Barber, Teresa

From: Massey, Steven
Sent: 20 June 2017 15:56
To: Johnston, Christopher
Cc: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: DOC/2016/0044 - Upper Fernyhill Farm, Basford - landscaping for Condition 2 of SMD/2016/0054 (pond)

Chris,

The submitted landscaping scheme comprises a range of mainly native species new trees, but also some of non-native species which would be inappropriate and out of place, these latter being Horse Chestnut, Walnut and Rhododendron. And although the Small-Leaved Lime is native, it is generally regarded as a woodland tree rather than a field/hedgerow tree.

The proposed meadow area is composed of native species, although it could be pointed out that the first plant on the schedule – Corn Poppy – is not a grassland meadow plant but a cornfield annual wildflower which depends on arable management of ploughing (rather than haymaking) as the seeds require bare ground to germinate. This may be an overly critical comment as this species comprises only 1% of the proposed species mix.

One question which is raised is: if the area of the application site to the south of the pond is proposed as "wild meadow" (which would be appropriate) and the northern part of the site around the pond is proposed as "grass", how would this "grass" be maintained? The SMD/2016/0054 planning application's Design and Access Statement states that the site was "formerly part of the farm and is not actively used" now being "part of the setting of the applicants' house". However, in the absence of any change of use planning permission being granted, the site is, presumably, still agricultural land in planning terms. The slight concern is that in the absence of traditional agricultural management of this land such as livestock grazing, hay/silage cropping or arable cropping, it (including, presumably, the remaining large part of this field between the pond and the house) will be regarded as and managed as "amenity grassland" – effectively a large lawn.

Is the layout of "stone paths" also a proposal? This too is not in keeping with a rural agricultural landscape..

The whole area around Upper Fernyhill Farm is being progressively and cumulatively landscaped and changed from a rural agricultural character typical of the Staffordshire Moorlands to that of a maintained ornamental estate/grounds/large park. Whilst it would probably be difficult to justify actual refusal of this discharge of conditions application, being as it comprises native species mix for the wild meadow area and majority native species tree planting around the pond, it must be said that this landscaping scheme could have been better designed/specified along a more naturalistic approach to be more in keeping with the rural agricultural setting; as it is, it could potentially support a further intensification of the on-going "ornamentalising" of the wider property.

Steve Massey

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