

20/01788/FUL - 350 houses - Land at Shurdington Road Cheltenham

Review of further landscape material- Addendum

Purpose of note

To provide further landscape comments on the proposal by Miller Homes to build 350 houses on land off Shurdington Road in Cheltenham. This Addendum is in response to additional material supplied by the Applicant in the form of;

- Overall Planning Layout – Rev R
- Open space measurements dated 1/10/20; and
- Shurdington Road Public Open Space schedule dated 6/10/21.

There has also been further descriptive material supplied by the applicant's scheme Landscape Architect – Hankinson Duckett Associate, specifically Brian Duckett in a direct e-mail to Stuart Ryder of the 19/11/21.

The note is intended to further inform the determination of the planning application by Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) as they consider the proposals against their landscape planning policies.

Author of note

The note has been prepared by Stuart Ryder of Ryder Landscape Consultants who commented on the initial submission material in his initial note of the 2/2/21 and then with additional comments in a further note dated 11/11/21.

Scope of addendum note

The note considers three items;

1. Rev R of the Planning Layout;
2. The Public Open Space calculations; and
3. Supporting comments made by Brian Duckett in his e-mail of the 19/11/21

Rev R of the Planning Layout

The following comments are quite specific matters of detail that should be resolvable through review of the detail design proposals in the Condition Discharge stage. They are mentioned now to bring them to the Applicant's attention so they can respond to them now or at any later stage.

Route of CHL/6 Footpath

There seems to be a possible confusion with how CHL/6 runs near the end of the proposed allotments and then up to wards Robinswood Cottage, is the old alignment being used? Is it being improved in terms of surfacing? There also appears to be a route on new paths nearby – can these be combined as a better route to the west of the existing hedge?

The reason for these questions is that CHL/6 at the moment is a definable route through the area but may be superseded by other paths leaving it as a secondary path that becomes overgrown or less appealing to use. A snip of the area is provided to confirm which area this comment relates to.



Entrance roundabout to the estate

I have expressed concern about the quality of the public realm associated with the entrance roundabout on Shurdington Road and Brian Duckett supplies further comments on this matter in Point 3 of his e-mail dated 19/11/21. At this stage there still appears little interest indicated at the roundabout. One suggestion is to seek feature tree planting of the roundabout (without affecting highway safety) or a significant piece of civic art to act as a marker to the entrance to the estate and retain public realm quality on the approach to Cheltenham.



A further comment with regard to 'greening' the three small triangular islands is that they will become a safety liability to maintain. The roundabout too could be problematical for grass cutting and any detail proposals should take this into account. A maintenance van 'pull-on' to the island is not recommended as it would detract from any scheme on the roundabout and are problematic for maintenance staff to re-join the highway. Finally the long bed to the north of the junction is too narrow in parts making grass establishment and subsequent management problematical and a suitable hard surface is recommended for its narrower parts.

Tree planting bed widths

It is encouraging to see further street trees being incorporated into the proposals. There are however some that still appear to be 'squeezed' into too narrow planting areas as illustrated in the snip below. The thin strips of green (estimated to be a metre wide) do not in themselves hold enough soil volume to allow tree establishment and sustain growth to mature size so underground details and soil volumes will continue to be a key consideration of detailed proposals required to discharge planning conditions.



Trees in proximity to buildings

Trees are shown in close proximity to many houses given the small front garden sizes. The tree species chosen for these locations needs to be of sufficient mature size to make a difference to the character of the streetscene. The foundations of adjacent houses will need to be designed and implemented to accommodate the nearby presence of the mature trees. The snip set below indicates this point as an example.



Parking courts

There are a considerable number of parking courts throughout the proposals with a variety of levels of landscape treatments. The pale green colouring of the master plan (as illustrated above) is taken as an indication that they may be surfaced in a more decorative material. Alternatively it may relate to the general green tones used across this version of the drawing and they end up being tarmac. There is still a concern that the parking courts will appear as hard, unattractive areas.

