

**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE**

16th February 2023

Application No:	SMD/2021/0536	
Location	Land at Barnfields Industrial Estate Sunnyhills Road Leek Staffordshire ST13 5RJ	
Proposal	Reserved matters application for approval of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale to provide: 152 residential dwellings (Class C3) providing a mix of two, three and four bedroom houses, and two bedroom apartments; 6 x live / work units (Sui Generis); 1 x public house / restaurant / café (Sui Generis / Class E(b)); a marina / basin and associated boating facilities with 13 berths; associated works including internal road network, associated highway works, drainage infrastructure, landscaping, open space, play area, pedestrian, and cyclist links; land reserved for future railway station with associated heritage / railway a activities building/s and car parking; and land reserved for future link road including associated landscaping. The application is submitted pursuant to outline planning permission SMD/2014/0750.	
Applicant	The Casey Group Ltd	
Agent	None	
Parish/ward	Leek	Date registered 13/08/2021
If you have a question about this report please contact: Jane Curley tel: 01538 395400 ex 4124 Jane.curley@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk		

REFERRAL

This is a major application and the outline was considered by the Planning Committee

1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO APPROVE with conditions

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

2.1 This is a brownfield site on the edge of the Barnfields Industrial estate. It was a former concrete batching plant. Much of the site is cleared and has started to regenerate with a mosaic of habitats. There are a number of buildings remaining in the central and eastern parts of the site and part of the site is still in use.

2.2 The site borders Sunnyhills Road to the north, Ladderidge Country park to the south, an access road (including to the country park and car park) and industrial buildings to the west and the former railway line to the east. In the south east corner the site borders a public footpath beyond which is a commercial scrap yard.

2.3 The principle of developing the site for a residential led, mixed use scheme was established by the grant of outline planning permission in 2015.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 This is the final reserved matters submission for the mixed use development on the Cornhill site for which outline permission was granted in 2015 under ref SMD/2014/0750. It comprises the detail for the reserved matters of Layout, scale, appearance and landscaping for 152 houses, 6 live-work units, a Marina and a pub/restaurant/café building (Sui generis/Class Eb). The application also shows land reserved for a future railway station with associated heritage / railway activities building/s and car parking and land reserved for a future link road including associated landscaping.

3.2 152 dwellings are now proposed with the mix of units as follows:-

22 x 2 bed
72 x 3 bed
48 x 4 bed
6 x Live work units (3 bed)
4 X 2 bed apartments

3.3 Six Character areas are shown on the plans. A description of each is provided below.

Urban core

3.4 The majority of the site falls within this character area. It extends across the whole site from the western to eastern boundary and includes the Sunnyhills Road frontage but excludes the southern portion of the site. This character area has a contemporary appearance. The houses have relatively simple brick elevations with dark grey (anthracite) window frames and light grey doors. Some contrasting dark blue brick detail to window heads, sills and string courses is included. None of the units in this character area have chimneys. This character area includes dwellings of two and two and a half/ three storey. The latter are restricted to the Sunnyhill Road frontage and include House type E (9.88m) and Focal house types C,D and F (9.27m) on Plots 72, 73, 94, 95 and 119.

Countryside edge

3.5 This character area extends from the eastern boundary to the Marina. It comprises predominantly a single row of dwellings, all two storey in height along the southern boundary of the south where it interfaces with Laddridge Country park. Dwellings in this character area are the same/similar house types to those in the Urban Core but with some added detailing to windows, eaves and verges. 6 plots have chimneys. The drawings show brick detailing to eaves and verges, arched brickwork to windows, string courses with some of the detailing continued to the rear elevations which is important as these will be read in views from the south. The actual detail on the drawings is unclear and will need to be secured by condition to ensure the right quality is achieved. With the exception of plots 8-11 which front towards the country park, all other units are rear or side facing.

Marina

3.6 The Marina character area comprises 16 town houses which front onto the Marina also extending eastwards to the railway hub with a further 6 town houses. All are three storey in height with relative narrow gabled fronts reflecting canal side/wharf architecture. The main

estate road runs through this area but a change of surfacing is shown from black to red tarmac with block paved footways.

Railside

3.7 This character area comprises two terraces, one of five and one of four units. They are designed to be contemporary but with a traditional twist. They are shown constructed in brick with chimneys and brick detailing around windows and contrasting band courses

Focal Building

3.8 The application identifies a single building in this character area; the restaurant/public house with apartments above. It is sited between the Marina character area and the railway hub. In revised plans this building is considerably improved. It reflects a traditional mill building; three storey in height with parapet roof, brick panel detailing and large glazed opening at ground floor. The space around the building is largely dedicated to car parking

Station approach

3.9 The applicant introduced this further character area in the latest revised plans. It comprises the dwellings either side of Barnfields Road leading to the station hub and includes the 6 Live work units (House type J) . It is sandwiched between two areas of Urban Core. With the exception of one House type D and the Live -work units, all units are House type E, the three storey brick unit used in the Urban Core but in this character area has adopted stone heads and cills

3.10 The 6 Live work units (3 pairs of semis) are also three storey brick buildings. In response to concerns from Officers in previous versions of this unit the garage doors at street level have been replaced with what the Agent confirms to be bi fold glazed patio doors/windows although the detail is not clear on the plans.

Comments from the applicant

The applicant asks that these point be taken into consideration

1. We therefore feel that we are at a point where all comments and concerns have been addressed, where possible, and without detriment to the delivery of the site, and the Council now need to determine the scheme as soon as possible
2. In the absence of a specific Design Code, our architects have designed the scheme in accordance with best practice, with reference to Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document.
3. The Council needs to recognise that this is a brownfield site in an established employment setting. Approximately 70% of the application site borders the disused railway line and general industrial uses, including low-amenity activities that would be in clear conflict with housing. Significant buffers along sensitive boundaries are therefore essential and we believe an urban form of an appropriate density within the heart of the site, with a mix of contemporary design, is the appropriate design response.
4. The overall density (32.5 homes per net hectare based on 152 homes and 4.67 net hectares) is broadly in line with national guidance and the Council's Local Plan Viability Assumptions (35 per net hectare for a site of this type). Furthermore, the substantial landscape buffers and other open spaces provide for over 1.5 acres of green infrastructure and the proposed marina has scope to contribute a further 0.5 acres of blue infrastructure if this can be delivered. If the marina is not built (in the

medium or longer term), this will be a significant green space for the local community, and it will transition the built development with the adjacent Country Park. We therefore believe the scheme provides substantial landscape benefits and is not overly dense.

5. NPPF paragraph 124 (achieving appropriate densities) also requires planning policies and decisions that "...makes efficient use of land..." and consider the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development and local market conditions / viability. The Council also recognises that there is currently a high proportion of older terraced housing in Leek (terraces represent 39.5% of the local stock compared to around 30.5% in the UK), which is partly reflective of the failure to deliver new homes in Leek in recent years. Furthermore, the Council's adopted SHMA (2017 update) highlights the need to rebalance "...the stock away from small, terraced properties towards better quality, aspirational property types designed to reduce the high levels of net out-migration" (p105). Our scheme and layout are clearly in line with these national and local objectives. A development based on apartments and townhouses would not meet a need and affect viability and our scheme is one of the few opportunities to deliver larger 3 and 4 bed semi / detached properties in Leek, hence the form and mix that underpins our planning application.
6. Our proposals now directly respond to the Canalside, railway and Staffordshire influences that have been suggested by the Council's Design advisor since the application was submitted. The layout has also been adapted to accommodate their previous comments on the position of the main vehicular access off Sunnyhills Road and the location of the play area and restaurant / café etc. We have also addressed the aspirations for the Sunnyhills Road frontage and the Country Park edge.
7. The proposed street scenes have also been carefully considered in relation to the exiting context and forthcoming development:
 - The main east-west spine road has strong definition and changes in character, including a transition into the marina area and the heritage railway hub. We have maximised the opportunities for trees and other planting, but this needs to be balanced against the advice provided in Manual for Streets, which encourages widths between 12-18m for Residential Streets, partly to add character and partly to influence the speed at which people choose to drive. As such, the proximity of buildings along the length of road between plots 12-24 and 26-46 is an appropriate design response.
 - Furthermore, this principal street is close to and within view of heavily landscaped areas to the south and north. The proposed residential streets to the north terminate with a high-quality green buffer to the industrial area, including pedestrian access points to Sunnyhills Road, and we have worked hard to soften these links with green verges, shrubs, hedges, and increased tree planting as suggested. To the south, the positioning of mostly detached properties along this 'countryside' edge enhances views and avoids the sense of a heavily built-up frontage to the Country Park. The layout has been purposely designed to include an enhanced viewpoint between plots 15 and 18, creating a green viewpoint from Sunnyhills Road. The updated layout also incorporates two footpaths (next the play area and proposed marina) to increase permeability, and bespoke house designs and finishes. We have also proposed substantial additional planting and improvements to the southern boundary.
 - The eastern development parcel has been reconfigured to improve connectivity between the proposed cul-de-sacs.
 - We have incorporated bespoke designs for the homes that overlook the marina and heritage railway to create added distinctiveness which contribute to placemaking (see also the additional comments on house types below).

