
From: Steve Massey
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 2:34 PM
To: Jane Curley
Subject: RE: SMD/2022/0667 - Land west of Uttoxeter Road, Upper Tean

There are no regulations or “rules” as such for tree planting close to dwellings (or buildings in general), but obviously common sense should be applied.

I generally advise that it is unlikely to be fair to trees/buildings/residents to plant closer than, say, 5m from dwellings, certainly main elevations with principal outlook, and even then only using species which only achieve small/compact size at maturity. Otherwise it seems inevitable that at some stage the trees will be regarded as “too big” “too close” “too overbearing” etc and be subject to early removal or substantial/disfiguring reductions.

Plot 1 – just about ok with a *Betula jacquemontii* (“BJ” Himalayan Birch) at c.6m from front elevation, but wouldn’t want any closer.

Plot 4 – BJ at <5m is too big & too close; suggest moving tree position another 0.5m away from dwelling and replacing BJ with “SAS” (*Sorbus* ‘Sheerwater Seedling’ – a compact, upright/narrow-crowned variety of Rowan).

Plots 5/6 – BJ too big & too close; suggest moving it c.0.5m further from Plot 5 dwelling and c.1.0m further from Plot 6 dwelling, and replacing with SAS.

Plot 7 – BJ too big for fractionally >5m from dwelling as shown, even off the corner of the footprint rather than directly in front of a principal elevation; suggest replacing with “MS” (*Malus sylvestris* – native Crab Apple).

Plot 8 Uttoxeter Rd frontage – 3 *Sorbus aria* “SAR” @ 6m are potentially a bit too big at maturity; suggest replacing them with SAS.

Plots 10 & 14 – trees @ just >5m from elevations, but just ok with species shown “ACST” (*Acer campestre* ‘Streetwise’ – another compact narrow-crowned variety good for restricted spaces).

Plot 15 – tree is only 4m from dwelling, not really space on the plot to move it far enough away, instead suggest replace with a large specimen shrub eg *Viburnum opulus* (Geulder Rose – not on planting scheme schedule, but then there are no suitable large specimen shrubs on the schedule anyway).

Plot 25 – tree is exactly at 5m from dwelling, just about ok given the SAS proposed.

Steve Massey Arboricultural Officer

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From: Steve Massey

Sent: Monday, September 23, 2024 10:08 PM

To: Jane Curley

Cc: Planning Comments (SMDC)

Subject: SMD/2022/0667 - Land west of Uttoxeter Road, Upper Tean

Jane

I have the following comments on this application seeking full planning permission for 30 new dwellings, etc.

Summary: Little adverse impact on existing trees, other than at the northern-most corner. Loss of the majority of the existing Uttoxeter Road frontage hedgerow would have a significant initial detrimental impact on local landscape character, and lead to initially major adverse visual impact becoming medium adverse over perhaps 10 – 15 years until replacement planting becomes well-established. Also other close range major adverse visual impact along a limited stretch of Public Footpath 57 (Checkley Parish) at Riverside Court. Visual impact from mid-range and longer-range viewpoints generally minor adverse, and improvements to the landscaping scheme could assist in this becoming negligible adverse. Conditions suggested in the event that planning permission is granted.

Existing Trees and Hedgerows

As can be seen from the application Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report and noted at site visit, there is not any greatly significant amount of existing tree cover on site – neither by number or size/importance. Four trees of poor (T2), medium (T3) and low (T4 & T5) quality/amenity clustered around an existing structure some 30m into the site to the rear of 77 Uttoxeter Rd would be removed to accommodate the proposed layout. These trees are not of sufficient quality or significance to merit objection to this aspect of the development, and their loss in itself could be readily mitigated through new planting in the medium-long term.

At the northern-most corner of the site, existing mature off-site trees to the north-east

(Group G1) and on site/site boundary trees to the north-west (Group G2) form a substantial combined canopy which extends up to c.7 – 8m over the site. Whilst the AIA report assigns these medium (B) and low (C) retention categories, collectively they have local significance as seen from the adjacent public footpath in front of Nos. 5, 6 & 7 Riverside Court. In practice, these trees are likely to be heavily reduced if development proceeds – initially by the developer to accommodate construction of the sub-station, Plots 29 & 30 and their boundary treatments, and subsequently by occupiers of these plots in order to maximise useable private garden/amenity space. Such hard reduction would be likely to have a detrimental impact on the local amenity value of these trees. If development of this site goes ahead, this element of the layout would be better re-thought in order to avoid or minimise such impact (along with other visual impact issues here – see below).

