

Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking

Independent Landscape and Urban Design Advisors

email: contact@derbyshirelandandplace.com

Reserve Matters App: SMD210210536

‘Reserved matters application for approval of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale to provide: 157 residential dwellings (Class C3) providing a mix of two, three and four bedroom houses, and two bedroom apartments; 6 x live / work units (Sui Generis); 1 x public house / restaurant / café (Sui Generis / Class E(b)); a marina / basin and associated boating facilities with 13 berths; associated works including internal road network, associated highway works, drainage infrastructure, landscaping, open space, play area, pedestrian, and cyclist links; land reserved for future railway station with associated heritage / railway activities building/s and car parking; and land reserved for future link road including associated landscaping. The application is submitted pursuant to outline planning permission SMD/2014/0750A site location plan identifying the area which the reserved matters application relates to is provided at Appendix I and a list of the application drawings is provided at Appendix II.’

Land at Barnfield Industrial Estate, Sunnyhills Road, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 5RJ

Urban Design Comments 28/11/22

I am still of the opinion that overall the scheme, apart from the Marina Frontage and Station Terraces has a density and layout that reads the same and fails to give the character areas I would like to see coming through. There is still not enough understanding of local context of the importance of this site as a gateway to Leek and its special countryside location with the canal and country park. The estate still has an anywhere estate feel to it overall.

The frontage to Sunnyhills Road has improved but still does not deliver the identity of the scheme to the public interface that I would like. There is an opportunity to extend a footpath within the landscape verge along the frontage to provide an enhanced walkability along the frontage with the character of a ‘parkway’ along this stretch of road.

The main entrances into the estate from Sunny Hills Road and at Bransfield Road still have little presence to distinguish the sense of arrival into the estate at either end. These gateways although with improved landscape screening to fences is not distinguished enough by focal buildings to help with legibility.

The Barnsfield Road area itself needs more characterisation. The live/work units Type J are bland and unattractive both at the front and rear elevations. The integral workshop doors detract from the character of the row of properties. These need an improved character. I would like to see both sides of the street working together to give a separate identity to the rest of the estate. Similarly, the area to the east of the estate needs revisiting. The cul-de-sacs here and separation by close boarded fencing, the parking and high walls to the rear of station terrace, combine to give a poor configuration of street scenes.

The Café Area and station terraced housing area is improved. The architecture of the Café and the Terrace is much improved. However, I still find the layout of the café/restaurant unimaginative and the car park had space around it disproportionate to the building.

The Ladderage Countryside Park Edge is improved with softer boundary treatments to the rear. The houses facing the park at the western edge are more distinctive in form. The predominance of rear elevations has been interrupted by the introduction of a small shared courtyard of houses. Whilst this opens up a vista towards the country park from within the estate, the side elevations of these

houses, and the introduction of garages in the rear gardens of other houses along the row do not give the improved views of the public interface of the estate from the country park intended.

The Marina Area has benefited from the removal of cars from the frontage of the properties here. I am happier with the architecture of the houses. The metal railing surrounding the marina area will need to be carefully chosen and details are required. The playground is in a better location although I would prefer softer peripheral planting than a simple rectangular edge lines of trees that formalise the space and disconnects the House Type A which is to be overlooking it. I would still prefer a housing fronting in the direction of the playground to give more enclosure to the Marina area. The courtyard parking areas at the rear of the houses has reverted to a character of a rear parking-lot with the opportunity for mature focal trees having been lost in the layout.

General to the whole layout is a poor termination of street scenes and a weak landscape framework within the development that fails to relate to its countryside setting. The street tree planting is tight and the materials of the shared access streets with asphalt and chippings would also fail to give the softer character to these streets one would hope to achieve. I also think that the house types are randomly placed and this detracts from the unity and identity of the street scenes. House Type E, at over 10m punctuates the roofline and is not characteristic of the context of housing found in this area. It weakens the overall layout and would be preferably located within a group to give a more distinct identity to the area, either along Sunnyhills road or Barnfield road. However, as with House Type J, I think the character needs reworking to provide more distinctive style and articulation.

My conclusion is that there is a failure to appreciate local context, setting and provide a truly characterful development that respond to the aspiration for the site. The scheme needs further development to be acceptable in urban design terms.