8. The final proposal should therefore be regarded as a high-quality scheme that reflects the local context and setting balanced against the significant constraints of the site and the need to ensure a market facing, viable scheme. We are therefore firmly of the opinion that this that will deliver homes that meet the needs of the Borough.
9. The scheme has undergone a full review of the structural landscaping and now provides increased tree coverage along streets, careful selection of appropriate species and placing, as well as hedgerows to improve streetscape and enhance biodiversity. We have also reviewed and replaced areas of hard landscaping in response to feedback received.
10. To respond to the consultation response from Staffordshire County Highways, the layout has also been reviewed and a swept path analysis undertaken using the 11.9 metre refuse vehicle specified. The Manual for Streets documents advocate that layouts shouldn't be overdesigned for service vehicles, but for robustness, this swept path analysis has been undertaken assuming three-point turns, when vehicles will most likely undertake multipoint manoeuvres.
11. We have also reviewed and amended many of the house types to accommodate design feedback. In particular, we have responded to your comments on Type E (the 2.5 storey townhouse / semi) which accommodates a reduced ridge height and smaller dormer and made significant changes to the Type J (live-work properties) to provide a more distinctive style and articulation. The 'Countryside' Type C has also been reduced in height, as requested. The eastern part of the site has also been reconsidered with house types positioned to the western side of Barnfield Road being substituted for 2.5 storey dwellings, creating a more balanced street scene, (both sides of the street now complement each other and work together) improving the transition between character areas and providing an appropriate approach to the heritage station area.
12. In closing, we and the landowner are now at a point where the scheme must be determined on the merits of what we have put forward in the context of policy and need. We would also highlight the fact that the agreed viability case was based on a scheme of 163 homes compared to a layout that now yields 152 homes to accommodate the views of the Council's Design advisor. We do not propose to re-open this point, but the amended scheme is appropriate in form and density, and it provides the only means by which the significant supplementary planning S106 payment towards the Council's aspiration for a marina and other planning gain can be delivered, including education contributions and the reservation of land for a marina, the heritage railway, and a new highway connection to the east.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

SMD/2014/0750 Demolition of former industrial buildings and redevelopment of site comprising: residential (use class c3 up to 175 dwellings) with associated open space, play area and cycle links; live/work units (up to 2000sqm), employment units (use class b1c/b2 up to 1847 gross sqm including mezzanine); tourism and leisure uses including a marina / basin and associated boating facilities (up to 20 berths); reserve land for future railway station with associated heritage/railway activities building including tourist/local needs retail unit (use class d2/a1 up to 394 gross sqm); public house/ restaurant (use class a3 / a4 up to 340 sqm) including associated car parking and servicing; reserve land for future link road including associated landscaping. Approved

SMD/2019/0502 Reserved matters application for approval of layout for B1(c) light industrial/B2 general development pursuant to outline planning application SMD/2014/0750. Approved 15/11/19

SMD/2021/0538 Reserved matters application for approval of appearance, landscaping, and scale to provide: Class E(g)(iii) Industrial processes/ B2 general industrial development pursuant to outline planning permission SMD/2014/0750. Pending consideration

SMD/2021/0537 Variation of conditions 4 & 13 and Removal of Conditions 10 & 19 of Planning Permission SMD/2014/0750. Pending consideration

SMD/2022/0475 Excavation, remediation and landscaping of land directly to the south of the redevelopment of the Cornhill Regeneration Project. Pending consideration

PLANNING POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

- SS1 Development Principles
- SD1 Sustainable Use of Resources
- SD3 Carbon-saving Measures in Development
- SD4 Pollution and Flood Risk
- SS 5 Leek Strategy
- SS12 Planning obligations
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 Heritage
- E1 Employment
- E3 Existing employment areas
- C1 Creating Sustainable Communities
- C2 Sport, recreation and open space
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- NE 2 Trees, Hedges and woodland
- H1 New housing development
- H3 Affordable housing
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
- T2 Other Sustainable Transport Measures

National Planning Policy NPPF

National Planning Policy Guidance

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

Press Notice expired

Site Notice expired

Local residents have been notified by letter. The following representation have been received

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST (5 Comments)

- missed opportunity to encompass the marina/canal terminus basin as a "focus of place, design/character, public realm and activity" and not as seemingly currently planned to be a shunned asset segregated from the development by a 2.1 metre fence.
- I walk the area most days with my dogs and see clearly the potential linkage that could be created for all to enjoy and appreciate between the development and the natural features of the area with its canal, river and country park. I just hope that this vision is also recognised and appreciated by the SMDC planning committee and that a revised development plan is commissioned that fully embraces the opportunities and potential presented by this unique area of our town.
- Is there is any cycle access to the canal from the Barnfields road , as this is a lovely pedal cyclists route for the elderly .
- I am contacting you after seeing a complete disregard to recognise footpaths that have been used for decades by Leek people.The replacement footpath is very narrow,already overgrown, and this week the steps at the bottom of Birchall have been BULLDOZED with access across the track to the canal and other routes barred. This once beautiful walk cannot now be accessed without now having to detour through a very busy industrial estate which no doubt will become busier once the car park is installed.
- The business would request that a formal review is made of suitability of access to the proposed site. Since the original application (2015), vehicle traffic to our business has increased by approximately 30% due to expansion within existing footprint, all of which passes the proposed Sunnyhills Road entrance to the development. We fear that this, coupled with the already significant on-road parking by users of the industrial estate, creates a level of danger to road and pedestrian users that is unacceptable. During shift changeovers (3 times per day) our business will see up to 350 colleagues either enter or leave our premises and will then have to interact with an additional traffic stream entering Sunnyhills Road directly opposite our site and most likely from between parked cars.
- We would also request that careful thought is made in planning of the construction phases of the proposed development to ensure that (i) the location of the entrance to the development during construction is sited in such a way that it does not impact on the users of the industrial estate, (ii) the construction of the entrance to the site does not impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of our staff or the ability to efficiently run our business and (iii) no construction vehicles are held on the roadways of the industrial estate during the construction phases of the proposed development as this will further exacerbate the traffic levels observed.

OBJECTION (1 comment)

- The condition that the developer of the Barnfields site for housing also delivers a mooring basin should be retained unless an alternate guaranteed plan for the same is on the table.
- It would be good if SMDC planning dept could come up with and shared an outline plan of how the train station on one side and canal basin on the other is to be sited.
- An area along the town side and end of the basin [assuming it to run parallel with the Churnet] should be reserved for waterside buildings as per note 3 below. The river side of the basin should be landscaped to provide an open public space. The basin most definitely should not be fenced off on this side.
- Terminating the Leek branch of the Caldon Canal in a basin sited within Barnfields would provide a number of wins that need to be promoted these I suggest could include:

A) A fitting end to the scenically special Leek branch of the Caldon Canal where boats can safely moor, and boaters can easily access shops and services this would be enhanced by the provision of water and sanitation facilities.

B) An opportunity for Leekbrook [ultimately Leek] to Consall Forge rail-canal / canal-rail excursions with a meal / drink at the Black Lion in the middle

C) An opportunity for waterside buildings catering to artisanal / small business / associations / tourism / restaurant / accommodation etc these to serve canal / rail users, cyclists, walkers, townspeople and visitors alike.

D) Opportunity for linkage to river and canal walks and the Ladderedge Country Park and a value-added feature for the residential area, local people and visitors.

E) With the coming of the rail station to Barnfields this area is logically going to attract both residents and tourists - adding a canal basin and surrounding canal side buildings would bring significant added amenity value as a fit for purpose development creating, for generations to come, a unique and broad based jewel to enhance the crown of attractions that makes Leek such a special and privileged place in which to live and for tourists to visit.

SUPPORT (1 comment)

- Looks good

Town Council

First response September 2021

Approve. Recommendation to include electric vehicle charging points, to dredge the turnaround and turnaround point for barges and restore the boat turnaround area at the end of the Leek arm.

Second response October 2022

Advise that the Committee discussed the concerns expressed by Ornu foods and want to stress that the Planning Committee take these concerns into consideration. Leek Town Council also resolved to expect to see environmental changes to building methods which could improve the impact of new developments on Climate Change to be considered with all new applications.

Regeneration Officer

Support the application

The application is to complete reserve matters in line with outline planning approval for the currently vacant former concrete works at Sunnyhills Road Leek. The application should be seen in combination with an application to delete and vary four conditions that were attached to the outline planning permission for the Cornhill Regeneration Project (ref. SMD/2014/0750), which the Regeneration team is also supporting.

The project will deliver significant levels of housing in a site identified for housing within the Churnet Valley masterplan and adopted as part of the Local Plan. It will also secure planning for a range of other facilities including 1 x public house/café/restaurant; marina; and secure land for railway activities including car parking.

Residential development will impact on the local economy in terms of jobs and purchasing of supplies and services. In order to assess the economic impact of this development, we have relied upon the data supplied by the applicant and used the Council's approved multipliers to prepare these comments.

The proposal for 157 + 6 live/work units will provide the following outputs:

- The new householders occupying each new house will spend some of their income locally through shopping and use of local services. National research has identified that 34%

of all household expenditure is spent at district level or below. For this development of 163 units this is calculated at £1,530,244 additional re-spend in the local economy per year.

- Each new house will generate 4 direct jobs within the construction industry or associated supply chain, of which 25% are likely to be locally based. This development will therefore support 174 temporary positions during its lifetime. Indirect jobs are also generated by local spend in shops and services. This is calculated at an additional local job for every seven new homes based on national research (23 jobs). In total, the housing development will therefore support 197 jobs.
- Once completed, the development will also generate approximately £29,944 additional council tax for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council per annum.

The planning application also includes 340m² of A3/A4 use for café/restaurant/Public house. In addition to the temporary jobs generated through the construction, this will generate between 17 and 22 full time equivalent jobs. This calculation is based on the Government's accepted job density guide (HCA Employment Density Guide 3rd edition).

To conclude, this project will deliver 163 new homes, generating over £1.5 million of re-spend in the community per annum, as well as nearly £30,000 of additional resource to the Council. It will support 197 temporary jobs and lead to 17-22 FTE permanent jobs, excluding the small industrial units which are subject to a separate reserve matters application. The development will also support delivery of the Local Plan and Churnet Valley masterplan and remediate a contaminated brownfield site bringing it back into productive use. On this basis, the Regeneration team is fully supportive of this application.

Environmental Health Officer

Relevant conditions already imposed on the outline permission

Trees and Woodland Officer

First response November 2021

In terms of new landscaping, other than suitable management and enhancement of the existing tree belt to be retained along Sunnyhills Road, I would not see a need for major new structural landscaping to site boundaries for screening/setting purposes.

The emphasis should be on provision of new landscaping to enhance streetscenes within the development, suitable to the character of the site and with the aim of also softening the dominance of buildings, roads and vehicles. However, this necessitates that appropriate spatial provision needs to be made within the layout to accommodate planting eg as street trees and/or plot frontage trees, and also that landscaping should be considered from the outset as a key part of the layout/character design rather than an add-on at the end of the process, squeezed in where possible. To that end, and notwithstanding the comments above, the indicative tree planting shown on the application layout plan is largely unrealistic, with many positions between dwelling front elevations and highway being significantly too small and restricted to accommodate trees (even smaller ornamental varieties or those of upright columnar form). This is further apparent from the detailed landscaping plans, which show many tree positions on plot frontages to be only 3m (or even less) from dwelling elevations – this is much too close and will not allow sufficient space for trees to grow and achieve their potential before being heavily reduced or prematurely removed – exacerbated by concerns of overbearing impact, constrained outlook and fear of damage to buildings by branches and roots. Several stretches of streetscene within the development will be heavily dominated by large extents of frontage parking areas and associated vehicles, with little or no spatial opportunity to provide structural landscaping to break up and relieve their visual impact. In particular: Plots 29 – 38; 68 – 72 & 88 – 92; 77 – 82; 96 – 107; 124 – 127; 147 - 154

Second response November 2022

The cul-de-sac and parking bays fronting Plots 131 – 140 would comprise a hard urban environment heavily dominated by hard surfacing, walls, dwellings and parked vehicles, with little spatial opportunity (or proposed provision) for planting to soften and break up the streetscene. Other positions for tree planting to contribute to streetscene greening along this cul-de-sac should be taken – eg SE corner of rear garden Plot 122; SW corner rear garden Plot 123; SE corner front garden Plot 123; SW corner front garden Plot 130.

