



LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT REPORT

For Client:
Treville Properties

in respect of

Proposed new residential development on land
at Church Lane, New Mills,
Derbyshire

Prepared on behalf of The Client

by

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1.0 Qualifications & Experience

- 1.1 My name is Vanessa Swift. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect based in Warrington, Cheshire.
- 1.2 I hold a Degree of Bachelor of Science in Landscape Design and Plant Science and a Post Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Sheffield.
- 1.3 I was elected a Member of the Landscape Institute in 1997 and I have been involved in a wide range of landscape work whilst working for both local authority and in private practice for a period of twenty years.
- 1.4 In private practice I have been commissioned by both local authorities, public utility companies and private clients to prepare landscape layouts and to undertake landscape assessments of a range of residential and commercial sites. I have considerable experience in the integration of built form into the landscape and in appraising the visual impact and environmental effects of site developments on the surrounding landscape.
- 1.5 I was appointed by Treville Properties, being instructed to:
- 1 Consider the existing landscape setting of the site known as Millers Vale, in relation to the proposals for a new residential development of 21 no. dwellings;
 - 2 Consider the proposals and assess their impact on the existing landscape;
 - 3 Advise on suitable landscape proposals to be incorporated into the scheme.
- 1.6 I have visited the site for the purposes of preparing this report and I am conversant with the landscape and visual character of this part of the High Peak.

2.0 Scope of Document

2.1 The scope of this document is primarily concerned with the landscape characteristics of the site and the actual development proposals. The report will provide sufficient information on which to assess the significance of the landscape and visual impact of the current scheme on the surrounding landscape and its users.

2.2 Contents:-

- 1.0 Qualifications and Introduction
- 2.0 Scope of Document
- 3.0 The Characteristics of the Site and Surrounding Area
- 4.0 Assessment of Landscape and Visual Impact
- 5.0 Description of the Development, Landscape Philosophy and Design Proposals
- 6.0 Summary and Conclusions
- Appendices

2.3 Within the scope of this report it will be demonstrated that: -

Proposition 1

The implementation of the development proposals will have a minor detrimental effect upon the landscape setting and character of the site,

Proposition 2

The implementation of the development proposals will have a minor detrimental effect upon the landscape setting and character of the surrounding area,

Proposition 3

That the proposals being put forward in relation to the external building arrangements and recommendations for additional soft landscaping are carefully considered so as to not to impact negatively upon the character of this part of the High Peak.

2.4 In support of the report there are a number of drawings, which are referred to overleaf, these form part of Appendix 1. Architects plans have also been produced. Any reference within the text to the proposed dwellings is supported by TADW Architects Drawing No. 211080 10 P2.

SCHEDULE OF DRAWINGS

REF Appendix	Title Drawings	Scale
PR/PL01/LOC	Site and photo location plan	1:2500 @ A3
PR/PL01/PH 01-08	Photographic record -8 sheets	NTS
Dwg No.		
PR/TP01/13/LP/01	Landscape proposals master plan	1:200 @ A0

3.0 The Characteristics of the Site and Surrounding Area

Description, classification and evaluation of intrinsic quality

3.1 The first stage of the appraisal is to describe, classify and evaluate the intrinsic landscape quality of the site and its surroundings.

3.2 The landscape assessment is based on the interpretation of documentary information, Ordnance Survey maps and field study. The existing landscape is described in terms of landform and land cover to establish the existing character, quality and sensitivity of the site.

3.3 This part of the assessment broadly establishes the baseline from which the effect of the proposals can be judged against.

3.4 The sensitivity of the landscape to change is reflected to a degree with the ability of the existing landscape to accommodate change. The capacity of the landscape to accommodate the development is therefore sometimes different from the importance of the value of that landscape.

3.5 The baseline analysis will cover the following: -

- Existing elements
- Existing features
- Existing characteristics
- Existing character of the area
- Existing quality of the present landscape.

