

Landscape Strategy

Proposed Residential Development at The Toat Café.

Toat Café, Stanes Cottage, Stanes Farm and Whitelands Farm, Pulborough



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Ref: KM_2026_LS022

1 Introduction.

- 1.1 Kevin Murphy Landscape and Garden Design (KMLGD) were instructed to work with the design team to develop the Landscape Strategy which would inform the development of the residential masterplan at the Toat Café and associated land. This strategy is to accompany an outline planning application to Horsham District Council (HDC).
- 1.2 The report outlines the strategy which takes particular note of the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) by ROAVR Group in order that the development is acceptable in Landscape and Visual Impact terms.
- 1.3 The overall site comprises approximately 8.2 hectares (ha) of land and includes:
- The Toat Café (2.6 ha)
 - Stanes Cottage (0.26 ha)
 - Stanes Farm (2.4 ha)
 - Whitelands Farm (2.9 ha) to be set aside for BNG and open space.



Fig 1 – Aerial photograph of the site (Google Maps) with zones indicated.

- 1.4 The overall site is of poor grade 3b agricultural land along with a considerable area of hard standing, which at present is being used as carparking for the Toat Café, and a car wash area adjacent to the A29 (Stane Street) between the villages of Codmore Hill/Pulborough and Adversane/Billingshurst.
- 1.5 As noted in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) by ROAVR Group, the site lies in Landscape Character Area J1: "Billingshurst and North Heath Farmlands" - see the Horsham District Council (HDC) Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas map. As noted in the LVIA:

"While the J1 character area is described as possessing a semi-enclosed and strongly rural character, the presence of the A29 introduces an established urbanising corridor with hard edges, large scale signage, traffic movement and noise."

- 1.6 HDC's Landscape Character Assessment (2003) also acknowledges the urbanising effect of the A29. Below is an extract from a map overlay which shows the site as part of a string of development along the A29 between Pulborough and Billingshurst:



Fig 2 - Extract of MCA Architects Aerial Study of development along the A29 (in red)

- 1.7 The proposed development includes a total of 93 residential units comprising mixed sizes and will include 35% of affordable units which will be distributed evenly across the site. A Pharmacy and Café/Shop are also provided.

1.8 In addition to the above, the site will incorporate:

- Natural and Amenity Greenspace.
- A mountain bike technical skills area for recreation.
- A locally equipped area for play (LEAP).
- Foot/cycle paths through green corridors.
- SUDS Drainage features integrated into the landscape.

2 The Landscape Strategy.

2.1 This landscape strategy has been prepared in association with MCA Architects and the project team, with reference to the detailed LVIA prepared by the ROAVR Group. The strategy also responds to the outcomes of local authority and public consultations which are discussed in more detail within the MCA Design and Access Statement.

2.2 The LVIA concludes:

“The proposed development is located within a landscape of moderate sensitivity at the application site, where change must be handled carefully but can be successfully accommodated through landscape-led design, retention of key vegetation, and substantial structural planting. The baseline is not one of isolated or pristine countryside, but of a mixed roadside environment in which rural and urbanising influences already coexist...

...subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation and long-term management measures, the scheme would not give rise to unacceptable landscape or visual effects. Rather, it would introduce a more coherent, better integrated and more effectively landscaped form of development than the existing fragmented roadside condition, and is therefore capable of being supported in landscape and visual terms.”

2.3 The mitigation proposed in the LVIA comprises the following:

“A comprehensive mitigation strategy has been proposed to reduce and manage the landscape and visual impacts of the development, including:

- *A landscape-led masterplan layout that avoids visually sensitive edges*
- *Retention and reinforcement of key landscape features, particularly hedgerows and trees*
- *Introduction of structural planting, particularly along the western and southern boundaries*
- *Creation of buffer zones, green corridors and SuDS features to soften built form*
- *Use of dark-sky compliant lighting design*

- *Implementation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to ensure long-term success of mitigation measures (to be secured by condition)"*

With these measures in place, residual effects are significantly reduced. In most locations, effects fall within the minor or minor-moderate range, which is considered acceptable in planning terms and consistent with development in rural edge locations."