Removal of on-plot frontage parking to Plots 62 – 68 and 80 – 87 is a definite improvement to the setting of the canal mooring basin, as is the revision to house types giving something of an “urban waterfront” character as opposed to standard suburban estate as previously. Spatial opportunity for landscaping is very limited, with short on-plot frontages having low evergreen hedging enclosing herbaceous planting and a few specimen shrubs, but this in itself need not be considered an issue if the architectural treatment is good enough to create a distinctive and high quality character which relates well to the canal basin.

.Eastern boundary adjacent to railway: rear (eastern) boundaries to Plots 127 – 130 and 152 - 154 would include a line of new trees inside their timber close boarded fences; these trees are proposed at the far end of the garden from the houses and so would have sufficient space to establish and grow, and would provide some additional filtering/screening of railway activity in conjunction with any retained within the railway land beyond the garden fences. Residents could subsequently reinforce this with their own additional planting if/as they wish. Alongside Plot 131, the line of new trees continues with native shrub underplanting, within a landscape buffer strip a few metres wide which would be sufficient for this planting to establish.

The landscaping scheme for the development includes tree planting to a number of plot frontages to provide streetscene greening to the main route and side streets, along with enclosing ornamental evergreen low hedging and beds of mixed low shrubs. However, in many cases the frontages are so short that trees would be planted within 2 – 3 metres of the dwellings' front elevations; even for the fastigate (narrow upright form) species specified in some cases here, this would be inappropriately restricted, but quite a few of the trees specified in these locations are naturally tall, wide spreading, large trees at maturity (eg ALN GLU, Common Alder, and LIQ STY, Sweet Gum). This arrangement will not work, and any such trees planted are likely to be pulled out, cut down or heavily lopped within a few years of planting as they will very quickly outgrow the extremely small space available leading to shading, overbearing effect, direct crown encroachment onto buildings and fear of root damage to foundations. This layout generally does not provide sufficient space for meaningful streetscene tree planting.

There is a narrow strip of low evergreen shrub planting proposed along the top of the T-shaped turning head between Plots 126 and 127 which would soften/screen the lower part of the close boarded fence along this boundary (c. 1m wide planting bed shown on plan, in practice will be a bit narrower allowing for edge support/haunching for the carriageway. This could be improved by the addition of some climbers (with suitable climbing wires/trellis netting if required) or it may be possible to squeeze in a few smaller species fastigate trees against the fence. On the other side of this same fence, between Plots 151 and 154, there is no space allowed or available for any planting against the fence in the cul-de-sac/shared drive head.

Within the country park, to the south of Plots 8 – 24, is a wide (c.25 – 30m) wooded/scrubby planting belt, also incorporating a semi-silted up/overgrown pond. . The stone path through the country park meadow, from the car park to the canal terminus, is generally set back some 10m to 25m max away from the southern edge of this country park planting belt, and therefore some 35 – 55m away from the application site boundary. This path is generally the closest that most country park users will seek to get to the development site whilst they are

in this meadow itself, and the intervening woodland/scrub belt would provide some quite effective existing screening of the proposed development (less so in winter, and less so in particular around the pond/marsh area where there relatively fewer trees/shrubs – this is also the length of the application site boundary where a retaining structure is indicated). Potentially, interlocking crib walls can accommodate planting (or become self-set by colonising vegetation) but typically this tends to be trailing groundcover/climbers/tall ruderal herbaceous plants rather than trees/large native shrubs – but even this would be more attractive/softer than the existing concrete circle-section boundary wall along this stretch. If the top of the crib wall is backfilled with soil rather than pure aggregate, and the railings and close boarded fences are set back into the site away from the top edge of the crib wall, there may be sufficient strip to accommodate some native shrub/hedge planting. Further along, at the southern boundaries of plots 17 – 24, the planting plans show proposed new Beech hedging inside post and wire stockproof fencing (i.e hedge planting within plot gardens); given the location immediately adjacent to the country park woodland/scrub belt, this would preferably be a mixed native species hedge. There are also pros and cons of planting the hedge inside a garden boundary fence: on the plus side it is more obvious who is responsible for each stretch of hedge (i.e. individual plot owners) and the hedge would be more accessible for maintenance; on the minus side some occupiers may be tempted to remove their stretch of hedge to avoid maintenance and gain extra garden area, and a planning condition requiring permanent retention of the hedge within individual private gardens may in practice be difficult to monitor and enforce. The hedge (if retained) inside the garden fence would grow through the wire netting and soon appear as simply a hedge from the country park side, but if residents chose to replace the post and wire fence with 2m close boarded, the hedge would provide no visual screening from external viewpoints and would then become more likely to be removed as “redundant”. A hedge outside the post and wire fence would be more likely to be simply trimmed back to the fenceline, and if a timber boarded fence was erected as replacement for the post and wire the hedge would remain outside to screen it – but ownership responsibility for the hedge would inevitably become ambiguous and access for its maintenance would be more difficult.

Third response (February 2023)

References to plot numbers relate to the latest Rev J layout/plot numbering.

1. Overall number of proposed new individual trees has increased slightly, from 277 to 301. Individual trees as streetscene greening has been increased notably, although this is partly accounted for by reducing tree planting from levels previously indicated in other parts of the site – some specifics below.
2. Species for trees on plot frontages have been reviewed and amended, to concentrate on “fastigate” varieties (upright, narrow crowns) of generally small/medium species more suitable for enclosed spaces.
3. Nonetheless, a large proportion of the plot frontage trees contributing to streetscene greening, including quite a number of the new additions, are still only shown sited 2.5 – 3.0m from dwelling elevations. Even with the more compact species indicated, it is difficult to envisage many of these trees being retained for more than a few years as they are likely to be perceived as being too close to habitable buildings with attendant concerns about shading, overbearing, restricted outlook, potential damage to buildings by direct crown encroachment and direct/indirect root action. The layout remains one which is not designed to reasonably accommodate the provision or long term retention of significant tree planting as contribution to streetscene greening.
4. Ornamental hedge planting to plot frontages has been notably increased – again to improve streetscene greening. However, there are quite a few instances where shrub beds only c.1m wide are located between plot frontage hedges and building elevations – I’m not sure what the real benefit of this would be nor even how successfully they would establish in such restricted positions (even given the “low shade” species mix specified).

5. Fewer new trees are now proposed to the existing tree belt along Sunnyhills Road, no doubt to off-set costs of additional trees in streetscene locations; however, this is not particularly a problem given general retention of existing trees, still some new trees to reinforce the belt, and general massed underplanting with native shrubs throughout the belt.
6. Fewer new trees are now proposed: at the western boundary of the site (access road to country park car park, and adjacent to pumping station; along the eastern boundary adjacent to the railway (either in gardens of plots 127-130 & 150-152) or in landscaped buffer to side of plot 131; around the proposed café (also with reduction of overall plot size for café and loss of outdoor sitting/eating area); along the southern boundary adjacent to the country park.
7. To offset this, there is increased tree planting now proposed along Barnfields Road, the estate spine road and the culs-de-sac off this – generally to plot frontages but see issue noted at point 3 above.
8. Also more trees proposed around the play area. Ok in landscape terms, but are the Service Commissioning team/Police Architectural Liaison Officer happy with the level of screening around the play area both from trees and the proposed peripheral beech hedge planting? Subsequent grounds maintenance would perhaps need to ensure this hedge is kept well trimmed no higher than adjacent railings height to facilitate natural surveillance.
9. More trees now shown along protected line of the future link road, which is good.
10. The 2 abutting culs-de-sac at plots 123-140 and 148-152 have been made pedestrian permeable, with the previously shown 1.8m closed board fence now omitted and ornamental hedging shown instead. Also additional trees added to plot frontages on these culs-de-sac. Good improvement.
11. One plot now omitted from plots 131-139, with corresponding omission of 2 parking bays. A couple of extra lengths of dividing hedge added, and a couple of additional trees behind the parking bays, but otherwise still a long, relatively unbroken run of parking/vehicles along the southern side of this cul-de-sac.
12. However, the northern side has been greened significantly with a number of additional new trees indicated.
13. There are additional trees along the south side of plots 131-139 facing the railway station and car park area, although the trees are still only c.3.5m from the front elevations and may well feel too enclosing once established. Again there may be pressure for early removals here.
14. 1.2m railings are now shown around the marina site, which is better than the previous 2.1m fencing although still separated. Perhaps if/when the marina itself is designed, its visual/spatial/functional interaction with the new housing estate can be revisited together with hard/soft landscaping to the basin (but still little room appears likely) in order to achieve a quality integrated urban waterside development/character.
15. 1.2m railings are now shown along the public footpath boundary between the Barnfield Road turning circle and the marina location, which is clearly a big improvement to replace the existing industrial steel palisade fence. However, whilst understandable to attempt to screen the scrapyards from the development, the proposed tree planting and mixed native shrub planting inside (application site side) this railing fence will still visually enclose the footpath in its existing narrow corridor. It is still considered a missed opportunity not to slightly re-align the footpath within the site with the new planting set against the scrapyards boundary (subject to landowner permission and any statutory legal diversion process required).
16. The 1.8m closed board fence to the rear of plots 12-14 and side of plot 16, standing at the top of the proposed crib wall retaining structure at the southern boundary of the site, will be elevated, prominent and intrusive in views from the adjacent country park, as would the development itself beyond – the more so due to the existing intervening tree/shrub belt being notably thinner in this location around the

silted/vegetated pond. The fence has not been set back into the site, and there is no sensible opportunity within the application site for planting external to this fenceline to soften its visual impact. Possibly there could be scope for supplementary planting within the country park tree belt at the base of the crib wall, but species would need to be carefully chosen to suit the often waterlogged ground conditions.