General Location

3.6 The development site covers an area of approximately 1.08 ha of land. The site is within the High Peak Borough.

3.7 The settlement centre of New Mills is some 0.25m to the west of the site.

3.8 The site is adjacent to the Sett Valley Trail which links open countryside to the north with the Torrs Riverside walk to the south.

3.9 The site is currently surrounded by built up area being mainly residential, but there are industrial areas, educational areas and health facilities close by.

Landscape Designations

3.10 There are no TPO'd trees on the site.

3.11 A number of public rights of way are in the vicinity of the site. Namely: -

Sett Valley Trail – to the west of the site running north towards open countryside and south linking up with the Torrs Riverside Walk within New Mills town centre.

Public footpath east of the site, leading from Church Lane to St George's Road, running south to north.

Land Use and Landscape Character within the Site

3.12 The site itself lies some 154-170m above Ordnance datum and is characterised by a narrow, steep-sided undulating cutting. A stream, a tributary of the nearby River Sett, is at the valley base flowing east to west through the site.

3.13 Church Lane runs parallel with the site to the south, while St George's Road runs parallel to the site to the north. Both Church Lane and St George's Road have properties running along their length with the rear gardens of the dwellings abutting the site. St George's Primary school also borders the site on Church Lane.

3.14 The site is bounded to the west by the rear garden of the property known as Beech Cottage, together with 6 St George's Road. To the east the site is open in character currently used for grazing horses with wooded areas beyond, forming part of the stream valley. New Mills Football ground is also found to the east of the site.

3.15 The area is generally grass with some scrub planting and trees. It is currently unkempt, being used for a number of activities, both domestic and commercial, associated with the property known as Elmwood.

3.16 Horses are regularly grazed on the open areas and a newly erected stable block has been constructed to the north of the primary school yard.

3.17 A site access track runs north from Church Lane into the site. The track provides access to stables and stable parking to the rear of Penlee. This track runs east and parallel with properties on Church Lane leading up to the stable block. Other disused and derelict timber buildings associated with a former cattery on the site are to be found to the rear of the property known as Thornwood House.

4.0 General Assessment of Landscape and Visual Impact

4.1 This section of the report serves to establish what impact the development has upon the character of the existing landscape and its visual intrusion, if any. These assessments should be read in conjunction with the Landscape Proposals (Drawing No. PR/TP01/13/LP/01)

4.2 Principle viewpoints are those locations within and around the application area where the extent of the site is visible. There is one principle viewpoints identified.

Principle Viewpoint One: Looking west into the site from the public footpath linking Church Lane with St George's Road.

Principle Viewpoint Two: Looking south-east into the site from the Sett Valley Trail.

Landscape Impact Assessment

Methodology

4.3 In accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment¹, this stage of the process aims to: -

- *Identify systematically all the potential landscape and visual impacts of the development;*
- *Predict and estimate their magnitude as accurately as possible;*
- *Assess their significance in a logical and well-reasoned fashion.*

4.4 Consideration should be made that the significance of these impacts is assessed taking into account the proposals put forward in Section 5 of this document.

4.5 It must be understood that landscape impacts and visual impact are separate but related.

4.6 The appraisal will describe the characteristics of the proposed development that would affect the visual baseline conditions, and predict the likely changes, if any.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON LANDSCAPE

4.7 ***Landscape Impacts*** are the changes in fabric, character and quality of the landscape as a result of the development. Hence landscape impact assessment is concerned with: -

- *direct impacts on specific elements;*
- *more subtle effects upon the overall pattern of the elements that gives rise to landscape character and regional and local distinctiveness;*
- *impacts upon acknowledged special interests or values such as designated landscapes, conservation sites and cultural associations.*

Landscape Impact Assessment

4.8 The purpose of making an assessment of Landscape Impact is to compare the quality and character of the landscape fabric at present, with that which would occur following the implementation of the proposals.

