

Upper Tean

Review of Submitted Landscape Information for application Ref: SMD/2022/0249

Site Description

The site is formed of a series of pastoral fields on sloping ground, at the upper periphery of the village of Upper Tean, to the west of Cheadle Road. The site is sloping in nature, grading down from the higher land on Cheadle Road in the east, down towards the River Tean which runs along the western boundary of the site. Vegetation cover within the site consists of hedgerows at the site boundaries, woodland, and stands of trees, which generally relate to internal field boundaries and former mill race (there is a linear body of standing water within the site). The site also contains riparian vegetation associated with the River Tean to its immediate west, and parts of the lower-lying land within the western part of the site are also marshy with areas of scrub.

The site is located within the Development Boundary of Upper Tean (Policy SS2) and outline consent for residential development within the site has previously been granted under application ref: SMD/2015/0424. The site is surrounded by agricultural land to the north and west. The landscape to the north of Breach Lane is also covered by a Green Belt designation within the current local plan (Policy SS10) which also washes over the elements of built form located off Breach Lane to the north of the site (a row of cottages and a small industrial yard). To the south and west the site is surrounded by the settlement edge of Upper Tean where residential properties along and off Cheadle Road adjoin the site, and a small industrial yard containing a car mechanics/workshop is located to the south of the site, also off Cheadle Road.

More broadly speaking, Upper Tean is a generally nucleated settlement with development clustered along the main roads that cross and enter the village, Cheadle Road being the main road. Development along Cheadle Road is somewhat linear but there are existing areas of development along its western side reaching down towards the River Tean which as well as coinciding with the development limits in policy terms, appears to form a visual and physical sense of containment to the village edge in landscape terms.

Landscape Character

A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been submitted as part of the application and accurately sets out that the site is largely identified within the Potteries and Churnet Valley National Character Area (NCA), with small parts of the south-western edges of the site identified within the adjoining Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands NCA. The LVA also accurately describes that at a local level, the site is identified within the Dissected Sandstone Cloughs and Valleys Landscape Character Area (LCA) and Landscape Character Type (LCT) and small parts of the south-western edges of the site are identified within the Settled Plateau Farmland LCT. The LVA sets out a thorough description of the landscape of and surrounding the site within the context of published character assessment findings. The LVA correctly picks up on the general aspects of landscape character relating to the site and its surroundings.

The site itself is transitional in character in that its eastern extents relate well to the existing built up edge of Upper Tean along Cheadle Road, and to the west, the lower lying land within the site is more enclosed and relates closely to the character of the valley of the River. This is not picked up particularly within the applicants LVA which focuses more on the western edge of the site being related to the surrounding farmland. However, there is a discrete character associated with the river corridor along the River Tean and this influences parts of the landscape surrounding it, particularly

across the western parts of the site which lie within the flood zone associated with the river. This is worthy of acknowledgement within the LVA and in association with consideration of landscape and visual design opportunities and constraints as it is important that the development within the site responds to the river corridor context as well as the fact that the site is indeed surrounded by agricultural land to the west beyond the River Tean.

The LVA notes that the properties off Breach Lane to the north have an influence over the site. The northern edge of the site also has a discretely different character from the rest of the site associated with Breach Lane, which is a narrow, gently undulating lane aligned by tall hedgerows and hedgerow trees. This creates a small-scale character along the northern edge of the site, intimate in places, which with distance from Upper Tean westwards along Breach Lane transitions to becoming more open visually with no regular views of built form and with visibility restricted to the immediate roadside hedgerows and longer distance views only possible where field gates afford visibility across the wider agricultural landscape. There is a small row of cottages and an industrial yard off Breach Lane to the north of the site, and another small cluster of built form at the north-eastern corner of the site where there is a cottage and The Anchor Inn. The character at this northern edge of the site is small in scale, and offers a transition to the wider open countryside and Green Belt land to the north of Breach Lane, which development should respond to in order to ensure the wider countryside surroundings of Upper Tean are respected and in order for the settlement periphery location of the site to be carefully considered.

Visual Context

The viewpoint selection included within the LVA has been based on both bare earth and screened height data modelling, and the viewpoints chosen represent a range of distances and locations from which the site could be seen from public locations within the wider landscape, which relate to public footpaths and public roads. Given that this is a settlement periphery location, that the site is sloping in nature and well screened by woodland vegetation along the River Tean to the west, and given the discrete character of Breach Lane and the wider Green Belt landscape to the north of Upper Tean, additional viewpoint coverage from the north along Cheadle Road would have been useful, as well as from Breach Lane to the north-west and from the settlement edge along Cheadle Road to the east, north-east and south-east, so as to ensure that impacts on these more sensitive parts of recreational and transient routes could be taken into account and to ensure that the settlement periphery and transitional nature of the site can be accurately appraised.

The sloping land within the site, together with the wooded floodplain landscape within the western part of the site, and the adjoining settlement edge to the east and south presents a situation in which the site tends to mostly be seen from close-proximity locations, associated mainly with Breach Lane, Cheadle Road and the public footpath crossing the north-eastern corner of the site. There will also be visibility of the site from the adjoining residential users associated with the properties along Cheadle Road and Breach Lane.

Visibility from the public footpaths to the west and south-west of the site which cross the open agricultural land to the west of Upper Tean tends to be restricted by intervening woodland and riparian vegetation. In more distant views from elevated locations to the north-west, south and south-east the site forms an indistinguishable part of the overall settlement of Upper Tean, in which built form is nestled in amongst clumps of woodland, and the village is seen against a rising, rolling agricultural and wooded landscape.