Commissioning Officer – open space and active design

First response

On-site play and open space provision:

The layout of the site shows an area of open space which includes a small number of play items. We think that the size of the play area and the number of items currently shown is not sufficient for the size of development being considered. The play area for a development of this size needs to meet the criteria of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). As such the activity zone should be at least 400m² and provide stimulating and challenging play experience for both the toddler and junior ages (0 to 14yrs). There should additionally be room for children to run around and play 'chase' type games.

Another issue we would highlight is the close proximity of the trees to the south boundary. These trees may cause the equipment and surfacing to become covered with algae build-up and leaf litter in the autumn/winter months would be a problem.

The original masterplan layout of the development included a much larger percentage of accessible open space within the development area, even though much of that was linear in its design. The play area was additionally positioned in a more central location and with a more considered, safe, road layout near-by. We feel that there is a reduction in the quantity of open space with the new layout.

We would be willing to work with the developer to improve the design and layout of the open space and play area to reach an acceptable final offer.

Active design.

The opportunities for the new residents of this development to be involved / take part in physical activity are focused mainly off-site. There is an opportunity for residents to leave the site and enter Ladderedge Country Park (Barnfields site) and also the canal tow path which offers access to various places such as Cheddleton, Consall and Froghall or on a different path to Endon, Stockton Brook and onwards to Stoke-on-Trent.

As mentioned above there is a lower percentage of open space than on the original plan and as such the opportunities for recreation on the site are limited but having the options nearby including Birchall Playing fields means that there are plenty of options on offer.

Off-site playing pitch contributions.

We would be looking for off-site contributions towards playing pitches from this development. These would be used with-in 2km of the development site. The current contribution formula is: £685.36 x number of bedrooms

Second response (January 2022)

Whilst it is appreciated that the play area has been moved and increased in size, including the number and play value of the equipment, it's new location is not without issue.

The new position is in the far corner of the development and feels "stuck up in the corner" for want of a better term. The other issue with this location is the proximity to the road junction from the development to Sunnyhills Road. Following the revised plan the road layout has

also altered, meaning that this is now the main access point in to the development. As such we would consider this to be a busy junction and although the play area is fenced there will still be unnecessary risks for children and carers accessing the site.

As previously mentioned the play area for a development of this size needs to meet the criteria of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP).

The revised plans do seem to show an increase in available open space, especially to the northern boundary of the site running parallel with Sunnyhills Road. This is welcomed and further mentioned below.

Active design.

It seems that the previous opportunity to access the tow path from the site of the original play area in the bottom (southern) boundary has now been removed. We would suggest that an access point here would still be beneficial for residents to access the open spaces off site, such as the tow path network and Ladderedge Country Park (Barnfields site).

It would however be beneficial if there was another pedestrian access point to Ladderedge Country Park (via the car park) from the side of the development near to plot 10. This would help to promote access and walking opportunities without having to walk out of the site and back down to the park via Sunnyhills Road.

Third Response (September 2022)

On site play and open space provision

The revised layout for the site has now moved the location of the play area to a more central position which is welcomed, although the position of the play area sits close to the main road running through the development it benefits from being fenced and has a gated exit. We would recommend that a "Children Playing" traffic warning sign is installed on the roadside for approaching traffic in both directions to sit along other traffic calming measures.

The play area does also now offer an area of amenity open space outside of the formal play area for general play and possible family picnics etc.

As previously mentioned the play area for a development of this size needs to meet the criteria of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). As such the activity zone should be at least 400m² and provide stimulating and challenging play experience for both the toddler age and junior (0 to 14yrs). There should additionally be room for children to run around and play 'chase' type games. The play area should also be a minimum of 20 meters from the nearest dwelling boundary.

We would be willing to work with the developer to improve the design and layout of the open space and play area to reach an acceptable final offer.

Active design.

We would like to see a formed pathway running the length of the development adjacent to Sunnyhills Road through the amenity grassed area. We would also ask that consideration is given for how residents will access the remaining section of the Leekbrook Line and additionally Birchall Playing Fields for recreation opportunities.

It would also be beneficial if there was another pedestrian access point to Ladderedge Country Park (via the car park) from the side of the development near to plot 11. This would help to promote access and walking opportunities without having to walk out of the site and back down to the park via Sunnyhills Road.

Local Highway Authority

No objection subject to conditions

Urban design response

A primary concern is the concept of the layout. The scheme differs significantly from the outline application in that the housing is much more inward looking. The frontages to Sunnyhills Road are dominated by stretches of brick and stone walls facing the highway, apart from a group of houses around the main junction and on either side of Barnfield Road between the east and western area of housing. From one point of view this provides the most privacy and protection for the gardens of the houses from the road which is dominated by industrial traffic and will be used more frequently once the link road is implemented and widened with more traffic from other areas. However, the character of this road previously envisioned was of a widened boulevard with a strip of green between the main carriageway and frontage estate road. With a separate frontage road, the building frontages are set back further from the road and the gardens at the rear would be more shielded from the noise. The present landscape verge is dense, however, there is opportunity to create visual gaps which means more housing frontage would give a much more meaningful public image to a new housing area. The architecture of the factory opposite and its landscaped boundaries are of a high quality and would not dominate any new housing.

Another benefit to having a secondary frontage service road would be to have an enhanced walkability and cycle route along the frontage, with the character of a 'parkway' along this stretch of road.

Another key factor in the initial outline plan was the connectivity of Sunnyhills Road with Newcastle Road which is the nearest residential area and a key route to school. The main entrance was to be located closer to Sunnyhills Road and this would help encourage residential traffic in this direction. It also leads to the nearest bus stops into town. The access road to Ladderedge Country Park and car park at the western edge of the site is bordered by industry on one side and part of the site on the other with a WST station on the corner. The current masterplan shows the back fences of housing facing this road. I agree overlooking the sewerage treatment station with hard flat concrete standing is an unattractive outlook for houses, however, the boundary of a 2m high acoustic fence and a hard wall at the back of houses if a poor sense of arrival when approaching the development. I think a softer landscape boundary would be preferable and a more distinctive building as an introduction to the site when approaching from the west along Sunnyhills Road. The small green space seems left

over on the southwestern corner due to the easement servicing the treatment plant and existing vegetation, it appears disconnected from anywhere else in the masterplan and there is no attempt to create a walkway across the green space along the south side of Plot 38 through to internal streets which would improve connectivity.

I agree that the orientation of houses 39 to 43 will improve the character of the entrance to Ladderedge Country Park and the interface between the site and the Country Park. The houses here will also improve overlooking and security of people moving into and out of the park. However, I do think again an opportunity has been lost to integrate the pond area into the housing area by providing of a walkway or enhanced nature scheme. The provision of straight 2m footpath to the carriageway does help with connectivity with the housing areas, the pond and the country park but the edge is hard and straight and could be softer.

The orientation of Plots 44 -57 all look inward and turn their backs on the country park. The landscape edge here is quite dense so it would seem that houses would not benefit from views into the countryside. However, frontages in this direction would give a softer countryside edge and reduce the risk of garden paraphernalia and unsightly rear fences being the introduction to Leek. The opportunity to create a new built-up countryside edge is a lost opportunity especially in terms of visitor attraction. There is some significant level

changes and banking at the rear of these properties and there may be an opportunity to make steps down to the public footpath into the country park linking to the existing footpaths before they meet the aqueduct and new marina basin. I suggest exploring mirroring the scheme so that the main access road runs parallel to Sunnyhills road with streets running perpendicular to it towards the countryside edge. This would allow for views to run along the streets to the county park and hillside beyond with more residents getting the benefit of views, and more opportunity for accessibility. Presently the longest access road runs past the marina and the amount of traffic passing by will dominate the space even though it is designated as a home zone. I also think the parking spaces and road are a poor transition from the marina to the residences beyond and would not encourage pedestrian priority or create a characterful public realm. I understand that this could be dealt with by surface treatments however, the amount of space left for public realm fronting the marina is poor when there is a much greater opportunity for the building edges to characterise the space. The transition and walkways from the marina to the country park is unclear. I can see the space requirements for the marina has been provided, but wonder if this is tight and needs exploring more to see if it is fit for future purpose. I consider the use of a high security fence is unwelcoming and perhaps against the idea of public realm and opening up to the country park. This needs to be thought out differently and I suggest references to other parts of the canal can hint at the creation of character at this terminus.

The linear park and link between the marina and station seems contemporary but at odds to the layout. There has been no attempt to integrate the very straight existing public footpath into the housing scheme on the planning layout and this could be blended with the public space to be more attractive. The presence of the scrapyards is unfortunate, and an acoustic green wall alongside the scrap yard could be an attractive feature. The fronting of houses onto this space is welcome. The plot for the restaurant and café is very unimaginative with little attempt to give outside characterful spaces. Only a designated rectangular plot on the illustrative site layout. The road and parking areas in front of the cafe and to the rear of Plots 148 – 154 seem to have a poor delineation and no attempt to create a verge. Just a wall to separate the two which will create poor vistas and poor circulation with the last two car parks potentially being blocked in. The rear of 148 -154 will be a particularly unattractive with parking area surrounded by walls and close boarded fencing and little opportunity for surveillance.

On the eastern side, I agree that Barnfield Road is characterised by housing frontages and I like the row of terraced housing facing the station. It would be good to see a potential concept plan for the station area to see how this could fit with the housing development. There is a great opportunity to see the round turning head to Barnfield Road as a focal axis of the public realm connecting the scheme. If there is a way to secure improvements to this as part of the future plan for the area then I would recommend a schematic design could be perhaps illustrated into the current layout. The scrap yard is unfortunate as it was very loud as I was walking along the public footpath. The use of water to disguise the noise may be used additionally to tree planting and green acoustic walls. Other areas of land between the housing scheme and the River Churnet should be treated as part of the project and enhanced biodiversity wise. The natural landscape treatment should run into other areas of the scheme and around parts of the canal basin. Presently the layout presents few opportunities internally for a truly connected green infrastructure that connects habitats and provides quality amenity space. These needs improving with more information on the use of Suds (Sustainable Urban Drainage) throughout the scheme. The use of bioswales and rain capture should be considered as a way of dealing with runoff.

