

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: David Cross
From: Tom Bramley
Re: P/20/0121
Date: 14th July 2020

RE: P/20/0121 Land to N of Crabtree Walk, Trefechan

With regards to the above application the important issues concerning the accommodation of this development within the landscape are the effect it will have in terms of visual impact and the loss of landscape heritage.

With regards to visual impact, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been completed and submitted as part of this application. It has emerged from the assessment that there will not be significant adverse impacts from the selected viewpoints.

Notwithstanding the pre-application stage and in the production of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, there have been concerns raised by both the Brecon Beacons National Park and Natural Resources Wales. Both organisations considered that viewpoints of the development should be taken from within the National Park Boundary.

However, on examination of the LVA, neither the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority or Natural Resources Wales have objected to the development, rather maintaining concerns regarding the importance of managing the mitigation planting to assimilate the development and secure the integrity of the boundary with the Brecon Beacons National Park. Natural Resources Wales have expressed concerns regarding the selection of materials, visual intrusion and the cumulative effects of lighting.

With regards to the historic landscape, concerns expressed by Cadw refer to the importance of the landscape design approach in this regard, in particular the restoration of boundary features such as the perimeter drystone walls, which are of a singular character particular to the area and the local geology.

Mitigation Planting

The success of the mitigation planting in particular on the two main areas within the development currently remains uncertain. As landscapes of an open nature these two areas proposed along the north western / western boundary and to the south-east of the site, require a degree of certainty with regards to their future. In order to ensure long term success, these landscape (enhanced, proposed and retained) have not been identified within a future management plan and further clarification is required from the developers as to how this is to be achieved i.e. is the land to be adopted, put into trust or managed in perpetuity by a management company? In so far as the proposed planting itself is concerned on these two areas the nature and selection of species is acceptable. Where there are areas of disturbed ground

making good of grass swards should be carried out with an appropriate seed mix which reflects as close as possible that of the locally found grassland species within the site.

Management of areas to the north west of the site are eluded to in the Biodiversity Strategy:

'The retained vegetation areas to the north and west of the site will requires some form of management to prevent bracken encroachment and the establishment of new planting. The grassland vegetation will be subject to a 2 yearly cut as minimum to help retain areas of shorter and longer vegetation suitable for reptiles.'

Although no long term management plan exists for the site that will address either the issues of biodiversity or those of the longer term success of the buffer planting to the north west.

Selection of Plant Species in Landscape Treatment

The proposed landscape drawings for the development have adopted a naturalistic approach to the planting which is to be welcomed. Further justification is however required for the reliance on a small number of species in particular that of *Sorbus* spp.

It might be worth reconsidering the introduction of three *Sorbus* species / cultivars into the local area given that the very rare *Sorbus leyana* is found relatively close at Darren Fach, there needs to be some care with the avoidance of population dilution.

Natural Resources Wales advise that:

'larger growing tree species within the planting mixes to provide greater long term containment of the development within the landscape.'

Consideration should be made of alternative species of greater stature than those specified for areas where there is capacity for such trees to thrive, such as the larger spaces undeveloped within the site boundary.

Boundary Features

Much emphasis has been placed on the restoration of boundary features such as drystone walls. The proposed landscape drawings identify where these features are to be either recreated or repaired. The Biodiversity Strategy in mitigation arrangements for reptiles specifies that:

'A portion of the stone work will be retained to create rubble piles within the retained vegetation areas to the north and west of the site and some small sections of dry stone walling within the site boundary.'

and:

'Enough of the rubble recovered from the dry stone walling across the site will be retained and used to create habitat piles within the retained vegetation to the north and west of the site. Four piles measuring 2m by 2m and at least 1m high will be created in the approximate areas shown in Appendix 3.'

Evidence is required of the quantities of stone available for both the restoration or boundary features and the formation of habitat piles for reptiles.

Building Materials and Design

Concerns have been expressed by Natural Resources Wales over the choice of building materials and the design of the units not reflecting local character. There does appear to be an excessive use of Ibstock Sandhurst brick, although it is understood that the development is seen as an extension to an established residential area and too contrasting materials might prove to single the development out. It would however be preferable to see a greater mixing of materials.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

It is noted that a SuDS scheme has been prepared for the site. It is currently unclear as to whether the approach to SuDS has received a SAB approval, therefore the landscape layout as currently proposed may be subject to change. Should this be the case a revised landscape scheme will require further approval. The current landscape scheme in so far as the SuDS elements are concerned is considered an acceptable approach.

Lighting

In respect of lighting to avoid excessive cumulative impacts the recommendation of the Biodiversity Strategy should be adopted.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Tom Bramley
Landscape Architect