

Landscape Character Area Report

for the

Former Sales and
Marketing Suite,
Kennet Island

On behalf of

Berkeley Homes (Western) Ltd

Quality Control

Landscape Character Area Report

for

Approved by:

Name: Phill Wray

Title:	Director
--------	----------

Date: 20th July 2018

Berkeley Group (Western) Ltd.
200 Longwater Avenue
Green Park Reading
Berkshire RG2 6GB

The Landscape Partnership
Registered office
Greenwood House
15a St
Cuthberts
Street Bedford
MK40 3JG

Registered in England No. 2709001

Contents

Report

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT	1
3	FOUDRY BROOK CORRIDOR - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA	2
4	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS	3
5	REVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: FOUDRY BROOK CORRIDOR	5
6	CONCLUSIONS	13

Appendix 01

Drawings

B08043.72 Landscape Proposals

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape Character Area Report has been prepared by The Landscape Partnership Limited on behalf of our client Berkeley Homes (Western) Ltd in support of planning application Ref:180543 for the: *“Proposed construction of 12 apartments (1 x 1 bed, 11 x 2 bed) with associated car parking, landscaping and open space, and infrastructure provision”*.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Report is to consider the specific character and function of the 'Foudry Brook Corridor' Landscape Character Area as identified within Section 6.0 of the Development Brief for Southside East, Reading, prepared by St. James Homes and submitted as part of the 2007 reserved matters application (App Ref: 071475), to assess whether the proposed development and the associated revised landscape scheme meets the objectives of the Landscape Character Area.

2 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Site is located at the main access and 'gateway' to the new residential development of Kennet Island off the A33, which links north to Reading Town Centre and south to the M4. The Site is situated between the five storey Cygnet House (Block Y), a residential apartment block to the north, and the five storey Hilton Hotel to the south, and is accessed from the A33 via Lindisfarne Way and Drake Way. These buildings along with the residential two to four storey residential block, which front Drake Way, define the site frontage when viewed from the A33.
- 2.2 Flowing between the A33 and the Kennet Island development is Foudry Brook, a tributary of the River Kennet, which is densely vegetated with naturally occurring willow *Salix spp.*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and elder *Sambucus nigra*. A 15m Wildlife Buffer Zone associated with the Foudry Brook is maintained to the west of the site. A SuDS water feature has been excavated between Foudry Brook and the Kennet Island development as part of the 'Open Water and Scrape Network' with a maturing landscape setting of red and yellow stemmed dog wood *Cornus alba 'Siberica'* and *Cornus stolonifera 'Flaveramea'* and a range of marginal and aquatic planting, managed to enhance biodiversity, including habitat for water vole and breeding birds.
- 2.3 A brick and tiled, pitched roof building housing an electricity sub-station, substantially screened by tall, mature evergreen shrubs, and located close to a rank of visitor parking is located to the south-east of the Site.
- 2.4 Timber decking forming a boardwalk along the western elevation of the Cygnet House (Block Y) links to a viewing deck just to the north of the Site at the southern end of the SuDS waterbody feature.
- 2.5 The Site is currently occupied by the Sales and Marketing Suite with car parking adjacent to Drake Way with a maturing landscape scheme that provides an attractive setting for the existing building.

