

Subject:

FW: F/25/100141 Land SE of Kings Copse Avenue - landscape comments

Landscape General Arrangement Plan

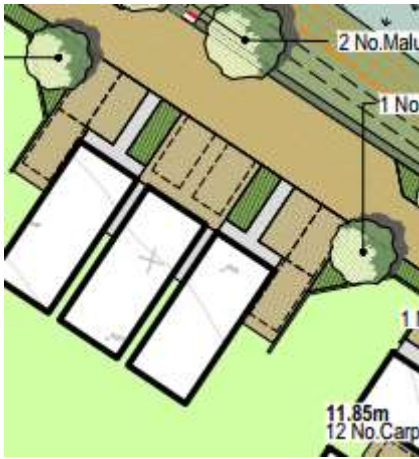
1/ The approach taken to the landscape proposals around the periphery of the site is generally welcomed. The tree planting along the frontage along Kings Copse Road will improve the character of the road and create a pleasant foredrop to the site. The protection and enhancement of the existing green buffers to site edges is an important aspect of the of the scheme. Currently it is not easy to decipher the various types of planting indicated (with differing shades of green). Some explanatory notes of planting types on the plan would be helpful in this regard. There are locations where wildflower meadow mix (shade tolerant) needs to be replaced by native tree and shrub planting to ensure boundaries are bolstered and screening improved. There is also scope to increase the number of individual new trees planted within the buffer zones.

2/ Having read through the DAS, the suggested proposed green zones shown on the concept plan are not immediately evident on this latest plan. The central square can be identified (although it is debatable whether this can be described as a green zone since there are extensive sweeps of hard surfacing in the area). The 2 secondary green zones have largely been lost with only pockets of soft landscape remaining.

The design of the central square is one of the most disappointing aspects of this latest proposal and requires further refinement to try and avoid this key space being dominated by vehicles and hard surfacing. At the very least the square should be developed as a shared space incorporating some home-zone type principles. At present the plan is rendered in a way that does not even suggest a change of material/colour of the surfacing. Further thought should be given to improve this key focal space and we would appreciate a detailed extract providing more detail of the design in this area.

3/ In terms of deliverable Green Infrastructure, especially street tree planting, I do not agree with the suggestion that the scheme has been landscape led (*'has a landscaped form at it's inception'*). Perhaps around the periphery it is possible to see how landscape has been prioritised in the design, but internally tree planting generally seems to be arranged where remnant soft landscape areas have been left after setting out buildings, roads and parking. There are few locations where contiguous avenues of tree planting occur and trees are often set far apart which will preclude canopy level green linkages.

Please review the plan and maximise numbers of trees to be planted. For example:



Where a tree might have to be positioned in narrow strips introduce specialist tree pits so the tree can be successfully planted.

4/ Too many parking courts are devoid of tree planting and as a result these spaces will be bland and exposed. Each area should be closely reviewed and every opportunity to increase tree planting to provide shade and shelter should be maximised.

5/ There are a notable number of trees planted in narrow beds between parking bays, and these should be provided with specialised tree cell pits if they are going to survive. Please these trees on the plan for clarity.

6/ SuD's - there are 4 basins indicated on plan. Currently these are notionally indicated as having a rather engineered, geometric form. Further design work is required to ensure these have a more naturalistic form with sweeping curves, shallow banks with varying slopes angles. There may be scope to introduce low gabion walls as informal berms to create a basin with 2 different levels. Please avoid off-the-shelf concrete headwalls using instead gabions of sandbags. Limit any required safety railing to absolute minimum as this can be visually intrusive.

Some further native shrub planting should be added around the top of the ponds to soften the form of the basins. This planting should be arranged in an informal and naturalistic manner.

7/ Where shrub and groundcover planting abuts the sides or ends of parking bays, allow for a min. 0.3m wide strip of shingle or bark mulch to allow for access or overrun without damaging planting.

Structural Planting Plan

8/ I won't comment in detail on this plan at this stage however, I do find the tree species mix and arrangement far too random. I appreciate that for climate resilience we need to plant a range of species, but at present having so many different species mixed together in one area will erode the

legibility of spaces. For example, the feature square includes Oaks and Alnus whereas a single species would work better using trees with real presence in the scene such as Sweet Gum or Red Maple.

I would prefer to see a consistency of species within individual locations to provide each streetscene with a distinctive landscape character.

Planting schedule and specification

9/ Good to see the inclusion of a range of evergreen tree species. An increase in the number of Pinus and Arbutus species would be welcomed as these would provide greater year-round effect.

Native shrubs and native tree and shrubs to be planted at max. 1m centres (currently 1.5m c/s).

Clipped hedges - Escallonia increased to min. 60-80cm high. Shrub, Rain garden mix etc. - plants generally min. 3L stock.

Scope to increase range of grasses specified.

AKS Ward Cut and Fill Plan

10/ The plan raises some concerns as regards the potential adverse impact on retained trees since in places cut and fill operations may be within the RPZ's of retained trees. Further work is required to ensure no adverse impact arising from contouring operations. I defer to comments by the Tree Officer in this regard.

AKS Ward - Typical Drainage Details

11/ Please omit concrete headwalls and replace with more naturalistic detail/material. Pond detail to be naturalistic with varied slopes etc. (see point 6 above)

Landscape and Visual Evidence Vol 1 (I could not locate Vol 2)

12/ The quality of the assessment is in general thorough and fair. However, some of the baseline conditions photographs are very dark and as a result it is impossible to accurately assess potential visual impact based on these views. In addition, the report does not represent the worse case scenario during winter when deciduous trees have shed their leaves.

Winter photographs need to be taken and included in the report. In some locations, the extent of views into the site will significantly increase during winter months.

I trust the above comments are helpful.

The main area of concern from a landscape perspective is the design of the feature square that needs to be improved, plus maximising street tree planting, especially to soften parking courts.

Any queries feel free to get in touch.

KR Tim

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