16.1 Visual Impact Assessment

Executive Summary

This Initial Heritage and Townscape Assessment was commissioned by Guild Living to inform development of a proposed 'later living' retirement development on the site of Wickes and Halfords on Harefield Road in Uxbridge. The document analyses the heritage and townscape within a 1km radius of the site.

Site and scheme

The site of Wickes and Halfords is at the edge of the densely developed Uxbridge Town centre, adjacent to the Police Station and close to the historic Uxbridge High Street. The site is typical of late twentieth century out of town retail, with large floor plate retail outlets and extensive car parking.

The proposed scheme will deliver an array of retirement accommodation options, with different levels of care which can be tailored to the individual, complemented by a suite of public facilities including a nursery, a cafe and bar, a restaurant, a wellness centre, and an accessible public plaza area. The scheme is designed to be accessible from to the nearby High Street.

Though there are no designated heritage assets on the site itself there are many in the immediate vicinity and within the 1km study area. These are summarised below.

Heritage assets in the vicinity of the Site

To the south and south west

The Old Uxbridge/Windsor Street Conservation Area lies to the south of the site. The conservation area derives its character and appearance from the wealth and variety of historic buildings on display, which is illustrative of the various phases of growth and development in Uxbridge over several centuries. The conservation area also preserves much of Uxbridge's medieval street pattern, which complements the diversity of buildings and enhances its character and appearance. The conservation area contains a large number of listed and locally listed buildings spanning from the twelfth to the twenty-first century. Being located on prominent sites overlooking one of the main historic highways into London, many of these buildings exhibit high quality craftsmanship, design and materials. As a group, the buildings are a strong visual representation of the changing fortunes and commercial activities going on within Uxbridge.

To the south-west of the Site lies the Rockingham Bridge Conservation Area, which contains a locally listed building and a number of buildings of merit. Much of the housing within the conservation area comprises good-quality, mid-Victorian workers' cottages. Along with the public open spaces around Fray's River and Fassnidge Park, these cottages largely define the character and appearance of the conservation area.

To the west

Immediately to the west of the Site lies the locally listed Uxbridge Magistrates' Court, built in 1907 with later extensions. The building's high-quality architecture and materiality is of the Edwardian Baroque style which was particularly popular for civic buildings in the early-twentieth century. The Edwardian building, along with its extensions, also illustrates the evolving status of Uxbridge as the local administrative centre on the western fringe of London. This building sits within a designed, landscaped setting facing onto Harefield Road, which makes a minor contribution to its overall significance. Further to the west lies the Uxbridge Lock Conservation Area, whose character and appearance derives from its semi-rural nature and the variety of historic buildings and structures associated with both the Grand Union Canal, built through the area in the 1790s, and the Oxford Road, a modern trunk road built along the line of the historic London to Oxford highway.

To the north

To the north and north-east of the Site lies the North Uxbridge Area of Special Local Character, which is a locally-designated heritage asset. The area is of considerable townscape merit, as a quiet residential suburb that developed in a piecemeal fashion through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and today contains a broad variety of building types and styles from this period. Although individual buildings are generally of very modest architectural or historical interest, the sheer diversity of house types and ages in the area means that they possess historical and architectural interest as a group.

Townscape character

This Assessment has identified six distinct areas of townscape character within a 1km-radius study area. These are:

- The historic core of Uxbridge, which contains a high concentration of locally or nationally designated heritage assets;
- Lower rise residential areas, typical of the 'Metroland' character of outer West London;
- Higher-rise residential areas which are found in pockets throughout the study area and are generally defined by higher-rise blocks;
- Large-footprint retail or commercial buildings, which are primarily found within the town centre and along the banks of the River Colne and Grand Union Canal;
- Individual or complexes of public buildings, such as Hillingdon Civic Centre and Uxbridge Underground Station, which often sit within significant areas of landscaped public realm;
- Managed open spaces, predominantly found to the west of the Site and comprising publicly-accessible open land generally used for leisure, recreation or conservation.



Alan Baxter

Selection of views

Having assessed the heritage and townscape context around the Site, 14 view locations have been selected and agreed with the local planning authority. These view locations are being used to monitor the evolving design of the Proposed Development and its impact on nearby heritage assets and townscape character areas, and will eventually be used to assess the impact of the final design as part of the full planning application.

Heritage and townscape impact of the Proposed Development

The verified views demonstrate that the significance and setting of nearly all heritage assets within the study area would be preserved, demonstrating a successful, sensitive approach to heights and massing. Very minor harm (at the lowest end of less than substantial) to the setting of a limited number of heritage assets are substantially outweighed by the broader townscape enhancements resulting from the replacement of the existing car park, which is of low quality in townscape terms, with high-quality new buildings and a greatly enhanced public realm.