- 2.6 The existing landscape setting for the Sales and Marketing Suite comprises an east facing site frontage with a nine-space car park directly accessed from Drake Way and separated from the road by a formal clipped box hedge with topiary box balls approximately 0.5m high, reinforced on the site side by a Photinia 'Red Robin' hedge approximately 1.35m high with two semi-mature trees, Norway maple *Acer platanoides* on the site frontage. The car parking ranks are defined by landscape strips of formal, clipped box hedges and low ornamental shrubs including lavender *Lavandula spp.*
- 2.7 To the north of the Marketing Suite lies the publicly accessible viewing deck, with a timber boardwalk which provides links to Drake Way to the east and towards Cygnet House to the north. The boardwalk is set within mature shrubs including red and yellow stemmed dogwood *Cornus alba* 'Siberica' and *Cornus stolonifera* 'Flaveramea', *Hebe spp* and shrubby honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida* 'Maigreen' and topiary box *Buxus sempervirens* with intermittent trees including cherry *Prunus spp.*
- 2.8 To the west of the Marketing Suite lies an area of formal grass lawn with young intermittent feathered trees, Himalayan Birch *Betula Jacqemontii*, an area enclosed by a range of ornamental shrubs including broom *Cytisus praecox*, red stemmed dogwood *Cornus alba* 'Siberica', dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire', *Garrya elliptica* and native shrubs including hazel *Corylus avellana*, Guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*. Further west is the Foudry Brook with its densely vegetated margins including *Salix spp* and common alder *Alnus glutinosa* within the 15m Wildlife Buffer Zone associated with the Foudry Brook.
- 2.9 To the south of the Marketing Suite is an area of formal grass lawn enclosed with red and yellow stemmed dogwood *Cornus alba* 'Siberica' and *Cornus stolonifera* 'Flaveramea', tall hazel *Corylus avellana* and a couple of large *Eucalyptus* trees.

3 FOUdry BROOK CORRIDOR - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

- 3.1 The Development Brief for Southside East, Reading, describes Foudry Brook Corridor Landscape Character Area under the following headings:

- Description

"The Foudry Brook corridor provides a broad landscape buffer along the full length of the development site....The 15 metre Wildlife Buffer Zone will be maintained along the full length of the site..."

"Access through it (the Wildlife Buffer Zone) will be carefully controlled to avoid disruption to wildlife".

"The proposals are to enhance the conservation value of the area, creating new habitats and increasing biodiversity. Existing vegetation is to be largely retained and elements of formal landscape treatment may be introduced".

- Function

"Wildlife buffer zone"

“Landscape buffer to built development”

- Urban Design

“The broad strip of landscape along the Foudry Brook corridor creates a setting for the three focal apartment buildings which will announce the development as seen from the A33 – the new southern entrance to Reading. In combination with lower buildings set further back, these focal blocks form part of an undulating line of development enjoying views out over Foudry Brook”.

- Landscape Treatments - Soft Landscape and Hard Landscape

“Landscape treatment for conservation value. Retention of existing vegetation where providing valuable habitat. Retention of existing vegetation where providing valuable habitat. Management regime to promote biodiversity”.

“Boardwalk adjacent to wetland area”.

- Planting Strategy

“The planting along the brook corridor is to be in accordance with Environment Agency guidelines”.

“Species of local provenance are to be used”.

“Existing vegetation is to be retained in some locations to provide wildlife habitat. The brook margins and wetland areas are generally to be allowed to regenerate naturally”.

“New planting may include some marginal/aquatic species, scrub and tree planting”.

- Movement

“There is no vehicular or pedestrian movement within the Foudry Brook corridor with the exception of the proposed and existing bridge links”.

- 3.2 Section 4 of this report provides a description of the development proposals and landscape proposals and Section 5 of this report indicates how the proposals meet the objectives of the Landscape Character Area.

4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Following consideration of the ‘Foudry Brook Corridor’ Landscape Character Area, the proposed development with revised landscape scheme is hereby presented to Reading Borough Council for consideration. Please refer to the revised landscape proposals drawing, Drawing Number B08043.72, submitted alongside this report.
- 4.2 The revised landscape scheme comprises a number of features that address section 6.0 Landscape Character Areas - Foudry Brook Corridor of the Development Brief. These features include the provision of additional native shrub planting to give further protection for the Wildlife Buffer Zone. The Landscape Proposals include the following features:

