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Site Inspection and Report



Landscape Architecture

Landscape & Visual Assessment

Arboriculture

Ecology

**Landscape
Institute**
Registered practice

Project:

Hursley Park, Welham Road, Great Bowden, Leicestershire

Client:

Harborough District Council

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Introduction

The following report has been undertaken by Chris Nichols CMLI, BA (Hons), BLA (Manchester Metropolitan University, Principal Landscape Architect of ISL Associates Ltd (Ian Stemp Landscape Associates) on behalf of Harborough District Council. Chris has been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since 1998.

The purpose of the report is to ascertain the condition of site works associated with a large residential development not within private ownership and their compliance with site drawings and specifications prepared by Pegasus Design. It is not to comment on the current management regime undertaken by the management company.

It would be normal practice for the site works to be handed over to the management company to have achieved a presentable standard and all construction defects to have been rectified rather than to be a management issue.

Methodology

A site visit was carried out on the 31st March 2022 and a comprehensive survey of the site works was carried out.

The weather was for the most part dry with occasional snow showers. Ground conditions were firm and dry.

The following drawings and specifications were provided by the client;

P16-0864_04B	Detailed Landscape Proposals Sheet 1 of 4
P16-0864_05C	Detailed Landscape Proposals Sheey 2 of 4
P16-0864_06C	Detailed Landscape Proposals Sheet 3 of 4
P16-0864_07B	Detailed Landscape Proposals Sheet 4 of 4
P16-0864 LMP011	Landscape Management Plan

Footpaths

Footpaths on the approved drawings are detailed as tarmacadam surface with pre-cast concrete edging. In almost all circumstances the footpaths across the site have been laid to a crushed stone/gravel finish and with timber edgings. No specifications or construction details were provided.

A general specification for footpaths of this material would be for 100 to 150mm of compacted MOT Type 1 with compacted 50mm depth of stone finish. Edgings should be softwood boards pressure impregnated and fixed to softwood pegs. A camber of about 1 in 55 should be provided to shed surface water and the surface should be flush with edgings to allow water to flow to adjacent grass areas.

It was apparent in many places that the rolled gravel surface has not been adequately laid, with large stones and sub-grade visible in many places leading to surface degradation and trip hazards that will only worsen over time. The surface had not hardened in many areas as should be expected and there were many areas of loose and large size material instead of a smooth finish of hard stone fines. Some loose chippings are inevitable with this surface type as a natural process of scarification takes place, however the large amount of loose material is not acceptable.

In many areas there appears to be an insignificant or non-existent camber or fall to the footpaths and in wet conditions there are indications that lying water is causing surface damage. In one specific area significant water damage was clear, with large gouges in the footpath surface creating a significant trip hazard. Additional features such as water bars could have been incorporated to prevent this.

In many areas surface finish was not level with the timber edgings preventing water from flowing off into adjacent areas and causing additional surface damage as well as creating trip hazards.

Ingress of grass growth into the footpaths from adjacent areas was evident in many areas, however this is a problem often associated with this surface material and must be managed by weed control measures. Failure to do so will result in additional breakup of the surface.

A visual inspection of the footpaths was carried out only, without physical excavation into the subsurface, although in some areas surface erosion

allowed some observation of surface depths which did appear to be less than a 50mm depth, although this was only a localised observation.



Loose surface material is common with subsurface breaking through creating trip hazards



Sub surface breakthrough is common in many areas



Water damage



Water damage

Tree Planting

Tree planting across site was generally in accordance with the positions and species shown on the approved plans. All trees were double staked and secured with rubber ties as per the specification. Some watering pipes were evident on some trees but not on all, although this does not appear in the specification. No bark mulch was evident around each tree as per the specification. I would also liked to have seen tree guards to each tree within grass areas to prevent strimmer damage.

No excavation was carried out to determine soil quality, however there is clear evidence that back fill contained heavy clay soils and large stones.



Dried out ground would indicate heavy clay content, large stones also visible.

