

Delegated Report

Approval of Details

Planning Application No: 20221268

Location: Former Northfleet Cement Works The Shore Northfleet Gravesend

Description: Application for the approval of condition 5 attached to planning permission reference number 20220226 relating to details of hard and soft landscaping

Applicant: Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Gateway)

Planning permission was granted for 'Temporary Access and associated landscaping and parking for the sales suite at Northfleet Embankment West site' under planning reference 20220226. This was subject to a number of conditions. This application seeks to discharge condition 5 of the approval.

Condition 5 is as follows:

'Notwithstanding the details submitted with the application, no development shall take place until the following hard and soft landscape details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:-

- a. Full planting plans, including details of the final planting layout together with planting schedule providing sizes and total quantities of individual species;*
- b. Details of tree planting including relationship to street lighting and where appropriate tree pit details including indicative irrigation / aeration pipes, drainage to the base of the tree pit and mulched area where planted within grass;*
- c. Final layout and details of hard landscaping including the external finishes of all roads, footpaths and parking areas, together with specification of edging and kerbs;*
- d. Final layout and details of boundaries including hoarding, fencing and gates access*
- e. Final layout and details of street furniture including tree guards, bollard lighting, flagpoles and parking control signage*

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect and enhance the visual amenity and the character of the area and to ensure a satisfactory environment for existing and future residents in accordance with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan: Core Strategy (September 2014).'

Submitted Documents/Plans

Cover Letter

2956-PH1B-LA-09 P1 - Sales Area/Access Road - General Arrangements

2956-PH1B-PP-09 P3 - Sales Area/Access Road Planting Plan

2956-PH1B-DT-14 P1 - Typical Tree Pit Details

2956-PH1B-SK-15 - Pictorial Plant Palette

2956-PH1B-SSK-16 P3 - Surface Finishes and Street Furniture

Consultee Comments

GBC Environmental Protection:

30/12/2022 -

I am unsure if you require our comments for condition 5 (20221268) as there is no mention of ecology/biodiversity within the condition wording or the reasons, however, virtually all of the planting is non-native. Non-native species have little to no biodiversity value and, therefore, we cannot recommend a discharge of the application until a revised plan has been submitted which should feature a much higher proportion of native species.

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation – Landscape Officer:

06/01/23 –

We have reviewed the application documents, having regard to the approved Concept Sketch submitted under the originally approved application.

Overall, the proposals convey a high quality landscape scheme appropriate to this sales centre entrance into the site. Some minor recommendations are set out below, informed by the wording of condition 5, the approved concept design and the EDC Public Realm Strategy.

A planting specification is referred to on the Planting Plan but was not seen. A full specification should be submitted, detailing as a minimum; ground preparation, topsoil, mulching, seeding / turfing, root barriers and plant protection, to ensure the landscaping will be implemented to a high standard. A Landscape Management Plan is also recommended, to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the new planting and hard landscaping.

Tree sizes vary between 14-16cm girth and 20-25cm girth trees, and some further uplift of the smaller trees to 20-25cm girth is recommended (as originally proposed on the approved Concept Sketch). The schedule should also be updated to include both planted heights and girths for all new trees.

The tree pit details submitted are generally welcomed, although it is unclear which detail applies to the proposed trees. A consistent approach to tree fixing is recommended, with underground guying the preferred method for all semi mature trees.

Shrub, hedge and herbaceous planting comprises a broad range of species diversity with good planting heights and densities, giving an instant impact to the scheme and the arrival into the site.

The hard landscaping proposals are generally fit for purpose and align with the approved Concept Sketch. A minor recommendation is to provide short breaks within the knee rail fencing, to allow maintenance access to the planting areas. The Hard Materials palette indicates buff coloured tarmac to footpaths and black tarmac to roads, although the colour is stated as being to be confirmed. This detail is required in order to confirm the final appearance of the hard landscaping.

There also appears to be a slight discrepancy between the extent of site hoarding shown on the Hard Landscape GA and Planting Plan, and this should be amended for consistency.

Following amended plans, the landscape officer made additional comments.

17/04/23 –

I've been through the revised submission for the sales centre car park at Harbour Village and have the following comments (original comment reattached for reference):

- Planting specification notes have been added to the Planting Plan and are generally fit for purpose although no details of mulch, including a depth, are stated. This should be a minimum of 50mm depth, medium grade bark mulch. Cross reference should also be made to the Tree Pit Details plan.

- A Landscape Management Plan remains outstanding – presumably this could fall under the wider site management, but a plan would technically need to be submitted under this application?
- Tree sizes remain unchanged and as previously recommended some uplift of those 14-16cm girths is recommended. Tree heights also remain omitted from the schedule and should be added.
- Tree pit specifications are included in the detailed notes, although it is noted that semi mature trees are stated as double staked, not underground guyed as previously recommended (and as shown on the Tree Pit Details plan).
- The Hard Materials palette has been updated to remove 'to be confirmed' references. No revised Hard Landscape GA plan was however submitted, with the previous recommendation of including short breaks in the knee rail fencing for maintenance access remaining outstanding.

