

MEMORANDUM

From:	Catherine Brimble Senior Landscape Officer		
Service	SDL Landscape and Trees	App No:	250931
Address:	Finchwood Park, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG40 4QY.		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2179 (as varied by 181194, dated 14/11/2018). The Reserved Matters comprise details of 161 dwellings within parcels P11, P12a & P12b together with associated internal access roads, parking, landscaping, footpaths and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS). Details of access, 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**

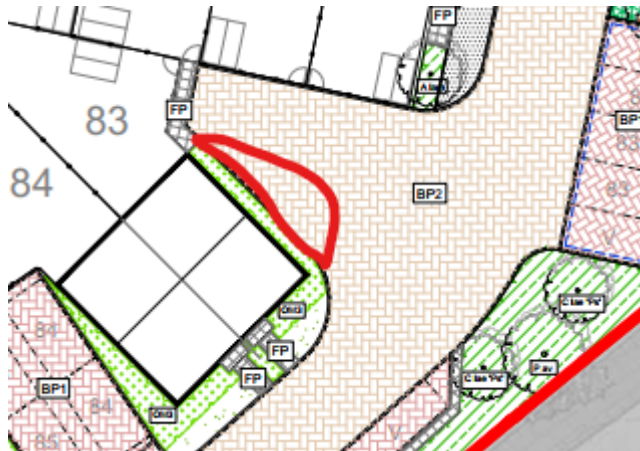
Comments On Proposal

This Reserved Matters application has been submitted following pre-app discussions for parcels P11 & P12. I will deal with various issues under each subheading.

Layout

1. Detailed Site Layout Sheets 1-3 are provided with this application in association with the Presentation Layout (Rev C).
2. A number of changes have been made to address issues raised though the pre-app process and these are largely addressed though the revised layout submitted.
3. An informal pedestrian route has now been included within the open space adjacent to the south-eastern boundary to activate and enliven the space. However it is important that this path continues south of the larger attenuation basin and connects into the off-site bridleway in the south-western corner of the site to enable direct pedestrian access to the bridleway and the SANG beyond.

4. The turning head between plots 82 & 83 is excessively wide to the front of this area. I suggest the hardstanding is reduced by the red line in the extract below to enable more planting in this location. I have checked the vehicle tracking and this area seems to be outside what is required for refuse vehicles.



Levels

5. The proposed FFLs and highway levels are shown on Proposed Levels Sheets 1 & 2. I presume there is no need for any retaining walls to accommodate level changes between plots as none are shown on the drawings. This will need to be clarified and if any retaining walls are required their location and height will need to be indicated on the drawings.
6. The FFLs of the three storey apartment blocks on the western side of the development parcel appear to be over 1.5m above existing ground levels with the two-storey block 1m above existing. The proposed ground levels around this part of the site will need to be indicated on the levels plan to show how the proposed levels will grade back into the existing and how these relate to the adjacent public open space.

Drainage

7. The surface water drainage for Parcels 11 & 12 are indicated on Proposed Drainage Sheets 1 & 2.
8. The Surface Water Drainage Strategy now includes additional SuDS features within the SuDS train as discussed through the pre-application process. These include attenuation tanks, permeable paving with integrated tree pits, a swale & bio-retention strips and are welcome additions.
9. The form and gradients of the attenuation basins have also been amended to look less engineered which is an improvement.
10. We will need to understand construction details of the tree pit rain gardens associated with the permeable paving as well as the bio retention strips. All tree pits operating as rain garden will need to be in the control of a management company rather than individual ownership. These details can be provided through a conditions submission.

Landscape

11. A brief landscape strategy is included in the Design and Access Statement. It would have been helpful include additional information in order to further understand the proposed character of the public open space along the south-eastern boundary of the site. Pre-app comments from the Green Infrastructure Officer indicated that this space is designated as a Parks and

Gardens typology which calls for a more formal landscape character. The following advice was given:

A suitable approach is to implement a formal layout featuring linear planting beds, structured lawn areas, and straight axial pathways that provide clear sightlines while respecting easement restrictions. Pathways should guide users through the landscape, with focal points such as sculptures, seating areas, and ornamental planting placed at intersections or pathway ends to enhance visual interest. To avoid interference with underground services, shallow-rooting ground cover plants and ornamental grasses are recommended. Near the woodland edge, using native and shade-tolerant species will create a soft transition while preserving a formal aesthetic closer to the corridor centre and residential boundaries.

The landscape scheme as provided incorporates a soft transition with the woodland edge on the S-E boundary of the site, however the more park and garden type elements are not included nor the focal points to enhance visual interest. Further work will need to be undertaken in this area to ensure this character type can be achieved.

12. The DAS provides very little information on the play strategy and a separate drawing will need to be provided showing the detail of the individual play elements with photos or images showing the type equipment proposed. Pre-app comments from the Green Infrastructure Officer indicated that this space needed to be at least 100 sqm, and provided the following guidance.

