

Subject: FW: F/24/97312 Land adjoining 4 Brookfield, Providence Hill, Bursledon - landscape comments

Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 5:07 PM

Subject: Re: F/24/97312 Land adjoining 4 Brookfield, Providence Hill, Bursledon - landscape comments

Hi Rebecca,

I have been asked to provide landscape comments on this latest application for land adjoining 4 Brookfield.

This is a significant site and landscape design should be one of the foundational principles that influence the design proposals. Integration of Green Infrastructure into the design process is regarded as key to a successful outcome.

I have asked for additional information in my comments below so that we can fully assess the proposals. The challenging on site levels are a particular concern, and I have requested a number of cross-sections to clarify how this sloping site can successfully accommodate the proposed Care Home and cottages.

Background:

I have commented on a previous application F/22/93160 (refused) on this site, so I am aware of the main landscape related issues. I visited the site in 2022.

The site adjoins the listed Bursledon Windmill and Conservation Area. A watercourse runs along the northern boundary. Windmill Woods Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) adjoins the site to the northeast.

The northern boundary is well treed and covered by a blanket Tree Preservation Order that forms an important backdrop to the site. These trees are also prominent in the views from Providence Hill. The southern boundary abuts Providence Hill and is marked by well established trees on bank that provide good screening to the site.

The topography of the site falls significantly from south to north, from Providence Hill down to the level of the stream, beyond which it then begins to rise again through the Goslings Turning development and then beyond to where Bursledon Windmill, a Listed building, is located on higher ground. Some limited views are available from Providence Hill towards the Windmill and it is important that these are preserved and enhanced.

The site is allocated for residential development of approximately 19 dwellings under Policy BU1, Land north of Providence Hill. Policy BU1 is mentioned in the submitted Planning Statement and this Policy includes the following specific landscape related requirements:

c) the development incorporates measures to safeguard the adjoining stream and Windmill Woods Site

of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) with 20m undeveloped buffers;

d) to preserve water quality and flows into the unnamed watercourse to the north of the site details of Sustainable Urban Drainage shall be provided in accordance with policy DM6 as part of any application for outline or full planning permission;

e) ensure avoidance or mitigation of direct and indirect adverse impacts on habitats or species protected by legislation or identified as of principal importance within the NERC Act 2006 S41 lists and that there is a net gain in biodiversity;

f) the development provides a high quality landscaped setting which preserves or enhances the special interest, character and appearance of the adjoining Bursledon Windmill Conservation Area and safeguards the setting of the listed windmill;

To support the Council's commitment to taking action on Climate Change development proposals should:

Ensure the retention/protection of existing trees

Maximise opportunities for planting new trees to soften hard surfaces, slow surface water run-off, provide shade and create habitats/corridors for biodiversity

Reduce vehicular dominance and prioritise pedestrian movement

Minimise parking provision

Consider introducing green and blue roofs/walls

Incorporate permeable surfaces and SUDS

Landscape Comments:

I have downloaded and reviewed the landscape related documents uploaded to Salesforce.

There are a number of key landscape considerations including:

a/ Levels - the site slopes steeply down from Providence Hill

b/ Landscape character along existing stream & SINC to the north

c/ Existing boundary trees - these provide valuable screening of the site

d/ Existing views of the landmark Bursledon Windmill - protected view corridor

e/ Potential visual impact

f/ Opportunities to provide deliverable Green Infrastructure (GI)

It may be helpful if I address these points in order with any additional comments following:

Levels

There are significant level changes south to north on this site which present a genuine challenge to successful development. The submitted site layout responds to this challenge by proposing a split-level design for the Care Home with fairly tortuous routes for the proposed access drive and footpath link from Providence Hill. Significant retaining walls are also indicated, in places close to 3m high.

Whilst level changes can be used in a creative way, much depends on detailed hard & soft landscape design and quality implementation. The notional feature rocks within planting beds along the route of the main link footpath look interesting, and the use of some green walls is supported, although we would need comfort that these will be properly maintained in the long-term.

To fully evaluate the proposed levels, a number of key cross-sections are required so that the relationship between the Care Home and the Cottages and the wider setting can be determined. These sections should indicate existing and proposed levels, together with the details of any retaining structures. The sections should extend some way beyond the site boundary, so that the proposed levels can be assessed in the wider context.

Key sections include:

Section through 1-4 Brookfield, proposed Care Home and stream up to existing development to the N (relationship between the Care Home and 1-4 Brookfield is important).

Section through 'zig-zag' pedestrian path, access drive, parking and across stream to Goslings Turning

Section along centreline of the view cone of Bursledon Windmill (protected view of Windmill)

Sections through Providence Hill, Cottages 1-3 & Cottage 5 and through to adjacent Goslings Turning development (to assess extent of ground modelling required and possible impact on retained boundary trees).

These sections will also be useful to assess potential close view visual impact.

We also require details of the types of retaining walls proposed by location. Bearing in mind the extent/height of walls required, the finishes should be as visually 'soft' as possible, with some areas of gabion walling and planted retaining walls considered.

