HILLINGDON
LONDON

URBAN DESIGN LANDSCAPE COMMENTS

Site Address: **BROADWATER LAKE, MOORHALL ROAD, HAREFIELD**

Planning ref: 2382/APP/2023/2906

Case Officer Michael Briginshaw

Design Officer: Antonia Whatmore

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Proposal: Redevelopment of the site to create the Hillingdon Watersports Facility and Activity Centre including demolition of existing Broadwater Lake Sailing Club (BSC) clubhouse at the north of the lake and erection of a building including changing facilities, meeting rooms, storage, Workshop and seasonal worker accommodation (sui generis), activity shelters; installation of pontoons and slipways; boat shed; equipment storage huts; boat parking and racking areas; camping area; outdoor activity areas; ecological enhancement throughout the site; new pedestrian routes through the peninsula; landscaping including new woodland, dense vegetation screens and boundary treatment; access road; localised dredging and land reclamation; relocation of existing sailing area and creation of floating reedbeds within the lake; coach drop off and turning area; vehicle parking; cycle parking; and associated works. (Re-consultation following submission of amended plans and documents)

1. Comments

1.1 Context

The Broadwater Lake site is sensitive landscape within the Green Belt. It is designated as the Mid-Colne Valley SSSI and identified as a site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation.

Accordingly, consideration needs to be given to the impact on openness both spatially and visually on the Green Belt. As well as any adverse impacts on the landscape character, ecology and biodiversity.

It is understood the development of this site is a replacement facility of the existing Broadwater Sailing Club on the north side of the lake and the former Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre (HOAC) located on Dews Lane.

1.2 Comments

Green Belt

The site's use for outdoor sports and recreation is identified as a relevant exception to development in the Green Belt. Although it needs to be demonstrated that the openness both visually and spatially of the Green Belt is not compromised.

Visual Impacts

The LVIA demonstrates that the visual impacts from key receptors that have the best view of the site would lead to no impacts on views due to the retention of existing trees. There would only be minor impacts during construction due to views of cranes over the tree canopy.

Spatial Impacts

The accommodation schedule indicates that the proposed development, which is to be the re-provision of the existing use, will increase the footprint of the Operation Zone, Safety Zone, Camp Zone, and Anglers' Shelter from a total of 3,474 m^2 to 3,844 m^2. This increase is justified by the need to address shortfalls in accessibility/changing facilities, and the number of toilets, as well as to comply with current Building Regulations, best practice guidance, space standards, and the requirements of the Equality Act.

While it is acknowledged and welcomed that the scale of the built form has been reduced through the pre-app process. It is felt there remains elements of the scheme that could be reduced in building mass to reduce spatial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. These include:

- The roof form that expands over the whole Operation Zone building that increases the building height by 3.3m. A flat roof would reduce the overall building mass and spatial impact on the Green Belt. It was requested during the pre-app process that a green roof be considered as this would be an ecological benefit and appropriate to the site's context;

- There remains a concern that the Camping Zone building is excessively large, with a covered roof area that would be better served by a seasonal covering, such as awnings. This approach would reduce the building's footprint and massing, and would also help prevent birds from nesting in the roof rafters, which could render the building unusable. Additionally, to better integrate the structure with its surroundings and further minimise its mass, a flat green roof would be a more suitable option.

- Similarly, the anglers' huts would benefit from flat green roofs, reducing their visual impact while providing ecological benefits to the site.

To minimise harm to the openness of the Green Belt, the design for the new HOAC and BSC facility should explore all possible options to reduce both the building footprint and overall massing.

It should also be clarified that the decommissioned HOAC site has been returned to landscape as replacement for the spatial impact on the Green Belt on this site.

Development in a SSSI and site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation

The scheme has sought to respect the Site's SSSI designation delivering ecological enhancements which will be assessed by an ecologist and Natural England.

From a landscape-character perspective, the quantum of development required to replace the HOAC and BSC, and its placement on areas of existing hardstanding with minimal tree loss, achieves the objective of retaining the landscape character while hosting the outdoor activities facilities. However, it will need to be demonstrated that the former sites have their buildings removed and are restored and planted as enhanced SSSI replacement areas.