The play area should offer ample space for informal play, seating, and landscape features, focusing on natural and informal play experiences. Formal play equipment, if included, should be rustic or timber-based to align with the LLAP character. Opportunities for climbing, balancing, and exploration should be incorporated through features like large logs, boulders, mounds, and diverse planting. Additionally, adequate seating for parents and caregivers, waste bins for litter control, and signage indicating appropriate use should be provided.

I consider the information provided on the type and range of play for this play area is inadequate and further details will need to be provided to address the pre-app comments made above.

13. Combined Hard and Soft Landscape Plans (Sheets 1 - 5) (24.1992.L104 B, L105 B, L106 B, L107 B & L108 B) and Planting Schedule (24.1992.L109 B) are provided with this application.
14. It would be helpful to have the full species names of the trees provided on the drawings as the abbreviated labels are difficult to read.
15. Native shrub planting is appropriate where located adjacent to the existing woodland along the South-Eastern boundary or adjacent to the bridleway and the south-western boundary. However all other locations the inclusion of native shrub planting within the site, such as to the side boundaries of gardens or dwellings and adjacent to footways, is not appropriate due to lack of space or closeness to buildings. These areas will need to be replaced with ornamental type planting.
16. Instead of the native shrub planting proposed on the landscape drawings in the easement gap, I suggest it is replaced with perennial / prairie style planting with grasses which is well suited for this space and will provide much more interest than native shrubs which are likely to become visually and physically dominant in this space.

17. The other location of native shrub planting proposed is to the back of edge of the access road running parallel to the S-W boundary and the footway / cycleway. I am concerned that this again will become too visually dominant and prevent passive surveillance of users of the play area or informal footpath. This style of planting also doesn't relate to the parks and gardens typology as discussed in point 11 above. This planting will need to be replaced with more ornamental type planting and / or single species hedgerows such as hornbeam or beech which are native species but suit a more formal clipped form.
18. All new hedgerow planting should include temporary post and wire fencing to aid establishment and provide a secure boundary while the hedgerow matures.
19. The landscape drawings indicate the location of timber fencing in rear gardens; however it is not clear where the post and rail fencing is located which is also indicated within the key. Perhaps this fence type is proposed adjacent to the northern boundary. This will need to be clarified.
20. We will need to understand whether there are any other enclosures proposed either along the front boundaries of properties or whether some garden boundaries will be brick walls. There may also be a requirement for some form of low barrier to the ends of some driveways or parking bays where adjacent to green space. An enclosures plan should also be provided and can be submitted as part of a conditions application.
21. Where tree planting is proposed in small or narrow planting beds we will need to have details of tree pits, and which will need to include underground soil cells under adjacent hard surfaces to provide sufficient rooting volume and to ensure the long-term health of the tree. In some locations this may be combined with the rain gardens proposed as part of the drainage strategy.
22. Even with the requested changes discussed as part of these comments, we still require a landscape condition to be included in any RM approval as this wasn't included as part of the original Outline approval (suggested landscape condition given below). Additional specific details that will need to be provided through a landscape condition are a detailed landscape specification, and detailed landscape drawings which should indicate the individual plant species, location and numbers on the drawings and in the schedule.

Arboricultural Information

23. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment by RPS and dated 4th April 2025 has been submitted with this application. I note the Tree Protection Plans are based on an earlier layout, although the layout that is now proposed will not have any significant effects on the existing tree belt that is shown to be retained. I therefore consider this document does not need to be revised for this RM application, but the Tree Protection Plans will need to be revised to show the current layout in order to discharge the tree protection condition as part of any future submission.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Landscaping

- i) No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works for that phase have been submitted to and approved in

writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. The details shall include, as appropriate:

- a) scheme drawings;
- b) soft landscaping details including planting plans, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
- c) a Landscape Specification document covering soft landscaping (including site preparation, cultivation, plant handling and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment) and hard landscaping including all construction works such as paths, bridges and retaining walls;
- d) hard landscaping materials including samples;
- e) minor artefacts and structures (e.g. play equipment, street furniture, refuse or other storage units, signs, external services) including specifications for the product and its installation;
- f) specification for tree rooting systems and use of structural soils under paving or where rooting volumes are limited;
- g) all boundary treatments, and other means of enclosure or controlling access such as gates, bollards and vehicle restraint systems, which shall include consideration of ecological permeability;
- h) measures required for ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gain;
- ii) Details of quality control measures, including supervision of landscape contract(s) by a suitably qualified landscape specialist and annual landscape audits for the five-year period from completion of the landscaping for the Landscape Phase or until adoption (whichever is longer). The annual Landscape Audit shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for information prior to the next planting season and replacement planting undertaken in accordance with the landscape audit and iii) below.
- iii) Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Landscape management

Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Date:	8 th July 2025	Signed:	C. Brimble
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