

Landscape Architect's response to Planning Application

From: Terra Firma Consultancy Ltd (Isla Denton-Thompson)

On behalf of: West Sussex County Council (Environment & Heritage Team)

Date: 21.07.2014

Application ref: BE/73/14/PL Land at Oldlands Farm Shripney Road, Distribution units

Description: Erection of 2 No. detached industrial/distribution units (B1(c)/B2/B8) including access & servicing arrangements, car parking, landscaping & associated flood compensation area.

Location: Land at Oldlands Farm Shripney Road Bognor Regis PO22 9NN

Determining Authority: Arun

Summary response: Holding objection pending further information

Comments:

Relevant baseline information

- WSCC Landscape Character Assessment (2005)
 - o County Character Area County Character Area SC9 Chichester and Yapton Coastal Plain
- WSCC Landscape Strategy

Relevant landscape designations

4.5km south of South Downs National Park

WSCC Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The WSCC LCA is presented as Land Management Guidance sheets. The relevant sheet for this area is SC9 Chichester and Yapton Coastal Plain. The following points from SC9 are considered particularly relevant to the consideration of this proposal.

In the section entitled **Key Issues for Change** the following relevant issues are identified:

- *Loss of tree and hedgerow cover from agricultural intensification since World War II*
- *Introduction of large scale industrial buildings and glasshouses with distribution sheds*

In the section entitled **Key Landscape Sensitivities** the following relevant issues are identified:

- *Fragmentation and loss of hedgerows and connections between hedgerow and woodland*
- *Replacement of mature treescape*
- *Changes in transport infrastructure due to urban development pressures*
- *Development on settlement edges of Bognor and suburban settlements of Tangmere, Barnham, Yapton and Westergate*

In the section entitled **Key Land Management** objectives the following relevant issues are identified:

- *Create a new, large scale tree and hedgerow framework which complements the open intensively farmed landscape, whilst maintaining significant views of Chichester Cathedral, the South Downs and local features*
- *Maintain and strengthen field boundaries such as hedgerows and shelterbelts*
- *Link up existing remnant hedgerows and tree lines to re-establish coherent field boundaries and wildlife corridors*
- *Encourage and promote land management schemes to increase species rich grassland areas*
- *Promote management and establishment of grassland regimes of grazing, hay cutting and silage*
- *Establish landscape management plans for urban edges, notably Bognor Regis, to enhance the distinction between the urban and rural landscape*
- *Maintain and enhance the landscape and biodiversity of rifes and other existing habitats. Re-profile banks and encourage more diverse flora by lengthening clearance cycles*

Landscape Architect's response to Planning Application

The terra firma Consultancy Ltd.

- Enhance the visual prominence of rifles through the establishment of waterside vegetation features

Response

I understand that there is an existing hybrid planning consent (BE/61/13) for the site in question namely: an outline planning permission for a 33116 sq m of mixed commercial and industrial uses, comprising A1, A3, A5, B1, B2 and B8, with associated works and landscaping; and full planning permission for the access road and flood compensation area. The consented scheme covers a larger development area (extending to the west) than the one proposed in the current application. The site is also an allocated employment site.

The site is visible from a number of public vantage points surrounding the site including from the A29, Steyning way, Sack lane and a number of PRowWs. There are also potential views from residential properties adjacent to the site's southern boundary and further to the north.

Boundaries

More information is required on the proposed boundary treatments and management of existing boundary vegetation to ensure the proposed buildings are sympathetically integrated into the surrounding landscape, particularly given the open character of the surrounding landscape; and to reduce the visual impact on potential visual receptors.

I note that the previous LVIA which formed part of the approved scheme included proposals for:

'strengthening and reinforcement of all site boundaries to increase habitat connectivity, reinforce landscape character and further contain views'.

