

Urban Design Comments

F/25/100141- LAND EAST OF KINGS COPSE AVENUE & TANHOUSE LANE

From: Urban & Landscape Design Team to Development Management

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Proposal: Residential development of 192 dwellings comprising houses and apartments, to include access, parking, landscaping and other associated works, along with off-site footway and bridleway improvements.

Summary:

- The central square appears dominated by hard surfacing and vehicle movement areas.
 - Parking court design lacking landscape integration.
 - More detailed comments below.
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These comments represent a desk-top study of the plans dated 2nd October and should be read in conjunction with comments from the Landscape, Ecology and Tree officers.

1. Site context

The site lies within the urban edge of the settlement of Hedge End, on the eastern side of Kings Copse Avenue. In addition, a SINC designation covers the northern east sector of the site. Directly to the south, east and part of the west boundary is open countryside.

Given the sensitivity of the site context, adjacent to the countryside, the building layout needs to respond to the landscape. The layout therefore needs to be evolved as part of an iterative and multidisciplinary design process, which is fundamental to high quality placemaking.

It should be taken into account the specific requirements of Policy BO3, for which are allocated about 120 dwellings and areas of open space to the whole site. Also, Policy BO3 requires an approved masterplan for the whole site prior to any planning permission being granted.

The Borough Council's Character Area Appraisal (2007) identifies the following character areas next to this site: 73 (Sherwood Avenue area) – 1970s terraced development on a loop/cul-de-sacs, 74 (area to the northwest of Kings Copse Avenue) - 1970s-1980s terraced development on multi-headed cul-de-sacs and 75 (Salwey Road area) – terraced/detached development on multi-headed cul-de-sacs.

2. General Comments

The overall density of the development appears acceptable, achieving an efficient use of land while maintaining a comfortable scale of built form. It's acknowledged that the scale of the four central apartment blocks is relatively large; however, it helps to create a sense of intensity appropriate to the central square, while the transition to lower-rise housing toward the site edges successfully mediates between the urban centre and surrounding landscape.

The gateway into the site successfully takes a greater level of density and height whilst providing a better and positive streetscene towards Kings Copse Avenue.

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The street pattern provides permeability and good pedestrian connectivity, with routes radiating from the central space. However, the western route appears to terminate abruptly at an informally shaped open space, which feels unresolved and represents a missed opportunity to strengthen the clarity and legibility of movement through the site.

The potential for cycle connections through and beyond the site should be explored, particularly linking into the green corridor along the east and north edges. Permeability and connectivity to surrounding areas should be strengthened.

The central square has the potential to become a genuine social focus for the community. Its position is logical and visible, but its long-term success will depend on how it is animated and accessible.

The Central Square

While the perimeter blocks provide a strong sense of enclosure around the central square, the current site plan does not clearly convey a pedestrian-first environment. The layout functions largely as a shared-surface traffic junction rather than a reimagined civic space that prioritises people, social activity, and flexibility. At present, the square appears dominated by hard surfacing and vehicle movement, which risks undermining its potential as a vibrant, inclusive, and people-focused focal point at the heart of the development.

Given the square's strategic importance as the heart of the development, further thought should be given to how its design can communicate hierarchy, activity, and sense of place. This space sits at the intersection of several main access routes and parking areas, which risks it feeling like a shared circulation zone rather than a destination in its own right.

We would therefore appreciate a detailed extract or enlarged plan showing:

- Proposed materials palette and surface hierarchy, indicating how paving, texture, or colour changes can reinforce pedestrian priority and visual richness.
- Landscape and planting structure — trees, planters, or green elements that can soften hard surfaces and contribute to microclimate and comfort.
- Vehicle management strategy — clear definition of parking, servicing, or drop-off areas to prevent the space being dominated by vehicles.
- Seating, lighting, and street furniture layout that supports social activity and reinforces the civic quality of the square.
- Sunlight access and enclosure—ensure that building heights and orientations allow for a well-lit, comfortable public space, especially in winter months.

Also, to fully understand how the proposed materials, massing, and landscape design will interact within the central square, it would be very helpful to see a series of high-quality CGI visualisations illustrating the spatial character of this key public space. Eye-level perspectives from within the square, showing the relationship between buildings, planting, and the public realm and, how it feels and functions at ground level to ensure constant natural surveillance and day-to-day activity.

The aim should be to ensure this central space reads as a welcoming, pedestrian-led public realm that reflects the identity of the development, rather than a traffic-dominated junction. Strengthening its design at this stage will significantly improve the sense of arrival and community focus at the heart of the scheme.

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Parking Courts

I agree with the Landscape Officer's comment that "some parking courts still lack tree and hedge planting opportunities to soften these areas." The current design of the parking courts appears overly hard-surfaced and lacks sufficient landscape treatment resulting in areas that feel utilitarian rather than well-integrated parts of the neighbourhood. Without soft landscaping, tree planting, these spaces risk appearing visually harsh and dominated by vehicles, detracting from the overall character and residential quality of the scheme.

Elevations

The use of different types of balconies (recessed/ cantilevered), and alternating window patterns gives a balanced rhythm to the façades and helps convey residential character. Balconies and windows overlooking the square will help animate it, but careful consideration should be given to privacy and acoustic comfort for residents, particularly in the most public-facing apartments.

Consider greater contrast between materials or detailing at entrances and corners — this would reinforce wayfinding around the square and highlight key frontages.

The adjoining townhouse façades integrate relatively well in height and material continuity.

Materials

The proposed material palette demonstrates a thoughtful and coherent approach that responds well to both the urban and landscape setting of the scheme.

The use of brick as the dominant material establishes visual solidity and a timeless quality appropriate for a development of this scale. Consider ensuring that mortar colour and finish complement the chosen brick tone — too stark a contrast could create visual harshness.

The introduction of darker cladding and complementary materials adds contrast and helps define the hierarchy between building types — apartment blocks, townhouses, etc. It will be important to ensure that cladding materials have a robust, high-quality finish with sufficient texture or grain to avoid appearing flat.

The proposed dark vertical cladding offers an attractive, contemporary counterpoint to the brickwork and reinforces building articulation.

The material strategy successfully avoids over-complexity, maintaining a simple, modern, and contextually grounded palette.

There is a clear opportunity to integrate green roofs across the apartment blocks and that could deliver several benefits such as softening the roofscape when viewed from the square or from any potential distant view, enhancing the overall character of the development.