

Memo

Date: 31/05/11

To: Richard Aston

Cc:

From: Claire Lilley

Subject: N6-2010-2055-MA – Former Shredded Wheat Factory, Broadwater Road, WGC

I have reviewed all the submitted information regarding the landscape of the above site with regards to the recent development application. There are a number of aspects to consider here which is the overall quality and long term use of the existing trees on site, the protection of these existing trees and the new planting proposals plus surrounding issues.

Existing Trees

Overall I would say that the tree report submitted with the application is reasonable considering the past usage of the site. Although it is now out of date and some of the conditions of the trees may have changed in the past two years. I would question also the use of the term 'indifferent' to describe structural condition which was done repeatedly in the report.

There are a couple of areas within the site where the trees keep appearing and being shown as retained, and then in other plans being shown for removal or disappear completely. At the northern boundary of the site, trees 93-100 are a good example of where their own environmental statement details the importance of this set of lime trees for screening purposes and then they have disappeared from the surface finish plan, when all other retained trees are shown. Similarly trees 65-70 are shown for removal on the tree removals plan and then are shown on the surface finish plan to be retained. The proposed planting plan has inconsistencies with the surface finish plan showing more trees to be planted than is previously shown. Which one is correct? These inconsistencies are worrying as it makes me question the validity of the other details illustrated and give a false impression to other considering the application.

Trees 51-56 are a set of reasonable sycamore that are shown to be removed on all plans to facilitate the widening of what will be the access road at Hyde Way. These trees are very visible in the street scene and serve to improve the amenity of the area here. It seems that they are removing them, only to create additional tree planting on the opposite side of the road. It would be more beneficial to retain these trees and move the road to accommodate them. This is reiterated in the report from Tibbalds which also mentions this as an important group.

The widening of Broadwater Road is going to result in the removal of two semi mature sycamore trees (63 & 64) on the highway verge here. These trees were protected during the creation of cycle ways through this route and soften the aspect of the buildings here. The removal of them will be a detriment to the amenity of the road here. Although they have shown replacement planting here, it is unlikely to successfully establish in such narrow planting areas. The widening of this section of road however appears to be integral to the site and the trees are not of such a quality that they would prevent development however and therefore I would have to regretfully allow their removal. Are there any wider reaching alterations to the highway that have not been shown on these plans that are likely to affect highways trees?

Similarly the fastigiata Oaks that run along the front boundary of the site (44-47) are also shown to be removed to widen the road here. Again the applicant has shown replanting here, albeit of an alternative species and that will be discussed later in this memo.

Another key area of vegetation within the site is the group of trees G1 which runs along the area of the Pall Mall site. This acts as a screen from outside the site, although individually the trees here have questionable condition they serve a function as a whole. The proposal shows the removal of all these trees and the creation of a tree lined avenue at the rear of the site. On face value that would be acceptable, however in reality I feel that it would be better to have a wider verge on the western boundary with larger trees and reduce the footpath on the housing side to a minimal amount and not have planting. This would create a better rooting environment for the replacement trees, lessen the impact of the trees on the property and enable a more aesthetically pleasing species to be chosen. It could also mean the best of G1 could be selected and retained and planted around to maintain a maturity on the site. The area is shown to be paved here and it would be more beneficial to change that to grass and improve the rooting area for the newly planted trees and increase the greenspace.

Overall I would say that there are areas within the site that are shown to be paved when they could be grassed to not only improve the greenspace but to enhance the trees that are planted there

New Planting

The proposed new planting is as a whole beneficial to the site. However there are areas where it could be improved upon in terms of species and location. The proposed planting plan mistakenly lists the dark green trees as *Quercus palustris*, when according to the picture key they are *Pyrus Chanticleer*. I will assume they mean *Pyrus* for this purpose. Also their own environmental statement details a list of trees that they will plant on site for ecology purposes, none of which actually feature in the proposed planting.

To start with the replacement trees chosen for the two sycamore removed to widen the road are *Quercus palustris*. They have been shown at very close spacings in a very small verge area, barely wide enough to plant in. *Quercus palustris* are generally sensitive and difficult to establish and along a main trunk road in the town I feel would be too harsh for this species. It would be better to use *Acer campestre* here as this is a hardy, robust species that establishes well in this borough. Although less ornamental, i feel it would be more appropriate.