Site Layout

The site layout positions the two main buildings, the Operations Zone and the Safety Zone, at the northern end of the peninsula near the water's edge. A central space between these buildings creates an enclosed area for users to socialise and enjoy views of the sailing activity. This space is largely pedestrian, with car parking and the drop-off point located at the southern end of the site near the entrance. This arrangement provides a substantial pedestrian-friendly area with very limited vehicular access. The camping and woodland activities are located in a separate area at the southern part of the peninsula. This layout approach is supported. Particularly as all development is confined to areas of previous hard surfacing, thereby protecting the existing woodland and requiring minimal tree removal.

The retention of certain elements that reference the historic use of the site, such as the weighbridge and one of the concrete buildings, is also supported.

However, as previously commented, the coach arrival area could be improved to create a better arrival space, trees in the native shrub beds and at the end of the bike store would help define this area. The Angler's store and W/C should be shown closer to the car park to reduce the amount of hard surfacing pathway, and distance for the utilities to reach the building. This would also enhance wayfinding to this building.

Building Appearance

Operations Building

The applicant has addressed previous comments by relocating the large deck area to the centre of the building and positioning the reception at the arrival point of the complex. This approach is welcomed, particularly as it reduces the overall building footprint.

The earlier iteration, with flint walls and a standing seam roof, provided a clear distinction between these two elements, which was a positive aspect of the design. In contrast, the introduction of standing seam material on some wall surfaces gives the building a more commercial appearance that feels out of keeping with its rural context. Additionally, this material on vertical surfaces carries a high risk of bubbling and may be prone to staining and surface discoloration from bird droppings. While it is acknowledged that the entrance should be expressed in a different material, this should ideally be a natural finish that better reflects the site's character such as hanging clay tiles.

Furthermore, the inclusion of curtain walling at the centre of the building to enclose the stairway introduces another material that appears incongruous with the rest of the design.

There also remain concerns that the central roof form is overly complex and presents a large, sheer expanse facing the most active part of the site. It is recommended that further consideration be given to this element.

Safety Building

The safety buildings should create the second of a pair of buildings that appear similar in materiality and design. The flint and standing seam roof follow this design intent. However concern is raised that the PVs are shown on the most visible west elevation.

Further the exposed structure appears awkward adjacent to the solidity of the flint. More explanation is required for this element, to explain the roof material and structure material.

Further details will be required at the next stage of design development to clarify the window framing and materials of the window frames. Traditionally, flint buildings incorporated substantial, robust framing around windows to accommodate the construction methods used for flint walling.

Anglers Hut/Camping Zone/BSC Store

See the previous comments in the Green Belt section of this report regarding the Anglers' Hut/Camping Zone massing. Clarification is also sought on whether the BSC store remains part of the proposal.

All smaller, subservient buildings associated with the main operations and safety zone buildings should use a consistent palette of materials. Their design and materiality should present a more rural character than the two main buildings. Black painted, wavy-edged weatherboarding is recommended.

Bike Shelter/Bin Store

The bike shelter would be better arranged as a single long row of stands. This would provide a neat edge to the car park and reduce the overall building footprint.

The proposed materials for both the bin store and bike store are required at the next stage of design development.

Landscape

The landscape proposals are broadly sensitive to the existing landscape character and have sought to retain as much as possible of the existing trees while accommodating the site's activities. This approach is welcomed particularly the management of the invasive Buddleia which is currently on site.

Concern is raised that detail section 9 should use gabions rather than the repurposed concrete to build up the level for tree planting edge. Concrete is unlikely to allow sufficient water to penetrate to allow the long term health of the trees. Detail section 1 is missing and needs to be provided. Details are also needed for the caving area and zip wire.

The masterplan shows vehicle access to the front of the Camping zone buildings with trolley park. It is considered that the hard surfacing should be reduce with vehicle access limited to the north side of the building.

Boundaries

Apart from the 1.8m high V-Mesh security fencing along the canal edge, the boundaries are considered appropriate to the site's context. While the need for security along the canal is understood a methodology needs to be provided to ensure the existing trees along this edge will not be affected.

Confirmation is also required that, along long runs of impenetrable fencing, appropriate measures will be included to allow animals to pass through.

Lighting

Lighting is limited to key areas of the site, with the aim of keeping it to a minimum due to the site's SSSI status. The ecologist will need to assess any potential impacts on local ecology. It should also be demonstrated that the lighting will only operate during restricted hours and solely when the site is in use.