
From: John Copestake
Sent: 31 July 2023 12:55
To: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: FW: SMD/2021/0113 - Land at Bridgend, Macclesfield Road, Leek

Categories:

Hi,

Please could you record the email below as consultation response from the tree officer for SMD/2021/0113?

Thanks very much,

John

From: Steve Massey <>
Sent: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 10:10 PM
To: >
Cc: Kate Dewey <
Subject: SMD/2021/0113 - Land at Bridgend, Macclesfield Road, Leek

John

Summary: no objection subject to conditions, and some amendments to the detail of proposed new planting species.

Impact on Trees

In making the following comments, I have taken into account Sammons Architectural Ltd "Sketch Proposal Site Plan" Drg. No. 2022-2683-01 Rev C dated March 2022 which I understand to be the most up to date site layout proposal, in conjunction with the Elite Ecology "New Habitat Map" dated 09/02/2022 (although the housing are layout on the New Habitat Map differs in some minor details).

As per previous applications for development of this site, a 5m wide access road is proposed following the existing sunken carriage track from the top of Bridgend. Again, other than very minor impact on a few of the trees lining the track (which are generally situated back from the track bed and above the exposed rockface or retaining wall) and/or potential removal of one or two low to poor quality trees at the very edge of the track/proposed roadway, the access arrangements into the main body of the site would have very little impact on the trees either side (which are protected as Groups G15 and G16 under TPO SM.305).

Within the main body of the site proposed for the residential development itself, the site access road, dwelling/garage footprints and private drives/parking areas would all be located outside the Root Protection Areas of retained trees, and given implementation of suitable temporary tree protection measures from the outset of construction this layout would have no significant direct impact on these trees. Furthermore, there would be good to generous separation between existing trees and elevations of all proposed dwellings, which would help to avoid or minimise any significant indirect effects such as excessive shading, overbearing impact on dwelling outlook etc and therefore the proposed layout would be unlikely to give rise to substantial pressure for felling or heavy reduction of retained trees.

On this basis, the proposed layout is considered acceptable and I have no objection to this application on grounds of impact on or relationship with trees.

Visual Impact

The site occupies a hilltop plateau visible from open countryside to the east and north-east, and also directly ahead from A523 Mill Street when heading north-west from the town centre towards Churnet Works. Although within the Town Development Boundary, and with an Inspector for a previous appeal in relation to this site suggesting that hilltop development is characteristic of Leek, if where visible the proposed development would not be seen against or as an attached part of the existing urban landscape, but as a separate detached pocket of development in/against rural landscape. Therefore if approved, the development should include new landscaping provision to screen/filter views and reduce visual impact as seen from these viewpoints to the north-east, east and south-east of the site.

To this end, the site plan shows an indication of tree and hedge planting within the housing development area, but this is not specified in any detail, and a comprehensive landscaping plan would be required by condition in the event of planning permission being granted. As part of this, the opportunity should be taken to introduce some suitable native hedgerow trees into the existing hedge along the south-eastern half of the north-eastern boundary of the site (around 6 – 8 in total, irregularly spaced and positioned with care in relation to the outlook from principal windows), and into the proposed new hedging lining the footpath link between Plots 5 & 6. I would also suggest that any planning permission should require removal of the existing semi-dilapidated chainlink boundary fencing which has an inappropriate utilitarian/industrial character for this rural edge location and would surely also be considered undesirable as domestic garden boundary for new dwellings with a rural outlook. However, any such removal would need to be carried out with great care, and by manual methods only, in order to avoid removal or significant damage to the existing hedgerows along these boundaries which are critical to be retained.

The New Habitat Map shows a substantial area to the east of the main development area which is proposed for habitat enhancement including woodland and scrub planting, wildflower meadow and ponds. Whilst this is supported, most of the structural planting (i.e. woodland and scrub) would actually be located on the steeply sloping banks below the summit plateau, and therefore even when established and mature this vegetation will have relatively little functional value as screening of the residential development itself. In addition, when looking towards the site when travelling along Mill Street/Macclesfield Road, the “nature reserve” area would be off-set to the right and would not provide any screening function. It would therefore be useful and desirable for the site landscaping scheme to include for a significant structural planting element (principally suitable trees) at the eastern ends of Plots 5 & 6. There is some indicative representation of this on both the New Habitat Map and the application site plan, but again this needs to be to suitable detailed specification as part of a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

Comments on proposed Landscape/Habitat details

Whilst still not comprising a detailed landscaping scheme specification sufficient to approve as a landscaping scheme as it stands at this stage, the submitted Initial Biodiversity Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy includes within Section 6 (Habitat Creation and Management) species suggestions and typical species mixes, on which I have some comments:

6.1.1 Mixed Scrub – Alder Buckthorn, Box and Buckthorn are not characteristic of this area and should not be included; Beech and Wild Cherry are large woodland trees rather than “scrub” and the shade from an established Beech in particular will suppress and eliminate more suitable species around it, so these should also be omitted. Suggested species for scrub would be Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Dog Rose, Bramble and perhaps the occasional Rowan and Silver Birch.