Other sustainable credentials need to be considered such as solar roofs, electric charging points, green roofs, and bicycle parking areas. The café presents a terrific opportunity for a cyclist hub and breakaway café to the countryside. There is little reference to feasible renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies within the scheme. The scheme needs

to make provision for sustainable management of the ecological landscape and use of surface water.

I am unsure about the live/work units' location and think these houses should be purely residential along Barnfield road with the live work units located nearer to the station and the café to add more focus and intensity to the space creating a hub of activity. Overall, there could also be more live/work Units in light of the recent changes in the workplace since the pandemic and these could be more scattered throughout the scheme and maybe a few concentrated around the green space and the industry towards the eastern end of the scheme to form a transition.

Overall, I do not read that there are different character areas to the housing throughout the scheme with the layout and the housing typologies looking much the same and regular. More perimeter blocks or small walkway connections would give opportunity to create greater variety and distinction between house types. The reliance of turnaround houses at corners does not provide the focal points required. More distinction is required between different areas of the scheme.

The house types and buildings all present as relatively bland and suburban to me and could be located anywhere. The site is capable of accommodating both contemporary and traditional forms of development that are high quality and functional. Larger windows and more use of balconies, setbacks and referencing is required. The outline suggested referencing to the Moorland area of Leek where high quality housing exists in treelined street. This certainly could be referenced in part of the scheme. However, I would also look at the character of buildings along the Caldon Canal and see if this old industrial architecture could lead to more contemporary interpretations to present a new reinvented sense of arrival of the canal into Leek.

As Cornhill is located in the northern part of the Churnet Valley, it occupies an important site on the edge of Leek at the head of the Caldon Canal and Leek - Stoke railway line. It has potential to act as a significant gateway into the Churnet Valley. Significant gateway buildings are required.

Lastly, I would say that the scheme needs considerable rethinking throughout rather than a few changes to the present layout. The plan fundamentally is internalised, and the housing is laid out to increase sizes of houses whilst reducing the mix. Whilst I appreciate the economics of this it does not give the wider public benefits and expectations that this scheme is required to deliver. I would suggest revisiting the concept.

The canal basin is key to the character of the scheme, and I would suggest the influence in style of the marine architecture extends beyond the houses fronting onto it. This is the point at which the gateway and arrival is enhanced and a new edge to Leek provides benefits to the whole town. In the event of the basin not being deliverable, I would favour the development of a low key landscaped public space. This could be interesting in itself if well designed. It should however open up access and views to the country park and could include the use of water as a shallow pool to develop an interesting POS in place of canal.

A few minor details:

The parking area between plots 30 and 31 is a poor termination to the vista of the road. The driveway at Plot 28 is an awkward angle over the corner of the hammerhead.

The tandem parking parallel to the footpath on Plot 44 will be unattractive and confusing. The car park between Plots 17, 18 and 19,20 is a poor ending to the road. This pattern of parking lots at the end of the streets facing Sunnyhills Road is repeated along the main

frontage of the scheme. This is a consequence of the increased floorspace throughout the residential areas that results in more parking and less green space. The two rectangular pieces of greens space at the far west and the far east both appear as left-over spaces and not very well integrated with little obvious use.

The change in mix leans towards more expensive larger properties with an increase in number of 4 bedroom properties, and I see no reference to affordable housing within the scheme. From an urban design perspective inclusiveness and a good mix of properties leads to more interesting and diverse places. The increase in residential floor space from 148,818ft² to 176,220ft² equates to 27,402ft² (2545m²) which is a substantial increase in residential floorspace, and indicates a higher density development with less public open space.

There is a need for a mixed use diverse scheme, quality office space and housing for young people in particular. This has all the potential for a community hub which offers a different quality and character of space from other areas of the town yet builds upon the unique setting to the countryside edge, the River Churnet, Caldon Canal and country park. The opportunity to enhance tourist and visitor attraction to Leek is in a truly comprehensively mixed scheme. Presently, I do not think the benchmark of design quality has been met.

The Listed Grade II Wall Grange Farmhouse with stone farm house and barns dominates views on the hillside to the south of the site. The farm has a dominant backdrop to views of the housing. It may well be worth considering the farms relationship to the site as a listed building and how the development will have an impact on its setting. Whilst this is not a great concern as the industry would have a greater impact it maybe that a traditional reference might be relevant. The bridge to Wall Grange farm further along the canal is listed and I wonder if there is any historical connection between the farm and the canal.

The Listed Grade II, Caldon Canal Barnfields Canal Aqueduct 1801 by John Rennie is an arched structure curved which formerly carried the Caldon canal over the River Churnet into the Leek canal basin. Presumably, any heritage considerations will need to be sensitively dealt with regarding the aqueduct and any works will need listed building consent.

I find the relationship of the River Churnet, Leek branch of Caldon Canal, the canal feeder and Nature Reserve, and the tow path along east side of canal, a facinating area that with sensitive treatment would have significant benefits to Leek in terms of access to the countryside and tourism potential. This with the terminus of the Churnet Valley railway demands a comprehensive masterplan that shows more detail of public realm.

I see the delivery of the canal basin as essential to the scheme as there is little justification to have housing in this area without the wider public benefits of the new station and canal basin which bring more life into the area. There is a danger of delivering a housing area where residents feel isolated and surrounded by industry otherwise.

Second response (Nov 2022)

I am still of the opinion that overall the scheme, apart from the Marina Frontage and Station Terraces has a density and layout that reads the same and fails to give the character areas I would like to see coming through. There is still not enough understanding of local context of the importance of this site as a gateway to Leek and its special countryside location with the canal and country park. The estate still has an anywhere estate feel to it overall.

The frontage to Sunnyhills Road has improved but still does not deliver the identity of the scheme to the public interface that I would like. There is an opportunity to extend a footpath

within the landscape verge along the frontage to provide an enhanced walkability along the frontage with the character of a 'parkway' along this stretch of road.

The main entrances into the estate from Sunny Hills Road and at Bransfield Road still have little presence to distinguish the sense of arrival into the estate at either end. These gateways although with improved landscape screening to fences is not distinguished enough by focal buildings to help with legibility.

The Barnsfield Road area itself needs more characterisation. The live/work units Type J are bland and unattractive both at the front and rear elevations. The integral workshop doors detract from the character of the row of properties. These need an improved character. I would like to see both sides of the street working together to give a separate identity to the rest of the estate. Similarly, the area to the east of the estate needs revisiting. The cul-de-sacs here and separation by close boarded fencing, the parking and high walls to the rear of station terrace, combine to give a poor configuration of street scenes.

The Café Area and station terraced housing area is improved. The architecture of the Café and the Terrace is much improved. However, I still find the layout of the café/restaurant unimaginative and the car park had space around it disproportionate to the building.

The Ladderage Countryside Park Edge is improved with softer boundary treatments to the rear. The houses facing the park at the western edge are more distinctive in form. The predominance of rear elevations has been interrupted by the introduction of a small shared courtyard of houses. Whilst this opens up a vista towards the country park from within the estate, the side elevations of these houses, and the introduction of garages in the rear gardens of other houses along the row do not give the improved views of the public interface of the estate from the country park intended.

The Marina Area has benefited from the removal of cars from the frontage of the properties here. I am happier with the architecture of the houses. The metal railing surrounding the marina area will need to be carefully chosen and details are required. The playground is in a better location although I would prefer softer peripheral planting than a simple rectangular edge lines of trees that formalise the space and disconnects the House Type A which is to be overlooking it. I would still prefer a housing fronting in the direction of the playground to give more enclosure to the Marina area. The courtyard parking areas at the rear of the houses has reverted to a character of a rear parking-lot with the opportunity for mature focal trees having been lost in the layout.

General to the whole layout is a poor termination of street scenes and a weak landscape framework within the development that fails to relate to its countryside setting. The street tree planting is tight and the materials of the shared access streets with asphalt and chippings would also fail to give the softer character to these streets one would hope to achieve. I also think that the house types are randomly placed and this detracts from the unity and identity of the street scenes. House Type E, at over 10m punctuates the roofline and is not characteristic of the context of housing found in this area. It weakens the overall layout and would be preferably located within a group to give a more distinct identity to the area, either along Sunnyhills road or Barnfield road. However, as with House Type J, I think the character needs reworking to provide more distinctive style and articulation.

My conclusion is that there is a failure to appreciate local context, setting and provide a truly characterful development that respond to the aspiration for the site. The scheme needs further development to be acceptable in urban design terms.

Local Lead Flood Authority

Have raised issues regarding the drainage strategy, discharge points and discharge rates

Officer comment:

The principle of drainage was considered at outline and the details of the drainage scheme are matters that will be addressed through the pre commencement drainage conditions imposed on the outline, Condition 32 and 33. Condition 31 requires the development is carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment.

If, as a result of satisfying the drainage condition (or indeed any other condition on the outline) any revisions are needed to the layout, scale, appearance or landscaping of the site, then the applicant would need to seek a variation to the application. Depending on the nature of the revision this could be a Non material amendment, a Section 73 Minor material amendment or in the case of a significant change a new planning application.

Environment Agency

No objections to the submission of Reserved Matters. We note Drawing No.s BFL-RDG-00-ZZ-DR-C-0005 and BFL-RDG-00-ZZ-DR-C-0006, dated 28 August 2021, shows finished floor levels are above 145.91m AOD in line with condition 31 attached to Planning Permission SMD/2014/0750.

Canals and Rivers Trust

No objection . Comment that the layout shows how the marina element could be incorporated within the development. It does not provide comprehensive information relating to the detailed design for the marina, including the location and layout of moorings, access, materials and buildings for all ancillary features nor does it provide any structural review or construction methodology demonstrating the feasibility and method of constructing the link from the proposed marina via the aqueduct to the Caldon Canal. However they are already required to be submitted under Conditions 10 and 19 of the outline permission.

Advise that connection of the marina to the existing Caldon canal will require separate consent from the CRT as owner and operator of the canal. All marina proposals seeking consent to connect to the Trusts canals must enter and successfully complete the Trusts own new marina application process. No assumption should be made as to the prospects of obtaining such consent.

Natural England

No objection. The proposals will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes

Caldon And Uttoxeter Canals Trust

First response

Objects to the application without the application first providing for a appropriate approach to deliver a feasible “marina / basin and associated boating facilities” (i.e. waterspace with associated boating facilities connected to the Caldon Canal).

