

REPORT ADDENDUM TO ITEM NUMBER 5b - PART A

APPLICATION NO: 17/01730/OUT DATE: 18.10.17
VALID:
APPLICANT: Mrs Sarah Cornwell
Bellway Homes Limited, Bellway House, 1 Cunard Square,
Townfield Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1AQ
AGENT: Miss Philippa Robinson
Andrew Martin Planning, Town Mill, Mill Lane, Stebbing
Dunmow, CM6 3SN
DESCRIPTION: Outline planning application with all matters reserved for up
to 58 dwellings including affordable homes, public open
space including local equipped area for play, sustainable
drainage systems, landscaping and all associated
development.
LOCATION: Land South of Rickstones Road, In the Parish of Rivenhall,
Witham, Essex

For more information about this Application please contact:
Mr Tim Havers on:- 01376 551414 Ext. 2526
or by e-mail to: timha@braintree.gov.uk

Site Frontage with Rickstones Road - Hedge (Landscape and Ecological Value)

Following the completion of the Officer Committee Report but prior to its publication two further representations were submitted to the Council in relation to the proposed removal of the hedge which sits along the site's frontage with Rickstones Road.

The representations were made by Councillor Abbott who submits that the Ecological and Landscape Value of the hedge has been underestimated and that a review of this hedge should be undertaken as there are at least 9 species present within it, including Oak, Ivy, Wild Clematis and Wild Rose and that the hedge is a double line of planting for a significant portion of its length with the width and structure offering very good bird nesting potential in addition to its landscape value.

The second representation was made by Rivenhall Parish Council who submit that the hedge is not of limited quality and is not full of dead Elm. Again, they state that there are at least 9 species of trees/shrubs including Oak and that a significant portion of the hedge is a double hedge of at least 3 metres in depth, containing a great variety of wildlife.

In response to Councillor's Abbott's request and the Parish Council's representation the Council's Landscape and Ecology Officer visited the site again specifically to review the hedge. His additional comments are set out below:

The hedgerow along Rickstones Road has recently started to respond to the warm temperatures and it is clear to see as you pass along its length (where it is also noticeably very close to the road) that it is composed of large blocks of single species planting mostly blackthorn (now flushing with white blossom on black stems) up to about 60% of the total length - and the remainder consisting mostly of hawthorn with some elm and a number of young oak trees largely at the Witham end; whilst there may be a few other species present at points along its length; the planting mixture is not of a composition/density that would suggest any historical/biodiversity merit. The condition of the hedge is an important point of context here in that it is now over 3 metres high with very thin elongated stems suggesting a fairly recent planting, it appears to have been largely unmanaged for a number of years and has little structure at low level – to restore it to any form of management and get stronger multi-stemmed growth at ground level would require coppicing (i.e. cutting to ground level) which would be the visual equivalent of removal.

In light of the comments made above the proposed development offers the opportunity to require a new replacement hedge set further back from the road of greater species diversity and with a strong evergreen component providing strong wildlife and landscape/screening value (in the winter months).

So removal of this particular hedge in this location given the tabled landscape proposals for the new development is not a matter that Landscape Services considers a reason for refusal/objection to the application. In short we are getting the prospect of something better in 3-5 years as the new hedgerow establishes itself.

The Committee Report acknowledges that the removal of this hedgerow weighs against the application in the planning balance and will have a detrimental visual impact. The Report also identifies that this section of hedgerow is not a priority habitat and other areas of boundary hedging which are priority habitats will be retained. Overall, and following the Landscape and Ecology Officer's return visit to the site Officers remain of the view that although the proposed removal of the identified hedgerow weighs against the application in the planning balance it does not outweigh the demonstrable public benefits of the proposal and does not constitute a reason for recommending that planning permission is refused.

ECC Education

The Parish Council's additional representation identified that Essex County Council's statutory consultee response incorrectly identified the application site as being within Witham North Ward. In response the County Council have issued an updated consultation response advising the following:

Early Years and Childcare

The proposed development is located within Rivenhall, which lies within Silver End and Cressing Ward. The latest data taken from Summer 2017 term showed

that there are currently 12 providers offering Early Years and Childcare places within the ward, with a total of 10 places available during the summer term, which would meet the demand generated from this development.

However, when analysing the data, it is evident that 8 of the vacancies lie within 1 provider who is based on the neighbouring Braintree Central & Beckers Green border close to Freeport, which would lead to very limited childcare places being available within the rural villages within the ward. With limited transport options available for non-drivers, further development would have a significant impact within Rivenhall and neighbouring villages.

Further outline planning applications have also been received within this ward and it is clear that current capacity could not meet the needs generated by the developments if they were all to go ahead. Therefore, it is appropriate to request a financial contribution to address the increased demand for Early Years Places that this development would create.

An additional 4.3 places would be provided at an estimated total cost of £62,722 at April 2017 prices. This equates to £14,519 per place and so, based on demand generated by this proposal set out above, a developer contribution of £62,722 index linked to April 2017, is sought to mitigate its impact on local EY&C provision.

The s106 Heads of Terms set out in the Committee Report therefore remain unchanged however Officers note that the County Council's consultation response now makes correct reference to Silver End and Cressing Ward rather than Witham North.