- * the retention and protection of the existing trees and shrubs within the Wildlife Buffer Zone and many of the existing trees and shrubs associated with the current landscape setting of the marketing suite, including the semi-mature lime trees along Lindisfarne Way, the Norway maple trees adjacent to Drake Way and the tall evergreen Photinia hedging to the southern and eastern site boundaries;
- * the management of the existing mature native dogwood and hazel shrubs through selective coppicing to provide the regeneration of new stems from the base, creating a variety of vegetation heights and an uneven age structure to contribute to the nature conservation value of the site, for visual integration and to prolong the life of the plants;
- * new trees including weeping birch *Betula pendula* 'Tristis' and Field maple *Acer campestre* 'Elsrijk' are shown within the proposed herbaceous and ornamental shrubs. These trees would provide an attractive setting for the new building, providing a physical and visual separation between public and private spaces, enable the integration of the proposed building into the landscape, screen views primarily from the north and the west of the site and provide additional habitat for birds and bats;
- * large, semi-mature specimen trees including two Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* and one weeping birch *Betula pendula* 'Tristis' are proposed to the south-west and to the west of the proposed building to provide additional landscape integration, screening for views from the south-west and provide additional habitat for birds and bats;
- * the proposed herbaceous and ornamental shrub planting will be both attractive to residents and visitors and provide wildlife benefits. Shrubs have been selected for their contribution to wildlife, including *Cornus alba*, *Cytisus* spp., *Lavendula* spp., *Hebe* spp., *Mahonia* spp., *Amelanchier* spp., *Corylus avellana*, *Cornus sanguinea*, *Geranium* spp., *Salvia* spp., *Sarcococca* spp., *Rosmarinus* and *Forsythia*.
- * the amenity grass area not only provides space for informal recreation, but also floristically rich meadow species, which will be developed through management with a variety of mowing regimes to provide wildlife benefit. A relatively short wildflower sward is specified to allow pedestrians to walk through the meadow. Swathes of native daffodil bulbs at the edge of the amenity grass areas will provide an early nectar source and be left to die back naturally within areas of taller floristically rich meadow; and
- * the existing boardwalk adjacent to the northern edge of the current car park will require slight relocation to accommodate the proposals. An additional boardwalk link will be provided from the proposed building to the boardwalk and viewing deck at the southern edge of the existing SuDS

feature water body.

- * an additional area of native shrubs to be planted in gaps within the Wildlife Buffer Zone to strengthen the planting associated with the buffer and to extend beyond the 15m boundary by 2-3m towards the proposed apartment block into the existing grassed area between the buffer and the proposed apartment block, to further protect the wildlife buffer and to enhance the conservation value of the area through the planting of hawthorn *Crataegus mongyna*, (provides nectar and pollen for bees), hazel *Corylus avellana* (nuts for squirrels and birds), Butcher's Broom *Ruscus aculeatus* (red berries for birds especially thrush) and holly *Ilex aquifolium* (provides nectar and pollen for bees).
- * the proposed wildflower meadow is retained and adjusted towards the proposed apartment block for informal recreation and as an enhanced wildlife habitat for invertebrates and reptiles.
- * to further protect the buffer zone from pedestrian access, the proposed footpath linking the existing boardwalk to the area of wildflower meadow to the west of the proposed apartment block has been omitted.

5 REVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA: FOUDRY BROOK CORRIDOR

- 5.1 We now make the following comments, stating how the proposed development and associated revised landscape proposals meet the objectives of the Landscape Character Area (LCA) within the Development Brief.

"Description"

- 5.2 *"The Foudry Brook corridor provides a broad landscape buffer along the full length of the development site.... The 15 metre Wildlife Buffer Zone will be maintained along the full length of the site..."*
- 5.3 The existing 15m wide Wildlife Buffer Zone adjacent to Foudry Brook to the west of the site including tall, mature white willow and common alder trees close to the brook with a dense scrub understorey of hawthorn and elder covers the majority of the buffer zone. Towards the eastern edge of the buffer zone, some smaller growing native and non-native shrubs have been planted and established to form part of the buffer. A couple of eucalyptus trees are establishing within the buffer close to Lindisfarne Way. Although not native, the eucalyptus trees do provide a tall evergreen feature at the gateway to Kennet Island.
- 5.4 The existing planting, as described above, which lies on the boundary of the Site will be retained as part of the proposals. Therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "Description".

