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Our Ref

14th September 2021

Dear Lee,

**Former Wheathill Riding School, Naylors Road, Knowsley, L27 2YA.
Response to Landscape Comments.**

This letter and the attached updated Landscaping Plan (ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D) provide a response to comments received from Knowsley Council's Landscape Architect (received 9th September 2021).

For ease of reference, this letter follows the same structure as the comments – our comments are provided in **red**.

1. *The building's form is helped by the building being broken up with the different building styles. It is similar in analogy to the existing Primary School being a farmhouse, with the new building frontage for animal husbandry and the rear buildings agricultural sheds. It is therefore giving a developmental context which is appropriate to the Greenbelt setting, that is greater than the current situation is at present.* **Noted.**
2. *When considering the landscape setting, it is felt that the agricultural context has been lost. The concept should be more in keeping with the surroundings of farmsteads which are typically surrounded with pasture based meadows with native hedgerows and scattered trees. This being the case it is advised that:*
 - a. *The block paving surfacing around the buildings is replaced with a resin bonded stone surface with a natural stone finish. Due to the surrounding context, there should be avoidance of buff or black / very dark grey stone colours.* **The proposed block paving will remain but the comment in respect of the colour is noted and samples will be submitted for approval prior to the paving works commencing on site (if required).**
 - b. *Mass shrub planting is replaced with species rich wildflower areas.* **It was understood that the shrub planting was required to provide screening to the boundaries to screen parking areas etc. Therefore, the planting has been retained with added wild flower areas to compliment these where appropriate.**
 - c. *Planting focuses on native species.* **This has been amended – see attached updated landscape plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D.**
 - d. *Hedgerows and tree planting should surround the development, including the western side and frontage, this will help soften the boundary security fence and help it tie in better with the*

surrounding landscape. Additional planting has been added to the western boundary to soften the fencing – see attached updated landscape plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D.

- e. *Under the existing trees at the front it is suggested to remove the fence and clear the undergrowth, and weaker trees under the existing mature trees which should be crown lifted. This would then be supported by planting a hedgerow along the new boundary fence and planting bulbs and wildflowers within a grassed area, to give a natural and attractive uplift to the entrance. Further trees could also be planted next to the entrance to be replacements when the other mature trees eventually fail. To the front of the site the existing fence is to remain, however, annotation has been added to the amended Landscape Plan (ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D) that the tree area to the frontage should be improved through thinning and crown lifting of existing trees.*
- f. *Hedgerows should be 60% Crataegus, 15% ilex, and the rest made up of native species. Avoid Ligustrum as it doesn't form compact hedges. The hedgerow have been amended - see attached updated Landscape Plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D.*
- g. *There should be focus on climax tree species in / along the hedgerows, so species like Quercus sp, Carpinus betulus, Fagus sp, Tilia cordata. It is also fine if smaller trees like Acer Campestre were planted which is native and typically found in hedgerows, and also evergreens like Scots pines or climax trees which have become common-place like Castanea sativa. The current tree planting pallet is not typically found in an agricultural setting and is not supported. The tree pallet has been amended – see attached updated Landscape Plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D.*
- h. *The smaller fruiting trees should be focused around a nature garden, but locating a few along the hedgerows is acceptable. The location of fruiting trees within the pupil areas is not appropriate for this type of school setting.*
- i. *Thought regarding the spaces around the buildings needs consideration, so the potential play area is like a farmyard / courtyard setting, with focus on the detailing to mimic this character a bit more. Pupils attending the type of school proposed thrive in open spaces and creating smaller enclosed play spaces would not be appropriate in our school setting. These would also cause operational and safeguarding issues.*
- j. *What is the use of the grass area to the north of this space? This would be ideal place to be a nature area, whether meadow / orchard / forest schools / introduction of a pond to help with habitat diversity which could be part of a SuDS feature. At the least the perimeter needs to be surrounded with hedgerows and with trees to help strengthen the rural paddock concept. Meadow grass land areas have been added to this area in front of the additional fencing along this boundary as noted above. A significant portion of the existing scrub in this area will be also be maintained located directly behind the new MUGA (see attached updated Landscape Plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D). As noted on the application plans there is already a significant water feature on at the existing Lakeside School site that is used for outdoor curriculum activities but this has its challenges and it would not be appropriate (in operational terms) to introduce a secondary pond area.*
- k. *The timber knee rail does not look to serve a purpose and is out of keeping in a rural setting, especially if a hedge is planted around the grassed area to the north of the building / potential play area, so this should be removed. An estate railing fence could be used instead which is more appropriate. The timber knee rail has been omitted (see attached updated Landscape Plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D). A estate rail fence would not be appropriate from a Health and Safety*

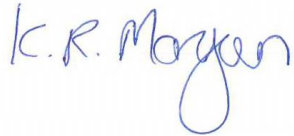
perspective in the Witherslack Group's school settings so has not been introduced in the revised proposals.

3. *There several drawings which do not show the MUGA having fencing but it is noted that there are details on the MUGA Plan, appearing that there is to be a mesh fence around. As this adjoins the court with no runoff, the lower panel should be strengthened as it will be used as a rebound and also to include noise suppression pads on fixings. To help reinforce the rural paddock concept hedge planting needs to surround the outer path of the MUGA area. The drawings need to show the same so those which do not show MUGA boundary treatment need to be revised. The Witherslack Group would accept a planning condition in respect of further details to be submitted for approval prior to the installation of the MUGA. The Witherslack Group has not allowed for hedge planting to the path around the MUGA for the reasons detailed in response to 2i.*
4. *With the grassed area to the northwest, understanding of its purpose is necessary and to appraise opportunities to improve the opportunities for more wildlife habitats on the site; or if this is to be a sports field would the MUGA be better orientated north south so the space is more usable? It is considered that the MUGA is best suited orientated as shown from an operational and safeguarding perspective.*
5. *The car park has a very engineered design. This would be better to extended towards the western boundary and curved to run nearer to the northern boundary and also have trees to break up the dominance of the car park. Further there are opportunities to introduce SuDS systems to collect surface water into rain gardens to make the scheme more environmentally sustainable. Currently these have been omitted from the scheme and it is disappointing that the only SuDS system proposed is an engineered inception tank, which is not as environmentally sustainable. The amended car park layout has already been captured through discussions with the highways departments of the respective Councils. Car parking provision along the eastern boundary has been reduced with the displaced parking added along the northern boundary.*
6. *With the car park at the front, to enable this to have a more rural feel, hedge planting against the parking bays (probably focusing on none thorn species like hazel and having wildflower / bulb planting in the grassed areas with the scattered trees) should be incorporated. This planting has been incorporated (see attached updated Landscape Plan ref: PR/210304/GA/01 REV D. We have noted planting to be maintained at a max height of 900mm in this area so not to compromise road safety in this area.*

In addition to allow pedestrians walking to the school from Belle Vale/Netherley such as school employees a pedestrian link should be incorporated from the current school through to the new school to negate the widening of the footpath at the front of the site and the loss of the vegetation/planting there which would impact on the openness of the Green Belt. If travelling by bus to the school from Liverpool the bus stop to the north east of the site is nearer so more likely to be the bus stop of choice. Staff accessing the site by foot will still be able to access the site via the existing primary school gates and will be able to use the existing school entrance points if they wish as this will be the main access point for primary children to access their existing playground areas.

I trust the above and attached is in order and addresses the comments raised, however, should you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K. R. Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "M" at the end.

Katharine Morgan MRTPI
Associate, Development and Planning