6.1.2. Scattered Trees – some fruit trees within plot gardens as included would be beneficial and this is supported. Walnut is not a “small tree species” at maturity but nevertheless the odd one or two within gardens would be good, although these should be located with regard to potential mature size. Probably best to omit Sycamore (although it is anyway very common in the area, but not the most desirable garden tree for deliberate planting. Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is commercially unavailable and inappropriate due to Ash Dieback disease; this could be usefully replaced by Mountain Ash/Rowan.

Above comments on detail of landscaping and visual impact, if not addressed by amendments prior to determination, can be readily incorporated into a subsequent landscaping scheme secured by condition and therefore these comments need not delay determination of this application.

Public Access

Public Footpath No. 6 (Leek Parish) crosses the western-most corner of the proposed “nature reserve” plot of land and should at all times remain unobstructed and available for use. Therefore any new planting and plot/site boundaries should make allowance for this statutory access. In practice, the actual definitive line of the footpath in this location, closely following the field boundary has become overgrown and more or less impassable, in favour of a very well defined desire-line route which has developed just a few metres further to the east to arrive at the stile into the field to the immediate north-east of the disused reservoir enclosed plot, and it may be better to accept the inevitability of this route continuing and therefore also make due allowance when carrying out new landscaping/planting etc, notwithstanding that the definitive line of the footpath must remain available.

There is also a well-defined but unofficial circular route around the edge of the plateau within the “nature reserve” section of the site – well used by dog walkers, local runners etc and again it may be wise to accept the continued use of this route in carrying out the proposed habitat enhancement measures.

Requested conditions:

1. No trees, shrubs or hedgerows shall be removed other than those whose removal is directly required to accommodate the approved development, unless otherwise approved by the LPA. There shall be no removal of any trees, shrubs or hedgerows during the bird nesting season (nominally March to August inclusive), unless otherwise agreed by the LPA and in this case only following careful inspection by a competent person immediately prior to removal in order to establish that such trees, shrubs or hedgerow are not in active use by nesting wild birds.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of Condition 1, all existing hedgerows to the boundaries of the application site shall be permanently retained.
3. The first action on commencement of development, prior to any further action (including any site clearance, site stripping, site establishment or formation/improvement of temporary/permanent access) shall be the erection of temporary tree protection barriers and advisory notices for the protection of the existing trees and hedgerows to be retained, in accordance with guidance in British Standard 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*, and as set out in the Tree Heritage Ltd arboricultural report reference THL-R21-42 dated 1st April 2021 submitted in support of the application hereby approved, and these shall be retained in position for the duration of the period that development takes place, unless otherwise agreed by the LPA. Within the fenced areas there shall be no excavation, changes in ground levels, installation of underground services, provision of hard surfacing, passage of vehicles, storage of materials, equipment or site huts, tipping of chemicals, waste or cement, or lighting of fires unless otherwise agreed by the LPA.
4. Before the first occupation of the development hereby approved, the existing chainlink fencing to the north-east and south-east boundaries of the housing development part of the site shall be carefully removed using hand tools only so as to avoid causing any significant damage to the existing hedgerows along these same boundaries.
5. Notwithstanding any indication on the plans hereby approved, before the commencement of development (including any site clearance, site stripping, site establishment and formation or

improvement of site access) a comprehensive, fully specified landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved by the LPA, relating to both the main residential development area and the proposed “nature reserve” to the east. Such a scheme shall in particular provide, inter alia, for the planting of several hedgerow trees of suitable native species within the existing hedgerow along the south-eastern half of the north-eastern boundary of the residential development area and within the proposed new native hedgerows along the footpath link from the turning head, together with substantial groups of new trees at the eastern end of Plots 5 and 6. The submitted landscaping scheme shall include full details of all proposed new trees, shrubs and other planting, giving specification for species, positions, planting sizes and numbers/densities of all new planting. The landscaping scheme so approved shall be fully implemented before the end of the first available dormant season (November to February inclusive) following completion of the development hereby approved. The trees and shrubs etc planted in accordance with this landscaping scheme shall be properly maintained for a period of 5 years following planting. Any plants which within this period are damaged, become diseased, die, are removed or otherwise fail to establish shall be replaced during the next suitable season.

Steve Massey

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

*Moorlands House, Stockwell Street, Leek, Staffordshire Moorlands ST13
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