de Courcy
town planning consultants

Viola Hill, Ashford Lane, Steep GU32 1AA

Formation of pond with associated earthworks and landscaping

Supporting Information

Landscape Impact Statement

The proposed pond would be formed within a field to the south-west of Viola Hill. Viola Hill is a large contemporary dwelling current nearing completion which replaces a previous dwelling on the site.

The land for the proposed lake has been disturbed with earthworks for a larger lake carried out about 2 years ago. Works initially commenced to form a larger lake, but works ceased following contact with the Council's enforcement team.

The land slopes down from the hanger to Ashford Lane to the south. The field is mainly grassland with a woodland copse to the west of the proposed lake. Ashford Lane is sunken in the vicinity of the site and the north side of the lane is marked by a well developed mixed hedge. There are views up across the site to the hanger from the junction of the access drive and Ashford Lane (see Photo.1 below). The house is set back into this view and is largely screened by existing vegetation from the lane.

Photo.1 – View towards copse and hanger over proposed lake area

There are permissive footpaths running along the contours of the hanger to the north. There are glimpses over the site from the closest footpath which runs to the rear of Viola Hill during the winter months but any views would be screened during the summer months.

The strip of land between Ashford Lane and the hanger is characterised by agricultural fields stretching from the road to the base of the hanger and divided by well developed hedges, trees and copses. This character would not change.

The proposed lake would be formed by gently raising the contours of the land to ensure that the bunding would blend in with the existing sloping topography of the land and protecting the view from Ashford Lane up to the wooded hanger.

The proposed lake would not alter the currently open vista from Ashford Lane to the hanger and would preserve the landscape character of the area.

Biodiversity Enhancement

The accompanying Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) notes that the formation of a natural pond through the introduction of native planting would be beneficial to a variety of wildlife species in the local area, including invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. It would also provide drinking water for mammals and foraging for species such as bats.

The variable depth of the proposed pond, with shallow sections on the sides at 0.2m and a large area of open water to 2.4m depth. The sides of the pond would be gently sloping to allow animals to easily exit the pond.

The periphery of the pond would be planted with native species that provide nectar for invertebrates, egg laying substrate for amphibians and nesting opportunities for birds.

The lake will be maintained to maximise biodiversity. This will involve the removal of plant species should over 50% of the open water becomes covered in plant material and the targeted removal of any invasive species should they be identified within the lake, for the period of this management plan.

The PEA identifies an number of enhancements which would be implemented as part of the scheme. These include:

- A traditional meadow management regime would be implemented on the wider field adjoining the pond
- Several small log piles would be created around the edge of the lake/ on the embankment
- Active management of the adjacent copse to open up the woodland and encourage an understorey of ground flora

A detailed landscape plan and associated management plan can be submitted and agreed via condition.

Protection of Designated Sites

Ashford Hangers National Nature Reserve (NNR), part of the East Hampshire Hangers SAC and associated SSSI are within about 80m north of the site. In view of the sensitivity of these designated sites a Construction Method Statement (CMS) will be produced to mitigate the impacts of the development to control noise and dust and avoid pollution. A CMS can be submitted and agreed via condition.

Sustainable Drainage

The proposed pond would be fed by rainwater run-off from the house and associated hardstanding areas. This should be sufficient to keep the pond full.

Run-off from the hill above the site would be diverted around the pond by forming an interceptor pond to prevent overfilling during storm events. Any excess water in the pond would flow onto adjacent land via an overflow pipe and will soak away into adjacent ground.

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