

Urban Design consultation response

Land at Lakeside School, Caroline Way

23/0328

Recommendations

Two public footpaths run adjacent to site. The western and southern boundaries are positioned directly adjacent to residential gardens. The application site is located at the end of a cul-du-sac to the north.

The site is designated recreational open space within settlement, for which policy DM15 applies, which means that the site will be protected unless it can be demonstrated that the facilities are surplus to requirements and that there is no demand for any other recreational purpose in this location. The SLAA 2019, for which an urban design assessment was made, indicating a capacity of 15 residential units – subject to evidence above being demonstrated.

The existing tree belt and piece of open landscape strongly contributes to the character of the area, acts as an important buffer regulating temperature and flooding, and backdrop for existing residential areas. The green-space also plays an important role in terms of daily recreation, has an educational potential for neighbouring schools, provides resilience with regards to climate change as well as being an important part of the existing green structure in the area.

The Surrey Heath Borough Council advised in 2021 that that a design review was required for the development.

The proposed 64 unit development is considered to be over-development for the site in question, as demonstrated by the proposed footprint and massing which creates a development that spatially dominates the application site, and retains insufficient space along especially the western and southern boundaries, with virtually no proper setting to the south. The proximity of the development to the existing residential dwellings to the south is unacceptable from an urban design point of view. The scheme fails to provide a proper landscaped setting for the proposed built form also along the western boundary. Given the proximity to the existing trees to the north and the east, the scheme must be carefully evaluated in terms of long term effects on existing vegetation by the Council's tree officer, to ensure the proposal can be delivered without any detrimental effects.

The proposed car park along the Western boundary , moved from the northern part of the site, does not address previous design concerns with regards to the urbanising effect, the unrelieved scale, loss of existing greenery and lack of proper hard and soft landscaping but creates an harsh hard landscaped boundary to neighbouring the residential dwellings to the west. As such the design proposal is contrary to the Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide (SHRDG)SPD, principle 6.7. The general standards required for car parking design are set out in paragraphs 6.20-6.21, of the SHRDG SPD. The current proposal creates a poor spatial relationship to neighbouring properties, especially to the west, having an urbanising effect,

exacerbated by increased traffic movements. The proposed car park must be redesigned to reduce the scale and the urbanising impact by breaking up the large scale parking into a sequence of spaces with the help of vertical greenery, tree planting, bollards, lighting and detailed hard landscaping. Still, at the northern boundary, the scheme does not provide any strong sense of arrival. There is in essence a need for proper place-making.

Although the design seeks to reduce the height impact of the development by creating a sunken garden, the footprint and the massing of the proposed scheme is still causing some concerns from an urban design perspective, and would appear overbearing in relation to the character and appearance of the existing built and green context. The development would also have a detrimental impact on the openness, spaciousness and natural character that this piece of open landscape currently provides in the local area.

There are no objections in principle to the design cue, with the double pitched roofs, simplified design and traditional materials, a contemporary scheme inspired by local tradition. However, the large amounts of plants on the roofs and the detailing revealing some flat parts of the roofs from certain angles should be revised and minimised. Plants should ideally be relocated. Details like the balcony design could also be improved. The revised design idiom is however an important improvement in principle from an urban design point of view, compared to earlier schemes. The sunken garden is also supported in principle and assists in reducing the height to some extent.

However, the proposed layout creates a too narrow gap to neighbouring private gardens to the south, creating a poor spatial relationship which will have an adverse impact on residential amenity, and appear visually overbearing, especially given the the unbroken length of built form and the uniform character. Proper green boundaries of natural character along this perimeter, as well as along the western boundary, are required.

M. Gustafsson MSc MA

Urban Design Advisor

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