The Proposed Development represents the addition of high-quality new buildings in a fringe area of townscape on the boundary between a number of highly varied townscape character areas. The Proposed Development successfully mediates between these contrasting townscape character areas through its high-quality design and materiality, its mixture of uses and in varying its height and massing to respond to the pattern of building heights and typologies around the Site. Overall, the Proposed Development represents a beneficial change in terms of its townscape and visual impact.

The Proposed Development satisfies national, regional and local policy relating to heritage and townscape, namely: Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework; Policies 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan; Policies D3, D9, HC1 and HC3 of the Intend to Publish London Plan; and Policies HE1, BE1, DMHB1, DMBH4 and DMHB10 of the Hillingdon Local Plan.

Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document has been commissioned by Guild Living as part of their application for planning permission for a ‘later living’ retirement complex on a site close to Uxbridge town centre (currently occupied by a Halfords and a Wickes). Based on best-practice guidance relating to townscape and visual impact assessment, this document offers a baseline study of the relative value and sensitivity to change of the heritage assets (Section 4.0 on page) and the wider townscape (Section 5.0 on page) within a 1km radius of the Site to inform the design of the Proposed Development. These heritage and townscape considerations have informed the selection of a series of viewpoints, agreed within the local planning authority, from where the degree and nature of visibility of the Proposed Development will be assessed as the design evolves. These viewpoints are presented in Section 6.4 on page . When the Proposed Development is finalised, verified views of the proposed buildings will be incorporated into the document, to allow Alan Baxter to assess the impact of the scheme on the heritage assets and wider townscape in the vicinity on the Site.

1.2 Site

The Site is Nos. 2-12 Harefield Road, Uxbridge (currently a Halfords and a Wickes). The buildings are 1990s retail warehouse structures set within in a large car park. The ground level of the site is considerably higher than Harefield Road, with access via a ramped road and held back with a brick retaining wall.

The Site boundary includes the entire site, car park, access road to the west and service road to the south.

The Site is located next to Uxbridge Police station to the south, and close to the shops and businesses of Uxbridge High Street immediately beyond it.

1.3 The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will deliver an array of retirement accommodation options, with different levels of care which can be tailored to the individual, complemented by a suite of public facilities including a nursery, a café and bar, a restaurant, a wellness centre, and an accessible public plaza area.

1.4 Planning context

The existing buildings on the site were constructed in the mid-1990s. An application to demolish these buildings and construct a group of residential towers, submitted in May 2018, was rejected in March 2019 (application reference 16299/APP/2018/1849). The site has since changed ownership.

1.5 Methodology, sources and limitations

The information in this report is based on desk-based research and a site visit conducted in June 2020 (while observing government guidelines regarding social distancing). Views analysis has been undertaken from publicly accessible areas only. Views from within private properties may be different. Views analysis is, by its nature, selective, chosen to provide a representative sample of key and sensitive views. It is recognised that different locations give a different experience of the proposed development and that not all views can be captured and assessed as part of the TVIA process. Where relevant, multiple viewpoints from the same road or area have been assessed to account for kinetic views of particular townscape features.

It is the nature of existing buildings that details of their construction and development may be hidden or may not be apparent from a visual inspection. The conclusions and any advice contained in our reports — particularly relating to the dating and nature of the fabric — are based on our research, and on observations and interpretations of what was visible at the time of our site visits. Further research, investigations or opening up works may reveal new information which may require such conclusions and advice to be revised.

1.5.1 Historic Environment Record

The London Historic Environment Record has been consulted and reviewed. The search map and relevant results are reproduced in 6Section 8.4 on page .

1.5.2 Limitations of data

The data used to form the basis of our analysis is the most recent survey data available for the area. Please note however, that this data is ten years old for much of Uxbridge, and up to seventeen years old for the southern portion of the study area, and will not include development that has been built after the survey date. Exclusions from the survey data may therefore include taller buildings within the assessment area. This is not considered to be disadvantageous to the assessment as the exclusion of more recent development provides a worse-case scenario with regard to the visibility of the proposed scheme. To mitigate potential omissions from the baseline survey data, consented schemes within the study area that may contribute to the cumulative effects of development upon the views in this report have been reproduced in the verified views.

The verified views in this assessment process use current summer photography and provide an industry-standard assessment of the selected viewpoints.

