THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP



LANGLEY LANE

MIDDLETON

LANGLEY LANE - STATEMENT OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN

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Document Title	Langley Lane - Statement of Landscape Design
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Document Ref	6024.009

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Date	October 2016
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Amendment History					
Version	Date	Modified by	Check / Approved by	Reason(s) issue	Status
2.0	23.01.19	RJC	GDA	Update to drawing extract	Issued

CONTENTS PAGE

1.0 Introduction 1
2.0 Site Location and Appraisal 2
3.0 Aims and Objectives 3
4.0 Design Principles 4
5.0 Conclusion 10

DRAWINGS

D6024.001 – Landscape Masterplan

D6024.002 – Langley Lane: Landscape Proposals

D6024.009 – Langley Lane: Planting Concept

D6024.010 – Langley Lane: Play Provision

D6024.012 – Langley Lane: Open Space Biodiversity Enhancements

1.0 Introduction

1.1 TEP has prepared landscape proposals for the residential development at land off Langley Lane, Middleton on behalf of Taylor Wimpey.

1.2 Taylor Wimpey was granted outline planning permission (ref: 14/00851/OUT) by Rochdale Borough Council. This report and associated details has been produced to support a reserved matters application.

1.3 The development will include the erection of up to 115 no. dwellings, associated infrastructure and public open space.

1.4 The following landscape design statement has been developed in liaison with Taylor Wimpey and GTD who has prepared the development proposals for the site. Arboricultural surveys and ecological surveys were undertaken by TEP which have been used to inform development proposals. This statement should be read in conjunction with the Landscape Proposals drawing (D6024.002); Arboricultural Impact Assessment (6024.002); Ecological Assessment (6024.005); Invasive Species Management Plan (6024.007) and the Landscape Management Plan (6024.001).

2.0 Site Location and Appraisal

The site

2.1 The development site is located to the northern fringe of Middleton, approximately 4 miles south west of Rochdale. It will be accessible from Langley Lane which offers easy connections to the M62 (Junction 19) motorway.

2.2 The site is bordered to the south by Langley Lane, with residential areas beyond. Farm holdings are located to the east and west of the site, with grazing farmland to the north. The fields to the north and west are designated as Green Belt. Directly adjacent to the south east of the site, land has been allocated for a future school development.

Landscape

2.3 The site is approximately 4.8 hectares, comprising undulating semi-improved grassland and pockets of scattered scrub and trees. The fields are currently being used for grazing.

2.4 Whittle Brook passes in and out of the northern site boundary, flowing westwards. It is a narrow, shallow and meandering brook with earth banks, which are gently sloping along most of the length. The base of the brook is predominantly silt with some areas of gravel. The majority of the brook is bordered by a thin strip of marsh and tall ruderal herb, including invasive species Himalayan Balsam.

2.5 The landform of the site rises approximately 15.5m from east to west. Sections of bank to the brook have a 1 in 3 gradient with an approximate rise of 5m.

2.6 Tree cover across the site is sparse with large areas of arable field. The majority of trees are located around the northern and western boundary with the exception of a belt of lapsed hedgerow from north to south across the middle of the site. Tree stock is typically of low value with hawthorn the dominant species and sycamore, elder and common ash also present.

Public Rights of Way

2.7 Public Right of Way (PRoW) MidFp 114 borders the eastern boundary of the site, linking Langley Lane to the south with Heywood Old Road (A6045) to the north. MidFp114 also offers connection to numerous other footpaths and bridleways through the countryside between the development and the M62 to the north.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

3.1 The landscape proposals have been prepared in response to the existing landscape character, visual amenity and features of the site and the ecological and arboricultural assessments. The landscape proposals are detailed on drawing D6024.002.

3.2 The aspiration for the development is to provide a landscape that delivers:

- A strong sense of place;
- A high quality landscape setting to the development;
- Increased biodiversity;
- Connectivity and sustainability;
- A safe and secure environment; and
- A desirable and healthy place to live.

3.3 A key objective of the landscape is to minimise visual effects of the proposed development on surrounding residential properties, PRoW and Green Belt, whilst providing a high quality setting to the development.

