

Design rationale

The Landscape scheme will work alongside the architectural proposal to create a scheme that achieves a sense of belonging, both in terms of the physical context and the end user's social and psychological requirements.

The needs of the residents, visitors and staff are fundamental in our design approach. Indeed it is our overall objective to create a landscape where people enjoy living, visiting and working in. This experience should start from the entrance with a sense of arrival, through to the communal garden to the rear.

The existing landscape is obviously incredibly poor and offers a negative experience to those walking along London Road, Stages Road or the public footpath along the site boundary to the east.

By addressing this we will hopefully create an attractive presence on to the road and enhance the feeling of safety and security.

The landscape scheme around the building is treated cohesively to provide a coherent image and quality to the development, but can be subdivided into four elements: the Stakes Road frontage; central garden; side garden to the east; and the parking courtyard.

The Stakes Road frontage is treated formally with a new walled entrance feature creating a high quality sense of arrival. This wall will be an extension of the existing flint wall along London Road and help to enhance the presence of this 'vernacular' landscape element. Further to this the combination of railings, formal hedge and line of trees provides a new soft alignment to the street.

The central communal garden is for residents, staff and visitors to enjoy. It will provide a beautiful setting to look out on to and use as an informal recreational area. It is laid out formally to resemble the qualities of an English Country Garden, but with a contemporary twist.

The garden effectively commences with an open communal terrace of york stone, bounded by colourful shrubs and groundcovers. This space is an extension of the residents lounge and will be used for outdoor seating and dining and includes a pergola shelter for more intimate seating.

The terrace flows out to a central lawn with a sculptural feature on its central axis. A pathway is located around the perimeter of the lawn, offering residents a circuit to walk around. Seating is also positioned off this route amongst herbaceous perennials and shrub borders with small trees framing the garden.

The overall experience of this garden is one of prestige formality but with a welcoming soft and intimate character. We believe residents, visitors and staff will indeed all feel uplifted by looking over and/or accessing this space.

To the eastern side of the building a communal garden is located along its length. This will be of a very similar composition of elements to the central garden but in a long linear shape. It will be contained by a formal hedge which will offer an opportunity for wildlife and bio-diversity. The garden will provide a softer and more pleasant environment for the public footpath adjacent to the site boundary, which will be made more secure by improving the natural lighting.

To the south of the development a car parking courtyard provides an open space buffer to the residential dwellings beyond the site boundary. The courtyard is effectively treated as a pedestrian priority shared space with flush kerbs throughout. Hedging along the boundary provides a further screen. The courtyard has a flexible layout to allow the location of any disabled bays that might be needed. Indeed these can be accommodated by minor landscaping changes without impacting the overall character of the space.

Landscape elements

We are proposing a consistent and cohesive palette of landscape elements: a range of surface materials, furniture and planting to provide a unified character for the new development. Of particular interest is the planting strategy which will have a major part to play in the lives of the residents, staff and visitors.

Our aim is to create a place for all seasons, using indigenous native species where possible, but bolstered with evergreen and ornamental species to encourage year round cover, in particular the autumn and winter months where a splash of colour will brighten up views.

Materials will be chosen not just for their textural and aesthetic qualities but also for their suitability for purpose and their robustness. Sustainability is a key factor, therefore materials will have a high recycled content and will be chosen from ethical and sustainable sources.

Materials will be suitable for all users regardless of physical ability. The scheme will be compliant to 'Part M Access to Buildings'.