @Cherwellcouncil