- 5.5 An extract from the Landscape Proposals drawing no. B08043.72 below shows the existing vegetation associated with the 15m wide Wildlife Buffer Zone and the existing mature vegetation, adjacent to Lindisfarne Way, which wraps around the southern part of the Site.



- 5.6 *“Access through it (the Wildlife Buffer Zone) will be carefully controlled to avoid disruption to wildlife”.*
- 5.7 Due to the presence and dense nature of the existing vegetation beyond the Site boundary, including thorny hawthorn, access is prevented and therefore controlled to avoid disruption to wildlife, in accordance with the above statement.
- 5.8 The current situation will not change as part of the proposals. Therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA “Description”.
- 5.9 *“The proposals are to enhance the conservation value of the area, creating new habitats and increasing*

biodiversity. Existing vegetation is to be largely retained and elements of formal landscape treatment may be introduced”.

- 5.10 The existing retained mature vegetation associated with the Wildlife Buffer Zone including tall native trees and dense scrub would be retained and managed to provide good conservation value, especially foraging and nesting for birds, habitat for invertebrates, cover for reptiles and foraging and commuting for bats.
- 5.11 The addition and establishment of more formal elements including ornamental shrubs of wildlife benefit and individual trees to provide an attractive landscape setting for the proposed apartment block, provides structural diversity for wildlife to shelter and for an increased range of flowering and berry-bearing for wildlife benefit. The addition of native shrubs to strengthen and extend the wildlife buffer, which also provides additional wildlife benefit through the provision of hawthorn *Crataegus mongyna*, (provides nectar and pollen for bees), hazel *Corylus avellana* (nuts for squirrels and birds), Butcher's Broom *Ruscus aculeatus* (red berries for birds especially thrush) and holly *Ilex aquifolium* (provides nectar and pollen for bees) as part of the extended shrub mix is proposed.
- 5.12 The conservation value of the area, as described above, will be enhanced by the proposals, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA “Description”.

“Function”

5.13 *“Wildlife buffer zone”*

The function of the wildlife buffer zone as part of the Foudry Brook Corridor is preserved through the retention of the existing vegetation of tall trees and dense scrub. The landscape proposals show the addition of shrubs of wildlife benefit within the eastern edge of the buffer and the extension of the shrub planting beyond the 15m buffer, away from the brook and towards the development, increasing and protecting the vegetated buffer of Foudry Brook.

- 5.14 The function of the wildlife buffer will remain and the buffer will be enhanced by the landscape proposals, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA “Function”.
- 5.15 An extract from the Landscape Proposals drawing no. B08043.72 below shows the proposed native shrub planting to strengthen and extend beyond the 15m boundary of the Wildlife Buffer Zone.



5.16 *"Landscape buffer to built development"*

5.17 The function of the landscape buffer to built development is retained (see comment above relating to the retention of existing vegetation and planting and refer to the Comparative Landscape Assessment dated March 2018 prepared by The Landscape Partnership).

5.18 The function of the landscape buffer will remain and the buffer will be enhanced by the landscape proposals, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "Function".

"Urban Design"

5.19 *"The broad strip of landscape along the Foudry Brook corridor creates a setting for the three focal apartment buildings which will announce the development as seen from the A33 – the new southern entrance to Reading. In combination with lower buildings set further back, these focal blocks form part of an undulating line of development enjoying views out over Foudry Brook".*

5.20 The addition of one apartment building, slightly lower than the apartment blocks to the north and the

hotel to the south, would add to the undulating line of development as the new southern approach to Reading. The repetitive form would be enhanced by the addition of an apartment building in this location, without which there would be a gap with the rhythm interrupted. The addition of one apartment block and associated landscape will not prevent the enjoyment of “views out over the Foudry Brook” from the existing focal blocks.