Visual Impact Assessment contd.

1.6 Designations

1.6.1 Heritage

There are no heritage designations applying to the Site. However, the Site is within the vicinity of many designated and non-designated heritage assets. These include, but are not limited to:

- Old Uxbridge/Windsor Street Conservation Area, including several Grade II listed buildings along Uxbridge High Street and in close proximity to the Site.
- Three Grade II listed buildings and one locally listed building to the west of the Site, on Uxbridge High Street but beyond the boundary of the Old Uxbridge/ Windsor Street Conservation Area.
- Locally listed Court House (Uxbridge Magistrates' Court) on Harefield Road, to the west of the Site.
- North Uxbridge Area of Special Local Character to the east of the Site.

There are other designated and non-designated heritage assets in the wider area, including the Rockingham Bridge, Uxbridge Lock and Uxbridge Moor Conservation Areas to the southwest and north-west of the Site. These conservation areas contain listed buildings, locally-listed buildings, and undesignated heritage assets that positively contribute to the character and appearance of those conservation areas.

1.6.2 Landscape

There are no landscape designations applying to the Site. The open land to the west of the Site beyond Fray's River/ the urban development of Uxbridge forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt and Colne Valley Regional Park.



17.

DEVELOPMENT DATA





17.1 Proposed Areas & Unit Mix

Guild @ Uxbridge - Building Area Schedule		
Level	GIA (m2)	GEA (m2)
GROUND	4505	4760
MEZZ	526	561
LEVEL 1	3352	3568
LEVEL 2	3120	3326
LEVEL 3	2915	3109
LEVEL 4	1773	1907
LEVEL 5	1598	1717
LEVEL 6	1415	1528
LEVEL 7	636	692
TOTAL	**19839**	**21168**

Guild @ Uxbridge - Accommodation and Ancillary Area Schedule					
	GLR	**GCS**	**GCR**	**Plant / BOH**	**Amenity**
	NSA (m2)	NSA (m2)	NSA (m2)	GIA (m2)	GIA (m2)
GROUND	1084			630	1019
MEZZ	296			94	-
LEVEL 1	1120	659	390	99	-
LEVEL 2	2423			-	-
LEVEL 3	2258			-	-
LEVEL 4	1369			-	-
LEVEL 5	1217			-	-
LEVEL 6	1065			-	-
LEVEL 7	459			-	-
TOTAL	**11292**	**659**	**390**	**823**	**1019**
GRAND TOTAL	**12,341**			**823**	**1019**

GUILD LIVING AT UXBRIDGE - UNIT AREAS + MIX

TOTAL

LEVEL	**STUDIO (44-49 m2)**	**1 BED (S) (50-52 m2)**	**1 BED (M) (53-56 m2)**	**1 BED (L) (57-63 m2)**	**2 BED (C) (69-71 m2)**	**2 BED (S) (72-76 m2)**	**2 BED (M) (77-84 m2)**	**2 BED (XL) (91-100m2)**	**3 BED(M) (95-105 m2)**	**GCS**	**GCR**
GROUND	2	1	4	1	5	1	3	0	0	0	0
MEZZ	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
LEVEL 1	2	0	2	0	4	4	2	2	0	26	7
LEVEL 2	2	1	5	1	14	6	3	3	0	0	0
LEVEL 3	2	0	5	0	14	5	2	4	0	0	0
LEVEL 4	0	0	2	0	9	4	3	0	1	0	0
LEVEL 5	0	0	2	0	9	3	2	0	1	0	0
LEVEL 6	1	0	1	0	7	3	2	0	1	0	0
LEVEL 7	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
	9	2	22	2	67	27	18	9	5	26	7
MIX	6%	1%	14%	1%	42%	17%	11%	6%	3%		
UNITS									161	26	7
TOTAL											194



18.

CONCLUSION





18.1 Conclusion

The application site presents a unique opportunity to:

- Regenerate the existing Halfords and Wickes site with new public spaces that will benefit the community and create a connection to the centre through pedestrian and cycle friendly landscape;
- Produce both a distinct architectural response which encourages site permeability whilst enhancing street permeability along Harefield Road, the public realm, and improves the appearance of the existing site;
- New active frontage will create interest and safety at ground level. This considered development intervention will also benefit employment/staff, the community's residents, facilities and adjacent businesses by becoming an integral part of the site;
- Introduce the Guild Later Living model to Uxbridge. This model promotes social interaction and connections to the Town Centre for an enjoyable experience. These concepts are essential for Later Living principles of encouraging integration, and maintaining health and well-being for senior people.



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