Officer's Analysis

Background

For clarity the background as referenced in the committee report for 20220226 is re-stated here:

Northfleet Embankment West is a Local Plan Core Strategy allocation, which now benefits from a planning permission. As part of that permission the site will deliver:

- *up to 532 Homes, related car parking and landscaping (C3);*
- *up to 46,000 sq m Employment Floorspace, related car parking, servicing and landscaping (B1/B2/B8);*
- *Mixed Use Neighbour Centre comprising mix of: up to 850 sq m retail/cafe/takeaway floor space (A1/A2/A3/A5); residential uses (C3); community centre (D1); up to 1,000 sq m clinic/health centre (D1) and related car parking and landscaping;*
- *Riverside Food and Drink Uses comprising up to 500 sq m of pub or food and drink uses (A3/A4);*
- *Public Open Space including riverside promenade, public park with equipped play areas and playing field with shared public/school use and wildlife corridors;*
- *Fastrack Link to provide a segregated link across the site along with Fastrack stops;*
- *Street and Footpath Network to provide access to development and maintain and enhance existing public rights of way, including a bridge link between Hive Lane and Factory Road;*
- *Access Improvement to Grove Road/The Creek and The Shore/Crete Hall Road and associated highway improvements;*
- *Supporting Services and Infrastructure including new utilities, enhanced flood defences and providing for access to cliffs and tunnels;*
- *Ground re-grading to create efficient development and open space platforms and to raise land to address flood risk; and*
- *Other Minor Works and development ancillary to the main proposals including the principle of relocating the Scout Hut within the site and the retention of tunnels and facing walls adjacent to Lawn Road.*

As the permission was outline, there has been a number of subsequent applications for reserved matters and related conditions.

Whilst the wider site is being built out, this proposal seeks to provide access and parking to show homes, which form part of Phase 1b for Harbour Village. This will allow the applicant to market and sell homes from this site and deliver much needed housing within the Borough. This will contribute to the Borough Council's land supply, which is a material consideration, that has to be afforded significant weight, due to the number of dwellings involved (up to 532).

This current application directly relates to the previous permissions to provide a temporary access to the Marketing Suite that is the subject of a separate planning application to Ebbsfleet Development Corporation as the determining authority, due to the location of the marketing suite.

As the temporary access falls within the boundary of Gravesham Borough Council, application reference 20220226 and this current application for discharge of condition were/will be assessed on its own merits against the current Local Plan and NPPF (2021).

Biodiversity

It is noted that the Biodiversity officer made comments on this application raising concerns regarding the lack of native species of planting and the impact on biodiversity.

It is noted that the works have already been completed with regard to landscaping, despite the condition requiring that no works commence until the details have been discharged. However, this should not impact the decision and the assessment should be made regardless of completeness.

The other points to note are that there has clearly previously been an improvement in terms of native planting on the site, given the substantial removal of non-native species on site. Whilst the addition of non-native species may somewhat hinder this, it is likely that this would have lesser harm than the original state of the site with substantial non-native species. Whilst multiple requests were made to the agents that they provide evidence that their ecologist would agree with this statement, information was not forthcoming.

However, given the temporary nature of the site, which would be cleared by 05/10/25 as per condition 1 of 20220226, it is considered that on balance the impact in terms of biodiversity would be minimal.

Landscaping

The Landscaping officer at Ebbsfleet Borough Council has provided their insights on the details provided. They state that *'Overall, the proposals convey a high-quality landscape scheme appropriate to this sales centre entrance into the site.'*

They requested minor amendments, some of which were addressed via the amended plans provided. However, the further comments from the Landscape Officer indicate that further recommendations were made. However, given that as stated the scheme is already of a high quality, it would seem unreasonable to withhold consent of these details where they are of a sufficient quality.

Therefore, the following are considered to be acceptable as existing (But noted improvements are recommended):

- Tree sizes
- Tree pit specifications
- Hard Landscaping Details
- Knee Rail Fencing

The request for a Landscape Management Plan is noted and would be useful to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the site whilst it is in use. However, this cannot be required as a landscape management plan was not included as part of this condition or any other on the decision notice for 20221268. It would be reasonable to assume given the nature of the entrance as a sales site that it would be routinely maintained for the benefit of the users.

Conclusion & Recommendation

On balance, the proposed details would be acceptable and would meet the requirements of the condition and uphold its purposes to *'protect and enhance the visual amenity and the character of the area and to ensure a satisfactory environment for existing and future residents'*.

The recommendation is to discharge condition 5.

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Lisa Williams	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	28th April 2023	Dated:	28 April 2023