We believe that every opportunity should be given to enable and support the delivery of a new waterspace project. CUCT has long supported the creation of a canal basin as a public amenity for residents and visitors to Leek, having campaigned for this since the early 2000s. The adopted Local Plan and Churnet Valley Masterplan envisage the opportunity of a canal and railway hub - both significant attractions and destinations in their own rights, but together would be a unique combination in this country. Linkages between them and the development is set out in the Masterplan.

All of these anticipated links, accessibility and connectivity will need to be able to take place in the southern, south-to-east axis of the site - the area between the canal/aqueduct/new

waterspace land and the railway station land. In the application's proposed site layout this axis indicates it will include the site's main Play Area; it is suggested the location for this be reconsidered

This application for approval of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale must also be seen against a background of the developer NOT undertaking

- The project to design in detail, deliver and operate any new waterspace, accessibility facilities and connectivity to the Caldon Canal, including consideration of the restoration of the Grade II listed 1801 aqueduct over the River Churnet;
- The project for the new railway station similarly;
- The detailed connectivity design to the Caldon Canal towpath and neighbouring public footpath, designated National Cycle Network route number 559, and to strengthening the links to Ladderedge and Rudyard.

We suggest that an appropriate approach would be for the planning committee to seek changes, conditions or clauses that enable and support the delivery of the waterspace project and the flexibility to layout the accessibility and connectivity aspired to in the Local Plan. We suggest

a) Designation of the south east section of the site as Waterspace / Open Space / Green Infrastructure – all of the south-eastern area of the site between the canal/aqueduct new waterspace land and the railway station land, be designated to be Open Space for the site and that that this can be factored in to the Council's project looking to deliver feasible new waterspace that is accessible to all. Thus the layout and the design of routes across this space would only be agreed once the required linkages and plans for their management can be determined.

b) relocate play area more centrally

c) Preliminary Marina Layout is insufficient for the delivery of new waterspace and associated facilities - No technical and environmental consideration is given to the extent of boater's facilities that could be provided to encourage boaters to visit Leek. Fresh Water, electrical supply, electric-boat charging, elsan disposal and refuse & recycling point. The overall services for the site need to allow for these to be made available alongside future waterspace.

When the planning committee considers the planning application(s) we urge it again to consider the need for conditions in the light of needing to plan for not a commercially-operated mooring marina but a mooring basin that is part of the site's public realm, has agreed connectivity with the Caldon Canal and is accessible to the public and boaters of all types.

In conclusion, we must object to the application as currently proposed and request that due consideration is given to our concerns and suggestions. We urge the planning team and committee to work with the applicant to devise an approach that will enable the design of an accessible basin that will deliver a distinct sense of place, reconnect Leek to its canal and with the railway offer a unique gateway to the Churnet Valley - which will add enormously to the Staffordshire Moorlands facilities and offer for its residents and the tourism economy.

Second response (October 2022)

Objects - elements detailed in our previous objection have still not been addressed.

Furthermore, the specific elements on recent versions of drawings 03 Boundary Treatment Layout and 04 Boundary Treatment Details that refer to 2.1m High Railings (around Marina) are NOT needed because the applicant is not delivering a marina, and because a final design for the proposed new 'canal basin' provided for by SMD/2020/0552 has not yet been agreed and does not form part of this application.

The proposed canal basin will be a gateway into Leek and needs to have strong character around which communities can flow and interact, as can be seen around other market town canal basins and wharves such as: Brecon, Market Harborough, Llangollen, Aylesbury. (Photographs will be provided under separate cover.) Railings as indicated are not appropriate and are not installed at other such locations.

Furthermore on the Site Layout in the southern section only a Pedestrian Link to the county park footpath is indicated; there is no indication of connectivity to the Caldon Canal towpath which carries National Cycle Network route number 559 (this links through with Stoke-on-Trent and also via the main line of the Caldon Canal into the Churnet Valley). Nor does it define strong links between the towpath, Ladderedge /Rudyard and the new station.

In conclusion, we must object to the application as currently proposed and request that consideration is given to our concerns about it including elements that are not appropriate in this application, and about it not making provision for a well-interconnected southern area to the site.

We urge the planning team, committee and SMDC officers to work to bring about a partnership with the applicant - and others such as CUCT and Canal & River Trust - that will enable the design of an accessible basin that will deliver a distinct sense of place, reconnect Leek to its canal and with the railway offer a unique gateway for Leek and the Churnet Valley - which will add enormously to the Staffordshire Moorlands for its residents and for the tourism economy.

Inland Waterways Association

First response – October 2021

Object

We note that this new planning application still includes a marina/basin and associated boating facilities with 13 berths even though the Casey Group is not able to commit to the delivery of the marina basin.

It is our view that the condition in previous planning application, SMD/2014/0750, that the developer of the site should also deliver the mooring basin, should be retained.

Waterways can contribute to the economic development of an area; by improving the physical and mental health of the local population through opportunities for exercise, holidays and recreation which in turn creates financial benefits to local economies through tourism, employment and regeneration.

The current terminus of the Leek Arm of the Caldon Canal is under-used and little visited, due to the lack of facilities and limited turning space. The proposed marina/basin, combined with the provision of boaters facilities, would resolve this and bring many more waterborne visitors to the town.

We note that the covering letter associated with the application states: "Although the Casey Group is not able to commit to the delivery of the marina basin, the reserved matters application seeks detailed approval for this facility and delineates an area of land within the site to be reserved for its future delivery or, if not implemented within an agreed period of time, an area of public open space. It is understood the Council is seeking to access Government funding in order to deliver the marina basin as part of a wider package of potential projects in Staffordshire Moorlands." If indeed SMDC is progressing such a scheme, we would be very happy to support the project in any way we can.

However, it remains our concern that if planning permission is granted without the requirement for the marina to be built, that it may well never be built.

We believe that the developer has missed an opportunity to get a better outcome for this site. It is well documented that waterside housing can increase the value of property by up to 15-20% (Water Adds Value, Highlighting the impact of the restoration of our waterways, Canal & River Trust and IWA, 2015). Conversely, by not building the marina from the outset, the residents of the houses adjacent to the marina site could object to the marina being built in the future, resulting in a loss of amenity to the wider community.

Looking specifically at the proposals for the marina, it isn't clear from the plans whether any of the proposed 13 berths are for visiting boats, or whether they are all proposed for permanent moorings. We would suggest that at least 3 to 4 berths are available for visiting boats at any one time, and that boaters' facilities should be provided. This should include chemical toilet disposal point, water taps and rubbish disposal as a minimum. The provision of electric charging points for visiting boats in addition to those paying for long term moorings would be a welcome contribution to making our waterways more sustainable and will encourage those visitors with electric boats to make the journey to spend the night in Leek, spending money in the local area, while they charge their batteries.

Electric boats are becoming more and more popular and local authorities, navigation authorities and developers should be working together to incorporate boat charging points (which should be basic electric hook up points as currently provided in marinas).

We would question why a 2.1 high metre security fence is required all around the basin, if this is to be used by boats visiting Leek. There are other similar scale developments in other Canalside locations that incorporate both long term and visitor moorings where an open and welcome environment has been created by not using security fencing, eg Brecon, Aylesbury and Market Harborough (details can be provided on request).

In conclusion, by including the proposed mooring basin in this planning application, but stating that they will not themselves be building it, the developers will be avoiding any obligation to deliver the mooring basin. There is a strong likelihood that the basin will not get built at all, and none of the benefits outlined above will ever be realised for the people of Leek. We therefore object to the planning application as currently proposed.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Holding objection. Further surveys required, amended layout to facilitate more habitats along the southern boundary, details of the retaining structure, BIA to secure biodiversity net gain, detailed landscape plans and habitat enhancement/compensation.

Officer comment:

The principle of ecology was considered at outline and relevant conditions (Conditions 20 and 21) imposed.

Staffordshire Police: Crime Prevention Design Advisor

Generally supportive of the scheme. Raises some concern regarding

- a) The kick rail on Sunnyhills frontage – suggests 1.2m railings to define this boundary and more effectively channel those on foot.
- b) Rear parking courts to Marina houses - These will certainly be less convenient for residents (bringing shopping in, dealing with toddlers/babies etc) and will be subject to less natural surveillance, albeit there would be a dwellings/s facing the entrance and plot 77 will have a side window (will plot 55?). There would be quite a run of rear garden fencing exposed, which aesthetically leaves a little to be desired, and quite a number of rear garden

boundaries will also be made publicly accessible from this approach, which is generally considered undesirable (general opportunities for graffiti, burglary etc). Any alterations that can be made to these areas to mitigate possible concerns whilst retaining the marina confinement/definition sought from the housing should be considered.

c) The other area which would warrant reconsideration is that which will border the land reserved

for future railway use. The suggestion is that there would be access through from the front of plots 142-151 to the railway land behind at a number of points (either end and between the two blocks?). It is unclear what particular purpose this would serve, given the short distance/time taken using the road network to access the railway land. It would better for this superfluous connectivity to be removed, which could provide improved privacy and defensible space for those respective residents. Providing a more robust boundary between the restaurant/café and the circulation area in front of these plots should also be considered to improve privacy, even if visual permeability was retained between the two areas.

SCC Education

A Section 106 Agreement was signed when the Outline Application was granted, and the education contribution amount and terms should be calculated in line with this. In summary those triggered through this REM are:

£70,000 shall be paid prior to works for the construction of any Dwelling

£60,000 shall be paid prior to Practical Completion of the 17th Dwelling and

The remaining £70,000 shall be paid prior to the Practical Completion of the 32nd Dwelling.

Severn Trent Water

Request sight of drainage proposals

7. OFFICER COMMENT AND PLANNING BALANCE

7.1 By law this application must be determined in accordance with the Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 This application seeks approval for the reserved matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping following the grant of outline planning permission for this mixed use development under SMD/2014/0715.

7.3 The submitted scheme was not considered to be acceptable . It was a dense, bland, somewhat characterless, scheme which did not create local distinctiveness. The applicant willingly entered into negotiation with Officers and Urban designers, Derbyshire Landscape and Place Making (acting for the Council) in trying to improve the design quality in line with national and local policy and the design principles established and accepted at the outline stage. There have been extensive discussions and several iterations of the plans. The applicant has indicated however that he now feels that all comments and concerns have been addressed where possible and without detriment to the delivery of the site and asks that the Council now determine the application as soon as possible.

