

Your ref:
Our ref: 2738/NJE/LAE

28 August 2020

Stephen Harris
Director
Emery Planning
2-4 South Park Court
Hobson Street
Macclesfield
SK11 8BS



Dear Stephen,

**MILTON MALSOR: RESPONSE TO SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL'S COMMENTS OF
08/07/2020: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ISSUES**

GENERAL COMMENTS

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was prepared as part of the planning application, and although the officer refers to the LVIA, we note that there are no comments on either its landscape or visual findings.

The LVIA found the following effects on landscape receptors:

- During construction, the effects on the published Landscape Character Type are predicted to be Not Significant, largely as a result of the relatively small size of the site in relation to the type and because few of the key characteristics would be affected. The character of the site would experience Moderately Significant adverse effects due to the disturbance caused by construction activities. Effects on trees and hedges on site are predicted to be Not Significant as very few would be impacted by construction.
- On completion, adverse landscape effects for the published Landscape Character Type, and trees and hedges on the site, remain as Not Significant. Adverse effects of Moderate Significance remain for the landscape character of the site as, although construction activity would have ceased, the mitigation planting would not have matured sufficiently to reduce the magnitude of effects arising from the newly constructed buildings and access road.
- 15 years after completion, adverse landscape effects for the published Landscape Character Type remain as Not Significant. Landscape effects would reduce to Minor Significance for the landscape character of the site, as the proposed mitigation planting would be maturing and becoming effective by this stage. However, for trees and hedges on site, a beneficial effect of Moderate Significance has been assessed, as there would be substantially increased planting throughout the site, as well as management of existing trees and hedges for landscape and ecological objectives rather than agricultural objectives.

The LVIA found the following effects on visual receptors:



- During construction, effects of Moderate Significance are predicted for pedestrians and residents at Viewpoint 3, owing to the open view of construction activities close to the viewpoint. Effects of Minor Significance are predicted for pedestrians at Viewpoint 2, motorists at Viewpoint 3 as, although close to the site, it would be a fleeting view, and motorists and pedestrians at Viewpoint 4. All other visual effects for this period are assessed as Not Significant.
- On completion, effects of Moderate Significance are predicted to remain for pedestrians and residents at Viewpoint 3 as, although construction activity would have ceased, the mitigation planting would not have matured sufficiently to reduce the magnitude of effects arising from the newly constructed buildings and access road. Effects of Minor Significance are predicted to remain for pedestrians at Viewpoint 2, motorists at Viewpoint 3, and motorists and pedestrians at Viewpoint 4.
- 15 years after completion, Visual effects for pedestrians and residents at Viewpoint 3 are predicted to reduce to Minor Significance, and for motorists to Not Significant, as the new planting would be mature and effective by this stage. All other effects are Not Significant.

Function of Site in the Landscape

The officer suggests that the site forms the rural setting to Milton Malsor. Although it could be argued that any field adjacent to existing development could form part of its rural setting because of proximity, the important issue is the role of that land in interpreting or placing that settlement in the landscape. In this instance, the interface between development and the rural landscape is provided by back gardens and a dense and frequently regular pattern of the rear of houses (Viewpoint 3 from the LVIA).

The LVIA at 2.7.22 describes the site as:

*a largely featureless rectilinear and sloping field, with mainly trimmed boundary hedges to the north and west (as shown on **Viewpoint 3**) and sections of outgrown hedge along the eastern parts of the northern and southern boundaries...*

Landscape design has been an integral part of the proposal from its earliest stages, and the objective has been to provide an improvement to the approach to the village. That would be achieved by having a more sympathetic and organic edge to development than is currently the case, which will integrate the scheme into the landscape rather impose it upon the landscape. Articulated front elevations of new dwellings will face outwards, looking over an enhanced landscape setting of new hedges, hedgerow trees and meadowland, extending from the new edge of development to the existing hedgerow along the northern boundary, which itself would be enhanced with new hedgerow tree planting to reflect the pattern of the wider landscape.

Along the eastern edge of the site, towards the railway, as it matures a new woodland belt will provide a backdrop to the new development along the skyline and a sense of scale.

The proposed landscape treatment to Lower Road will provide an interface between the road and the new houses, setting the houses behind an area of open space and reflecting the meadows within the Conservation Area that give the central part of the village its strong character.



As a result, the proposal would not be a bolt-on, but a sympathetic extension to the settlement, which would be an improvement when compared with the bleak arable field that is the baseline. It would also provide a carefully considered and designed setting to the edge of development.

ALTERNATIVE LAYOUT

In terms of the suggested positioning of development in the south-west corner for landscape character reasons, it is not explained what those reasons are or what the benefits might be. The field is open and at the edge of the settlement. Development in the south-west corner would not change that, although it would consolidate development nearer to Lower Road.