The existing frontage field hedgerow along Uttoxeter Road (H1) has a basic structure maintained at c.2.5 – 2.75m high, plus any annual growth prior to routine trimming. There is no pavement along the western side of the highway fronting the site, and the hedgerow immediately abuts the carriageway edge. In practice, to provide the new site access junction visibility splays as proposed/detailed in the application (which I note are queried for accuracy and justification by Staffordshire County Council Highways) the full length (c.23m) of this hedge to the north of the access position and at least c.70m to the south would need to be fully removed. This is broadly acknowledged in the application details, although somewhat understated. Initially the loss of the large majority of the frontage hedgerow will be very significant, having a notable detrimental impact on the semi-rural character of the local area.

Visual Impact

The immediate loss of the majority of the existing frontage hedgerow would in itself have a significant adverse impact, and would also instantly open up the site and the proposed development to give prominent, close-range views from Uttoxeter Rd along the majority of the highway frontage of the site. Whilst at this stretch of Uttoxeter Road there is the existing visual influence of dwellings/cul-de-sac at Hollinscroft Court opposite the application site together with sporadic individual dwellings on the approach into Upper Tean and forward views of established terraced houses within the built-up village itself, the application scheme would nevertheless introduce a dominant new development with suburbanising character into the semi-rural surroundings.

The submitted landscaping scheme shows reinforcement/replacement planting for the hedge to be removed, to be located behind the access visibility splays. *Prunus* ‘*Otto Luyken*’ hedging (a compact Laurel species) is specified to part of the Plot 8 frontage but still leaving a semi-open frontage of suburban character to the plot; it is also a non-native ornamental evergreen species which would reinforce suburban character, and being a low growing shrub it would not provide effective screening of the development even at maturity. To the south of the proposed new site access, the landscaping scheme specifies a “supplementary” native hedge mix to “reinforce” and “gap up where necessary” the existing hedge boundary along Uttoxeter Road. In practice this would require full new hedge planting from scratch along the majority of this highway frontage given the extent of removal required to achieve the visibility splay. Whilst the specified native hedge species mix is appropriate to replace a rural field hedge, this would take an estimated 10 – 15 years to establish and achieve the same sense of maturity and density of screening as is currently provided by the existing hedge.

Even when established and grown to a height/density to reflect that of the existing hedge, the upper storeys and roofs of the proposed new dwellings would be readily

evident above the hedge, as shown in the applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal wireframe modelled View 6, giving a permanent level of visual impact as viewed from the adjacent highway.

Receptors using public highways (drivers, passengers, relatively few pedestrians) are of medium sensitivity (compared to high sensitivity for eg users of rural public footpaths and bridleways more likely to be aware of and appreciating landscape character and quality, quite possibly using rights of way for informal recreation). Magnitude of change of view along the road initially high, becoming less with time as new hedge planting establishes and matures. Visual impact along Uttoxeter Road assessed as initially major adverse, becoming medium adverse over 10 – 15 years.

From Public Footpath 57 (Checkley Parish) in front of Nos. 5, 6 & 7 Riverside Court there are clear views into the site through substantial gaps in the hedge/treeline; these views are generally of a rural character over riverside open fields, hedges and trees, although depending on the specific angle of view the backs of the gardens of existing terraced houses along the west side of Uttoxeter Road are also visible. The proposed development would place a 1.8m high timber close-boarded fence along the site boundary across this view, effectively blocking it, with upper parts of new dwellings at Plots 27 – 30 inclusive probably seen over the fence – a complete change of the full view (if intermittent and along only a short stretch of footpath) having major adverse visual impact.

From Public Footpath 9 (Checkley) which follows fields along the western side of the River Tean, there is (at this time of year) quite substantial intervening screening and/or filtering through which parts of the development would be sporadically glimpsed, but largely (where visible) against the backdrop of the existing settlement. Overall visual impact from FP 9 likely to be minor adverse. More effective new landscaping (i.e. much more substantial than currently proposed) along the western side of the development area of the site could make this more towards negligible adverse impact after establishment.

