
INFORMATION ITEM

Aylesford
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Subject: Landscaping and tree planting
Location: Land Adjacent To London Road South Aylesford Retail Park
Quarry Wood Industrial Estate Aylesford Kent

1. Description:

1.1 This is an information report following on from Members request at the November Area Planning Committee No.3. The report covers the current status of the approved tree works and landscape planting.

2. The Site:

2.1 The site lies within the South Aylesford Retail Park, which lies at the front of the Quarrywood industrial area. The site lies to the south of London Road and to the west of the Mills Road roundabout. The trees and landscaping in question lie to the north of the Homebase store and to the north and east of the Harveys store. The trees and landscaping form a buffer to London Road.

3. Planning History (most relevant):

3.1 TM/05/00559/FL Approved 15.04.2005
Provision of additional paving and planting.

3.2 TM/04/03229/FL Approved 10.11.2004
New pathway and landscaping.

3.3 TM/04/00091/FL Approved 27.02.2004
Refurbishment of existing buildings, including external alterations.

3.4 TM/03/03947/RD Approved 30.01.2004
Revised details of landscaping for unit 1 (Harveys).

3.5 TM/03/03495/TPOC Approved 27.02.2004
Coppice 27 trees (1 beech & 26 maple), fell 23 trees (15 pine, 2 maple, 1 silver birch, 2 hawthorn, 1 cherry & 2 sycamore) and crown lift 1 pine tree.

4. Determining Issues:

4.1 There are three areas of trees and landscaping, which have been subject to separate previous applications, which I propose to address, these being:

- The land to the north of the Homebase store fronting onto London Road;

- The land between the Homebase and Harveys stores;
- The land surrounding the Harveys store.

Land to the north of Homebase

- 4.2 I understand that the main area of concern relates to the tree belt adjacent to the Homebase store fronting onto London Road. The trees in this area are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. An application for TPO consent (TM/03/03495/TPOC) to coppice 27 beech and maple trees, fell 23 pine, maple, silver birch, hawthorn, cherry and sycamore trees and to also crown lift 1 pine tree was submitted in 2004. This application was approved subject to a number of conditions relating to the submission of additional information regarding monitoring and review of the condition of the trees, along with details of fencing to protect the coppiced area of trees.
- 4.3 During the summer of 2004 during the refurbishment works on the adjoining units, the trees to be coppiced were removed and two trees intended to be retained were removed. This appears to have taken place in order to allow access to undertake external changes to the side elevation of the Homebase store. The approved works to other trees were also carried out. The owners agent and the contractors have expressed their regrets in writing regarding the unauthorised works to the planted area and have submitted an application showing replacement planting.
- 4.4 This replacement planting, along with a replacement footpath, formed the content of application TM/04/03299/FL, which also included the outstanding details required through conditions on tree application TM/03/03495/TPOC. The new scheme involved planting one semi-mature field maple (min 4.5m high), 30 hornbeam whips (1.25m), hedging (0.4-0.6m) along with a service footpath beside Homebase and extensive shrub and bulb planting. The application also specified the erection of chestnut paling fencing on a temporary basis in order to protect the trees as construction works were still being carried out in this locality. The application was approved in November 2004, subject to the landscaping as shown on the approved plans being carried out in the first planting season following completion of the refurbishment of the adjacent site as approved under TM/04/00091/FL. This condition was imposed to ensure that any new planting would be carried out after the adjacent refurbishment works were completed, to ensure that new planting was not damaged by construction works which were still being carried out.
- 4.5 Whilst the protective chestnut paling fencing has been erected, none of the landscaping and tree planting has taken place. The owners have completed the adjacent Homebase store within the last year and this is currently the first planting season since the works at Homebase were completed. The owners are not currently in breach of this condition, as the planting season would normally run until the end of March. However, the wording of the condition is such that it does

not actually rely solely on the completion of the Homebase store. It does not take effect until the refurbishment of all this parade of retail units has been completed. Notwithstanding, the owners have been contacted regarding carrying out the planting next to Homebase store within the current planting season and I await their formal response. Therefore, whilst the owners have carried out unauthorised works to the protected trees, a replacement planting scheme has been agreed and this is the first planting season within which they have been able to carry out any replacement planting. Therefore, there is no breach of condition, as the first planting season has not finished nor has the refurbishment of the parade of retail units.

Land between Homebase and Harveys

- 4.6 Under application TM/05/00559/FL, planning permission has been granted to provide an additional paving between the Homebase and Harvey stores, along with additional area of planting. This scheme seeks to improve pedestrian access from Homebase to London Road, which involves widening of the footpath. The landscaping proposals involve hedge and shrub planting on the land between Homebase and Harveys and do not involve any tree works and would enhance the appearance of this area. This planning permission has not been implemented, as the footpath has not been widened. Therefore the Borough Council can not at present require the landscaping to be carried out. However, once the footpath is widened, the owners will have to carry out the landscape planting within the first planting season following the completion of the development. Given these circumstances, there is currently no breach in respect of this planning permission.

Land around Harveys

- 4.7 The third area in question is the land around the relatively newly constructed Harveys store. As part of planning permission TM/02/03599/FL for the new retail unit, landscaping details were required to be submitted, approved and implemented. These landscaping details were originally approved under TM/03/1729/RD and subsequently revised by application TM/03/3947/RD. The approved planting includes extensive shrub planting, along with the planting of 13 native trees. The new store is now occupied and the planting has been implemented. It is acknowledged that a small number of the shrubs have swapped positions within the general landscaping area, but this neither detracts from the visual amenity of the locality, nor reduces the softening effect on the new store that the landscaping provides. The tree planting is essential as the approved drawings and the owners appear to have retained an existing semi-mature tree, where previously it was shown to be removed. However, three laurel trees proposed within the car park have been relocated to the Mills Road frontage. This arrangement is visually acceptable. Therefore, I am satisfied that the landscaping and tree planting approved for Harveys has been carried out satisfactorily albeit acknowledging the minor repositioning.

5. Recommendation:

5.1 FOR INFORMATION.

Contact: Aaron Hill