However, in response to the officer's comments, an alternative scheme has been developed, shown at this stage as a parameters plan, drawing number PARAM01, which removes proposed development from the upper, south-eastern part of the site, and instead extends the development northwards across the site and further along Lower Road. The two schemes are compared below.

Landscape Effects

Both schemes have extensive areas of open space to provide integration into the landscape and a setting for the development. The submitted scheme has open space along the northern side of the site, between 45m and 95m deep from the proposed buildings to the hedge along the northern boundary, and at least 60m from the eastern boundary along the railway. The revised scheme has the open space to the north reduced to about 15 to 20m, whilst to the east it is increased to a minimum of 85m from the railway boundary. The proposed development edge does not extend beyond the existing eastern edge of development at its maximum extent, and curves to the north-west, increasing the separation from the railway and the amount of open space on the upper part of the slope. The change

has responded to the officer's observation that, with the submitted scheme, development would extend beyond the existing building line towards the railway.

Both schemes have a network of new hedges with hedgerow trees, new trees along the existing hedge on the northern boundary, a new community orchard of traditional species in the north-eastern part of the site, a woodland belt along the boundary with the railway and, along the boundary with Lower Road, there would be open space, tree planting and an attenuation pond. Both schemes show wildflower meadows on the open spaces.

In terms of landscape character, both have similar objectives, but with the revised scheme, the space between the northern boundary and the development edge is greatly reduced, so that the opportunity for subdivision with hedges is diminished and the open space in that area becomes a wide greenway. However, the land available for open space to the east is increased, compensating for the reduction of space to the north. With the submitted scheme, the open space along the northern edge becomes a series of small fields, subdivided by hedges with greater distance between the proposed development edge and the countryside beyond the northern boundary.

However, for the revised scheme the balance of beneficial and adverse effects is such that the assessment of significance of landscape effects would be the same as those set out in the LVIA for the submitted scheme.



Visual Effects

In the wider landscape, the distance and limited number of viewpoints, the scale of the existing landscape, and the extent of intervening vegetation and development, means that the difference between the two schemes would not be apparent.

In closer views from footpath KX10 (Viewpoints 1 and 2) to the south-east, beyond the railway, the effects during construction and on completion may be reduced if moving the development edge means that views of the development are no longer possible. However, as detailed design of the scheme is not available at outline stage, it is better to assume the worst case and the effects would remain unchanged from those set out in the LVIA.

From the viewpoints along Lower Road, in the revised scheme development would be removed from the upper part of the slope but would be nearer the northern boundary, and therefore nearer to the viewpoints. As a result, it is likely that the new development would be about 2m lower than the submitted proposal.

However, the changes are not sufficient for the assessment of significance of visual effects for Viewpoints 3, 4 and 5, as set out in the LVIA, to change.

CONCLUSIONS

The submitted scheme and the parameters set for the revised scheme have been assessed, and there is likely to be no difference in terms of landscape and visual effects between the two. Both provide enhancement in terms of planting and management, as well as providing a better edge and setting to development when compared with the existing, in both layout and landscape design. The site as existing has no landscape features of note, apart from the boundary hedges. With both the submitted and the revised schemes, there would be significant benefits to trees and hedges because of:

- the planting of new woodland, along the eastern boundary, which would create a wooded skyline;
- hedge planting within the open spaces to subdivide them into fields and greatly increase the length of new hedges;
- new tree planting along the existing and proposed hedges, which would help compensate for the decline of hedgerow trees in the wider landscape, as well as enhance the landscape of the currently barren, bleak site;
- new planting at the entrance to the site from Lower Road, providing a new gateway to the village and reflecting open space in the core of the settlement; and
- provision of new wildflower meadows across the open spaces, managed to enhance biodiversity.

The tree planting would accord with the desire, expressed in the Parish Plan, to increase tree planting within the village.

There would inevitably be changes to the character of the site and in some views, but that is to be expected with any greenfield development. In any event, the few moderate effects would be reduced as the mitigation planting matures, and there would be long term benefits to trees and hedges.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Kind regards,

Nigel

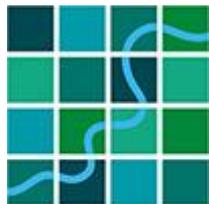
Nigel Evers CMLI
Director

Viridian Landscape Planning
3 Fairfield Close, Backwell, Bristol BS48 3PS

M: 07552 276782

E: nigel@viridianlandscape.co.uk

W: viridianlandscape.co.uk



viridian
LANDSCAPE PLANNING