7.4 The last and final revised plans, subject of this report are considered to be an improvement. They have resulted in the loss of 5 units from the scheme. There is now evidence of some character areas, road hierarchy with softened verges where appropriate, stronger house types and focal buildings and the Marina interface is improved with cars removed from the frontages. The focal building of the restaurant/public house with apartments above has a much stronger sense of identity as does the terrace row of units facing the station car park. In summary the main improvements secured include the following:-

- Improved arrangement at the entrance to the development
- Generally throughout stronger house types and focal buildings
- Stronger outward looking frontage to Sunnyhills Road
- Evidence of road hierarchy throughout the scheme with differing surfacing and some green verges where appropriate lessening the engineered appearance
- More varied and softened edge to the countryside to the south
- Relocation of the play area to an improved position more central to the site and adjacent to the Marina
- Improved house types and character area around the Marina. Removal of front car parking to rear courtyards providing a better transition and interface
- Continuation of house types on plots 104-109 linking from the Marina to the railway terraces and hub
- Better offset to the Future link road
- Stronger character to frontage of railway terraces with small gardens, brick wall and verge providing a more characterful interface with the future station car park.
- Much improved architecture to the restaurant/café/pub building
- Removal of 2m high palisade fencing around the Marina and replacement with 1.2m railings
- The north – south alignment of the secondary access roads allowing some views through to the countryside beyond.
- Reduction in height of house type C on the Countryside edge
- Removal of the existing concrete post/chain link fence along the Sunnyhills Road boundary and the replacement of the palisade fencing on the south eastern boundary adjacent to the public footpath with 1.2m railings with hedge planting in front
- Change of house type of plots 6/7 from House type E to H to better respond to raised levels in this part of the site

Layout

7.5 The amended plans now show a development that is outward facing and addresses Sunnyhills Road which is an improvement on the initial submission. The north – south alignment of the secondary access roads should allow some views through the site to the rising countryside to the south including the Listed farm The Grange and this too is positive.

7.6 The concept in the Design an Access Statement (DAS) at outline was for a green buffer along the southern boundary where the site interfaces with the country park with dwellings set back and outward facing. This would have provided a softer edge to the country park. The submitted scheme has largely reversed this concept. With the exception of plots 8-11, dwellings are either rear or side facing with little space for any meaningful landscaping which is considered to be a regrettable step and less successful outcome. The concern is that over time garden paraphernalia and fences will become the introduction to Leek from the south. This matter is considered in more detail below

7.7 The layout in the eastern part of the site (part of the Urban Core) is still considered to be rather weak. It is road dominant with an unfortunate turning head to the rear of Plots 144/145. The applicant was asked to consider a circular road arrangement to avoid cul de sac heads defined by close boarded fencing. In the amended plans a beech hedge separates the two cul de sacs. The concern is that this may not create a long term defensible boundary.

7.8 More generally within the site there are still some instances of inactive street frontages dominated by blank elevations and side garden walls/fences and roads poorly punctuated. See for example the road serving Plots 30, 39 and road serving 146-154 and road serving plots 131-139. In terms of the Councils Space About Dwelling (SAD) standards, there some shortfalls in interface distances – examples at plots 1/2 to 35 (15m approx. between facing

elevations) 20 – 24 (16m approx.) 24 to 46 (18m approx) 49 to 57 (17m approx.) 36 and 43 at rear (just over 20m) and some private gardens which are below 65 sq m mainly the marina houses and the railway terraces where access paths to rear parking compromise already tight spaces. Plot 46 is also tight with its parking detached from it. As the applicant says in some instances reduced interface distance is justified on design/character grounds. In others the concern is that the height (of buildings) to width (of street) ratio will result in an overbearing relationship and a cramped feeling of development – see further discussion elsewhere. It is recommended that permitted development rights are removed on those plots with below SAD gardens for extensions and outbuildings and also on all House type E units to control roof alterations given the extensive nature of these and potential for harmful additions.

Appearance

7.9 The detailed assessment of the six character areas is set out in the Description section above. As noted the majority of the site falls within the Urban Core character area. This area contains a number of different house types which are contemporary but there are no particular distinctive elements which give this part of the site a positive sense of place and identity. As the urban designer says, apart from the marina frontage and railway terraces, the rest of the scheme has a density and layout that reads the same and has an anywhere estate feel to it. This includes the units identified as Countryside edge which are distinguished only by added detailing, even though this is welcomed.

7.10 As discussed elsewhere the Marina frontage and Railway terraces are much improved and do provide distinct areas with a positive identity. The architecture of the Restaurant/café focal building is also much improved. It's unfortunate that the space around it is tight and as the urban designer says feels disproportionate to the building

7.11 In response to Officer concerns about the live-work units, some revised plans are put forward. These show the ground floor garage doors replaced with what appear to be a bi fold patio type window/door. The live-work units occupy a prominent part of the development marking the entrance to the estate. However they are still considered to be uninspiring architecturally, bland both front and rear and will appear very imposing in this prominent position.

7.12 The outline application was silent as to the need for any retaining structures but this is now evident on part of the southern boundary where there is an appreciable level difference. Currently some rather unfortunate concrete rings define this boundary. The plans indicate a crib retaining wall would span plots 8-16. No specific details are provided and would need to be conditioned. The Trees and Woodland Officer says that interlocking crib walls can accommodate planting (or become self-set by colonising vegetation) but typically this tends to be trailing groundcover/climbers/tall ruderal herbaceous plants rather than trees/large native shrubs which would help to screen and soften the development. The Landscaping plans do show space for hedging to the front of plots 8-10 but nothing in front of the close boarded fencing defining the boundaries of Plots 12-16. Beyond plot 17 a beech hedge is shown at the rear of gardens.

7.13 There is a wide (c.25 – 30m) wooded/scrubby planting belt adjacent to the southern boundary, part of the Country park. The Trees and Woodland Officer says that this intervening woodland/scrub belt would provide some quite effective existing screening of the proposed development of part of this boundary albeit less so in winter. Unfortunately within the section where the crib retaining wall is proposed the woodland/scrub belt is notably thinner. There will undoubtedly be views therefore of the close boarded fencing from the country park. As the Trees and Woodland Officer says, the fence has not been set back into the site, and there is no sensible opportunity within the application site for planting external to this fenceline to soften its visual impact. He refers to it as '*elevated, prominent and*

intrusive from the countrypark'. There will be views of the development generally from the country park where it will be seen on higher ground with the section drawings showing that ground levels are in fact raised from existing levels in this part of the site potentially accentuating its presence. As noted above with the exception of plots 8-11 this view will be of the 'rear' of the development.

7.14 It is a requirement of Condition 31 of the outline that no finished floor level should be lower than 145.91 AOD for flood risk reasons. Finished floor levels for the final revised scheme are still awaited at the time of writing this report. Members will be updated at the meeting. The sections show that there will be some cut and fill across the site with areas of raised and lowered ground levels.

7.15 Finally in terms of layout, conditions will be needed to ensure a high quality finish for the units, particularly for the Marina, Countryside edge, Focal café/restaurant building and Railway terraces. Although some detailing is shown on the drawing in relation to windows, eaves, verge, string courses etc it is too vague to approve. The success or otherwise of this scheme will be very dependent on good quality materials and detailing.

Scale

7.16 Whilst the development is predominantly 2 storey in height, as noted in the description above many of the units on the Sunnyhills frontage are 2.5/3 storey in height. House type E for example is 9.88m to the ridge and the Focal house types C,D and F are 9.27m to ridge. This scale of development is not generally reflective of the market town of Leek. Having said that the existing commercial buildings on the opposite side of Sunnyhills Road do provide some context for these heights. These are sizeable buildings similarly on raised ground levels. Sunnyhills Road has a wide carriageway (7.5m approx.) and this in combination with the softening effect and spatial benefit of the retained and enhanced landscaped buffer along the site frontage should ensure that the scale of development along this frontage is not unduly imposing.

7.17 Buildings fronting the Marina and linking to the railway hub are three storey in height but here they help to define the public realm in a positive manner and no objection is raised.

7.18 The new Station approach character area in the revised plans includes the Live – work units as before but has introduced the House type E, 2.5/3 storey on the opposite side of the street. The applicant says this is in response to comments made by the urban designer that both sides of the street should work together. The distance between the front elevations of the buildings is less than the space standards and this together with the heights on either side will result in the buildings feeling quite imposing along this stretch. Although tree planting is shown to plot frontages, many of these are too close to dwellings (see further discussion below). It was previously suggested to the applicant that the houses along Barnfield should be purely residential with the live work units located nearer to the station and the café to add more focus and intensity to the space creating a hub of activity. The scale of development in this character is not considered to work well.

Landscaping

7.19 The existing tree belt along Sunnyhills Road which comprises well-established trees of varying individual quality, but collectively of significance and importance to the landscape structure of Sunnyhills Road/Barnfields Industrial Estate is to be retained and enhanced and will provide an attractive frontage to the development as noted above. There are no trees of real significance within the main body of the application site. The tree groups/woodland belt along the southern boundary are also of significance, but are located off-site, within the adjacent country park. There is also an off-site tree belt along the Leekbrook Line former

railway at the eastern boundary. An Arboriculture Impact Assessment is provided with the application

7.20 The initial concern of the Trees and Woodland Officer was that appropriate spatial provision was not made within the layout to accommodate planting e.g. as street trees and/or plot frontage trees. In the final plans subject of this report regrettably he still raises the same concerns. Although he acknowledges that species for trees on plot frontages have been amended, to concentrate on “fastigate” varieties (upright, narrow crowns) of generally small/medium species more suitable for enclosed spaces, he says that a large proportion of the plot frontage trees contributing to street scene greening, including quite a number of the new additions, are still only shown sited 2.5 – 3.0m from dwelling elevations. Even with the more compact species indicated, he says it is difficult to envisage many of these trees being retained for more than a few years as they are likely to be perceived as being too close to habitable buildings with attendant concerns about shading, overbearing, restricted outlook, potential damage to buildings by direct crown encroachment and direct/indirect root action. His view is that the layout remains one which is not designed to reasonably accommodate the provision or long term retention of significant tree planting as contribution to streetscene greening. He further comments that ornamental hedge planting to plot frontages has been notably increased – again to improve streetscene greening. However, there are quite a few instances where shrub beds only c.1m wide are located between plot frontage hedges and building elevations. As he says he is not sure what the real benefit of this would be nor even how successfully these would establish in such restricted positions, even given the “low shade” species mix specified.