From Public Footpath 5 (Checkley) along a private vehicle access road rising up the hillside to the west of the site, beyond the river, views towards/of the application site are mostly not possible due to the route being largely along a sunken lane with tall steep banks topped with mature trees and well-established hedgerows. Brief partial views of the site, at distance (c.675m), are possible from near the access drive to Benthouse Farm, from where filtered views of the development would be possible, but again seen against the existing settlement along Uttoxeter Road and off Vicarage Road/Furlong Avenue. Given greater distance and the development occupying a lesser proportion of a wider view, visual impact from FP 5 would be minor-negligible and again could be made to become negligible given more effective landscaping to the western side of the development area.

Proposed New Landscaping

The proposed generally linear development has two main sections with contrasting approach to layout and landscaping.

Plots 1 – 7 incl front towards Uttoxeter Road over a shared access/service road and behind the proposed new/supplemented native hedge behind the visibility splay along Uttoxeter Road to the south of the site access. A new native hedge would also (appropriately) be planted along the rear boundaries of these plots to mark the new

settlement/open countryside transition. Whilst the species mix and planting pattern/density specification for the native hedging is appropriate, both hedgerows lack standard hedgerow trees.

Plot 8 would have an inappropriate suburban character semi-open frontage to Uttoxeter Road, with dwarf brick wall/timber close-boarded fence combination forming an abrupt boundary to the rear facing open countryside with no hedge screening proposed.

Meanwhile, Plots 9 – 19 incl and 28 – 30 incl would front towards the open fields to the west, with front gardens bounded by formal Beech hedging; beyond this would be the shared service to these plots, then with no boundary treatment indicated on the western edge of the roadway (built or planted); the road, parked vehicles, formally bound front gardens and dwellings would be readily and prominently visible from the open field to the west (although it is noted this field does not currently have public access, and no information appears to be given in the application regarding its proposed use eg whether it would be available as public open space).

Some groups of new trees are indicated on the landscaping plan, to the west of the proposed development area, in combination with retained grassland to be enhanced with wetland wildflower seed mix. Tree species proposed here are appropriate, if slightly limited in diversity, and wetland wildflowers are also appropriate, as this bank along the edge of the development area marks the official edge of the floodplain beyond (Flood Zone 1 – Flood Zones 2/3 interface). Tree species could be added to with, for example, Aspen, Goat Willow, and Crack Willow for added variety. It is considered that the number of trees should also be substantially increased to provide more effective filtering/screening.

It is noted that other residential development recently approved nearby (east side of Uttoxeter Road around Daisy Farm) has been required to make provision for substantial planted screen buffers where the development site abuts open fields, in the form of minimum 5m wide strip to be densely planted with native shrub mix and trees. It is suggested that a similar minimum screening buffer treatment should be considered for the current application scheme at its development area boundaries (including along the western side of the new roadway serving Plots 9 – 30) abutting open fields.

Conditions

1. The first action on commencement of development, prior to any further action (including any demolition, 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 these barriers and notices 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.

2. The planting scheme shown on Trevor Bridge Associates Landscape Proposal Sheet 1 of 4 Drg. No. 7000.01 Rev F Sheet 2 of 4 Drg. No. 7000.02 Rev F, Sheet 3 of 4 Drg. No. 7000.03 Rev F, Sheet 4 of 4 Drg. No. 7000.04 Rev F, and Full Site Landscape Proposal Drg. No. 7000.05 Rev F 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, 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.
3. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, a Landscape and Habitat Management and Maintenance Plan shall be submitted to and approved by the LPA, giving details of proposed creation, maintenance, management and development, including timescales and delivery mechanisms, for all landscaping and wildlife habitats and associated structures/features across the non-plot areas of the site including the undeveloped retained field area and new/replacement native hedgerows. This shall include full and accurate locations of existing and any proposed new habitats; technical specifications, timescales and phasing for the creation of any new habitats; 5 year establishment and aftercare management prescriptions for any newly created habitats; and minimum 20 year maintenance and management operations for all habitats throughout the non-plot areas of the site to be monitored and reviewed every 5 years. Following approval of such a management plan, it shall be fully implemented in accordance with the details and timescales so approved.

Steve Massey Arboricultural Officer

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