**From:** Tim Screen
**Sent:** 02 February 2018 12:11
**To:** Caroline Ford
**Subject:** 17/00600/DISC - Bicester Eco Town Exemplar Site Banbury Road Bicester

Caroline

General comments, as promised, although further consideration and detailed response required by me. I suggest the we go through all this with the developer and their consultant.

**Play Areas:**

Play area fencing gates require consideration:

Gates to be repositioned elsewhere due to circulation impacts

Planting layouts could be trampled

Boulder area to be revised.

‘Bottlenecks’ to be revised

Fencing that does not enclosed the entire play area.

For example, consider inset 2

The play area gate are to open away from the play activity area, for example the southern gate appears to open right onto play item 5 which will result in accidents (children running towards opening gates, etc.). Usually a transitional space between the main path and the play area entrance is created to allow for the temporary parking of buggies and wheelchairs and people, away from the main route while the gate is opened. It would be prudent to delete play item 5 to allow for a better access.

Delete the maintenance/mowing access gate due to the potential conflict of users. Relocate the (locked) maintenance access gate in the fence on the eastern boundary near the main path away from play area entrances. The seat opposite the gate will present a circulation constraint where persons may ‘hang around’.

**Planting (not play areas):**

The mixed planting does not instruct the landscape contractor to plant in the correct positions dependent on the size and growth rate, of the individual species. The species can be a spiny rose planted too close the edge of the path, or the Ceanothus thyrusiflorus repens which is too vigorous and overtakes it neighbours. Aspect is also important:

Ajuga reptans 'Catlin's Giant' – full shade

Deschampsia cespitosa 'Goldtau' – full sun/partial shade, therefore replace with fern Dryopteris felix-mas

Melissa officinalis 'Aurea' – full sun and free draining, therefore replace with Euonymus fortunei ‘Emerald and Gold’

Sarcococca humilis – full shade/ part shade

Viburnum opulus 'Compactum' – full shade

Planting to roadside edge: Corynephorus canescens does not appear to be very robust and able to deal with roadside trampling. The narrow corners of the planting borders are liable to be trampled and there is little soil medium because of kerb haunching for the establishment of plants. The edge of the borders should be squared off and soil volumes increased. In order to prevent footfall damage to planting and soils compaction I think it is prudent to install a ‘quality’ knee-rails.

Elaeagnus x ebbingei – delete due to overly vigorous hybrid species near to foundations; replace with red and yellow-stemmed dogwoods for improved amenity. For example the large area of Eleagnus ebbingei near the eastern boundary, once established becomes a vigorous mass of, that if allow to get out of its maintained size will achieve a height and spread of 4.00 m: a very oppressive mass planting next to the pedestrian route. A Vis-splay in this location is crucial to ensure that there are no accidents between cyclists/pedestrians. Again, consider replacing all E.b hedges with Osmanthus burkwoodii or Escallonia ‘Apple Blossom’.

Hedera helix – overly vigorous species; delete in favour of a groundcover cushion (buffer to paving) to the front of the border such as Lonicera nitida ‘Maygreen’

Arbutus unedo 'Compacta' should be checked to see it will cope in the soil. Soilscapes define this area to have ‘Freely draining lime-rich loamy soils’ which means that this plant is inappropriate on this site. Arbutus unedo 'Compacta'  is not very hardy during its early years requiring fleece to give it protection against frost. I am concerned that these edible species have been partnered with Viburnum davidii which is toxic i.e. the fruit can cause a mild stomach upset if ingested.

Melissa officinalis 'Aurea' is inappropriate given its habit of dying back oever winter, leaving bare soil.

Narrow borders are unsustainable near hedges due to maintenance access for hedge trimming. Robust low groundcover required.

The hedge should be located to allow access to vehicles in parking areas.

**Proposed Hedges:**

Ligustrum vulgar (native privet) makes an ugly hedge and if left to grow out of its usual  maintained shape it will require extensive pruning that will expose its ugly bare stems that never regenerate into leaf. The rather sickly sweet smell of its flowers is not to everyone’s taste. Replace with the evergreen Osmanthus burkwoodii and Escallonia ‘Apple Blossom’.

The hedge should be located to allow access to vehicles in parking areas.

**Proposed Trees:**

Proposed trees within or near the hedgerow buffers should be native to comply with ecological objectives: the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat. Therefore:

replace Malus ‘Professor Sprenger’ with M. sylvestris;

replace Acer campestre ‘Elsrijk’ with A. campestre

Some trees should be removed or relocated because they are too close to kerb edges, play surfaces, dwelling foundations; canopies will grow and overhang play equipment and seats with detritus/bird fowling issues.

Carpinus betulus 'Fastigiata on the eastern boundary of the Central Open Space will widen their canopies as they grow. The very dense canopies resulting in dense overshadowing. Consider changing to C.b. ‘Frans  Fonteine’ due to its more fastigiate habit than the C.b. fastigiata.

Bacteria canker affects Prunus avium and  Prunus × subhirtella 'Autumnalis'  and it would be prudent to reduce their number and propose suitable, potentially disease-free substitutes.

Root barriers are required.

**Bins:**

Dog bins and litter bins are required in strategic locations.

Please let me know if you have any questions and a timeframe for the meeting with the developer’s landscape consultant.

Regards

Tim

**Tim Screen** CMLI

**Landscape Architect**

Cherwell District & South Northants Councils