
PL2026/00558 VAR MSA

From Clerk <clerk@hamptoninardenparish.gov.uk>

Date Tue 05/05/2026 09:30

To Lawrence Osborne (Solihull MBC) <losborne@solihull.gov.uk>

 3 attachments (2 MB)

1000039643.jpg; 1000039641.jpg; 1000039642.jpg;

Dear Lawrence,

We thank you for your email dated 28th April and the 3 included attachments. After reviewing the contents, the Parish Council wish to make the following observations and comments regarding the landscape impact arising from the possible reduction of soil to be removed from the site thereby increasing the profile of the site by an extra 4m from that approved by the Planning Inspector at appeal.

Firstly, we refer to the Supplementary Viewpoint Assessment – Commentary page 4 Under the heading **Visual Characteristics Design Considerations**

It is recognised that the development raises several issues some of which are of concern and which we have highlighted in bold text: -

“From the principal viewpoint, the following key visual characteristics were identified in relation to the proposed S73 works (as illustrated on sketch item 1.5):

- *Site levels indicate that views would be taken across the top of the FFS kiosk and associated canopies.*
- *As a result, the amenity building **would not be screened by the FFS elements.***
- *The upper level of the amenity building is anticipated to sit comfortably within the skyline, below the roofscape of Walford Hall Farm.*
- *Tight height parameters introduce a strong horizontal emphasis to the built form; however, **this is not considered discordant within the wider landscape context.***
- *The HGV parking area is likely to be a visually prominent element due to its proximity to the road, however extant and proposed roadside planting will minimises its impact.*
- *Other components of the development would largely fall within peripheral vision or require deliberate views across the site to be perceived.*
- *The DCO planting along the grass verge is already in-situ as shown on the photograph (item 1.3)*

After recently inspecting the site a member of the PC found that “Extensive, thorough, timeous planting of a wide variety of native trees and shrubs at the proposed site has been undertaken by Skanska/National Highways recently. There is evidence the site has been well maintained since. The

planting has **failed**, with many whips having died within months. There are very few survivors close to the road, where the screening effect is required.

Those surviving lower down (and so offering no screening effect, even when mature) are lower-growing invasive deciduous shrubs, particularly dogwood, that would be ineffective for the purpose proposed” He goes on to say “ The site proposed for screening vegetation is a heavily sun-exposed south-facing slope, with no natural water source. Hence, the failure of the current whips. There have been suggestions of planting more established trees – these are even more prone to loss (death) when in such an unsuitable site. To hope to achieve a screen during the 5 months of the year of reduced deciduous foliage, one would require native evergreens, which limits one largely to yew and holly. Evergreens are even more prone to failure at such a site, (again) even more so when mature specimens are planted – typically one plants specimens 20-30cm height, yew and holly are not well suited to this site’s characteristics and grow very slowly in even the best circumstance”.

There is a steep 30+ degree bank commencing immediately beyond the TCB, which means the screening effect from vegetation is largely limited to only the uppermost vegetation, perhaps 2 lines of plantings. It would be highly problematic to achieve meaningful year-round screening with such limitations, in addition to the self-evident current failure of tree/shrub establishment.

Whilst we accept that there is probably a contract in place to manage landscape vegetation under the DCO arrangement we have concerns that any reliance on the performance of the whip’ planting to contribute substantial mitigation to be speculative at best and cannot agree to the statement under the **Role of Landscape Mitigation heading that**

“Tree planting secured through the DCO works on the newly formed raised ramp embankments would, once established, substantially restrict views into the site from this location. It is acknowledged that a portion of this planting would need to be removed to facilitate construction of the proposed access tunnel beneath Solihull Road, and the resulting gap in vegetation will require careful consideration within the detailed landscape strategy. The DCO tree planting will have an approximate five-year establishment advantage over planting associated with the MSA development. Consequently, planting alongside the road that is retained following construction of the access tunnel is expected to be reasonably well established prior to the MSA becoming operational. Item 1.6 indicatively illustrates the anticipated extent of screening as this planting matures; for the purposes of clarity, the sketch assumes a notional tree maturity of approximately 15 years.”

We suggest the applicant should not place heavy reliance on DCO mitigation as its performance is outside its management and control.

The applicant goes on to say “There is a clear opportunity, as illustrated in the proposed view, to provide effective additional screening of the HGV parking area through supplementary planting as part of the MSA landscape proposals, particularly along the embankment between the FFS and the HGV parking area. This would further reduce the prominence of operational elements within views from the surrounding road network.”

We thank you for the update visual impressions in illustration 1.4 and 1.5 of the document which are far superior to the original line drawings .However we cannot get away from the view that there is significant reliance on The DCO mitigation, as can be seen on 1.5 which as have our doubts that this will be effective, even after 15 years .

Once again, we stress that all through our discussions landscape mitigation has been the critical issue and the requested variation will increase, not only the visual impact that needs to be mitigated, but also

the increased possibility of noise and light pollution. It will make any such mitigation a considerable challenge, if not impossible.

It has crossed our mind that with reduction in soil removal offsite being at the heart of this planning application, then we see multiple additional opportunities for balancing the earthworks on-site, some of which would act as visual/light/sound barriers. One such would be widening of the Solihull Road (and other) embankment, with possible additional bund.

This would also create a better site for planting appropriate shrubs in depth that would give better chance of some degree of landscape mitigation. We have no experience as to what this would mean in technical terms but promote this as possible landscape, noise and even light pollution mitigation. Its effect would be almost immediate and ultimately create the impression of an open landscape which the development destroys otherwise.

We request such options are seriously considered and be included as a condition for serious consideration if this application is approved.

We accept that landscaping is a subject to be covered in the Reserved Matters application, but as you will appreciate, the fundamentals are highly relevant to this application which markedly increases the visual impact of the development on a local environment that is under wider development pressure.

We reluctantly accept that 15 years may be the norm that is used to show the degree to which a sensitive development is visually mitigated. However, if there is a possible option to significantly minimising this timescale, whilst probably alleviating the gamble of successful acceptable landscaping mitigation then it must be explored. We believe a bund would do this and as stated earlier any approval of this application should be predicated by a condition that a **bund and/or similar options** be fully investigated prior to any Reserved Matters application being submitted.

The Parish Council is open to discussions with all parties now or prior to any Reserved Matters application being submitted.

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3 examples of dead whips contained in the attached images. Many were looked at but there are likely over 1000 on that one bank alone.

Kind regards.

Julie Barnes

Parish Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer & Data Protection Officer
to Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council

Telephone: 01675 442017

Website: hamptoninardenparish.gov.uk

Clerk: Julie Barnes, clerk@hamptoninardenparish.gov.uk

Address: The Parish Office, Fentham Hall, Marsh Lane, Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull, B92 0AH

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