Some slight position changes are apparent, and some species changes have occurred such as *Aesculus hippocastanum* which can no longer be planted due to disease control restrictions. Some tree replacement has been undertaken by residents; however it should be noted that any plant that fails within a 5-year period is normally replaced by the contractor under the planning approval. Tree failures, which are to be replaced, are at an acceptable percentage and are shown on the provided drawings to the rear of this report. All tree avenue planting through the estate has not been planted and presumed removed from the scheme. Almost all the proposed semi-mature trees within the Central Green have failed, most likely due to their size at planting and lack of watering, they should be replaced with appropriate native specimens for the open space such as Oak or Field Maple.

Native Hedgerow Planting

Native hedges were generally planted in single lines rather than double staggered row as per the specification. No double line support as per the specification was provided. However, the native hedges were in generally good order and forming up well. Ongoing maintenance will require the removal of weeds, topping up of bark mulch and filling of any gaps. Plant failures were approximately 5% to 10%, which I do not consider excessive.



Native hedge to north side of Plot 6

Beech Hedge Planting

Beech hedges were in generally good order and establishing well. However there were some areas still requiring replacement which are shown on the attached plans. Replacement planting of some failed beech plants had taken place, but plants were not in accordance with specification of 150/175cm height at 300 centres. Replaced plants were generally 600mm high whips. In many places there was no bark much evident and excessive weed growth, an 80cm wide bed of much is to be provided according to the specifications. No soil excavation or samples were taken, however as in many places, cracked and dried ground would indicate heavy clay soils present. The hedge to Plot 7 is missing completely.



Beech hedge adjacent Plot 12 and running along western edge of POS. Hedge plants undersize and insufficient numbers as opposed to specification. No bark mulch present and heavy clay soil evident. However, with appropriate after care, hedge should thrive in time.

Swales

All swale areas appeared to have been sown with a wetland meadow seed mix, however the early season site inspection meant it is difficult to ascertain how successful this has been. Successful establishment will be difficult due to

existing seed bank in soil. Steepness of swale sides in some places should have a required a post and rail fence to prevent access.



Native Shrub Planting

All native shrub areas were present, and an acceptable level of establishment had taken place with approximate 5-10% failure rate, these will need replacing as part of annual management. Management should also be aware to remove and excessive weed growth until the canopy can establish and suppress weeds below. A small area of native planting is missing adjacent Plot 40.

Amenity Grass Areas

All amenity grass areas look in good condition and well established. There are some areas of disturbed grass verge along the main access road which is an ongoing management issue rather than failure of establishment. Some areas next to footpaths need to be regraded and seeded where settlement has taken place.

Meadow Grass Areas

All meadow areas appeared to have been sown with a meadow seed mix and were laid out in accordance with the approved plans, however some areas within the POS adjacent to Plot 50 and Plots 7, 21 & 22 were laid to amenity grass. The early season site inspection meant it is difficult to ascertain how successful this has been; however it is understood a technical report has been prepared to inspect this separately. Successful establishment will be difficult due to existing seed bank in the soil and the management should look to create as diverse a sward as possible to create bio-diversity benefits without being overly concerned with the approved meadow species mix.

Allotment

In general the allotment is laid out in accordance with the plans with all facilities provided. One raised planter is damaged and needs repairing. Soils appear poor with significant amounts of heavy clay soils present, with ground rock hard and large cracks appearing. The specification is not clear on quality of topsoil to be provided, only refers to additional topsoil being in accordance with BS3882:2015 where 'additional' topsoil is required. The allotments should be provided with large amounts of organic material soil conditioner to alleviate this situation.



Poor quality heavy clay soils to allotments.

Extras

All benches and seating were present with one additional seat within the Central Green.

There were no spotlights to the large existing trees within the Central Green. The ornamental planting set around the play area is in poor condition and should be replaced.

This report does not intend to provide an inspection of the play equipment and this should be covered by a qualified inspector, however the grass areas around the play area were well established and maintained.

Area to rear of Plots 46 to 50 could not be accessed, however visual inspection over adjacent fence would indicate correct number of trees and establishment.