4.9 In analysing the magnitude and importance of landscape impacts, the following terminology has been used:

TABLE 1
<i>no impact</i>
<i>negligible-</i> where the change to the landscape character and setting is minimal;
<i>low-</i> where the change to the landscape character and setting is minor, and the underlying character, composition and attributes of the baseline conditions will be similar to pre-development conditions;
<i>moderate-</i> where the change to the landscape character and setting result in permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features of the baseline conditions; and
<i>major</i> – where the change to the landscape character and setting involves permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features, resulting in substantial change to the baseline conditions.

IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

4.10 The development will involve the erection of 21 no. new dwellings, accessed from Church Lane along a roadway which follows the existing track through the site.

4.11 The site is at present open in character. The proposals have been considered to allow for the open character of the area to be preserved in part. The 'green corridor' which

runs through the valley from east to west will be maintained by tucking the proposed built form into the southern areas of the site against the rear of Church Lane.

4.12 The character of the development will be in keeping with the style and type of properties found locally elsewhere. The property design and choice of vernacular material has been determined carefully to ensure the dwellings sit comfortably into the existing framework of properties found locally elsewhere thus ensuring the impact on the existing character of the area is kept to a minimum.

4.13 The character of the proposed property has been carefully considered to provide a high quality design with thought and regard for its setting and impact on the surrounding area.

4.14 The development will ensure that the remaining open space will be preserved and enhanced, through a management plan. The existing stream is proposed to be re-routed away from the line of the underground sewer, with a wetland pond area to be developed. This will have a long-term positive impact on the character and biodiversity of the area and its immediate surroundings.

4.15 Additional landscape proposals forming part of the application for the development can only help to enhance the existing setting, which in its current state is unkempt and un-managed. The proposals will serve to strengthen the existing green corridor that runs through the site, east to west, and thus improve the biodiversity of the site.

4.16 To conclude, it can be argued that the development will reduce the open character of the area by introducing built form to the site. That said, the loss of any open character will be off set however by the positive contribution the proposals have to protecting and preserving the remaining open areas of the site.

4.17 The proposed built form is not out of character with the scale and form of dwelling houses that surround the site, so can not be said to be out of character with the current setting.

4.18 These positive attributes will serve to reduce any impact the development will have on the area, so despite changes in character of the site which could be seen as low to moderate with reference to Table 1, the positive effects the scheme will have on the area will result in a negligible negative impact on the area in terms of impact on character.

4.19 To conclude therefore, the proposals will have a **minor detrimental effect** upon the landscape setting and character of the site or its surroundings.

ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL IMPACT

4.20 **Visual Impacts** are a subset of landscape impacts. They relate solely to changes in available views, and the effects of those changes on people. Hence visual impact assessment is concerned with:-

- the direct impacts of the development upon the view of the landscape through intrusion or obstruction;
- the reaction of viewers who may be affected;
- the overall impact on visual amenity.

Current Visual Character

4.21 The purpose of making an assessment of visual impact is to compare the quality of the view, as it exists at present, with that which would occur following implementation of the proposals.

Degree of Visual Change

4.22 An assessment has been made of the potential magnitude of the visual effects of the development. This depends on the sources of potential visual effects of the development and in the sensitivity of the viewpoint. The sensitivity is determined by combination of factors including the following:

- land use and landscape character of the location in which the viewpoint is situated;
- distance of the viewpoint from the development;
- background of the view;
- proportion of the field of view occupied by the source of the visual effect;
- extent of the development visible;
- speed of travel of the viewer where relevant;
- frequency of use of the viewpoint;
- visibility as affected by atmospheric conditions, and;
- public perception

4.23 In analysing the magnitude and importance of visual impacts, the following terminology has been used:

TABLE 2

negligible- where the application site occupies only a small fraction of the overall field of view and is at a considerable distance from the viewpoint, **or** where the sensitivity of the receptor is low;

low- where only a minor portion of the view changes for a short duration, **or** where the sensitivity of the receptor is medium;

moderate- where some changes occur in the view, but not for a substantial length of time, or not in a substantial part of the view, **and** the sensitivity of the receptor is medium; and

major- where changes in the view substantially alter the overall view, **and** the sensitivity of the receptor is high, **or** is in close proximity to the development.

