

Application Reference DMPA/2019/0948

Outline application (matters of access to be considered now with matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping reserved for later consideration) for the erection of up to 100,000sqm of commercial floorspace (use classes B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) with ancillary B1(a) offices) along with associated landscaping, surface water drainage infrastructure and access at Axis 50 (Formerly known as Burnaston Cross), Land at SK2929 1430, Etwall Road, Willington, Derby

Review of Landscape Proposals and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment October 2019

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Weddle Landscape Design (WLD) has been asked by South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC) to review and provide consultee comments in respect to Landscape.

The planning application is supported by various landscape documents which have been reviewed in preparing these comments:

- Design and Access Statement (DAS) by SGP Architects
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) by FPCR
- Green Infrastructure Strategy by FPCR
- Amenities Plan by FPCR
- Landscape Cross Sections by FPCR
- Illustrative Masterplan by SGP Architects
- Year 1 to 6 Phasing Plans by SGP Architects

2.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS AND SITE LAYOUT

The existing public right of way (PROW) crosses through the site. This is proposed to be diverted west along the southern boundary and then north-east parallel with the busy A38. This will be detrimental to for users of the PROW and instead it should be rerouted through the site via proposed green infrastructure, and not along estate roads.

The amenities plan shows some welcome features and connections to surroundings. However these are likely to be seldom used having been pushed to the far corner of the site with only one connection. Picnic/social and rest areas should also be provided throughout the site serving each of the units. Pedestrian links away from estate roads and through green infrastructure should also be provided.

The landscape cross sections provided do not include height information and do not extend far enough beyond the edge of the site. They do show that the proposed bund is very large but further detail needs to be provided to understand the effects of the proposals will have on the surrounding land.

Due to the falling topography and their positioning at the lowest part of the site, the bunds appear to have been an afterthought to screen the visual effects of the proposed buildings.

The site layout could be improved by widening the planting strips between Units 2/4 and 4/6. While the proposed native hedgerows are welcome a wider bund with tree planting would provide for better ecological connectivity and localised screening. Localised screening of buildings throughout the site may allow the southern bund to be reduced in height and this should be investigated further.

The lagoon and particularly the bunds are engineered shapes. More naturalistic shapes should be considered. While the sitewide SUDS system is welcomed again these could be designed to be less engineered and more naturalistic in appearance.

The proposals show that the entrance to the site will feature a '*high quality landscape approach and gateway*' landscaping. This would increase the visual effects of the proposed development. A more naturalistic approach is likely to be more appropriate to reduce the effects.

3.0 LVIA

The LVIA assessment has been undertaken following the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) third edition. The visual assessment was undertaken across the seasons including winter which is appropriate for assessing the worst case scenario.

3.1 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

The LVIA identifies the site within the Trent Valley Washlands National Character Area (NCA) and the Lowland Village Farmland Landscape Character Type (LCT) at a regional level.

The LVIA describes the site and its context and concludes that it is typical of the landscape descriptions of the LCT. The likely effects of the proposed development are then assessed during construction, at completion and in 15 years.

The conclusion of the assessment is that during construction the effects on the NCA would be **Negligible**, on the LCT would be **Minor Adverse** and on the site and immediate context would be **Moderate/Major Adverse**.

On completion the LVIA concludes that the effects on the LCT would be **Minor Adverse/Negligible** and on the site and immediate context would be **Moderate Adverse**.

At 15 years the effects on the site and immediate context are assessed to reduce to **Minor/Moderate Adverse**.

The Landscape Effects Table (LET) only includes an assessment of effects of the proposed development on Landscape Character and not on Landscape Features. Landscape Features such as arable land, topography, trees and woodland, field patterns and the PROW should be assessed.

I consider that the effects of the development on the LCT and site and immediate context have been understated. The development is clearly at odds with the established settlement

pattern, landform and tree cover and will contribute cumulatively to the effects of modern large scale development.

The development proposes extensive new bunds and planting along the southern and eastern sides of the site. On maturity these will provide effective screening of the development and form a woodland high on a bund.

While this serves to reduce the visual effects of the proposed buildings this pattern of topography and vegetation is at odds with the published local Landscape Character Type.

In my opinion the effects on the LCT at completion are likely to be at least **Moderate Adverse** with more adverse effects on the site and immediate context.

3.2 VISUAL EFFECTS

The LVIA identifies various visual receptors and provides photo viewpoints from a number of different viewpoints. The LVIA describes the likely visual effects during construction, at completion and in 15 years. Photomontages have also been prepared from four viewpoints showing the proposed development at completion and in 15 years.

The assessment concludes that the visual effects vary between **Negligible to Moderate/Major Adverse** during the construction phase depending on the location of the receptor.

On completion the LVIA concludes that the visual effects will generally be reduced from those experienced during the construction phase. These are considered to be between **Minor to Moderate Adverse**.

At 15 years the effects on the site and immediate context are assessed to reduce further.

I do not agree, as the size and scale of the predominant visual effect (buildings and screen bunds) does not reduce between the construction phase and completion. Therefore visual effects will not reduce at the level suggested. Similarly, while the buildings themselves will be screened by the woodland planting by year 15, the overall massing of bunds and woodland will not have reduced. I consider that the reduction of visual effects has been overstated.

The majority of the photo viewpoints show typical rural views of pastoral fields enclosed by hedgerows.

It is clear that close range receptors (as demonstrated by Photomontages A-D) will be effected by the huge scale of the proposed buildings, bunds and woodland planting. The existing rural views will be permanently curtailed by these incongruous landscape features. In my opinion the visual effects on these close range receptors are likely to be more adverse than stated.

The LVIA briefly touches on the phasing of the development at paragraph 10.5.1, however more detail is required. From the series of phasing plans it is apparent that bunds and woodland to the south are to be installed in years 3 or 4. Unit 3 will have very little screening to the south until this is implemented. The Visual Effects Table and photomontages should be extended to include years 1 and 2. It should also be noted that timescales for residual effects are therefore more likely to be 18/19 years to maturity.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Additional information and a revision to the assessment is required in order that the council can properly understand the effects of the development on the landscape and visual resource.

As it stands I do not agree with all of the findings of the LVIA which understates both the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development.

The proposals create a huge massing of built form and earthworks which will permanently change this open rural landscape. This 'big shed development' will have cumulative effects on the wider landscape.

The proposed bunds and woodland planting has been provided simply as a screen to the resulting visual effects of the proposed buildings. While the bunds and tree planting will provide a screen at maturity these features are inappropriate as they are incongruous with the landscape character. There will be significant, long-term permanent landscape effects on topography and tree cover.

The proposed development is contrary to policies **BNE4** and **BNE5**.