Moving down Broadwater Road to the replacements for the fastigiata Oaks which they need to remove to widen the road, they have proposed to replace with *Pyrus Chanticleer*. This would not be acceptable as this set of trees extends down both sides of Broadwater Road and needs to be replaced with *Quercus robur* *Fastigiata* *Koster*.

The planting around the LEAPS and the LAPS is good and so is the mixed planting along the central residential open space.

The formal lines of Lime trees around doctors surgery area are fine, but i would caution against the use of *Tilia cordata* which attracts aphids, and therefore the dripping honeydew that is sticky and messy in the summer months. There are varieties that are resistant to aphids and these would be more advisable.

The more mixed planting around the Civic Square is good and in this more sheltered position, the use of *Quercus palustris* could be successful. It is not clear to me however why the whole area needs to be paved and why a large planting bed could not be created to house the four *Quercus palustris* and soften the area here.

At the north of the site, around the open space and the YMCA car park they proposed planting shows block planting of Cherry, Birch, Lime and Field Maple. I can see no reason why they have chosen to do it this way and whilst block planting can unify areas, here it feels odd. If the planting scheme was following WGC design principles with same age, same species avenue planting, marked at junctions with alternate species etc, then it would make more sense. Perhaps it is simply because some of it is in the outline application area and the details are not firm, however i would not approve a scheme like this and would like to see it redesigned.

The use of all *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* in the courtyard behind the offices is more believable. It is a good species choice and will create a pleasant space.

To the side of the leisure centre the trees that are shown to be planted here are wedged into the middle of the parking area. From experience this type of planting seldom results in a thriving tree, as the conditions are just too tough. I could see no mention of design of planting pits and this would be essential for any scheme going forward. For any trees that are to remain with their mature root systems predominately under hard standing the applicants would need to provide details of underground frameworks such as Silva Cell with structural soils. Again the species chosen here is *Tilia cordata* which will drip honeydew onto all the parked cars and this should be altered to a resistant variety.

To the rear of the leisure centre is a set of *Pyrus Chanticleer* which is acceptable but as this area is shown to be asphalt with stone chippings the trees need to have underground frameworks and the surface needs to be permeable.

The double avenue of *Pyrus Chanticleer* along the western boundary has been mentioned already. I would propose that this becomes a single avenue on the western boundary, creating a larger planting area that would be left as grass, not paved. Again here there could be a run of underground framework so that the whole set could have the best chance at establishment. The species planted should be something with more potential size than an ornamental pear so that this group of trees would offer screening between the sites. This alteration would take the trees away from the properties here as well which would lessen the long term pressure on them.

The scheme as a whole is very straight and square and there does not seem to be flow through the site. The most appealing aspect of the proposals is the residential development to the south with the curved edges and mixed plantings.

Tree Protection

There are a number of existing trees that are to be retained on the development site. The applicant's environmental statement mentions that the trees will need to be fenced off during development. There has been no tree protection plan submitted with this application and this will need to be provided before any works commence on site.

Summary

In summary I would say that the existing trees on site are serviceable but due to the nature and the usage of the site over the years, that they are mostly average in form and condition. That said, if this proposal goes ahead then the change will be dramatic and any retention of maturity of landscape would be beneficial. I would like to see trees 51-56 retained and designed around. I would also like clarification that trees 93-100 and 65-70 are being retained.

The existing trees need to have suitable protection during the construction process in line with BS5837 and the applicant need to supply a tree protection plan to the Council, prior to any works taking place on site.

The proposed newly planted trees could be, on the whole, an improvement to the visual amenity of the area if they can be successfully established. However overall I would say that there are areas within the site that are shown to be paved when they could easily be grassed to not only improve the greenspace but to enhance the trees that are planted there and enable better rooting environments. There would also be a benefit to surface run off etc.

The species choice and location needs some work in the northern half of the site and I look forward to seeing the revisions.

A question to raise is who is ultimately going to be responsible for the publically visible greenspace? Is it due to be privately managed by householders, a management company or ultimately adopted by the LA? This will have a bearing on how appropriate the position of these new trees is.

I would like to see the plan showing the CCTV positions as this will have an impact on the newly planted trees and the lighting column plan as well as ordinarily the pressure from these factors will have a detrimental effect on the young trees.

I hope that these comments are useful and if you need anything further then please let me know.