- 2.4 The landscape strategy plans set out the strategic spatial arrangement envisaged for the site to provide a high-quality landscape setting and strong green infrastructure as a framework for the proposed development, implementing all the items listed in the mitigation strategy above.
- 2.5 Illustrated below is the proposed site plan by MCA Architects:

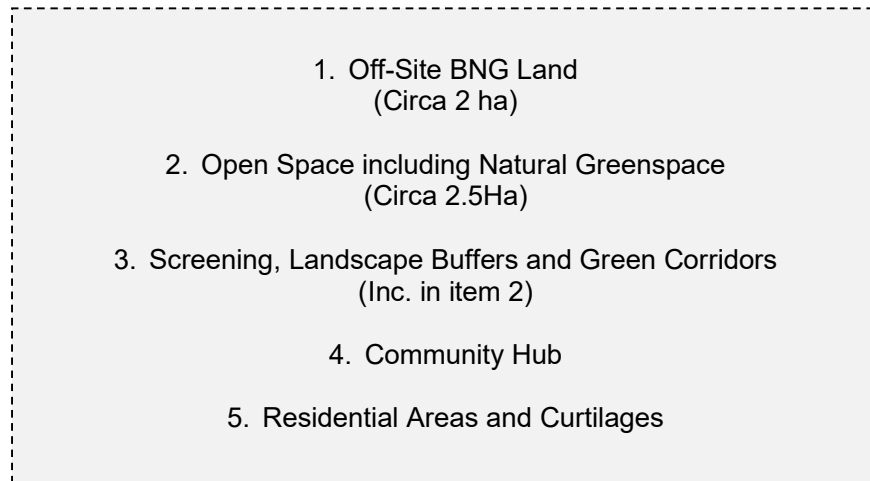


Fig. 2 : Proposed Development Masterplan

2.6 The landscape objectives of the proposed development include:

- Development of strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) to create a framework and setting for development and successfully integrate the proposals into the wider landscape.
- Strategically placed planting and new trees to connect with the GI ensuring the retention and enhancement of existing vegetation on the site boundaries.
- Preserving and enhancing nature conservation habitats for a range of species both within the site and the proposed BNG area.
- Maintain existing field boundaries and create a rural landscape setting for the development.

2.7 The development spatial strategy and hierarchy can be summarised in terms of the following key elements:



2.8 The above hierarchy is described and illustrated in more detail below.

2.9 **1 - Off-Site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Land**

- 2.9.1 Whitehead Farm is an underused area of Grade 3b agricultural land recently remediated to remove contamination. As detailed in the ecology report, a large portion of this land (circa 2 hectares) will become a dedicated off-site BNG area which, along with measures on site, will deliver over 20% BNG, well above the 10% minimum requirement.
- 2.9.2 Whilst maintaining and enhancing the existing boundary trees and native hedging, this BNG area will be oversown with a Lowland Meadow mix, which will help to naturalise and introduce new flora and fauna to the area.
- 2.9.3 Within this area, several natural mown footpaths will be introduced to encourage recreational use/dog walking and benefit health and wellbeing of the residents of and visitors to the development. In addition to regular maintenance, information and way finding will be provided to residents and access from within the development only, to

ensure its proper use and to ensure retention in the long-term. Car parking/turning and bike storage is also provided adjacent to the meadow within the on-site area.



