

Outline Soft Landscape Specification

Thamesfield Retirement Village,
Henley-on-Thames

November 2024

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Client
Retirement Villages Group

Our reference
RETH3002

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1. General

- 1.1 These outline specification notes are for planning purposes only. They are intended to indicate the required level of workmanship to be specified. They do not constitute a detailed specification.
- 1.2 All groundworks and planting operations shall be in accordance with the following British Standards:
 - BS 3882 (2015) Specification for Topsoil
 - BS 3936 Part 1 (1992) Nursery Stock – Specification for Trees and Shrubs
 - Part 10 (1990) Nursery Stock – Specification for Ground Cover Plants
 - Part 11 (1984) Nursery Stock – Specification for Container-grown Culinary Herbs
 - BS 4428 (1989) Code of Practice for General Landscape Operations (Excluding Hard Surfaces)
 - BS 3998 (2010) Tree Work - Recommendations
 - BS 5837 (2012) Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations
 - BS 8545 (2014) Trees: From Nursery to Independence in the Landscape – Recommendations
 - BS 3969 (1998) Recommendations for Turf for General Purposes.
- 1.3 In addition to the above, all plants shall be in accordance with the requirements in the National Plant Specification.
- 1.4 All soft landscaping should be carried out by a specialist landscape contractor who is either British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) accredited or can demonstrate a proven track record.
- 1.5 Supplying nurseries shall be registered under the HTA Nursery Certification Scheme.
- 1.6 All plants shall be packed, transported, and handled in accordance with the Code of Practice for Plant Handling as produced by the Committee for Plant Supply and Establishment (CPSE) and handling of trees to BS 8545 (2014).

2. Trees

Protection to Existing Trees

- 2.1 All trees to be retained shall be protected in accordance with BS 5837 (2012) Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction. Prior to commencement of site works, the position and construction of protective fencing shall be agreed with the local authority.
- 2.2 All works to retained trees should be undertaken in accordance with the British Standard BS 3998 (2010) Tree Work - Recommendations, by recognised tree contracting companies from the Arboricultural Association's list of registered contractors. Proof of experience and insurance provision will be required.
- 2.3 Without prior consent of the local authority, no pruning, lopping, felling or severance of roots is to take place.
- 2.4 Under no circumstances should materials be stored under the canopy of existing trees, and no cement, diesel or oil stored near them. No vehicles should pass under the canopy of existing trees. No fires should be lit in close proximity to existing trees. No ropes, cables, services or notice boards shall be fixed to existing trees.
- 2.5 Under no circumstances should the levels around existing trees be either raised or reduced. Any excavations under existing tree canopy spreads shall be done by hand.
- 2.6 Scaffolding may only be erected within protected areas if it is in accordance with BS 5837 (2012).

Ground Preparation for Tree Pits

- 2.7 Tree pit depths should be level with the existing root-ball or container depth. Tree pits should be 75mm wider in diameter than the root-ball. During tree pit excavation, topsoil and subsoil should be retained and separated. The base of tree pits should not be disturbed unless there are specific problems such as poor drainage and/or soil pan.
- 2.8 Tree pits within 5m of roads and services, and within 3m of other paved surfaces (distanced may vary) should have a linear root barrier be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The barrier should be as near as possible to the surface or service route to be protected to allow the largest root area for the tree.

Tree Planting

- 2.9 Arrangement: Trees shall be planted as per the planting arrangement as set out on the relevant soft landscape drawing. All trees are to be of the species and varieties indicated on the relevant plant schedule and equal to all clauses of the specification.
- 2.10 Backfill of tree pit: Tree pits should be backfilled with the excavated topsoil and/or a multi-purpose topsoil. If subsoil is excavated this should be discarded and the subsoil depth (beyond 300mm deep) be backfilled with a high sand content subsoil. Backfill

should be added in layers of 150 - 230mm depth, firming at each stage to remove air pockets (but not overly compacting soil and not compacting final layer).