Some of this approach is apparent in the new scheme and I note that the proposed highway planting associated with the BNRR will provide screening to the majority of the views from the north. However, I am concerned about the openness of the site's western boundary and the limited proposed planting along the northern boundary. Strengthening and reinforcing these boundaries is important in providing further green infrastructure enhancements e.g. enhancing the landscape character, providing ecological connectivity as well as further screening/soften views of the proposed large scale buildings.

Proposed planting

The submitted Landscape proposals plan (1606-L02-03) conflicts with the Landscape Strategy (Fig 7 of the LVIA). The latter includes a native hedge along a section of the western boundary and distinct areas of 'Low level scrub planting' and 'scrub planting'.

With regard to the proposed landscape treatment around the proposed buildings, The Design and Access statement submitted as part of the proposal states that:

'Where practical the parking and service yard areas have been softened by tree, hedge and ornamental groundcover planting. Adjacent to main footpaths low ground cover planting and mown grass verges provide well-defined open routes creating a safe and unobstructed environment for pedestrians. At key locations specimen shrubs situated within areas of low ground cover planting provide a contrast in height, texture and colour whilst a mix of deciduous and evergreen plant species offers a diverse range of seasonal interest'. (5.5)

This statement would be considered a sound approach, however there is very little evidence of this approach in the 'Planting Proposals' plan which appears to be limited to native shrub planting, limited tree planting, and meadow grass. The planting proposals should reflect the statement in the Design and Access statement providing a more usable, multifunctional and aesthetically pleasing open space incorporating Green Infrastructure principles and a more attractive setting for the development.

It is considered worth noting that the previous approved scheme (ref BE/61/13) had included an indicative landscape masterplan providing what had the potential to be a stronger landscape scheme.

I consider that the proposed avenue of trees would form a more coherent avenue if the same tree species were proposed on both sides. Medium/large scale trees could be chosen to provide a strong approach to the development and enhance the view from the A29.

Landscape Architect's response to Planning Application

The terra firma Consultancy Ltd.

A full detailed landscape plan including National Plant Specification (NPS) schedule and specification should be conditioned along with a management/maintenance plan to ensure all proposed planting will establish and thrive.

Flood compensation area and SUDs

Full details of the proposed restoration scheme for the flood compensation area should be conditioned.

I note that the proposed SUDs features include aquatic planting for wildlife enhancements, however, more information including full Latin names of proposed plants will be required to judge the suitability of the proposed planting. Shallow shelving slopes could also be incorporated into the SUDs basins to provide ecological enhancements.

Lighting

Limited information has been submitted about the proposed lighting. Lighting should be designed to minimise light spill, given the site's rural edge location. This should be conditioned.

Existing trees and vegetation

Confirmation of the protection of the existing trees and hedges in accordance with BS5837:2012 should be provided.

Conclusion

This application proposes a notably diminished landscape scheme to the one submitted with the recently consented scheme (BE/61/13). More information is required, as outlined above, to ensure the proposed scheme delivers multifunctional open space based on Green Infrastructure principles which will ensure that the proposed large scale buildings are sympathetically integrated in the surrounding landscape.

In summary:

- More information is required on the proposed boundary treatments and management of existing boundary vegetation to ensure the proposed buildings are sympathetically integrated into the surrounding landscape, particularly given its open character.
- The planting proposals should provide a more usable, multifunctional and aesthetically pleasing open space incorporating Green Infrastructure principles and a more attractive setting for the development.
- A full detailed landscape plan including National Plant Specification (NPS) schedule and specification and should be conditioned along with a management/maintenance plan to ensure all proposed planting will establish and thrive.
- Full details of the proposed restoration scheme for the flood compensation area should be conditioned
- Shallow shelving slopes could be incorporated into the SUDs basins to provide ecological enhancements.
- The proposed lighting should be designed to minimise light spill, given the site's rural edge location. This should be conditioned.
- Confirmation of the protection of the existing trees and hedges in accordance with BS5837:2012 should be provided.