3.4 The landscape proposals aim to connect and enhance open spaces within and surrounding the development to maintain coherence, retain the most important aspects of the sites identity and reinforce important visual buffers from the adjacent PRoW and neighbouring properties. This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Provision of a landscape framework for the proposed development that includes a series of open spaces;
- Retain, enhance and protect, wherever possible, existing vegetation that is ecologically or visually important (ie. hedgerows and trees);
- Enhancement of biodiversity through inclusion of new habitats throughout the site;
- Creation of a green and landscaped setting to development through the planting of trees and hedgerows along residential roads that reinforce identity and street hierarchy;
- Creation of a focal point at the entrance into the site;
- Sensitively integrate the development into the existing landscape and filter views from adjacent properties, PRoW and roads;
- Provide routes through the development and connect to the wider community and PRoW network; and
- Utilise, where appropriate, plant species that are in keeping with existing local character and vegetation and provide seasonal highlights and interest throughout the site.

4.0 Design Principles

Existing site features

4.1 There will be a small amount of tree and hedgerow loss in order to facilitate the development, as highlighted in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Tree loss will be offset by new native tree and hedgerow planting across the site.

4.2 The majority of existing trees, identified as trees of landscape and amenity value, will be retained to ensure the integrity of the landscape is maintained. The retention of existing vegetation will aid integration of the development within the existing site and wider landscape. This is particularly important adjacent to existing properties, along Whittle Brook and the PRoW, to provide a soft edge to the development and filter inward views.

Pedestrian movement

4.3 The main pedestrian access into the development will be along the new access roads which enter the south of the site from Langley Lane. Pedestrian access is to be provided on both sides of the roads.

4.4 A new 3m wide combined footpath cycleway is proposed through the main open space along the east-west axis to the north of the site, offering connections to the future residential development to the east. A 1.8m wide footpath will connect the footpath cycleway with the PRoW (MidFp 114) and a mown grass route will provide seasonal access to Whittle Brook.

4.5 Seating areas are to be provided within areas of open space to encourage use of the spaces and informal recreation.

Public open space

4.6 The proposed development will create approximately 1.1 hectares of open space that will offer a range of different uses including formal and informal recreation, and areas of wildlife habitat.

4.7 The development has been designed around the existing landscape features, such as trees and vegetation and Whittle Brook. Where possible these features have been retained and enhanced to increase biodiversity.

4.8 The main open space will be along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site, creating a buffer to the Green Belt. This open space will include re-profiling works to Whittle Brook, a SuDS basin, woodland planting, a play area (Local Equipped Area for Play), seating area, tree planting and species-rich grassland.

4.9 A number of paths will be provided within the greenspace connecting to the footpath cycleway, providing links to the PRoW and future development sites to the east.

4.10 Native woodland edge planting will be interspersed along the edges of existing vegetation to increase visual interest and wildlife habitat. Groups of trees set within species-rich grassland will complement existing trees.



Figure 1: Extract of Landscape Masterplan illustrating the Northern POS and path connections

4.11 Along the Langley Lane frontage a further open space will be provided, creating a buffer between existing dwellings and the proposed development. The boundary of the open space will be defined to the rear of the Langley Lane highway path by an ornamental railing and native hedgerow. Brick piers will define access points into the development. This open space will include the creation of species rich grassland and informal groups of trees. Two small amenity grassed areas with boulders or logs will be created to provide Local Areas for Play (LAP).



Figure 2: Extract of Landscape Masterplan illustrating the extent of the Southern POS

4.12 Proposals relating to the various open space elements are described in the following paragraphs and are illustrated on drawing D6024.002.

Vehicular entrance gateways

4.13 Entrance gateways will be created to provide a formal soft landscape. Langley Lane will be bounded by ornamental railings with brick piers and a native hedgerow, providing a rural character. At the vehicular entrances the railing will open out into a semi-circular arrangement to provide good visibility and define the site entrance. In front of the railings, ornamental planting beds will be provided.

4.14 Ornamental planting will comprise shrubs, perennial herbaceous planting and ornamental grasses which will provide texture and seasonal colour and interest. Semi-mature trees will be planted within the native hedgerow, positioned behind the railings, to further define the site entrance.

4.15 This planting approach will be replicated within the development at key landscape nodes to provide consistency and a series of connected spaces.

