

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	261108
Address:	Land to the South of 6 Harvest Place, Wargrave, Reading, RG10 8AG.		
Proposal:	Permission in principle application for a residential development comprising the erection of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3 dwellings, including removal of some existing outbuildings.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9) PiP		
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

The site is located in the countryside and the Green Belt. Its northern boundary is adjacent to the Wargrave Modest Development Location. There are no protected trees on the site and it is not in the Conservation Area.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The site is within landscape character area H1 'Wargrave – Twyford Arable Chalk Lowlands' a moderate quality landscape of moderate sensitivity and a moderate capacity for change. Key characteristics of the H1 LCA include;

- Intensive working arable farmland dominates with extensive areas of horticultural polytunnels between A4 and Mumbery Hill
- Settlement concentrated in riverside towns of Twyford and Wargrave where farmland separates the settlements.
- Strong sense of openness and homogeneity due to lack of field divisions. Poplar and coniferous shelterbelts provide vertical elements on the landscape.

The site is not within a valued landscape for the purposes of NPPF – 2024 paragraph 187A .

Key issues affecting H1 LCA include;

- Pressure for expansion, infill and densification within existing settlements particularly Twyford and Wargrave leading to loss of identity and potential amalgamation with adjacent settlements...

The Landscape Strategy for LCA H1 is to 'enhance the existing landscape character', in terms of development the aim is to 'conserve the rural setting and gaps between villages and to maintain settlement identity'.

SITE LOCATION

The site is set back from the highway verge adjacent to Mumbery Hill and School Hill where trees line the south and western site boundaries forming a mature hedgerow with hedgerow trees. On the opposite side of Mumbery Hill a line of Poplar trees screen polytunnels and being of a similar height create a striking feature which in combination with the trees opposite form a distinctive arboreal character upon entering this part of Wargrave.

The eastern side of the site is adjacent to a school playing field which I understand is used by pupils of Robert Piggott Infant and Junior Schools in close proximity to the site. The northern boundary of the site is a well kept ornamental, coniferous hedge, which extends from Harvest Place along the eastern and northern site boundaries.

Trees are an important feature of site and its immediate area.

It is noted from the indicative plans that the site boundary outlined in red cuts through the trees and hedges. It will be important to understand if the red line also marks the ownership boundaries between the site and the highway verge, and the site and the adjacent school field. The extent of land ownership will be an important factor in preserving the landscape character of the boundaries and where the responsibilities lie for retention and maintenance.

Is the hedge to the eastern boundary a shared hedge between land owners?

The proposed entrance is very close to the existing hedge and there is insufficient space to plant trees along the entrance on the east side or the western verge of the entrance road.

Plot 3 has a very large garden with the Thames Water easement extending through it. It is possible that this might be a constraint to tree planting / planting of particular species. This will need to be considered during the design development.

Indicative new trees are shown along the eastern boundary but again the boundary cuts through the centre of the trees. It will be important to retain and protect existing landscape features such as the trees and hedges but it is also important to ensure that there is adequate space for landscape enhancements within the site layout. I note that a visitor parking bay has been squeezed into a space along the eastern boundary that encroaches the existing boundary hedge.

The proposed site layout will need to include hard landscaping and fencing to plot boundaries and these will need to be informed by the presence of the existing trees and hedges and their root protection areas which must be kept free of development.

BS 5837 (2012), Section 5.3 'Proximity of structures to trees' states at 5.3.1 'The default position should be that structures are located outside the RPAs of trees to be retained. However, where there is an overriding justification for construction within the RPA, technical solutions might be available that prevent damage to the trees'

Policy CC03 2/d requires that development retain and protect trees, hedges and other landscape features. I note that no tree information is submitted with the application. Policy CC03 2/e requires high quality landscape scheme consisting of native trees and hedges.

EXISTING BUILT CHARACTER

The existing built character of Harvest Place is that of an upmarket estate of dwellings which include interest in use of brickwork patterns and timber features within the built fabric. Houses are set within generous plots and the road itself is pleasantly landscaped with trees, hedges and shrubs. The plot boundaries transition to the adjacent gardens and open fields that are associated with the schools. The proposed development would seem like a natural extension to Harvest Place and of the of the settlement area towards the natural barrier of Mumbery Hill. The pleasant character of the setting is as a result of the landscape setting.

SUMMARY

Although these proposals may seem like a natural extension to Wargrave settlement area, there are many landscape/built issues identified that need to be resolved before a layout can be devised and potentially supported. It is important that the existing landscape and built character of Harvest Plan is retained.

I suggest that the scheme is landscape led, which means that an assessment of the immediate and wider surroundings and the role that landscape features play within the scheme so it sits well within the context. I note a preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal is submitted.

The applicant has submitted indicative site layouts for either 2 or 3 dwellings on the site.

The correct technical information must be submitted in order to ascertain the overall impacts of a scheme which includes; arboricultural information in the form of an Arboricultural Implications Assessment to BS5837:2012 which demonstrates the site layout can be accommodated comfortably within the existing features, and constraints such as the easement, and can be mitigated with no additional pressure on the existing landscape setting.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	11.6.26	Signed:	BRC
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