7.21 Landscaping should be an integral part of the design process and should be considered from the outset as a key part of the layout/character design rather than, as seems to have happened here, an add-on at the end of the process. The conclusion is that whilst there have been some improvements to the landscaping scheme, there remain many shortcomings and uncertainty as to the long term retention of elements of it.

Connectivity

7.22 The revised plans show greater thought to connectivity. The Layout plan shows two links through to Sunnyhills Road, full details will need to be conditioned. The Police architectural liaison officer suggests that the proposed kick rail should be replaced with 1.2m railings to better define this boundary and more effectively channel those on foot. The applicant has agreed to that and it is shown on revised plans

7.23 The existing permissive path which linked the turning circle on Barnfields Road with the railway line has recently been closed as a result of work commencing on the new station platform. Consequently there is currently no access available for residents to join the railway path which links into Leek to the north, Cheddleton to the south and Birchfields playing fields to the east. A link to this path is really important in terms of connectivity, healthy lifestyles, and active design. Until the link road is actually constructed, a temporary path can be secured as part of the Landscape Management Plan required for this area under the 106 agreement It would need to incorporate steps up to the railway path. The Layout plan notes this temporary path provision up to the railway

7.24 Links are also shown to the south, one adjacent to the play area where it could connect to the existing footpath in the country park and one to the east of the Marina, again connecting to the country park. There are some level differences in these locations. Full details of these links could be conditioned.

7.25 Overall connectivity is now considered to be improved and acceptable

Sustainable use of resources

7.26 The applicant has provided a document setting out his approach to a sustainable development. It makes the following main points:-

a) In order to enable a development platform to accommodate new housing, it will be necessary to remediate this brownfield site, the majority of works will involve excavating, breaking up, grading, sorting and redistributing materials on site. This will minimise the need for importing/exporting materials to provide a sustainable solution to site remediation.

b) Casey intends to exceed the requirements of Part L of the building regulations by taking a fabric first approach to the build. Heating & hot water will be provided using low carbon high efficiency air source heat pumps with ventilation provided by extract fans.

c) The proposed development is to utilise below and above ground storage SUDS techniques to accommodate the restricted surface water discharge rate. Surface Water (SW) flows up to the 1 in 30-year event will be contained below ground to satisfy all guidance.

Other issues

7.27 The Layout plan shows land hatched along the Sunnyhills Rod frontage indicated to be '*safeguarded land for potential link road*'. Clarification on this has been sought from the Local Highway Authority as to whether this land will in fact be required should the link road go ahead in the future. They have provided plans which indicate that the existing carriageway on the application site frontage would be '*mostly to be reconstructed within existing alignment*'. The information available therefore suggests that the safeguarded land will/can remain as a landscaped area.

7.28 Matters of access, drainage, contamination, ecology were considered at the outline stage and relevant conditions imposed.

Conclusion

7.29 Policy DC1 expects all development to be well designed and to reinforce local distinctiveness. It says new development should be of high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. It says it should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting,, landscaping, character and appearance. It further says that new development should protect the amenity of the area and residential amenity in terms of amongst other matters visual impact, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping and that it should incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development. Policy NE2 also refers to new developments providing tree cover and that landscaping schemes should be required to mitigate against negative landscape impact and complement the design of new development and make provision for future maintenance

7.30 For the reasons in the detailed analysis above and notwithstanding the improvements that have been secured there is considered to be some conflict with these policies and the NPPF which says that good design is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development. It says that planning decisions should ensure that developments amongst other matters are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping. It says developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also says that development should create a strong sense of place and that trees can make an important contribution to the character and quality of the urban environment. It says that planning decisions should ensure that new streets are tree lined.

Planning Balance

7.31 Planning law requires that this application be determined in accordance with the Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the reasons set out

above it is considered that there is some conflict with Policies DC1 and NE2 of the adopted Local Plan.

7.32 The NPPF is however a material consideration. It says that LPA's should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development in decision making. Para 11 confirms that this means

EITHER approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay;

OR where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

7.33 Regrettably the Council is no longer in a position to demonstrate a 5 year deliverable supply of housing land. The most up to date figure shows a 3.71 year supply. As such policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date. In these circumstances the tilted balance as it is known applies. In other words planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

7.34 In terms of the benefits, this development will provide much needed housing (152 homes) in circumstances of an undersupply. It will release one of the few large-scale housing opportunities in Leek. It will provide homes that will meet local identified housing need including opportunities for those starting out on the housing ladder. This is a significant social benefit. The Regeneration Officer quantifies the economic benefits including the fact that it will generate over £1.5 million of re-spend in the community per annum, as well as nearly £30,000 of additional resource to the Council. It will support jobs in the construction industry and supply chain. The development will remediate a contaminated brownfield site with known viability issues and bring it back into productive use. It is also noteworthy that it is only once development is implemented on this site that the 'other' benefits secured under the 106 agreement at outline will be released. These include land to be reserved for a link road land which would unlock further development including private sector investment. It would also reserve land for the railway station and the marina, both helping to secure future tourism/leisure use and boost the local visitor economy and it secures a financial contribution towards the marina. The social and economic benefits are therefore substantial.

7.35 In terms of harm there is some conflict with Policy DC 1 and NE2 . The analysis above has pointed out that despite many improvements having been secured, there are still various design shortcomings in the scheme. Overall it has a density and layout that reads the same, there is a tight arrangement of buildings and limited space for landscaping.

7.36 The applicant has indicated however that he now feels that all comments and concerns have been addressed where possible and without detriment to the delivery of the site and asks that the Council now determine the application as soon as possible.

7.37 This is considered to be a very finely balanced decision but the judgement is that applying the tilted balance, the adverse impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. A recommendation of conditional approval is therefore made

8. RECOMMENDATION

That delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning to approve the application in the event that the corresponding Section 73 application (SMD/2021/0537) is also approved and subject to the following conditions:-

1.This notice constitutes an approval of matters reserved under Condition 1 of Planning Permission SMD/2014/0750 and does not by itself constitute a planning permission.

Reason:- For the avoidance of doubt. The application relates to matters reserved by planning permission SMD/2014/0750

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Reason:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.Notwithstanding the submitted plans, no phase of the development agreed under Condition 6 of SMD/2014/0750 shall take place above slab level until details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The development shall subsequently be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details

For all character areas including the Marina, Countryside edge, Railside and Focal building character areas:-

- Facing bricks and render type
- Roof tiles
- Window details, including glazing bar subdivision
- All Windows and doors shall be set back a minimum of 75mm from the edge of the brickwork around the window and door opening
- Hard Landscape -road signs, street furniture, lighting scheme for roads and footpaths
- Full details of all proposed fencing shown on the Boundary Treatment plan – height, materials, finish

For the Marina, Countryside edge, Railside and Focal building character areas:-

- Eaves, verge detail (no barge boards and tile edging strips/caps)
- string course detailing

Reason:- In the interests of the character and appearance of this rural area and to ensure an acceptable external finish

Removal of permitted development

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification), no development as specified in Part 1 Part 1 Class(es) A, AA, B, C and E

Class(es) B and C shall be carried out on on plots TBC and no development as specified in Part 1 Part 1 Class(es) A, AA, B, C and E shall be carried out on plots TBC other than those expressly authorised by this permission, without express planning permission first being obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:- To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development and so safeguard the character and visual amenities of this rural area and external appearance

of the development

Highways/access

5. No phase of the development agreed under Condition 6 of SMD/2014/0750 shall be brought into use until the access, parking, servicing and turning areas have been provided in accordance with the approved plans for that phase. The parking, turning and servicing areas shall thereafter be retained unobstructed as parking, turning and servicing areas for the life of the development.

Reason:- To comply with NPPF paragraph 111; to comply with SMDC Local Plan policy DC1; in the interests of highway safety and to comply with the Councils parking standards

6. The garages indicated on the approved plan 21039 01 G shall be retained for the parking of motorvehicles and cycles. They shall at no time be converted to living accommodation without the prior express permission of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:- To comply with NPPF paragraph 111; to comply with SMDC Local Plan policy DC1; in the interests of highway safety and to comply with the Councils parking standards

7. Prior to first occupation of any permitted new dwelling the parking area for that dwelling shall be provided and surfaced in a bound material for a minimum distance of 5m rear of the proposed highway boundary and shall thereafter be retained for the life of the development for their designated purposes.

Reason:- To comply with NPPF paragraph 111; to comply with SMDC Local Plan policy DC1; in the interests of highway safety.

8. Surface water drainage interceptor, connected to a surface water outfall, shall be provided across the access immediately to the rear of the highway boundary of any driveway/access which falls towards the highway.

Reason:- To comply with NPPF paragraph 111; to comply with SMDC Local Plan policy DC1; in the interests of highway safety and to prevent surface water flowing onto the highway

9. Notwithstanding details of the 9.8m long refuse vehicle submitted, before the development is submitted for adoption technical approval, swept path of minimum 11.2m long refuse vehicle or of dimensions confirmed by SMDC Refuse collection contractor shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority

Reason:- To comply with NPPF paragraph 111; to comply with SMDC Local Plan policy DC1; in the interests of highway safety and to ensure the roads are constructed to an adoptable standard and dwellings can be serviced by refuse vehicles.

10. No phase of the development agreed under Condition 6 of SMD/2014/0750 shall commence until such time that full details of the proposed footpath links for that phase shown on drawing TBC have been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall subsequently proceed fully in accordance with the agreed details and the path fully completed before first occupation of any dwelling in that phase.

Reason:- In the interests of permeability and connectivity, to encourage active healthy lifestyles and achieve a sustainable form of development

11. No development including site stripping and levelling shall take place until such time that full details of the proposed crib retaining wall on the southern boundary have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. Such detail to include but not limited to construction details, extent, height, cross and long sections, planting

details and finish. The development shall proceed strictly in accordance with the agreed details

Reason:- In the interests of the character and appearance of the area and interface with the Country park to the south

Informative

'For online advice on construction site security, the applicant's attention is directed to the following publications from recognised bodies - The British Security Industry Association's 'Construction Site Security – A Guide' and Secured by Design's 'Construction Site Security Guide 2021'.'

- B.** In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Development Services has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Applications Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's Decision.