- 5.21 The current situation will be enhanced by the addition of the apartment building that will add to the undulating line of development and accentuate the rhythm of development, therefore, we consider that the proposals provide an improvement on the requirements of the LCA in relation to the approved scheme and therefore exceed the objective of the LCA “Urban Design”

“Landscape Treatments”

“Soft Landscape”

- 5.22 *“Landscape treatment for conservation value. Retention of existing vegetation where providing valuable habitat. Retention of existing vegetation where providing valuable habitat. Management regime to promote biodiversity”.*

- 5.23 The existing retained mature vegetation associated with the Wildlife Buffer Zone, including tall native trees and dense scrub, would be retained and managed (refer to the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan dated October 2013 prepared by CSa Environmental Planning) for nature conservation value and to promote diversity. Proposed planting would not only be attractive as an enhanced landscaped setting for the proposed apartment block and an enhanced ‘gateway’ for Kennet Island, but would also provide enhanced habitat with ornamental shrub and herbaceous planting providing wildlife food source in the form of berries ripening at different stages during the year, nectar for invertebrates and provide bird nesting habitat through the planting of the following shrub species: *Cornus alba*, *Cytisus spp.*, *Lavendula spp.*, *Hebe spp.*, *Mahonia spp.*, *Amelanchier spp.*, *Corylus avellana*, *Cornus sanguinea*, *Geranium spp.*, *Salvia spp.*, *Sarcococca spp.*, *Forsythia spp.*, *Rosmarinus* and *Lavendula*. Trees of wildlife benefit are also proposed including birch and Scots pine. The area of proposed low growing wildflower turf would provide habitat for invertebrates and reptiles as part of promoting diversity. The Landscape Proposals show the addition of shrubs of wildlife benefit within the eastern edge of the buffer and an extension of the shrub planting beyond the 15meter buffer, away from the brook and towards the development, therefore increasing and protecting the vegetated buffer of Foudry Brook.

- 5.24 The conservation value of the area, as described above, will be enhanced by the landscape proposals, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA “Soft Landscape Treatment” and are an improvement in comparison to the approved scheme.

- 5.25 An extract from the Landscape Proposals drawing no. B08043.72 below shows the proposed

ornamental shrub planting providing an attractive setting for the proposed apartment block.



“Hard Landscape”

5.26 *“Boardwalk adjacent to wetland area”.*

5.27 The existing boardwalk, for a short section just the north of the proposed apartment block would be relocated where removal is required as part of the redevelopment, to accommodate a layout amendment to the car parking area, which will provide an improved alignment in comparison the existing boardwalk.

5.28 The current situation will not change, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA “Hard Landscape Treatment”.

“Planting Strategy”

5.29 *“The planting along the brook corridor is to be in accordance with Environment Agency guidelines”.*

The existing native planting along the brook corridor was designed and implemented following Environment Agency guidelines. The Environment Agency guidelines and best practice are as follows: no planting of invasive species; to use plant species local to the area, appropriate to a riverside landscape setting and soil type; to ensure trees or shrubs do not block the watercourse; to integrate the waterside bank into the designed landscape; to prevent or facilitate access to the water's edge as appropriate; to reduce maintenance and management implications; to extend wildlife habitats and to create diverse plant communities.

- 5.30 The existing planting, as described in 5.27, which lies on the boundary of the Site was designed and implemented following Environment Agency guidelines will be retained and the landscape proposals will extend wildlife habitats and create diverse plant communities. Therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "*Planting Strategy*".
- 5.31 "*Species of local provenance are to be used*".
- 5.32 Species of local provenance are present along the brook corridor including native hazel *Corylus avellana*, English oak *Quercus robur*, Goat willow *Salix caprea*, field maple *Acer campestre*, Silver birch *Betula pendula*, Common alder *Alnus glutinosa*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, native grass mix and native wetland mix. The landscape proposals indicate the use of primarily ornamental plants of wildlife benefit as an appropriate attractive landscape setting for the apartment block. The landscape proposals also show the landscape buffer strengthened and extended through the planting of species of local provenance including holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Butcher's Broom *Ruscus aculeatus* hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. The wildflower meadow will include species of local provenance.
- 5.33 The existing planting, as described in 5.29 above, which lies on the boundary of the Site comprises species of local provenance and will be retained and the proposed native shrub planting comprises species of local provenance, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "*Planting Strategy*".
- 5.34 An extract from the Landscape Proposals drawing no. B08043.72 showing the extent of wildflower meadow between the native tree and shrub planting associated with the Foudry Brook Wildlife Buffer Zone and the ornamental shrub planting, which provides an attractive setting for the apartment building.