Description of existing and proposed views

4.24 In Section 5 mitigation for the proposals will be discussed in detail wherein the philosophy and reasoning for the proposed landscape design will be considered.

4.25 Views from existing public footpaths, close to the development have been considered.

4.26 Other viewpoints were also considered. Photographs attached to this report show that the site is well screened from many public areas around the site, especially from the west and south.

4.27 Views from the rear of properties on St George's Road and Church Lane have been considered, along with distant views from public footpaths located in close proximity to the site.

4.28 The nearest public footpath to the site was identified as that running north –south from St George's Road towards Church Lane. The footpath runs along the edge of the adjacent field, east of the site. It is divided from the site by a field area and in part tree and scrub.

4.29 Another public footpath runs west of the site, known as the Sett Valley Trail . Views of the site from this footpath are possible at the point where the footpath crosses St George's

Road and along the western flank of the site boundary. Additional planting as part of the proposals along this boundary and to the rear of properties abutting the site is proposed.

4.30 The implementation of additional tree and shrub planting will have a positive effect on the current scene, enhancing the already verdant character of this part of New Mills. The planting will break up and soften views of the site from the existing properties. The landscape proposals will also have positive screening benefits upon current views of the rear façades of the existing housing on St George's Road for the proposed residents' of the new development.

4.31 From Spring Bank Road in New Mills town centre far-reaching and panoramic views are possible looking east across the town towards the hills and the national park beyond. The views from this point are some 0.4km away from the site. As noted previously the sensitivity of the receptor is affected by distance from the viewpoint to the site and the field of view at this point. As such, the impact of the proposals on the wider, open views from this point only make up a very small proportion of the field of view so their impact here would not be significant.

4.32 Views of the site by pedestrians walking along Church Lane are not possible of the site being obscured by properties and the lie of the land as the site sits within the valley cutting.

4.33 Views into site are possible from the playground of the primary school, but due to the lie of the land, falling away downhill sharply, only the upper storeys and roof lines of the proposed properties will be visible, which will marry in with other roof lines currently visible of housing on St George's Road and beyond as the valley rises up northwards away from the site.

4.34 Views of the site from St George's Road are only possible for small segments of the road where there is a break in the terraced housing. The views are fleeting and narrow so will any changes in the views at this point as a result of the proposals taking place will be hard to discern

4.35 Effects on the view will be negligible therefore following development of the site.

Principle Viewpoint One: Looking west into the site from the public footpath linking Church Lane with St George's Road. (See Photos)

4.36 The view from this point is looking westwards into the site from the footpath.

4.37 The footpath travels northwards from Church Lane runs parallel with the site running down hill into the valley bottom before rising again to the north and joining St George's Road. Views of the facades of the proposed properties to the west will be visible here for a short section of the footpath.

4.38 Additional proposed planting along the eastern boundary of the site will break up views into the site. Additional planting will have a positive effect on the current scene, enhancing the already verdant character of this part of New Mills.

4.39 In line with Table 2 above, the magnitude and importance of visual impact of the development on the receptor at this point is **low**.

Principle Viewpoint Two: Looking south-east into the site from the Sett Valley Trail. (See Photos)

4.40 The view from this point is looking south east into the site from the footpath.

4.41 Views of the terraced houses proposed to the rear of the property known as Beech Cottage will be visible from this point. However, the houses are on the upper slopes tucked against the existing boundary with the gardens sloping down hill into the valley. The impact of the proposals will therefore be minimal when set against the existing dwellings on Church Lane.

4.42 Additional tree and shrub planting to the north of the properties will also help to integrate the development into the existing landscape and breaking up views into site from this area.