Landscaped buffers

4.16 Sections of hedgerow will be created through the planting of new broad hedgerows with trees along the eastern boundary of the site and the residential edge of the northern open space, providing enclosure and extending wildlife corridors through the development.

4.17 Native structure planting will be introduced on high ground along the northern boundary to create a wildlife corridor and filter views of the development from the Green Belt. The structure planting, comprising of woodland edge and woodland species, would be arranged in small groups to frame views to the open countryside and allow light to the brook. Groups of trees set within species-rich grassland will complement existing trees and extend the woodland planting, whilst providing good natural surveillance to the footpath cycleway which will meander through the area.

4.18 Within the open space the planting of new groups of native trees will produce a natural parkland character which will connect open spaces and provide increased wildlife opportunities.

4.19 The introduction of species-rich grassland is proposed throughout the public open spaces which will provide further terrestrial habitat for amphibians with appropriate connectivity through green linkages.

Formal recreation

4.20 A LEAP is proposed on the eastern boundary, providing predominantly metal play equipment aimed at children between the ages of four and eight.

4.21 Sensory planting will provide sound, colour, smell and touch through the use of appropriate species. This will introduce an element of natural play.

4.22 New groups of trees will be planted to provide shade to users. Areas of amenity grassland and species-rich grassland around the play area will create break out areas and a good variation in scent, colour and texture.

4.23 A number of LAPs are proposed within the open spaces and located within 100m of the majority of houses. The LAPs do not have formal play equipment, but provide demonstrative features which indicate that play is encouraged, such as seating, landforms, timber logs and boulders.

Proposed site features

4.24 The landscape masterplan has been formed around the retained landscape features. These will be enhanced and supported by new landscape elements comprising:

- Brook re-profiling and SuDS basin;

- Play area;
- Hard landscaping;
- Boundary treatments; and
- Soft landscaping.

Book re-profiling and SuDS

4.25 Himalayan Balsam is present along the course of Whittle Brook. The proposals allow for the re-profiling of two sections of Whittle Brook to enhance the biodiversity of the watercourse, on completion of the eradication of the invasive species. The profiling works, detailed on drawing D6024.012, will involve the widening of the brook and creation of low ledges that will be planted with aquatic species. The areas affected by the earthworks will be seeded with a wet grassland mix.

4.26 A SuDS basin will be provided in the northern open space to attenuate the new development. The basin design is to be developed by a drainage engineer but will provide seasonal waterbodies that will help to support local wildlife. The banks will be seeded with a wet grassland mix to encourage the establishment of aquatic species.

Play area

4.27 As previously highlighted, a formal play area will be provided within the landscape scheme. The play area will be a LEAP with an activity zone of at least 400m2 catering for children between the ages of four and eight..

4.28 The LEAP, detailed on drawing D6024.010, will include a minimum of five pieces of equipment, of metal construction. The type of equipment provided within the LEAP will include:

- Swings;
- Balance beams;
- Roundabout;
- Seesaw; and
- Climbing frame with slide.

4.29 Appropriate impact absorbent surfacing, with vibrant colours, will be installed beneath and around the play equipment, conforming to BS EN 1177.

4.30 The play area will be fenced with 1.1m high bow top railings and 1.3m wide self-closing pedestrian gates that can also be used for maintenance access. Signs, seats (with backs) and litter bins will be provided within the play areas. The signs provided will include information such as:

- the area is solely for use by children;
- adults are not allowed unless accompanied by children;
- dogs are excluded;
- name and telephone number of the operator of the facility to report any incident or damage to the play equipment; and
- location of the nearest public telephone.

Hard landscaping

4.31 The footpaths within the public open spaces will be surfaced to ensure access in all weathers and with a surface material that is appropriate to the landscape setting and ground conditions.

4.32 It is envisaged that the footpath cycleway and paths leading to the play area will be of an asphalt concrete construction. The footpath link to the PRoW will be a self-binding gravel surface.

Boundary treatments

4.33 Property boundary treatments will vary depending on the location.

4.34 Front curtilages along the main access roads will be defined by low hedgerows, to be maintained by residents to a suitable height to meet visibility requirements, or ornamental planting. This will be in keeping with the treatments of properties in the local neighbourhood.