- 5.35 *“Existing vegetation is to be retained in some locations to provide wildlife habitat. The brook margins and wetland areas are generally to be allowed to regenerate naturally”.*
- 5.36 The existing retained mature vegetation associated with the Wildlife Buffer Zone, including tall native trees and dense scrub, would be retained and managed (refer to the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan dated October 2013 prepared by CSa Environmental Planning) for conservation value and to promote diversity.
- 5.37 The existing vegetation, as described above, which lies on the boundary of the Site will be retained as part of the proposals, therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA “Planting Strategy”.
- 5.38 *“New planting may include some marginal/aquatic species, scrub and tree planting”.*
- 5.39 The landscape proposals include ornamental tree and scrub planting outside of the buffer to compliment the landscape setting of the proposed apartment building. The landscape proposals include

an element of shrub, which will form scrub and tree planting within and adjacent to the Wildlife Buffer Zone to strengthen and extend the landscape buffer.

- 5.40 New scrub and tree planting will be planted therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "Planting Strategy".

"Movement"

- 5.41 *"There is no vehicular or pedestrian movement within the Foudry Brook corridor with the exception of the proposed and existing bridge links".*
- 5.42 No roads or pedestrian links are proposed in the Foudry Brook corridor.
- 5.43 The current situation will not change therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "Movement".
- 5.44 *"There will be no pedestrian movement or access within the Wildlife Buffer Zone. This will be prevented by a combination of water bodies, changes in level and planting in addition to provision of alternative circulation routes".*
- 5.45 Pedestrian movement within the Wildlife Buffer Zone is restricted by the presence of the existing SuDS feature to the north of the proposed apartment building and by the retained mature vegetation associated with the Wildlife Buffer Zone, including tall native trees and dense scrub. Additional native shrubs and non-native ornamental shrubs are proposed between the buffer zone and the proposed apartment building. In order to further protect the Wildlife Buffer Zone, the previously proposed pedestrian route, shown on the landscape proposals submitted with the Comparative Landscape Assessment, has been omitted.
- 5.46 The current situation will not change therefore, the proposals meet the objectives of the LCA "Movement".

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Following our review of the Foudry Brook Corridor Landscape Character Area of the Development Brief, we confirm that the proposed apartment block and associated landscape proposals meet the objectives of the Landscape Character Area with reference to the Description, the Function, Landscape Treatment: Soft and Hard Landscape, Planting Strategy and Movement. Meeting the objectives of the LCA includes recognition of the existence and purpose of the 15m wide Wildlife Buffer Zone for the Foudry Brook Corridor through the retention and management of the existing retained mature vegetation associated with the brook. The proposed development sits outside of the 15m buffer zone and does not impact on the buffer zone. The landscape proposals enhances the setting of the buffer zone. The landscape proposals show a strengthened landscape buffer, an extended wildlife habitat and protection of the buffer zone from pedestrian access.

- 6.2 Overall, the proposed apartment block and associated landscape scheme meets the objectives of the LCA, which is primarily about safeguarding the Foudry Brook Wildlife Buffer Zone. In terms of the LCA's objectives for Urban Design, it is considered that the proposed apartment building would enhance the undulating line of development and bridge the gap in the architectural rhythm for the new southern entrance to Reading. It would also strengthen urban legibility and reinforce the 'gateway' for Kennet Island.