On the approach to the village from the north along Cheadle Road, the site itself is screened from view by the lie of the land, intervening built form, and roadside hedgerows and trees. Development within it however will be seen from as far north as the Ship Inn (Grade II Listed Building), and this approach to the village has not been captured within the viewpoint selection provided within the applicant's LVA. The transition from this location southwards towards the site (Viewpoint 3 within the applicants LVA) forms one of the key parts of the visual aspect of the proposed development that needs to be considered within the development response, as this will extend the existing residential backdrop as seen on the approach to Upper Tean from the north.

Appraisal of Impacts/Effects

The appraisal does identify the close proximity views from the local road network and residential receptors to the east and south as being constraints to development, as well as the listed Anchor Inn to the north-east. It doesn't specifically identify close-proximity views and the character of Breach Lane as a constraint however, nor the wider countryside to the north-west beyond Breach Lane or the rising locations along Cheadle Road from which the site forms part of the threshold to the village on the approach from the north.

A development offset from the west is an appropriate development response set out within the proposed landscape strategy for the site, as well as the retention of existing on-site vegetation where possible. Relating the development to the existing settlement edge to the east and ensuring hedgerows are retained along Cheadle Road is also welcomed. However, there is no reference to the interface between the development and the northern edge of the site, where the distinct character of Breach Lane and the approach to Upper Tean from the north (including how the development and settlement edge would be viewed from the listed buildings) needs to be taken into account within the development response. The only reference made within the LVA is to a need to offset development from the northern edge of the site so as to retain the existing boundary planting where possible. Considering this edge forms an edge to the wider countryside and Green Belt, more attention should be paid to the treatment of this edge to ensure an appropriate landscaped response can be delivered in association with development of the site.

The LVA states that there will be additional internal tree loss beyond that which was committed to through the granting of the previous outline consent for residential development on the site. In landscape and visual terms, it is agreed that these losses would not change the overall perception of the site but there is insufficient detail in terms of how these losses would be mitigated for in the application material.

Landscape Commentary on Scheme Design

The development layout broadly corresponds with the previously consented outline scheme. For the full planning application submitted, the following commentary is made:

The clustered form of development parcels/zones is welcomed, in particular to the northern edge of the site where this would respond well to the distinct character of existing development at the eastern end of Breach Lane, to the north and north-east of the site. However, further detail is required as to how the rear boundaries of plots 64 to 67 would adjoin Breach Lane and the adjoining residential curtilage of Ivy Cottage. It is not clear from the submitted details whether a 1.8m high close boarded fence would be intended. If so, this could be at odds with the character along Breach Lane and could appear overly urban on this approach to the settlement edge. This also brings into question matters of maintenance of the existing roadside vegetation and responsibility for the continued thriving of the existing site boundary vegetation, which plays an important role not only in

retaining the existing character of Breach Lane, but also in providing physical and visual containment to the site and the proposed development within it. The same query applies to plots 9 to 21 to the south of the site where it has not been stated how the rear gardens to these properties will be contained and how this will relate to the adjacent land and vegetation.

The rear boundaries of plots 60 to 62 are enclosed with 1.8m high close boarded fencing, which it is proposed to be softened with a hedgerow. Given that these plots will adjoin the area of public open space, an alternative and more sympathetic boundary material could be considered, or additional soft landscaping to screen the fencing as close boarded fencing would not be an appropriate edge to border onto an area of open space as it would be uncharacteristically harsh.

The side boundaries of plots 22, 27, 32, 56 and 57 are proposed to be 1.8m high screen walling. More detail is required on the materiality of the walling proposed, and additional space may be required for soft landscaping to soften the scale of the walling visually so as to not appear uncharacteristically harsh from the area of retained open space.

The Landscape Masterplan shows that the lower lying flood zone land is intended to be retained as open, but given the character of the river corridor, concerns could be raised to how well the interface transitions between the development and the proposed ecological enhancement area associated with the River Tean corridor.

Overall, there is insufficient detail within the application material on how the development will relate to the open space to provide the Council with confidence that the new settlement edge will be appropriately contained, visually, physically, and in character terms.

The site is sloping, but the application material does not provide any details of how the development will respond to the existing ground levels – cross-sections would be useful. Similarly, details of soil management and retaining walls and structure should be provided, along with any mitigation associated with retaining structures so that they do not appear visually at odds with the open space landscape.

The overhead cables are not indicated on the Landscape Masterplan. It is assumed the intention is for these to be relocated or placed underground, otherwise, these need showing in case they have a bearing on the location of any new planting proposed so as to ensure there are no conflicts with the easements and maintenance requirements of utility providers.

Informal mown pathways and surfaced paths have been shown on the proposed layout linking up parts of the development. An informal route that encompasses more of the public open space would be welcomed, provided this is not at odds with the ecological enhancement of this area and its location within a flood zone.

The northern and eastern edges of the development have incorporated a development offset which appears to allow for some new soft landscaping. However, at the north-eastern corner in particular, the layout pattern is rigid and the orientation and layout of the plots together with the limited space for new landscaping presents a situation in which users will be faced with quite an abrupt built edge on the approach to the village from the north notwithstanding the use of a dual aspect property on the north-eastern corner of the development. A softer approach, with a greater offset to allow for more soft landscaping to be incorporated, would provide a more characteristic edge to the development that responds to the sensitive northern edge of the site.