Fig. 3: Site Plan – Landscape Overlay – BNG and Green Infrastructure

2.10 **2 - Open Space including Natural Greenspace**

- 2.10.1 HDPF Policy 32 notes that development is expected to deliver a “...framework of high-quality open spaces which meets the identified needs of a community.”
- 2.10.2 A variety of accessible open space typologies form an integral part of development, shaping the proposed layout and commercial/community uses. A significant portion of the site, (approximately 2.5 hectares), is dedicated to these spaces which can be summarised as follows:
- Natural and Amenity Greenspace incorporating SuDs measures (circa 2.36 Ha)
 - Green Corridors (included above)
 - LEAP (440m²)

- Mountain Bike Technical Skills Area/Trail (0.1 Ha)
 - Sheltered Seating
- 2.10.3 The provision of Natural Greenspaces as part of the Green Infrastructure and indicated on the illustrative masterplan will be 'multifunctional', enabling the land to perform a range of uses, such as the provision for healthy recreation whilst contributing to a wide range of species to increase and enhance biodiversity and visual amenity. These functions are not limited to recreation, but also include ecological enhancement, visual amenity improvement resulting in mental and physical health benefits for the users. The off-site BNG lowland meadow is accessed from the Natural Greenspace.
- 2.10.4 Green Corridors through the site qualify as Natural Greenspace and are described in more detail later in this report.
- 2.10.5 The Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) for children up to 10 years old is incorporated within these Natural/Amenity Greenspaces along with a mountain bike technical skills area for young people, which will further enhance and encourage its recreational use and enjoyment.
- 2.10.6 SUDS detention basins will be created and integrated into the landscape setting to act as temporary stores for stormwater runoff reducing peak flow rates to prevent any flooding and allow for slow runoff release/drainage in storm events. All rainwater is managed above ground level in accordance with SuDs best practice and Paul Timmins Engineering Design Services' (PTE) designs.
- 2.10.7 In addition to drainage uses, the detention basins, (often called Dry Ponds), will create an additional feature to the Natural Greenspace provided, whereby suitable planting to accommodate both wet and dryland planting will be incorporated, whilst also acting as an opportunity to create habitat and support a range of plant species
- 2.10.8 The whole site will have open ditches and swales to facilitate the movement of water directed towards the detention basins, along with surface water being piped beneath the road surfaces, as guided by PTE.
- 2.10.9 A feature Pavillion will also be introduced which will form a focal point when accessing the development and a central part of this area for recreational and community use.
- 2.10.10 The opportunity also presents itself to create a community orchard if desired benefiting not only the community but wildlife in general too.
- 2.10.11 The quality and provision of the above open spaces will be designed in accordance with the detailed guidance contained in the Horsham District Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Review, June 2021, as summarised in Appendix A.



Fig. 4: Site Plan – Landscape Overlay – Greenspace, SUDs, Play, Walking

2.11 **3-Screening, Landscape Buffers and Green Corridors.**

- 2.11.1 The overall development has been designed to maintain, enhance and extend the green corridors that currently subdivided the existing land into four key zones as

noted in the introduction, i.e. The Toat Café, Stanes Cottage, Stanes Farm and Whitelands Farm. Existing field boundaries are maintained and corridors for the movement of wildlife.

- 2.11.2 Existing mature boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained and reinforced, providing the setting of the development. Their long-term retention will be made possible through separation from residential curtilage and by bringing them into regular, long-term management. This will protect visual amenity and landscape character as well as continuing to offer commuting and foraging opportunities for wildlife through the site and connectivity to the wider landscape.
- 2.11.3 All the existing trees of note are to be maintained around the boundaries, with sympathetic tree surgery being undertaken on selective C and U grade trees.
- 2.11.4 Native tree species will be used adjacent to open spaces and along the site boundaries to create an appropriate transition to the surrounding area.
- 2.11.5 All strategic planting will incorporate species that are native and locally appropriate to the area; plant stock will be of local provenance where possible.
- 2.11.6 The use of further tree planting along the development boundary edge and within the BNG area will increase the biodiversity around the site whilst also strengthening the natural defensible boundary to the development area and to meet the requirements of the LVIA mitigation strategy.



Fig. 5: Site Plan – Landscape Overlay – Screening, buffers and green corridors

2.12 4-Community Hub.