- 2.11 Planting depth: The root flare of the newly planted tree shall be clearly visible at the soil surface. It should not be buried by excess soil or mulch.
- 2.12 Planting season: All transplanting shall be carried out between the end-October and the end-March in open cool weather. Planting shall not take place in frosty/snowy or waterlogged conditions or during periods of cold drying winds. Container grown trees may be transplanted at times outside the described season when approved by the Landscape Architect and with adequate watering supplied.
- 2.13 Tree support: Each tree to be secured with underground Tree Anchoring System consisting of heavy canvas straps/guys looped around 3no. 'deadmen' (e.g. railway sleeper or pcc kerbs) placed at bottom of pit. Protective matt to be utilised ensure guying system does not cut into root ball. All ratchets to be installed to side of root ball. Tree anchoring system to be 'Platipus Tree Anchoring Deadman System Ref: RF2RDMP' or similar as supplied by Platipus Tree Anchoring Systems.
- 2.14 Watering: At the time of planting, and before applying mulch, the tree pit shall be saturated to the point of field capacity. Each tree is to receive at least 30 gallons when watered.
- 2.15 Mulch: Mulch to be fine grade composted bark fines to be spread to a depth of 75mm across the whole of the bed, or in the case of trees within grass it shall be in the form of a circle. Heavy standard trees and above shall have a 1m diameter circle around the base of the tree, smaller trees shall have a 600mm diameter circle and whips and transplants shall have a 300mm diameter circle. Where trees are planted within grass, a circular hemp mulch mat is required beneath the layer of mulch at the diameters stated above, secured with fixing pegs. The root flare and the base of the stem shall be maintained free from mulch.

3. Ground Preparation

Subsoil Cultivation

- 3.1 Prior to any topsoiling all subsoil should be thoroughly 'ripped' to relieve compaction using suitable machinery, or by hand in confined areas or in proximity to existing tree roots to a depth of 150mm.

Imported and Stored Topsoil

- 3.2 Store and re-spread existing topsoil to areas of public open space to encourage re-generation of localised native species wherever possible.
- 3.3 All topsoil and soil storage operations shall be carried out in accordance with BS 3882 (2015) Specification for Topsoil. Topsoil to be well structured sandy-loam and free from stones or any other contaminants. Topsoil must not be installed to a greater depth than 300mm. Never be contaminated with other material, including hardcore. Never be laid over standing water or sodden ground. Never be over compacted.
- 3.4 Subsoil to comply with BS 8601. Subsoil Organic Matter Content to be no more than 1.5%.
- 3.5 Topsoil shall be provided to the depths shown below. All areas to be topsoiled shall be cleared of all weeds, debris and stones 50mm and above and removed from the site.
- 3.6 Minimum depths of topsoil after firming and of subsoil cultivation to be achieved:

Type of Soft Landscaping	Topsoil Depth	Depth of Subsoil to be Cultivated
Trees	300mm	500mm
Large shrubs / small trees	300mm	500mm
Perennials and shrubs	300mm	300mm
Grass Areas	150mm	150mm

Levelling/Grading

- 3.7 In final grading operations finished soil levels adjacent to buildings are to be 150mm below damp proof course. For planted areas where 75mm depth bark mulch is specified the soil should be graded down towards adjacent paved or grass surfaces to 90mm below the paving or grass. This allows for full depth of bark mulch with 15mm clearance. For turfed areas final soil levels should be 10mm above the adjacent paving ready to receive the turf and for seeded areas at least 30mm above.

Weed Treatment

- 3.8 If significant weed growth has started to establish, treat existing weeds with a non-residual based, herbicide and allow the manufacturer recommended period for this to take effect. Use products that are approved by the Soil Association. Herbicide should be used strictly in accordance with The Pesticides Act 1999, according to manufacturer's instructions and by qualified personnel.
- 3.9 Remove small amounts of weed growth within shrub beds by hand at time of planting.

4. Plants

- 4.1 Arrangement: All plants shall be planted as per the planting arrangement as set out on the relevant soft landscape drawing. All plants are to be of the species and varieties indicated on the relevant plant schedule and equal to all clauses of the specification.
- 4.2 Plants must be healthy, weed-free, bushy, vigorous and well-rooted but not pot bound.
- 4.3 All plant material, in particular bare root and root balled stock, to be planted between mid-November and end-February. Planting shall not take place in frosty/snowy or waterlogged conditions or during periods of cold drying winds. Container or pot grown plants may be planted at times outside the described season when approved by the Landscape Architect and with adequate watering supplied.
- 4.4 During final cultivations, combine a general-purpose slow-release fertiliser at the rate of 75g/m² into the top 150mm of topsoil.

Shrub/Herbaceous Planting

- 4.5 Planting: Planting pit sizes should be relative to the container size or root ball of the plant and shall be sufficiently large enough to accommodate the plants without root damage and to allow for backfill of topsoil and planting compost. Plants to be well firmed by heeling and the surface left neat and even. Planting must be to the equal depth as in the nursery.
- 4.6 Watering: At the time of planting, and before applying mulch, plants shall be saturated to the point of field capacity. Watering operations are to be undertaken as many times as necessary to ensure planting thrives.
- 4.7 Mulch: Evenly spread ornamental bark mulch to a depth of 75mm across all new planted areas, avoid burying groundcover plants. Mulch to be fine grade composted bark fines.

Hedge Planting

- 4.8 Ornamental hedgerows: Consistent in species, cultivar and clone to ensure a uniform hedge. All ornamental hedgerows are to be 'topped' cut to form a level hedge. Ornamental hedges are to be planted in a single row unless otherwise stated.
- 4.9 Native hedgerows: Species to be evenly distributed in accordance with their mix percentage. No clipping required. Native/naturalised hedges are to be planted in a double staggered row unless otherwise stated.
- 4.10 Planting: Single row hedges are to be trench planted into pits 1.5x the diameter of the root mass. Double row hedges are to be trench planted in a trench 450mm wide with 300mm between double staggered rows. Both pit depths to be 75mm deeper than root system. The bottom and sides of the planting trench shall be broken up to aid root expansion. Backfill with excavated material combined with a general-purpose slow-release fertiliser at a rate of 100g/m². Planting must be to the equal depth as in the

nursery. Hedges are to be set out at the specified centres with minimal disturbance to the rootball and well firmed in. At the time of planting, and before applying mulch, plants shall be saturated to the point of field capacity.

- 4.11 Watering: At the time of planting, and before applying mulch, plants shall be saturated to the point of field capacity. Watering operations are to be undertaken as many times as necessary to ensure planting thrives.
- 4.12 Mulch: Evenly spread ornamental bark mulch to a depth of 75mm along the length of all new hedgerows. Mulch to be fine grade composted bark fines.

Bulbs

- 4.13 Provide holes c.3 times the depth of the bulb. Backfill with soil and water.
- 4.14 Ensure bulbs are left to die back naturally for a minimum of 6 weeks prior to mowing (if in grassland) or removing (if in flowerbed) following flowering period.

5. Grasses

Wildflower Grass Mixes

- 5.1 All wildflower seed mixes are to be from a certified source with local provenance seed stock.
- 5.2 Preparation of seed bed: Good preparation is essential to success so aim to produce a good quality seed bed before sowing. Treat areas with an approved herbicide, strip existing topsoil (to be used elsewhere on site) and cultivate to a depth of 150mm to produce a fine tilth. All weeds, debris and stones 25mm and above shall be removed from the site. Firm by lightly rolling to smooth contours. If required, apply 100mm of nutrient poor soil on the surface and lightly fork over to combined with some of the native soil. Imported soil material for wildflower grassland shall meet BS 38601 (2013). Do not apply fertiliser on or close to the area.
- 5.3 Seeding season: Seeds need warmth and moisture for optimum germination. Sow seeds in either April and May or September and October during calm weather. Seeding shall not take place in frosty/snowy or waterlogged conditions.
- 5.4 Sowing: Carry out two equal sowings at right angles to each other (half the seed being used in each direction) as per supplier's instructions and at the specified rate. Following sowing, lightly rake or roll the seed to ensure good seed to soil contact.
- 5.5 Cutting: Avoid initial cut until mid to late summer. Grass cuttings to be collected and removed. This will reveal the young meadow, which can then be kept short by mowing through to the end of March of the following year. In the second and subsequent years, apply traditional meadow management. Avoid cutting from spring through to late July/August to give sown species opportunity to flower. After flowering in July or August take a 'hay cut' to a height of 50mm. Leave the 'hay' to dry and shed seed for up to 7 days, then remove from site. Mow the re-growth through to late autumn/winter to 50mm and again in spring if needed. Alternatively, at appropriate intervals and times dependant on the species mix, and in accordance with seed suppliers' recommendations.

Turf

- 5.6 Delivery and storage: Turf shall be supplied in accordance with BS 3969 (1998) Recommendations for Turf for General Purposes.
- 5.7 Turf Preparation: Treat areas with an approved herbicide and cultivate to a depth of 150mm to produce a fine tilth suitable for seeding. Firm by lightly rolling to smooth contours. All weeds, debris and stones 25mm and above shall be removed from the site. Incorporate pre-turfing fertiliser at 50g/m².
- 5.8 Product: Turf shall be well rooted, close textured, green in colour and be sufficiently fibrous to withstand handling. Turf rolls shall be regular in shape, 300mm wide and of uniform thickness (minimum 25mm).

- 5.9 Laying: Turf is to be laid with staggered joints, well butted together, and in firm contact with the soil working from planks positioned on turves already laid. At no time should freshly laid turf be walked on without the use of boards. Any unevenness shall be made good by lifting the turf and adjusting the levels. Should shrinkage occur, fine topsoil shall be brushed into the joints.
- 5.10 Season: Turf shall be laid when weather and soil conditions are suitable and preference should be given to autumn and early winter. Turfing shall not take place in frosty/snowy, waterlogged or exceptionally dry conditions.
- 5.11 Top dressing: On completion of laying, the whole turf shall be top dressed with finely sifted topsoil well worked into the joints.
- 5.12 Watering: On completion of laying and top dressing, turf areas shall be well watered.

6. Maintenance

- 6.1 To ensure successful establishment, all maintenance shall be carried out by the landscape contractor up to handover to the adopting property holder from the date of planting and turfing. All dead, diseased, damaged plants must be replaced during this time by the contractor at his own cost. 1 year Defects Liability Period applies.
- 6.2 Grass cutting: The initial cut shall be carried out when first growth is apparent. The landscape contractor shall continue cutting at appropriate intervals during the growing season and maintain 40mm high sward until grass areas are handed over. Watering, weeding, cutting, repair of all erosion and settlement and re-seeding as necessary to establish a uniform and healthy stand of grass shall continue until handover to the householder.
- 6.3 Pruning: At appropriate time, prune plants to remove dead, dying or diseased wood and suckers. Trees and shrubs are to be pruned in accordance with good horticultural practice/BS 3998 to maintain healthy well-shaped specimens. All hedges are to be clipped to help form hedge to dimensions on drawing/specification. Hedges shall be cut back off pavement and kept to a maximum height of 1.2m unless specified otherwise.
- 6.4 Tree checks: All tree ties and stakes are to be checked, adjusted (if too loose, too tight or if chaffing is occurring) and replaced if damaged or missing. Annually check all grilles, grids and guards and removed where no longer necessary or damaging the tree.
- 6.5 Weeding: All tree pits, shrub and hedgerow areas are to be kept weed free by hand weeding or herbicide treatment. Providing adequate mulch, as specified, should aid this. Mulch should also be topped up as required.
- 6.6 Watering: The landscape contractor shall ensure that sufficient water is applied to establish and maintain healthy plant, tree and grass growth.
- 6.7 Litter: Site to be kept free of litter.
- 6.8 Community Landscape Management: Ensure the maintenance of the gardens allows for active participation by the residents.

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