4.35 In prominent locations, external property boundaries along roads, footpaths and areas of public open space will comprise of 1.8m high brick screen walls, while all other external boundaries will be 1.8m high closed board screen fencing. Divisional fencing between rear gardens will be constructed with either 1.8m high or 1.5m high closed board fence panels.

Soft landscaping

4.36 The soft landscape scheme will vary across the development to create specific character areas. Examples of the types of species that may be specified is illustrated on drawing D6024.009.

General tree planting

4.37 New trees will be planted in front gardens and areas of public open space. These will mainly comprise native and semi-ornamental species that will offer diversity to the scheme and accentuate certain areas providing further visual interest. Tree species will reflect the existing species on site and the local area, whilst satisfying the requirements of the National House Building Council.

4.38 Ornamental trees will also be planted on the site to increase diversity and visual interest.

4.39 Some of the proposed trees will be planted within hedgerows and ornamental shrub beds to provide a vertical 'green' element, and to aid in filtering the visual appearance of the buildings, whilst minimising maintenance operations. The exact species to be used in each area will be determined by the location, proximity to roads and buildings and their water demand.

4.40 It is proposed that trees with a minimum 12-14cm girth will be planted in areas of open space and species with between 10-12cm and 12-14cm girth in residential gardens.

Woodland and woodland edge planting

4.41 Woodland edge and woodland planting is proposed for general space definition and variation in vegetation cover. Areas of woodland planting will be established to bolster existing planting and enhance the landscape buffers across the development. This will help to provide an appropriate setting for the proposed built development whilst filtering views and enhancing wildlife interest.

4.42 The edge planting will consist of native and semi-ornamental plant species which will provide seasonal colour and visual interest, such as Cornus alba 'Sibirica' (Dogwood) and Salix alba 'Vitellina' (Golden Willow). Woodland planting will consist of predominantly native species.

4.43 Plants will be fitted with appropriate rabbit protection and bark mulch will be applied.

Hedgerow planting

4.44 In some locations, hedgerows are proposed along access roads to define front boundaries of properties. In these situations both ornamental and native species will be used to provide visual interest.

4.45 Bark mulch to a minimum depth of 50mm will be applied to all planted areas. Suitable rabbit guards will be fixed to all species within public open spaces.

Ornamental planting

4.46 Ornamental planting will feature in the overall landscape scheme to provide appropriate 'highlights' to the development. The chosen deciduous and evergreen shrubs, ornamental grasses and herbaceous plants will provide a variety of form, colour and texture. Consideration will need to be given to the types of species selected to ensure plants are suitably robust and appropriate to the location.

4.47 In order to soften parking areas associated with the development, trees will be planted within areas of low growing ornamental species with native species used where appropriate. This will filter views, whilst allowing natural surveillance of communal areas.

Grassland areas

4.48 The remaining areas of open space will be seeded with grass. Within the active areas of the public open space and along the edges of the highway and footways, amenity grass will be established and cut on a regular basis.

4.49 Native species-rich meadow grasses will be sown to areas within the open spaces with a view to less frequent cutting to encourage wildlife. Around the ditches and SuDS basin and ponds, a wet grassland seed will be sown to provide a naturalised appearance that will flourish on the wet banks and increase the biodiversity of the areas.

4.50 In addition, native bulb species will be naturalised in grass areas, particularly in the larger expanses of grass or under trees, in order to provide seasonal colour and further increase the diversity of the planting.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The landscape proposals presented in this report, and associated drawing integrate the new development into the surrounding residential area and are appropriate to create an enhanced and attractive landscape setting to the development.

5.2 The design and range of open space respects the existing landscape through the retention and integration of existing landscape features, such as the vegetation and Whittle Brook, whilst providing opportunities for formal and informal recreation. The landscape strategy will result in a strong and coherent landscape character ensuring the development is a safe, valued and attractive residential development in keeping with its context.

5.3 The scheme will sensitively integrate the development into Middleton, provide new open space for use by the wider public and increase biodiversity of the area.

DRAWINGS

D6024.001 – Landscape Masterplan
D6024.002 – Langley Lane: Landscape Proposals
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