One observation is that many of the courts have thin door opening strips indicated between some of the bays. These could be combined to allow more space to be put to landscape treatments. A second observation relates to future adaptation of these spaces to allow for accessible parking spaces for Blue Badge holders living or visiting the development who may require additional space to access their vehicles' side doors or boots. Final comment relates to the number of visitor parking spaces, is there sufficient and do they comply with Glos. CC standards? On street parking and mounting the kerbs is anticipated if there are not enough visitor spaces. This would be more problematical on the secondary roads where carriageway width is narrower at 4.8m.

2. Public Open Space calculations

The public open space drawing is useful to illustrate where the different types of open space are propose around the development and what their intended purposes are. This perhaps could become an Approved Drawing to aid the scheme designers reach the intended POS provision.

The calculations were reviewed back in February with the initial note and still demonstrate a POS provision greater than that required by the Cheltenham Open Space 'Tool Kit' of 2016. I have no further comments to make on the provision of POS which appears to be policy compliant.

3. Supporting comments from Mr Duckett's e-mail of 19/11/21

Mr Brian Duckett issued some supplementary notes of explanation in his e-mail of the 19/11/21, there were seven substantive points covered. These points are set down below with my consultation reaction to them supplied underneath each;

1. **Tree cover:** the scheme has been reviewed in respect of the advice in the current NPPF and in the light of a positive approach now taken by the County highways department in respect of street trees and their standing advice. There are now more street trees in the avenues and rows lining secondary streets along with trees within car parking areas to relieve large areas of hardstanding. Trees on plot have also been increased.

The increase in street trees is welcome and I would direct the design team to my comments about tree bed width, soil volume, species selection and appropriate building foundation design contained above in my review of the Planning Layout – Rev R.

2. **Sustainable Drainage:-** the side slopes for the SuDs features have been reduced from 1 in 3 to 1 in 4 around the features as a whole. They will be permanently wet features which along with the profiles as illustrated on the masterplan should provide for an attractive and safe group of wetland features within the scheme. There may be the opportunity for further relaxation of the side slopes in areas that are not constrained by footpath or road alignments which would be determined as part of the detailed design undertaken as part of the conditions submission following grant of permission. If you need assurance that side slopes are considered further, you could add to the wording of the relevant condition. I should just mention that should further relaxation of side slopes be required, this would ultimately increase the size of the ponds and in turn decrease the areas of usable POS.

The relaxation of basin side slopes from 1:3 to 1:4 is welcome but it is the uniformity of side slopes that is best avoided so the variation of gradients is to be encouraged whenever possible. Mr

Duckett's comment about increasing the size of the ponds and decreasing the areas of usable POS is noted but there appears to be sufficient open space near the SuDS basins to achieve attractively designed attenuation basins and areas of POS around them. The confirmation that they are to be kept 'in the wet' is a positive for public amenity benefit. There will be a requirement for a safety audit and possibly resulting lifesaving rings and areas of access and egress required. Their long term management including actions to prevent natural succession should be included in the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.

3. **The Shurdington Road access** - Cooper Baillie (the project masterplanners) have been through many design iterations with the case officer and her team (including GCC Highways) to refine the entrance to the site in respect of setback of buildings, the form of housing design, landscape treatment of the frontage and the roundabout layout and highway constraints. They are content with the current design and that it forms an appropriate entrance to the site.

Please see my comments in Section 1 of this Addendum note that suggest feature tree planting or a piece of civic art could enhance the main roundabout island if the applicant feels that they have achieved the best possible housing layout to mark the entrance to the estate. Should tree planting or artwork be incorporated then public utilities may require modification to accommodate them. As stated above highway safety remains a paramount concern however it is hoped an attractive and imaginative proposal can come forward that marks the entrance to the development, appears attractive during daylight and the hours of darkness and adds to the character of Shurdington Road as an arterial route into Cheltenham.

