

Urban Design Comments

O/25/99534 – Land at Denhams Corner, Snakemoor Lane

From: Urban & Landscape Design Team to Development Management

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Proposal: Outline application for up to 150 dwellings including 40% affordable housing, with vehicle and cycle accesses from Snakemoor Lane, pedestrian/cycle access from Botley Road, sustainable transport hub, public open space and play area, and associated infrastructure and landscaping.

Summary:

- Countryside location where there is a presumption against new residential development.
 - A landscape-led approach will be critical to the successful development of this site.
 - More information required to produce more detailed comments (plans showing cross-sections through the site, alongside indicative street scenes to show the proposed development in context within the sit, etc.)
 - Suggestions to improve the site layout below.
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These comments are made in relation to the plans dated 10 June 2025 and should be read in conjunction with comments from the Landscape and Ecology Officers.

1. Site Context

The site lies within open countryside, on the easterly side of Botley Road, to the south of Horton Heath settlement.

To the north of the site is the Scoreys Copse Ancient Woodland and it is surrounded by a SINC on the northern east boundary.

Botley Road accommodates several bus services supporting access to the site by public transport. Bus stops are located within comfortable walking distance of the site as well as Hedge End train station.

Given the location of the site within the countryside, there is an in-principle objection to this form of development.

The following comments are made on the assumption that suitable justification can be made for a departure from planning policy.

Whilst the information provided at this stage is good for an indicative concept plan, it is insufficient to assess if a proposal can be integrated successfully into the wider setting. At the very least, a number of cross-sections should be submitted. These sections should show existing and proposed contours, together with the heights of the proposed development. These sections should extend some way beyond the site boundary so that the proposed levels can be assessed in the wider context.

A robust tree planting strategy is needed, with all boundaries carefully considered, with an emphasis on creating robust planted edges that will effectively soften the development in wider views.

2. Streets, Spaces and External Layout

Site Access

The proposal is for a new access from Snakemoor Lane (south-western corner of the site). It is for Highways colleagues to comment on the technicalities of whether the proposed site access is suitable in highway terms and for the Tree Officer to comment on the removal of some trees.

Building Layout

An illustrative arrangement of land uses was submitted in which is established principles for the disposition of housing, open space, access points and linkages for the whole site.

In terms of layout, the proposal indicates an approach based on a series of discrete perimeter blocks with potential housing facing outwards and enclosed private garden spaces within each block. This design principle works well and creates a great sense of place where the buildings frontage creates a clear, direct and positive relationship with the public realm, such as the open space or the ecologic area.

Notwithstanding the comment above, it is advised that the following is considered at the next stage:

- Provide further information and studies to examine the context to appropriately guide the proposal's articulation and elevational treatment. These studies should specifically assist in refining the architecture style proposed; the solid to void ratio and pattern; the roof form and ridges' heights to respond appropriately to the local character. Consider as well providing a wider site plan showing the surrounding buildings and open spaces.
- Elevation drawings/ sections through the site to show the relationship between the proposal and the adjacent buildings and how the external treatment relates and enhances the character of the place by using appropriate features and materials.
- Plans to include the external spaces and clarifying how they will be treated and used.
- Also, submitting visualisations will help to clarify how the scheme relates to its setting, namely through distant and close views. A careful consideration from specific viewpoints towards the residential area could ensure that the development integrates well within its setting.

The entrance of the site needs more consideration. It would be encouraged to produce a few visualisations to achieve a balanced design approach where both sides of the road work together as a gateway to the development.

The topography of the site is important, and it is not entirely clear how various elements of the development would relate to the existing and proposed final levels. The road layout should be contour driven to ensure that the proposal sits comfortable within the site whilst preventing any detrimental visual impact derived from the new built form.

The periphery road layout facing the open space, from Plots 90 and 99, should be more of a green edge characterized to have a sinuous line to better interact with nature. As it stands, it seems that the proposal fails to respect the landscape character of the surrounding area.

Also, it is considered that the group of detached dwellings towards north - Plots 36 to 41 - might be putting some pressure on the northern boundary/ buffer.

The approach of proposing a boulevard with trees on both sides of the road to connect the two green spaces is supported.

The central green space forms an important part of the concept and adds value to the sequence of public open spaces, such as the tree lined avenue and the pedestrian link to the east of the scheme.

It is advised to produce visualisations to illustrate how the architect envisages this central space.

Parking and Servicing

The scheme proposes parking courts to the rear of the new buildings. Concealed/ integrated parking would help keeping the central green space from being cluttered with cars which would be welcomed.

A well-integrated parking court is a balance between a well-designed arrangement, a rich and diverse landscape proposal as well as attention to a great architecture detail to create a strong sense of place and ownership.

It seems that few visitors parking spaces were provided. Place visitor parking spaces in the carriage way rather than deflect pavements and pedestrian desire lines and erode soft landscape.

Where parking areas are located adjacent to soft landscape, a buffer strip will be needed to prevent trampling of vegetation.

Bin and cycle stores should be designed as an integral part of the building, providing convenient access to the street. Placing stores in rear garden locations makes cycling inconvenient, encourages car use and runs the risk of bins being left in the public realm creating visual clutter.

3. Height

There are no objections in principle to this aspect of the scheme. However, in order to provide detailed comments, it would be encouraged to submit visualisations, namely through distant and close views, from specific viewpoints towards the residential area, to ensure that the development integrates well within its setting and does not have any visual impact on the surrounding area.

4. External Appearance & Materials

There is no information submitted regarding External appearance and materials. In order to provide further detailed design comments, more information would need to be submitted at a later stage.

Whilst it is not essential that design mimics or tries to replicate existing traditional buildings, as this often results in poor quality replicas, it is important that new buildings reinforce the character of the area. Good architecture is less to do with a particular style and more to do with the successful co-ordination of proportions, materials, colour and details. Particular care should be given to corners, roof lines and how the building meets the ground.

5. Sustainability

To support the Council's commitment to mitigate climate change:

- Significantly reduce vehicular dominance and prioritise pedestrian and cycle provision and links to public transport
- Provide minimum parking provision and a range of parking solutions
- Provide charging points for electric vehicles, Ebikes and other forms of micro-mobility within garages and/or locations that support the streetscene and do not hinder pedestrian movement
- Consider introducing green and blue roofs and walls to reduce hard surfaces and control water at source
- Include additional trees and soft landscape within streetscenes to reduce hard surfaces, slow surface water run-off, provide shade and create habitats / corridors for biodiversity
- Include additional trees within rear gardens and demarcate plot boundaries with hedgerows to slow surface water run-off, provide shade and create habitats / corridors for biodiversity
- Incorporate permeable surfaces and multi-functional SuDS in accordance with advice from Landscape and Ecology Officers
- Consider installation of photovoltaics
- Introduce *Passivhaus* and/or *Lifetime Homes* approaches to building design and construction
- Reduce levels of CO₂ emissions via energy efficiency and choice of materials
- Incorporate efficient mains water consumption measures
- Orient buildings to maximise solar gain and provide natural surveillance of surrounding streets and spaces to encourage active travel
- Include measures to provide outdoor shade and minimise indoor heating
- Ensure habitable rooms enjoy dual aspect to maximise solar gain, improve ventilation and maximise overlooking of surrounding streets and spaces