

Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking

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Urban Design Comments:

Fole is a small hamlet of residential and agricultural buildings previously dominated by the industrial dairy site. The settlement lies near the River Tean which is a key landscape feature in a pasture landscape of small fields and hedgerows. The demolition of the dairy buildings leaves a large vacant industrial site and has opened up opportunities to reinforce and re-establish the village character and its ruralness. The overall opportunity is for proposed housing to reinforce the design of buildings, along Uttoxeter Road, The Lane and Broadgatehall Brook, as a natural extension of the existing settlement.

Overall layout

In general, the street pattern is acceptable with a hierarchy of roads and footpaths off one main access and the use of the existing lane to the eastern site boundary. The following points suggest further review of the layout:

The line of the open Broadgate Hall Brook. The regularity of the width of the channel with the long road and adjoining footpath risks it looking artificial as a green corridor rather than a naturalised open waterway. This may depend on a native planting strategy but appears fairly standardised in the landscape strategy plan and may need more informal tree planting in the western bank of the brook. I also suggest another additional footpath bridge across from Plots 32 to Plot 39.

The parking areas dominate in places. The amount of frontage parking in front of Plots 45 -48 create a poor sense of arrival into the estate.

Double garages along western boundary are large in size in proportion to the houses as they have workrooms above. Also, the garages and boundary wall to plots 12 &13 dominate a short stretch of street frontage and therefore ends up with a poor streetscene. The pyramid hipped roofs with lanterns also provides dominant garages.

The hammerhead ending beyond pumping station appears too close to the riverbank and may be intrusive into the countryside setting. The angle of driveway to the pumping station from the hammerhead is a poor detail.

The frontage to Uttoxeter Road should be stronger with more houses facing it and referenced to the character of the previous terrace millennium buildings. The general road and parking layout around the Fole Chapel is acceptable providing space for the building to be viewed on arrival into Fole along the Uttoxeter Road.

The LEAP appears close to the river and although accessible with parking nearby, a more overlooked central location or nearer towards the main entrance would encourage users from other parts of the village to use the play area and this would benefit social cohesion.

House number 8 is too close to the western boundary to provide a comfortable setting for the house. The use of an Ivy screen rather than a well-established field hedge would not mitigate the dominant impact of the side elevation.

Other design comments:

The use of angled terraces and footpaths are not typical of the residential pattern of development in the area. I understand this is to add variety and character into the layout but unsure that it will lead to introducing a suburban character into a rural setting.

I also feel the angle of houses 37, 11-16, 20 and 21 are all slightly orientated at an angle to the road or features to which they relate, particularly the river. I understand this gives wider views but results in a pattern of development which is untypical along the valley where houses nearly always are orientated to enjoy direct views across the valley of facing the roads. This pattern of houses offset at slightly different angles may be to bring a degree of informality into the design but also results in a looser layout.

The corner of plot 44 is too close to the footpath and imposing on this junction.

The verge to Plot 48 by the at the entrance road has poor legibility, with there being little definition of the boundary between house and public verge.

The use of angled gateway buildings is not very typical of the patten of development in the area and creates odd, angled footpaths at the frontage to Uttoxeter Road.

The driveway to Plot 1 onto Uttoxeter Road is at odds to the rest of the development.

I do think the garages are oversized. The pyramid hipped roof with lantern gives too much prominence to these ancillary buildings.

House Types:

The house types would benefit from more local detailing within the brickwork. The segmental arch windows are acceptable although I would also prefer brick headers on the second-floor windows, and a dogtooth cornice with a band of alternate projecting headers. Previously, the Millennium Cottages, frontage residential buildings to the site on Uttoxeter Road, had Flemish style front central gables, with arched and square door and window openings, and sash windows. This must have given this road frontage specific identity. The new houses nearby the chapel could have a different character other than house types D & B together which are repeated elsewhere in the layout. Plots 33 to 36 adjacent to the Fole Chapel would benefit from being a different character area to give stronger placemaking qualities to the scheme and the Village interface.

In conclusion, the layout, road hierarchy, mix density of the scheme provides a good urban design response. There is room to strengthen the concept of the scheme, particularly the village and rural interfaces and to provide a more natural green corridor. There is also an opportunity to bring more detail into elevations to reflect local context.