The approximate heights of the various retaining walls should be indicated on the site plan and the landscape strategy drawing.

Landscape character along the northern boundary to the existing stream & SINC

Policy BU1 includes the safeguarding of the adjoining stream and Windmill Woods Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) with 20m undeveloped buffers - mentioned in the submitted planning statement clause 5.25 c).

The current site layout indicates an 10m wide ecological buffer as agreed separately with the EBC Ecology Officer.

The buffer should be carefully landscaped to provide diverse habitats. At present only native scrub and neutral grassland is indicated. Some native tree planting should be included along this edge to bolster tree cover and some additional native understorey species would strengthen screening at lower levels. There is scope to include a small tree copse in the far western corner of the site ('wedge' of land to the west of Cottage 5).

I am concerned the proposed retaining walls indicated on plan will adversely impact the setting of the stream and buffer zone. Further details are required, together with any planting that will be included

to soften these structures. At present, some stretches of wall are not softened with any planting, which is unacceptable.

I defer to the Ecology Officer for additional comments on the buffer zone.

Existing boundary trees

As regards impact on retained trees, I defer to comments by the Tree Officer, however, I am concerned that the new vehicular access and proposed retaining walls/ground modelling adjacent Cottages 1-5 may adversely impact retained trees. The requested cross-sections will help determine if all existing trees can be successfully retained in the long-term.

Views of Bursledon Windmill

The line of the key view on the site layout does not match the view corridor shown on the landscape strategy plan.

Although the vista towards the Windmill is indicated on the landscape plan, it is relatively narrow and will be much changed from the present view across an open field. The proposed view will include extensive areas of hard surfacing of the access drive and areas of parking.

The notional planting within the view cone is welcomed, but further work is required to ensure proposed tree planting frames this key view.

The eastern end of the 'green feature wall' should be pulled outside the vista. To reduce visual 'clutter' within the vista, the retaining wall along the northern edge of the lower parking area should be designed to avoid the introduction of railings/fencing to protect the drop (walls below 0.6m high, terraced as required).

There is scope to introduce a 'softer' surface for the lower parking area that will reduce visual impact on this key view.

Potential visual impact

No visual appraisal has been submitted. Previous applications included a visual appraisal, and this should be provided for this application. A number of CGI's from key viewpoints would also be helpful in assessing impact of the proposal on the scene.

The long sections mentioned above will also be helpful in determining likely visual impact on wider views.

Opportunities to provide deliverable Green Infrastructure (GI)

Overall, the landscape strategy plan indicates reasonable scope to include deliverable GI, however, the tree planting strategy is sporadic and further work is required in this regard. Trees should be arranged to create a strong framework to the development, including trees to frame the key vista of the windmill. Additional tree planting is required to bolster site boundaries, provide shade and shelter to parking areas and to screen the unsightly BT Exchange building.

The SE wing of the building comes too close to the boundary (circa 2m) and creates an unfortunate pinch point where there is insufficient space for screen planting. This will allow unobstructed and

unacceptable open views of the building from neighbouring properties. Consideration should be given to creating a wider soft landscape strip in this location for meaningful screen planting.

The effectiveness of the continuous line of trees to soften the SE corner of the site can be assessed once a cross-section through this area has been submitted as this will reveal the relationship between the Care Home and 1-4 Brookfield.

Further understorey planting is required along the boundary to Providence Hill to filter views into the site at lower levels.

Native hedge planting can play an important role on this site and significant stretches should be introduced to provide landscape structure, screen parking areas and to create new wildlife corridors.

General landscape comments on the current site layout:

1. Whilst I defer to separate comments by the Urban Design Officer, the size of the proposed Care Home does seem quite large for this restricted site. The building appears to have been 'shoe-horned' into the eastern sector of the site with the result that external spaces around the building are cramped. A reduction in the footprint of the build would free up space for additional hard and soft landscape creating a more generous setting for the Care Home.

It is good to see that the building is located outside the RPA's of existing boundary trees.

There are opportunities for vertical GI, including living walls to soften the impact of the new building. Green roofs should also be considered.

2. Is a proposed sub stn. required for this layout? If so, please locate on plan and demonstrate how this will be screened with planting.

3. The location of Cottage 5 does cause some concerns as it is close to the southern boundary. Can this cottage and retaining wall be moved away from the boundary at all?

4. There is no indication of any SuD's proposals at present. If these are to be included, please provide details at this stage so that they do not suddenly appear within the buffer zone. Any features must be designed to have a natural profile/character.

5. Previous schemes included an acoustic barrier. Please confirm this is not required for this application.

6. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal should ideally include site photographs taken in winter months when it is likely the screening effect of existing vegetation will be much reduced.

7. I cannot see how the 4 existing parking spaces adjacent Brookfield can be accessed as there is insufficient turning space.

I hope these broad-brush landscape comments are helpful. The implications of building on such a steeply sloping site are my primary concern.

I look forward to receiving further/revised information in due course for additional comment.

Any queries please feel free to get in contact. I am happy to speak with the design team direct if they would find this helpful.

KR Tim

Landscape Consultant

Working on behalf of Eastleigh Borough Council
