

PLANNING REF: 253071

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 22 Canberra Lake Way, Charvil, RG10 9DH

SUBMITTED BY: Ms Sarah Beere

Objection to Reserved Matters Application 253071 - Landscape Masterplan

I'm writing to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposed Overall Landscape Plan, specifically regarding the planned green infrastructure, ambiguous boundary screening, and the complete absence of a formal, explicit management strategy.

The developer proposes to plant *Alnus glutinosa* (Common Alder), *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch), and *Acer campestre* (Field Maple) in the restricted spaces between properties along Canberra Lake Way and the Bellway development. This selection, combined with a highly ambiguous layout plan and zero clarity regarding long-term ownership, violates national and local planning frameworks.

My objection is grounded in Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Planning Policies and the following material planning considerations:

1. Unacceptable Ambiguity in Management, Ownership, and Operational Frameworks

A sustainable landscape plan must be legally and operationally robust, clearly outlining long-term maintenance frameworks. The applicant, Bellway, has completely failed to provide this:

- **Vague and Allusive Documentation:** The only reference to future maintenance, land ownership, and site security across the entire submission is briefly alluded to in Appendix 3 ("Suggested Amendments and Interim Feedback from WBC") of the revised submission covering letter. It notes an intention that the buffer be "*gated and maintained by the ManCo, with access for maintenance only.*"
- **Complete Lack of an Explicit Strategy:** While the provision of a physical gate next to our boundary layout is noted and accepted in principle, nowhere does Bellway explicitly define, formalise, or commit to a binding Management and Maintenance Plan within the main application. Leaving such critical matters entirely open to interpretation is utterly unacceptable for a national housebuilder.
- **Policy Failure:** This ambiguity directly breaches WBC Core Strategy Policy CP3, which requires developers to provide infrastructure and designs that ensure long-term, high-quality management. Without an explicit, legally binding commitment detailing the exact operational parameters of the Management Company (ManCo), the landscape buffer will inevitably fall into neglect. This creates immediate vulnerabilities and environmental decay, severely harming residential amenity.

2. Plan Ambiguity and Complete Defeat of the Landscape Buffer

Beyond the administrative vagueness, the physical layout mapping lacks basic planning precision:

- **Unclear Tree Placement:** The spatial mapping is highly ambiguous. It remains entirely unclear from the drawing layout where the actual root zones and physical trunks of these trees are to be anchored relative to domestic boundaries.
- **Complete Failure of Screening for Plot No. 22:** If the council takes the developer's submitted plan literally, Plot No. 22 is left entirely exposed with zero screening from the preceding plots before the porter. This structural omission completely defeats the stated objective of a landscaped buffer. Leaving a plot fully exposed introduces a severe, direct invasion of privacy, failing to mitigate overlooking as required by WBC Material Planning Standards.

3. Failure to Balance Screening with Residential Amenity (The "Overhang" Substitution)

- **Trading a House for an Oppressive Canopy:** If we are offered tree screening based on the current landscape plan, the proposed species will simply replace the physical massing of a building with an equally oppressive, unmanaged tree canopy. *Alnus glutinosa* (Common Alder) and *Acer campestre* (Field Maple) grow far too wide for this tight space. They will cause severe horizontal branch overhang directly into our private garden, encroaching on our outdoor living space
- **Breach of Tree Strategy Policy NE4:** Under WBC Draft Local Plan Policy NE4 (Development and Existing Trees), new layouts must ensure sufficient space for growth while explicitly "*limiting excessive shading to residential properties.*" Squeezing large forest trees here will completely block low-angle daylight to my garden.
- **The Feasible Alternative:** To satisfy both privacy and sunlight requirements, the Council should condition the use of stilted pleached evergreen trees (such as *Pleached Photinia*). This provides dense, year-round screening at window level while maintaining a narrow physical footprint that eliminates canopy encroachment and loss of light.

4. Conflict with WBC Core Strategy Policy CP3 (Structural Risk & Amenity)

Policy CP3 dictates that development layout must be of a high quality and must not detrimentally impact the amenities or structural integrity of adjoining properties.

- **Property Damage and Subsidence Risk:** The proposed species are completely inappropriate for close-proximity residential gaps. *Alnus glutinosa* features aggressive, water-seeking root structures, while *Betula pendula* possesses an expansive, shallow root architecture requiring a minimum 4 to 5-metre structural clearance. In Wokingham's

prevalent shrinkable clay soils, introducing forest-canopy trees within proximity of foundations introduces an unacceptable long-term risk of structural subsidence and foundation lifting.

- **Overbearing Overhead Overhang:** *Alnus glutinosa* (mature spread 4–8m), *Betula pendula* (4–6m), and *Acer campestre* (4–8m) will swiftly outgrow the tight physical gap. Their physical canopies will encroach upon, overhang, and scrape against roofs and gutters, creating an intensely overbearing environment that violates Policy CP3.

5. Non-Compliance with the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (SPD)

The WBC Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Section R2) explicitly requires housing configurations to design out potential adverse environmental impacts and properly manage long-term boundary relationships.

- By placing massive forest-canopy species in a restricted boundary, omitting screening entirely for Plot No. 22, and leaving ownership ambiguous, the developer is baking in a permanent layout flaw. To keep these trees within the physical confines of the properties, they will require continuous, costly, and brutal pruning, ruining their natural form and destroying any intended visual or ecological benefit.

Conclusion and Requested Action

The current species allocation, spatial layout, and total lack of explicit maintenance and ownership strategies under Landscape Plan 253071 are unsustainable, ambiguous, and non-functional.

I urge Wokingham Borough Council to refuse approval of this layout until the developer submits an amended plan that explicitly details the Management Company's (ManCo) legal obligations and updates the species selection to:

1. Fastigate / Columnar tree varieties (such as *Betula pendula* 'Fastigiata'), which grow strictly upwards to eradicate overhang and roof encroachment.
2. Non-invasive evergreen pleached trees (such as *Pleached Photinia* or *Pleached Holm Oak*), which provide immediate, space-efficient, 365-day boundary screening while correcting the missing protection for Plot No. 22 without threatening foundations.