- 2.12.1 A small commercial development will form an essential community hub. This will comprise of a Pharmacy, café and small shop for essentials.
- 2.12.2 It is primarily located over the existing Toat Café and expanse of hard standing and will provide a community meeting point for all residents and visitors. Sufficient parking is provided without it becoming overpowering and unnecessary, with landscaping to soften edges.
- 2.12.3 The overall area has open grass spaces, along with sympathetic planting to soften and screen, but with lower maintenance always at the forefront of the design to ensure it is retained in the long term. Natural surveillance will come from surrounding houses, flats and commercial uses.
- 2.12.4 In landscaping terms this area will be restrained and visually well integrated into the overall development.



Fig. 6: Site Plan – Landscape Overlay – Community Hub and Residential Curtilages

2.13 5-Residential Areas and Curtilages.

- 2.13.1 The residential development will incorporate units and areas of subtly different character to define and create a sense of place.
- 2.13.2 The development frontages will face outwards towards open space and street scenes to ensure that rear garden boundaries are hidden and not a feature of the street scene. As a result, planting will be designed to respond to the individual character areas.
- 2.13.3 Semi native and ornamental hedges will be used to define and sub-divide the unit plots instead of urban fencing to maintain a rural character.
- 2.13.4 Roadside and verge planting and grass will comprise a combination of native and naturalised planting, and ornamental shrub beds will be used in more formal areas to define the street, and the use of street trees, all to soften the built form.
- 2.13.5 In other areas the planting has the potential to be more rural in character with strategic planting used to soften the development edge and open spaces.
- 2.13.6 A portion (circa 40%) of the residential units proposed are flats contained in two distinct blocks within the Toat Café Site. This location has been deemed by the council as acceptable for a range of commercial uses and associated parking which would result in substantial and highly visible development along the A29. The proposed flats, pharmacy and shop are likely to have a smaller footprint and therefore increased opportunity for landscape buffers and a less dominant built form.
- 2.13.7 The dwellings are arranged in clusters defined by the existing field boundaries, trees and drainage ditches which is in character with the local area and settlement pattern. There is already mature planting along the boundaries providing immediate screening of the majority of new housing. Notwithstanding that the remaining units are located on the Toat Café and Stanes Cottage portion of the site where existing built development is located and where substantial development is already possible under the Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan (PNP) allocation, new landscape buffers in these areas, including trees, shrubs, hedges and other planting, will provide substantial screening in the medium-long term.
- 2.13.8 As can be seen on the illustrative masterplan, there are smaller residential units towards the A29 road frontage with substantial landscape buffers. Less dense housing with larger house/plot sizes are then located deeper into the site and along the development edges to reflect the rural character of nearby and adjoining development.
- 2.13.9 The above, along with strategic tree planting, this will lessen the impact of the development considerably, beyond what could be achieved from the allocated commercial development, and provide seamless integration into the wider site.

3 Conclusion.

- 3.1 A development of housing is proposed at the above site, located in a rural area within a line of existing built development along the A29 corridor between Pulborough and Billingshurst.
- 3.2 ROAVR group have carried out a detailed assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivities of the site and set out the key mitigation measures required to achieve an acceptable design in landscape and visual terms.
- 3.3 The above landscape strategy is informed by the findings and recommendations of the LVIA and mitigates all landscape and visual impacts of the development including those of particular concern to officers assessing the earlier pre-application submissions and community consultation by MCA.
- 3.4 As demonstrated above, these measures are not restricted to visual screening along the site perimeter/new landscaping only. A careful and wholistic approach to the master plan design in relation to local landscape and built form has been prepared in collaboration with the design team and through consultation with the local authority and community.
- 3.5 The proposal maintains and augments existing site/boundary trees/planting and existing field boundaries, limits denser development and parking to the Toat Café site, enhances green corridors, provides a variety of open spaces with ecological benefits and for the new residents including off-site BNG land, natural greenspace and landscape buffers with integrated SuDs measures. The measures provide a rural and maintainable landscape setting to informal housing clusters.
- 3.6 The development will benefit greatly the overall existing local community, providing much needed housing in a sensitively designed landscape setting, hugely enhancing what is at present a collection of unsightly and neglected commercial, domestic and rural spaces along the A29 corridor.