

From: [Steve Massey](#)
To: [Curley, Jane](#)
Cc: [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
Subject: SMD/2021/0536 - Land at Barnfields Industrial Estate, Sunnyhills Road, Leek
Date: 09 November 2021 17:53:03

Jane

Some headline comments on this application as follows:

- Other than the tree belt along Sunnyhills Road at the northern edge of the site (comprising well-established trees of varying individual quality, but collectively of significance and importance to the landscape structure of Sunnyhills Road/Barnfields Industrial Estate and indeed to the setting of the application site itself), there are no trees of real significance within the main body of the application site. The tree groups/woodland belt along the southern boundary are also of significance, but are located off-site, within the adjacent country park. There is also an off-site tree belt along the Leekbrook Line former railway at the eastern boundary. Subject to ensuring suitable stand-off distances to avoid adverse direct impact on, or poor relationships with, these trees to the northern, southern and eastern edges, existing trees will not otherwise be a constraint to development.
- The application includes an arboricultural report which identifies the tree-related constraints; these are transposed onto the layout plan from which it is mostly demonstrated that proposed new buildings, structures, roads etc would be located outside Root Protection Areas of the boundary tree belts and direct adverse impact would therefore mainly be avoided.
- A few trees would need to be removed to create the new main site access off Sunnyhills Road, and to accommodate the new canal-marina link, and within the main body of the site there would need to be clearance of widespread recent natural colonisation by pioneer species of tree saplings and scrub across the largely abandoned former industrial site; there is no objection to such losses in this instance and in the context of the already accepted in-principle redevelopment.
- The site is therefore effectively a large open blank canvas, visually self-contained with the opportunity for layout, appearance and character to create a strong sense of place and to interact with on-site proposed focal features (eg marina, railway station, pub/café) and off-site surroundings (eg country park, canal, river, pedestrian links to wider area). It is therefore very disappointing that the proposed layout, housetypes and streetscenes would simply comprise a standard anonymous “off the shelf” suburban housing estate which largely fails to take these opportunities to create a highly individual, distinctive neighbourhood.
- There are potentially several places where direct pedestrian links from the development into the adjacent country park could be provided, but instead a virtually continuous abrupt rear boundary abuts the southern edge of the site where the development turns its back on and fails to acknowledge the presence of the country park. There could be opportunities in a different layout to allow views of the country park and rising landform

beyond the River Churnet to filter through into the development. It may also be appropriate to seek funding for landscape/habitat enhancement within the country park in lieu of on-site open space provision? These issues would need to be discussed and agreed in principle and detail with the Council's Service Commissioning team which oversees management of the country park, and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust who are imminently due to take over its management on behalf of the Council.

- The proposed scheme does not appear to have made the most of the opportunity of the marina as a focus of place, design/character, public realm and activity. The main estate distributor road runs adjacent to the marina, opposite which it is overlooked by suburban house types from behind their continuous row of parking bays, and the marina itself appears to be segregated from the whole site by a 2.1m railings fence.
- Whilst details of the indicated railway station etc are no doubt unknown at present, the housing layout does not obviously relate to this area, and the front elevations of Plots 148 – 154 appear inappropriately close to the station car park area.
- The statutory public footpath (Leek Town 1R/2054) leading from the large turning circle at the end of Barnfield Road to the canal aqueduct is presently enclosed in a narrow corridor between the application site and the scrapyard, and although well used is unwelcoming or even intimidating. There is a good opportunity, again unfortunately not taken in the scheme as currently presented, for the application site boundary to be opened up along this route, allowing the footpath to be included in a wider, attractively landscaped open space area.
- In terms of new landscaping, other than suitable management and enhancement of the existing tree belt to be retained along Sunnyside Road, I would not see a need for major new structural landscaping to site boundaries for screening/setting purposes. Instead, the emphasis should be on provision of new landscaping to enhance streetscenes within the development, suitable to the character of the site and with the aim of also softening the dominance of buildings, roads and vehicles. However, this necessitates that appropriate spatial provision needs to be made within the layout to accommodate planting eg as street trees and/or plot frontage trees, and also that landscaping should be considered from the outset as a key part of the layout/character design rather than an add-on at the end of the process, squeezed in where possible. To that end, and notwithstanding the comments above, the indicative tree planting shown on the application layout plan is largely unrealistic, with many positions between dwelling front elevations and highway being significantly too small and restricted to accommodate trees (even smaller ornamental varieties or those of upright columnar form). This is further apparent from the detailed landscaping plans, which show many tree positions on plot frontages to be only 3m (or even less) from dwelling elevations – this is much too close and will not allow sufficient space for trees to grow and achieve their potential before being heavily reduced or prematurely removed – exacerbated by concerns of overbearing impact, constrained outlook and fear of damage to buildings by branches and roots.
- Several stretches of streetscene within the development will be heavily dominated by large extents of frontage parking areas and associated vehicles, with little or no spatial opportunity to provide structural landscaping to break up and relieve their visual impact.

In particular: Plots 29 – 38; 68 – 72 & 88 – 92; 77 – 82; 96 – 107; 124 – 127; 147 - 154

Steve Massey

Arboricultural Officer / Development Services
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and High Peak Borough Council

Moorlands House, Stockwell Street, Leek, Staffordshire Moorlands ST13 6HQ
Tel: 01538 395788 Mobile: 07545 423071

E-mail: steve.massey@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk

www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk www.highpeak.gov.uk

Do you really need to print out this Email? Be green - keep it on the screen.

This email is intended for the addressee(s) only and may contain sensitive, privileged or confidential information that could be protectively marked. If you are not the addressee please do not use the information in any way. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender immediately and delete it from your system. Thank you.

The Council may be required to disclose this email or any responses to it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The way in which we handle personal information is set out in our privacy notice and is available at <https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/YourData>
