

STATEMENT OF VISUAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED AUTISM FACILITY AT NEEDLEWOOD, KERESFORTH ROAD, BARNSELY.

To be read in conjunction with Plan A.

Barnsley Metropolitan
Borough Council
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1. The development site lies within the Landscape Character Area E2- Barnsley Settled Wooded Farmland, as described in Barnsley Borough Council's Landscape Character Assessment, Dec 2002. This landscape character area is described as being *"dominated by the presence of urban development in and around Barnsley"* having a *"rolling landform, slopes towards the River Dearne or River Dove, or to streams that feed these rivers"*. The landuse is dominated by agriculture, recreation, residential, industry and landscape renewal, with the agricultural parts now becoming *"overshadowed by the enclosing urban development"*. Fields are bounded by hedgerows often of poor quality and mature trees are limited to occasional small woodland. The M1 corridor is a strong feature running north-south through this area bringing visual and noise intrusion, although often minimised by its location in cuttings or within naturally lower parts of the landscape. Views out of the area are generally enclosed by landform and urban development although there are occasional distant views from higher ground, particularly to the countryside to the west.
2. The Landscape Character Assessment document goes on to assess the strength of landscape character overall as medium but its condition as poor, due mainly to the decline of agriculture, and in particular the deterioration of well managed field boundaries. Recommendations for the long term management of this landscape character area centre on protection and enhancement of existing woodland, and hedgerows and screening of industry and residential development with natural woodland or hedgerows.
3. The site lies on the steep west facing slopes of Keresforth Hill, off the B6099 that runs down a tributary valley form towards the River Dove. The M1 runs in a cutting along the base of Keresforth Hill across the natural slopes that continue down to the valley bottom. Needlewood comprises a residential building set within extensive well wooded grounds. Along with a strip of woodland running along the slope below Needlewood and above the M1, this contributes towards the pattern of small woodlands that is a positive feature of the wider landscape character.
4. The boundaries of the site are of a range of fencing and hedgerows, in common with other parts of this landscape looking a little run down. However the backdrop of mature

trees renders the importance of the boundaries less than other field boundaries in the area.

5. The site is not highly visible overall due to the overall topography, hedges and woodlands and urban obstructive features such as housing and the motorway. In addition the woodland covering the site itself prevents all views of the building within. There are open views from the rear of two dwellings above the site (on Dark Lane), where the woodland surrounding Needlewood would form a significant part of the view. People passing the site on the B6099 (mainly within vehicles) gain a close view of the site and there may be glimpsed views across a field from users of the footpath running through the woods along the lower slopes below Needlewood. All views are of the boundary fencing or hedgerows with mature woodland behind, the structure itself is not visible from outside the site.
6. The proposals are described on drawing no N/OG/236/1a. Essential they involve replacing the existing 2 storey brick dwelling with a structure of similar scale. Much of the proposed building will be single story with a small first floor in the centre, all covered with a curved, green roof. Access into the site will be improved and some additional car parking will be created, some of which will be close to the Keresforth Hill Road boundary. Initially some of the poorer specimens of the trees will be removed for safety and to increase the space for adjoining trees to flourish. The existing boundary fencing will be repaired and hedgerow trimmed and gapped up to improve their condition. A new 2.4m high weldmesh fence, powder coated in green, will be erected within the grounds set back approximately 5m from the existing site boundary.
7. The impact of the proposals on landscape character will be minor. The improvements to the hedgerows and boundary structures, along with the management of the woodland will provide a positive benefit to the wider landscape character, as well as the immediate surroundings, securing and enhancing hedgerows and woodland. The new car parking near to the road and improved access will result in the loss of some trees on the Keresforth Hill Road boundary, but the proposed tree planting and improvements to fencing will significantly reduce the potential impact. (The cars themselves will not be visible from the road.) The proposed weldmesh fencing is a potentially urbanising influence on the landscape character but the positioning of the fence within the existing woodland will help to screen it from external views. The choice of fence, green powder coated weldmesh, will also reduce it's visibility, particularly as it will be viewed against the existing tree cover.
8. The impact of the proposals on views of the site will also be minor. Views from the housing to the east, upslope, and the footpaths to the west and north are likely to be marginally improved by the enhancement of the existing fence and hedgerow site boundaries. Views from Keresforth Hill Road will be changed slightly around the entrance

that will become more open, but the positive benefits of improved fencing counteracts the slightly negative impact of the removal of some of the trees. Although there may be glimpses of car parking through the access gate the main building will remain invisible from outside the site.

9. During construction and for the first few years after completion there will be a small change in landscape character and views of the site, as some of the mature trees are removed and shrubs cleared or pruned to erect the weldmesh fencing. However the growth of existing trees and shrubs will soon enclose views of the fence and fill gaps left by woodland thinning. In fact the positive management of the woodland will be of long term benefit and will avoid the sudden loss of groups of trees reaching senescence or decay at the same time.
10. In summary this area is typical of the Barnsley 'Settled Wooded Farmland' landscape character. It has a moderate landscape strength but is under threat from increasing urban development and declining agriculture. The wider landscape and the site itself are enclosed in nature, by topography and woodland, thus there are few views into or out of the site. The scale and nature of the proposals are minor. The impact of the proposals on landscape character and views of the site will be very minor comprising positive improvements to the boundaries, as well as changes to the access and parking arrangements that will result in the loss of some mature trees. The proposed weld mesh fencing will be a more significant change but it's siting and choice of style and colour will render it almost invisible from outside the site. During construction, then for the first 3 years, the changes will be more significant as the initial tree losses will have a relatively high impact on character and views. However as the new (and existing) planting matures to fill gaps and provide screening for the parking and weldmesh fencing the impact will become more positive. The repair of existing fencing and management of existing hedgerows will contribute towards positive benefits for the site and for the wider landscape.

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