

Jennifer Owen
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County Hall, Pegs Lane
Hertford, Herts SG13 8DF

30th May 2022

Dear Jennifer

OUTLINE APPLICATION: LAND BETWEEN CARAVAN SITE & WATLING STREET, PARK STREET, ST ALBANS

Thank you for your comments regarding the site at Park Street, St Albans. Taking all of your points in turn, we will endeavour to address any concerns and offer further detail and explanation.

We acknowledge that the findings of the landscape assessment are broadly supported, and note the provision of adequate mitigation, which will be discussed below.

With regard to the visual baseline, we have now added descriptions of viewpoints 23-28 as requested, and these lie within the main body of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. [Chapter 5: Visual Baseline Assessment, pages 36 – 38.]

The Council made a comment regarding 'The viewpoint numbers referenced within the LVIA 'Assessment of Effects' (Section 8) do not appear to correspond with the viewpoint location numbers shown on the Viewpoint location map or winter views map.' These have now been checked and I can confirm that all numbering is correct.

We also acknowledge the point made regarding the fact that effects on establishment are considered at post completion year 15, and this point has now been recognised within the LVIA. [Chapter 8: Assessment of Effects – Visual Assessment, pages 49 – 50.]

With regard to mitigation measures, you have made the point that the western boundary of the Site should be planted with additional trees, creating a robust and continuous boundary. This point is acknowledged, and additional areas of tree and shrub planting have been shown on the Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy. [Shown at Appendix 1 within updated LVIA.] It should however be noted, that due to the onsite constraints along this western edge of the Site including an existing easement and the provision of a new water attenuation feature within the south-western corner, it may not be possible to plant a wide belt of trees along the entire length of this boundary. However, additional tree planting where deemed possible is shown on the Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy.

The comments note that all landscape features are shown around the periphery of the Site and not within the developable area. This was partly because the internal layout was still under development when the plan you reviewed was prepared. We have now worked with the architects to identify

potential locations for more street tree planting and other green infrastructure within the development area, as shown on the Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy.

Again, the comments relating to Illustrative Layout – 01 plan [Shown at Appendix 1 within the updated LVIA] with mostly garden trees, has been addressed through the provision of additional street trees where space allows. The south-western corner of the Site cannot be planted with trees as a result of the proposed underground water attenuation facility, however other ecological and visual landscape features could be incorporated, and we have shown areas of mown grass and wildflower meadow within this area. The north-south aligned row of garden trees were deliberately included to provide layered screening as a response to the topography of the Site, and we have now recognised this within the LVIA. [Chapter 8: Assessment of Effects – Visual Assessment, para 8.63.]

In terms of the distribution of building heights, we have examined this and whilst the western edge of the scheme is the lowest topographically, it is also the most exposed to the surrounding landscape and therefore the proposed locations of the slightly taller structures is considered to present a balanced approach.

With regards to the concern expressed for the Public Open Space being located at the edges of the Site and within the ‘left-over space’, it is considered that as a result of the long, narrow shape of the Site and the existing onsite constraints, it is difficult to locate these anywhere else without taking up large areas of the Site, representing an inefficient use of land. Furthermore, the location of the majority of the green infrastructure at the edges of the Site enables it to form a wider functional unit with the existing boundary features and adjacent habitats. However, it is acknowledged that more landscape features should permeate through the Site, and therefore the addition of street trees, as well as further planting within the centre of the Site will help to achieve this.

It is acknowledged that the open spaces should have a clear function, and therefore these areas have been created to serve either as drainage, screening, public recreation, visual interest, ecological habitats, or a combination of these.

It is noted that the location of the play area was not supported, and therefore this has been moved further south to an area of open space. The play area has been located in this position, as we believe that it will lie closest to the majority of dwellings on site, does not lie along a main access route, and could be planted with trees around its western edge in order to provide some protection from the road and to create areas of shade. The position of the play area means that it is connected to the main area of development and is overlooked by the dwellings to the east, reducing safety concerns. The original play area could be planted with a large feature tree, to create a visually interesting approach into the centre of the site, and to contribute to the legibility of the new neighbourhood.

With regard to a potential conflict between open areas of recreation and habitat creation, this is acknowledged, and as shown on the Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy there is space for two large areas of amenity grass within the south-western corner where the underground attenuation features prevent tree planting, as well as a wide strip along the western boundary, where the easement prevents tree planting.

With regard to concerns surrounding the proposed SUDs not meeting biodiversity objectives, the northern basin is now shown on the Illustrative Landscape Design Strategy planted with trees around the edge to reduce views of a bare depression within the ground, as well as to create minor green infrastructure links which connect back into the western boundary, and act as further screening planting. This basin is anticipated to be no deeper than 1.5m and therefore steep slopes and security fencing are not required.

We hope that the above addresses the concerns identified by the Council, and provides more detailed information as to how this scheme could be brought forward in a way that can contribute to and enhance the visual and landscape character of the Site and its immediate setting.

Yours sincerely

Alison Barrett
Landscape Consultant