4. Views towards the escarpment: the main north south views to the escarpment lie within the Hatherley Brook landscape corridor, away from the busy Shurdington Road and include views both from the new footpath/cycleway and the open space within the park more generally. With respect to the road itself and car users, they currently have a transient view of the escarpment across the site. They will continue to have transient views from the new roundabout looking south along the main north – south axis road which will be tree lined to frame the views and through the open space which replaces the current Kidnappers Lane junction. There will also be views along the Hatherley Brook corridor from the road.

I acknowledge that the main viewing opportunity to the escarpment will be along the Hatherley Brook corridor but this will be for people walking and cycling through the estate rather than greater number of users of Shurdington Road. Views along the Hatherley Brook open space will most likely be best viewed by people leaving Cheltenham given its alignment. The amount of existing mature trees and proposed new planting will restrict views in part and it will be a matter of detail design and possible agreement on Site where possible views could be emphasised from this corridor. A further consideration is the alignment of the brook's open space that appears to focus to the west side of Leckhampton Hill.

I however remain sceptical of the two transient viewing opportunities identified as from the roundabout entrance and along the open space created at the current entrance to Kidnappers Lane. The roundabout is where the greater view will be visible given the width of open carriageway to its south but it should be remembered road user's attention will be concentrating on negotiating the roundabout safely. The former Kidnappers Lane access is narrow in comparison, soon passed by road users entering Cheltenham likely before recognising the presence of any view and set with amenity tree planting that will further restrict views to the escarpment.

Rather than prolonging the debate of potential visibility to Leckhampton Hill two things could happen. Firstly Visually Verifiable Images (VVI's) of the view to Leckhampton Hill could be created now the design has progressed to a reasonable level of detail. Secondly CBC can acknowledge that the view to Leckhampton Hill from Shurdington Road would change given the allocation of land for

housing development and the resulting visual adverse effect is accepted. The degree of change is then the matter for planning agreement and possible improvement to achieve the best opportunity to retain a view to Leckhampton Hill for the greatest number of people who use Shurdington Road.

5. Hatherley Brook: you expressed a concern on the multifunctional use of the brook corridor and a reliance on it to provide the open space and biodiversity provision for the site. I have attached the open space measurements for the site and schedule. This identifies the overall provision including Moorend Meadows, an extensive area of open space outside the original allocation. Overall, the provision of informal open space is well in excess of the informal open space requirements for the site and is provided in easily accessible locations for the new residents and the existing local community.

The multi-functional use of Hatherley Brook is acknowledged and accepted and given careful attention at detail design, implementation and perhaps most importantly management stages should be able to deliver the POS and bio-diversity functions it has been identified for. Moorend Meadows if its final form remains as POS rather than small-holdings gives greater flexibility of use than the ribbon of space along the brook.

6. Access to the residual land on the Shurdington Road: the location and provision of a pedestrian access to the Kendrick site (formerly the Bovis land) as shown on the attached planning layout has now been agreed directly with Kendrick.

Thank you for confirming this and it should benefit both schemes and future residents that there is a pedestrian link.

With regard to the LVIA which accompanied the application and following our conversation I would like to confirm that you do not have any concerns in respect of the likely landscape and visual effects from the wider landscape.

Although not numbered 7 Mr Duckett's final e-mail point was seeking my confirmation that I do not have any concerns regarding likely landscape and visual effects from the wider landscape. In my last note (11/11/21 I confirm that in my opinion there is compliance with Policy JD7 – Cotswolds AONB.

In summary

There a number of landscape elements that require careful detail design and review during the discharge of detail design matters. These include but are not limited to planting details of street trees, surfacing of parking courts, visitor parking, and foundation design to accommodate trees.

The Public Open Space provision is in excess of Cheltenham Borough Council's guidance documents requirements and HDA's Open Space Calculation Plan 436.16/- dated July 2020 is a useful drawing to show this and should be included as one of the Approved Drawings in any planning consent notice.

I have responded to the points raised by Mr Bran Duckett in his e-mail of the 19/11/21 and trust they answer the queries he raise.

Finally as ever if anybody in the Development Control Team wish to speak to me about these comments I am happy to discuss them in further detail with them.