

NOTES OF BROOKLEIGH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL (30/04/2025)

Panel: Neil Way (Chair), Lap Chan (Vice Chair), Alice-Rose Hoile, Andrew Cameron,

MSDC: Joseph Swift (Senior Planning Officer), Sally Blomfield (Brookleigh Development Manager)

Homes England: Nicholas Milner, Rob Morley

Northern Arc Avenue Central Section

Description of Scheme

Reserved matters at Brookleigh, for the provision of a highway link, including pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and associated landscaping to tie in with the proposed Western Section and Bridge through to the Eastern Bridge and Link Road, including tie-ins to the existing B2036 Cuckfield Road.

Presented to the same DRP Meeting as the application for the Western Bridge and Link Road (WBLR) in order to demonstrate synergy between the schemes and so that the proposals for the two road sections can be considered together.

Presenters

Design/Architects: Nathan Mitchell (Aecom)
Niltay Satchell (Aecom)
James Dee (Aecom)
Patrick Clarke (Aecom)

In attendance

Ward Councillor: Cllr Mustak Miah

The Panel's Comments

The Panel found it difficult to join up the dots, with the infrastructure coming in first, as they don't know how the rest of the spaces will interact with the road. The road will restrict how other elements are designed and will impose the crossing points, however these might not reflect the actual desire lines once the surrounding parcels are developed, making it difficult to consider without designing the full scheme. Nonetheless, it was accepted that Homes England was bringing the infrastructure forward early to unlock the surrounding development parcels.

Overall there was a mixed review of the proposal with two members giving the proposal a red, while two members gave the proposal an amber and were happy with the proposal subject to the following recommended changes.

Interaction with Cuckfield Road

The panel questioned what has changed from the previous submission at the pre-application stage. On plan it appears that the proposal generally takes the same form as before, which provides a very engineered curve and would encourage speeds around the junctions, however, the applicants confirmed that this curve had been tightened.

It was acknowledged that the junction is slightly tightened and the relationship to the bottom junction from Cuckfield Road was considered to be much better and it was recommended that this should also be repeated to the northern junction with Cuckfield Road.

Highway

Members commented that they were happy to see the speed strategy. It was noted that the plans were showing white hatching, it was questioned if this needed to be hatching or if it could be replaced with an infill material similar to how they have done the entrance to Northstowe.

The panel were happy to see the combined tree pits, positioning of the teeth on the humps, the general reduction and rationalisation of the parking signs and the green island with the tree on it as positive changes.

However, in relation to the green island it was recommended that this should be checked as the tree looks too big for the space. In addition, WSCC should be consulted to confirm if they are happy with it.

The panel questioned who had priority at the green corridor and at the neighbourhood square crossings, as these were uncontrolled. It was confirmed that vehicles had priority, but it was only 20 mph and there were raised tables within these locations. The panel thought that the connection between the square and the green should have pedestrian priority.

Again the same comments were recommended in relation to the removal of the central white lines as these seem excessive for this end of the street as it would be less trafficked, and the result of the white lines actually encourage drivers to go faster. It was therefore recommended that this was revisited with WSCC and even questioned if it was not possible to deliver the scheme day one without them and then monitor the situation to see if they were required.

General Comments

The panel found it difficult to understand how the proposals would interact with the development parcels to be brought forward at a later date and acknowledged that the visualisations were purely indicative. In addition, they felt that the visualisations were not an accurate reflection as: they did not accurately reflect the level changes between the central square, road and the open space, they incorrectly included trees within the central square that were unlikely to be within hard surfaced area; and they included play features within the hard surfaced central square which was also unrealistic.

The panel would prefer to have more detail on the road and landscaping that this application actually relates to, and any illustrative drawings should accurately reflect what might actually be proposed later on and not include elements that are unrealistic.

It is also an opportunity to make it more attractive by providing details to the surrounding buildings rather than white blocks.

Landscape

The panel welcomed the changes and the updates to the landscape scheme, with the tightening of the pallet, questions were raised if it was to include any Beech trees within the central islands as these are very water intensive. However, it was confirmed that it was actually trident maple, which is acceptable.

The tree pits have been designed so that the surface water and pipes would assist in watering the trees and keeping the soil moist. The cross section only shows the pipe at one point, therefore additional information was requested in relation to how regular the pipes were to ensure that it was not just the rootballs that were being watered.

Generally the panel were happy with the mix of trees, at a maximum these would be in groups of 4 and it was considered that the different heights and spacing would help provide a different feel and contribute towards a sense of place.

In relation to the landscape around the Cuckfield Road junction, the panel were happy with the incorporation of trees along the northern side of the Central Avenue and up Cuckfield Road. It was questioned if more was needed, including some additional hedge screening to the dead end road in front of the alternative provision college. However, it was accepted that there was a need for natural surveillance. Overall, members were split if more landscaping was required in this location or not.

The wildflower verges as shown are very attractive, but these visualisations should be shown in all 4 seasons so that it can be appreciated how these will look throughout the year. Similar should be done with the trees, to provide a realistic visualisation from day one of what size trees are being put in and then again in 15 years.

The panel was concerned that the visuals provided as part of the presentation might have exaggerated how the proposed trees would look and it was recommended that a more realistic and honest presentation should be provided.

Concerns were raised about the potential maintenance., The design team advised that the road was being designed to adoptable standards and once adopted responsibility for maintenance would fall to WSCC.

Overall Assessment

The panel were equally split between not supporting the scheme (red) and supporting the scheme subject to changes that address the above issues (amber).