4.43 In line with Table 2 above, the magnitude and importance of visual impact of the development on the receptor at this point is **low**.

5.0 Landscape Design Principles and Proposals

5.1 The proposals illustrate the approach the client would adopt for the development of this site and demonstrates their commitment to establishing a scheme within a high-quality setting.

5.2 The proposals take into account the character and setting of the area through choice of building materials, placement of buildings, access roads and retaining walls, along with the consideration for further enhancement of tree and shrub planting within and bordering the site.

5.3 The design principles which have been adopted here serve to achieve the following goals:-

- To ensure the proposals are in context with the character and setting of this part of New Mills, the design ethos proposes;_
 - Rear garden to face the valley (northside) to keep the green areas open and for the gardens to fall along natural lines, not terraced;
 - Proposed stonework boundaries, rather than wooden fencing, with planting to break up and soften site edges;
 - The provision of railings to some frontage boundaries of properties in order to keep the open character of the area where possible;
 - The provision of vernacular and natural building materials, design and construction detailing;
 - The design of elevations and windows with vertical emphasis;
 - To recognise the sloping nature of the site and integrate the built form carefully to break up any strong linear lines which may otherwise be formed.
- To ensure the retention and future management of existing trees, shrubs and hedgerows within the site;
- To enhance and diversify the existing landscape character within the site and its surroundings, whilst providing an appropriate setting for the new residences;
- To provide communal gardens for the new residents through a management scheme to ensure the area is maintained, thus preserving and enhancing the open character and appearance of the area for the benefit of its users and when viewed from adjacent properties;

- To provide additional tree and shrub planting to create ecological diversification on the site whilst also providing a visual buffer of the site from the surrounding areas;
- To create a transition from the development footprint into the surrounding area.

5.4 By adhering to these landscape objectives the proposals will ensure long-term integrity and structure of the landscape character and setting of the proposed development.

5.5 Due care has been taken at all times to ensure that the siting of the new buildings takes account of the existing views, landscape structure and character.

5.6 The existing vegetation is predominately along the boundaries in the form of mature trees and shrub planting. Additional planting is proposed to improve the setting of the development site and to strengthen the planting which already exists in order to further restrict views of the site from neighbouring properties. The proposed development will then sit comfortably in the existing setting.

5.7 In conclusion therefore, the proposals concur with Proposition 3 in the introduction, that the proposals being put forward in relation to the external building arrangement and recommendations for additional soft landscaping are carefully considered so as not to impact negatively upon the character of this part of New Mills.

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

6.1 In Section 3 the characteristics of the site and the surrounding area have duly been considered, together with the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposals, covered in Section 4 of the report.

6.2 In Section 5 a set of design principles for the development have been noted, that would ensure the proposals are in keeping with this area of New Mills.

Conclusions

6.3 It has been demonstrated that careful choice of position, height, vernacular materials and form has been considered to ensure the scheme will sit comfortably within this setting.

6.4 Screening, through additional planting, will also help to fit the proposals into the existing landscape framework. Any impact the development may have by the loss in part of some openness will be offset by the enhanced and improved landscaped areas of the site.

6.5 The client accepts that maintenance and management of the existing and future tree and hedgerow areas is necessary to ensure longevity, and sustain the future benefit these have on the wider landscape in the area.

6.6 To conclude therefore, the proposals concur with Propositions 1,2 and 3 set out in the introduction, that is: -

Proposition 1

The implementation of the development proposals will have a minor detrimental effect upon the existing landscape setting and character of the site;

Proposition 2

The implementation of the development proposals will have a minor detrimental effect upon the landscape setting and character of the surrounding area;

Proposition 3

That the proposals being put forward in relation to the external building arrangements and recommendations for additional soft landscaping are carefully considered so as not to impact negatively upon the character of this part of New Mills.

APPENDIX

References

- 1 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition)