

MEMORANDUM

From:	Catherine Brimble Senior Landscape Officer		
Service	SDL Landscape and Trees	App No:	252379
Address:	Parcel N, Arborfield Green, Berkshire.		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 for the erection of 67 dwellings with associated infrastructure, access and landscaping. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.		
Type of Development:	Major Dwellings (10+)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

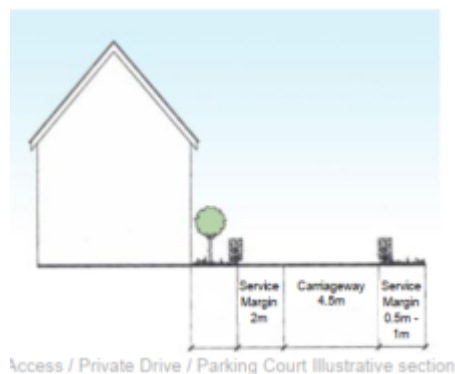
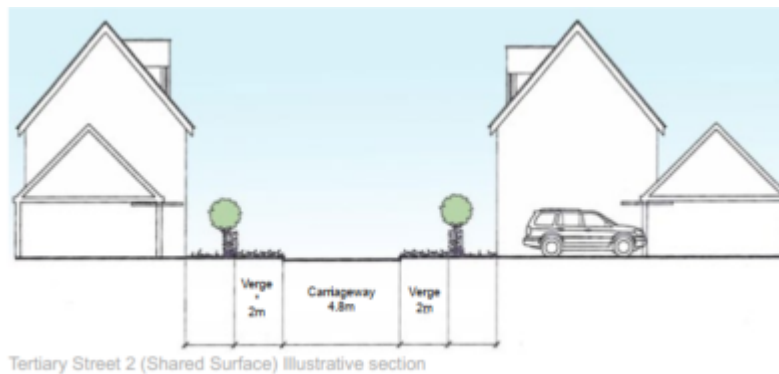
This application is preceded by a pre-application where a number of issues were raised regarding the site layout. I consider these have not been fully addressed in this application and which are discussed in my comments for this application.

Design Compliance Statement

This Design Compliance Statement has been provided to indicate how the design of Parcel N complies with the previously approved documents such as the Village Green Design Code. The compliance statement also mentions a Design and Access Statement however it is not clear which DAS this is referring to as I don't recall seeing one for this site. With particular reference to the Design Code I comment as follows:

1. The Village Edge character area in the Design Code (DC) relates to the edge of the development fronting onto the Linear Park to the south of the site. The building form and typologies are detailed for each character area on page 18 of the DC and indicates that this street should be lower density and have a balance between hard and soft landscape treatment and incorporate tree planting. Front gardens should also reinforce the soft landscape street character. This does not appear to be referenced in the Design Compliance Statement.
2. Within the movement framework of the DC the majority of the street typologies within the site are shown as tertiary street type 2. Where there is a shared surface along these streets a 2m service margin is required along dwelling

frontages, however where dwellings are provided on one side of the street a 0.5m-1.0m service margin is required on the opposite side of the road (my emphasis). This is highlighted in the two extracts below from page 23 of the DC.



The compliance document shows a different interpretation indicating a service margin on both sides of the street fronted by dwellings as being a minimal 0.5m as shown below. This is not acceptable and has a significant impact on layout which will be discussed further.



Tertiary 2 (Shared Surface)

3. The Parking Strategy drawing indicates only two visitor spaces within the body of the development with the other 12 on the boundary with the linear park. Although the compliance document states that the visitor parking is evenly spread throughout the site as required by the DC, it is clear that this is not the case, as it is concentrated on the southern edge of Parce N. (Note: I have made separate comments on this through application 251981.)

4. The built character of the Green Edge aligns with the Village Edge typology and should be characterised by a looser, more informal character which include landscaped verges and tree planting as already identified in point 1 above. This is not explored or discussed in the compliance document as to how this can be achieved through the layout.
5. The street scenes for the Green Edge should relate to Street Scene C rather than B which I believe represents Courtyards and Lanes. Street Scene C which fronts onto the Linear Park does not in my opinion have the looser, more informal character required by the DC. I'm also not sure what a '*semi-contiguous frontage*' means and '*contiguous*' with what.

Arboricultural Information

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement has been provided with an associated Tree Protection Plan. This gives details of the trees including TPO trees on the northern boundary and their root protection area.

6. The development proposals are pushed to the edges of the root protection areas (RPAs) and this causes issues concerning the relationship of development with the trees.
7. More than 50% of the gardens on plots 27, 28 35 & 36 are within the RPA's of protected or significant trees and therefore the long-term relationship of the gardens to the trees is unsustainable and unacceptable.
8. Although a landscape buffer has been retained along the northern boundary I am concerned that due to the short length of the gardens combined with the intensification of the garden spaces which may include the installation of garden sheds and patios, this will have a further detrimental effect on the protected trees.
9. The dwellings proposed around the open space adjacent to Tope Crescent have a poor long-term relationship with the protected trees within this space. Plots 38,39 40 and 41 (maisonettes) all have their open plan lounge / living space and balcony facing north and in close proximity to the trees adjacent to Tope Crescent. The canopy of the Red Oak (T45) is currently within 3.6m of the main facade containing windows to the living space and 2.3m from the edge of the balcony. I am concerned that the orientation the main rooms in all four dwellings in combination with close proximity to the trees will have a significant detrimental effect on the living conditions for future residents caused by shading and overshadowing of the dwellings by the trees.
10. The frontage of plots 42, 62, 63 and 65 are located right on the edge of the RPAs of two TPO Oak trees, with the access paths to the dwellings encroaching into the RPAs of the trees. The canopies of both trees are within between 4-5m from the fronts of the dwelling. Firstly, I note that neither of the RPA's of the trees on the Tree Protection Plan have been adjusted to take account of the existing road (Tope Crescent) to the north. BS5837 indicates in paragraph 4.6.2 that modifications should be made to the shape of the RPA to reflect likely root distribution i.e. that there will be limited rooting under the road. Therefore, the RPAs of T40 & T41 should be more asymmetrical to reflect a larger rooting area in the soft ground to the south of the trees. Secondly, where trees are in close proximity to dwellings this can often cause some apprehension to occupiers which is exacerbated by seasonal nuisance such as leaf drop in the autumn and shedding of twigs in high winds resulting in pressure to remove the trees in future years. We want to ensure the trees are properly considered through the layout and have the space to mature as

these form an important landscape feature between the existing dwellings and Parcel N. In order to retain an appropriate space for these trees to mature and not to have a detrimental impact on the TPO trees, the proposed dwellings in this location will need to be moved further from the trees. Also see further comments in the layout section.

11. Paragraph 3.16 of the AIA indicates that original ground levels will need to be maintained within the RPAs of the trees and at the time of writing full details of level changes are not finalised. However, it is noted on the Finished Floor Levels drawing submitted with the condition's application (252350) that there will be increased ground level changes on the eastern part of the site and within the RPAs of trees along the northern boundary. In particular level changes will be required in relation to the parking spaces and garage for plot 12, garden and parking spaces for plot 14, and parking spaces and garage for plot 15. This is unacceptable and any engineering works to grade back to existing levels will need to be made outside the RPAs of all trees.

Layout / Design / Landscape

I refer to the Site Layout drawing and Landscape Masterplan.

12. As previously identified in my comments on the pre-app layout, the relationship of the development within Parcel N with the Linear Park to the south of the site is crucial and will need to provide a green edge to the development. The Village Green Design Code indicates the roads within the development cells should have the character of 'Leafy Streets' and therefore we will be expecting street trees to be included within the layout adjacent to the boundary with the Linear Park. The necessity and inclusion of street trees in new developments is also highlighted in paragraph 136 of the NPPF. The layout provides no space within the red line of the site for either street trees or other tree planting in the front gardens of the dwellings fronting the Linear Park and this will need to be addressed through revisions to the layout..
13. The design and form of the dwellings along this edge is regular / formal rather than the looser, more informal character as required in the approved DC. This then limits the types of landscape treatment which is currently very limited and doesn't address the issues identified in point 12 above.
14. The dwellings proposed at the north-western end of the site adjacent to Tope Crescent are poorly positioned and have a awkward relationship with the existing open space, Tope Crescent and the TPO trees (see points 9 & 10). I consider this whole area needs to be redesigned with the level of development / housing reduced. I have already discussed how plots 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 62, 63 and 65 have a poor relationship with the adjacent TPO trees but also the dwellings in association the visitor space and three parking spaces on the development side of the open area will significantly dominate and enclose the existing public open space making it appear less user friendly for the existing residents of Tope Crescent.
15. The terrace of three dwellings (plots 65, 65 & 67) is awkwardly positioned in relation to Tope Crescent with the access footpath to plot 65 directly abutting the road and therefore there is no space for hedge planting along this boundary in this location as indicated on the Landscape Masterplan drawing. These plots take no reference from the existing dwellings in Tope Crescent including the landscape space to the front of the dwelling and neither do they have a positive relationship with the Linear park i.e. not reflecting the spacing, setbacks or landscape treatments to this edge. These dwellings will also block

the long views into the wider open space from Tope Crescent fundamentally changing the character of this road. This whole area will need to be redesigned, and a number of plots removed.

16. The layout across the whole site appears cramped with very little space for appropriate landscape planting and specifically space for tree planting throughout the site. As identified in point 2 above, the 2m service margins are not shown on the Site Layout drawing as required and therefore the majority of trees indicated to the fronts of dwellings would not be feasible as they would be in areas required for services. If the 2m service margin is shown to the front of all properties on this layout many dwellings would have no front garden for planting any type and several front elevations of dwellings will encroach into this zone (plots 6, 7, 16 & 57). The landscape principles as set out on the Landscape Masterplan cannot be achieved and therefore the layout as currently shown does not allow sufficient space for an integral high-quality landscape scheme in accordance with MDD Local Plan Policy CC03.
17. The central road will need to include more street tree planting and planting between parking bays in accordance with the Green Grid and Village Street character area. The Landscape Masterplan suggests this will be a tree lined street however the southern half contains no trees at all, and of the two trees located between parking bays, one has a restricted rooting zone due to a proposed footway. The build outs into the road could also be used for tree planting but both are shown on the landscape drawings as only containing grass.
18. A significant number of gardens are well below the minimum garden depth as set out in the Wokingham Borough Design Guide. This also has an impact on the separation distances between the rear to rear of dwellings and flank wall to the rear of the dwellings which in some instances are below the standards set out in the same document.
19. There are two locations where rear gardens are enclosed on two sides by garages with a 2.5 story dwelling forming part of the rear boundary and these are shown below. This will create very oppressive garden spaces dominated by walls of the surrounding garages which will need to be designed out



20. In order to achieve the garden lengths as shown for some of the dwellings backing onto the northern boundary tree group G27 will need to be cut back and removed as well as encroaching into the RPA's of a number of TPO trees as discussed in point 7 above. Although there are issues related to the long-term relationship of dwellings and gardens in close proximity to the substantial tree group discussed under the arboricultural section, it is also not clear how

access to this area will be provided to allow management of this vegetation but prevent unauthorised access to discourage antisocial behaviour.

21. The Highway officer has indicated that design of the two shared surfaces fronting onto the Linear Park should contain speed control measures to discourage speeding. If these are to consist of build outs then these should contain street tree planting with associated tree pits containing underground soil cells.

Levels

I refer to the Finished Floor Levels drawing submitted with the condition's application (252350) and Tree Protection Plan which is based on a topographical survey base showing spot heights for existing ground levels.

22. In order to understand how the proposed layout as submitted with this RM application relates to the existing landscape features and constraints of the site, we will need to be provided with a levels strategy plan clearly showing existing and proposed levels across the site and specifically on the site boundaries. Without this information we cannot be confident that this layout and the required level changes won't have a detrimental effect on TPO trees and adjacent public open space.
23. As discussed in point 11 above, the Finished Floor Levels drawing indicates there will be a rise in ground levels above existing to accommodate changes in the eastern part of the site. These will occur within some the RPA's of trees along the northern boundary. This is unacceptable and any engineering works to raise levels and to grade back to existing levels will need to be made outside the RPA's of all trees.
24. The shared surface road and associated visitor car parking bays adjacent to the Linear Park on the eastern side of the site are shown approximately 1m higher than the existing site levels. It is therefore not clear how these levels can be graded back to existing ground levels without working outside the red line boundary of the site or impacting on the proposed adjacent footpath and attenuation basin in the Linear Park, unless this area too will be raised accordingly. It would be helpful to have a combined approach to levels relating to this part of the Linear Park.

Conclusion

Although it is understood that the layout of the site needs to incorporate the various constraints, the layout currently provided appears cramped and does not address the design requirements set out in the Village Green Design Code. Changes to the design and layout of the development will need to be made in accordance with officer comments to allow for the long-term retention of the important TPO trees but also create a high-quality integrated landscape scheme in accordance with MDD Local Plan Policy CC03 that responds in a positive way to the adjacent Linear Park.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Conditions to be provided following the submission of additional requested information.

Date:	28 th November 2025	Signed:	C. Brimble
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