

# MEMORANDUM

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                 |                |        |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| <b>From:</b>                | Brigitte Crafer<br>Landscape Architect                                                                                                                          |                |        |
| <b>Service</b>              | WBC Landscape and Trees                                                                                                                                         | <b>App No:</b> | 250452 |
| <b>Address:</b>             | Gto House Floral Mile, Bath Road, Hare Hatch, Wokingham, RG10 9ES.                                                                                              |                |        |
| <b>Proposal:</b>            | Full application for proposed erection of a workshop including associated storage, landscaping and hardstanding, following the demolition of existing building. |                |        |
| <b>Type of Development:</b> | Major All other developments                                                                                                                                    |                |        |
| <b>Site Visit Made:</b>     | 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 set back from a stretch of Bath Road known as the Floral Mile. Bath Road itself which is a Green Route Enhancement Area. The site is located north of Mumbery Hill which runs parallel to Bath Road and characterised by a hedgerow of mature trees and hedges to both sides of the road which screen development beyond. In the case of the site, access is located to the east of a large forecourt on Mumbery Hill with a single building facing the road, set well back to the north towards the open arable fields. The site is to the west of the Hare Hatch Conservation Area.

The site is in the countryside and the Green Belt, and in Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Area H1 'Wargrave – Twyford Arable Chalk Lowlands' a landscape of moderate condition and sensitivity and a modest capacity for change.

The Valuable Landscape Attributes of the area include;

**Rural character and sense of openness** of the lowland landscape due to the homogenous land use in large amalgamated fields, flat topography and lack of trees.

**Rural buffer** and sense of separation provided by the farmed landscape to the settlements of Twyford and Wargrave.

**Historic settlements with vernacular interest** designated as Conservation Areas with distinctive riverside settings which provide a cultural record of the past.

**Views across the arable landscape** to surrounding character areas, particularly across the river valleys to the west and wooded hills to the north east which provide a degree of distant visual enclosure.

Key characteristics affecting the site location include;

- Intensive working arable farmland dominates with extensive areas of horticultural polytunnels between the A4 and Mumbery Hill sheltered by Poplar belts.
- Enclave of plant nurseries with associated car parks along the A4 near Hare Hatch
- Linear road and rail transport corridors, including the A4 (T), A3032 and A321 which run through the landscape and create a sense of disturbance in an otherwise peaceful landscape.

A key issue affecting the character area is commercial development pressure along the A4 Bath Road eroding rural character and settlement form

The Landscape Strategy for H1 is to *enhance existing landscape character* and improve the condition, intactness and presentation of the farmed landscape. In terms of development, the aim is *conserve the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the integrity of settlement identity, particularly enhancing the character along the A4 Bath Road*.

Landscape guidelines in relation to the site include;

**Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges** through hedges, new wooded boundaries and large-species tree planting to provide visual screening and to enhance landscape character, while conserving significant views to landmark features.

**Enhance sense of place through careful design** (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.

Trees and other vegetation on site is protected by TPO1548/2016.

The proposed development comprises of the demolition and removal of a temporary building in the NW of the site which is outlined on the Proposed Site Plan – Dwg. 5024150 RDG XX ST D A 001021 P02 and demolition and rebuilding of the existing workshop located to the NE of the site.

The existing workshop is approximately 50m long x 18m wide x 6.3m high and has a distinctive curved roof. The existing building is clad and coloured dark grey/black. The workshop is located just to the north of the GTO building which is set back just off the eastern site boundary whereas the workshop building is offset from the

building by 10.3m – 20.5m and where trees line the boundary providing a backdrop to the workshop, where there is no space to the rear of the GTO building for trees.

It is proposed not to replace the temporary building to be demolished at this stage and the space, known as 'the yard' will remain as hardstanding and provide additional parking. The workshop will be re-provided on the same footprint as the existing but with a different, more contemporary design which includes a fenestrated southern face which is partly landscaped.

It is proposed to replace the existing workshop with a more contemporary design on the same footprint / dimensions as the original building. Rather than a curved roof line the new roofline will be a low pitch at close to the original height at 6.30m. The building will be built using a mix of red brick and clad in black timber to help it to sit alongside GTO house. The building will be fenestrated to the south side where exterior landscaping will help it to blend into the setting. Although the replacement building is the same footprint as the existing the massing illustrations make the building look longer in length. The north and eastern elevations show the backdrop provided by the existing trees.

In the DAS there is a 'Landscape Overview' which includes;

- Widening of the GTO House car park entrance to allow improved vehicle circulation
- Green landscaping to the area surrounding the existing brick built building (replacing concrete hardstanding) including planting and fencing
- Landscape design improvements to the eastern garden
- Hard and soft landscaping to GTO House entrance improve customer circulation to enhance customer experience.

There is mention of levels but I can see no drawings with existing / proposed levels in relation to the proposals.

In the planning statement reference is made to an Arboricultural Survey and Planning Integration Report, but I cannot see any arboricultural information submitted with the plans.

The 'Proposed Site Plan' as well as the Existing Site Plan include several proposed landscape features which initially makes it difficult to assess the impact of development on the existing site.

The planning boundary is broadly outside of the tree line but the trees are still a material concern of the planning application and as such an Arboricultural Impact Assessment is required in order to assess the requirement to protect existing trees from development and a tree protection plan is required to BS5837:2012 and to comply with Policy CC03d of the Local Plan. NB. The root protection areas of the trees are shown very faintly on the Proposed Site Plan.

Landscape improvements appear on the existing and proposed site block plans which is confusing. I note the intentions for a new landscaping scheme for the site but in some cases it is difficult to see what impact the new layout will have on existing landscape features such as the area marked as '3' on the plan where it is proposed to widen the access and gate to GTO House Car park entrance.

Item 10 is included on existing and proposed plans. The best way to clearly demonstrate the landscape proposals is for a dedicated landscape design that clearly shows the proposed hard and soft landscaping and any features, against the retained existing. The use of a Key /Legend with colours that are enough of a contrast to see the difference on a printed plan will help.

The landscape scheme can address the landscape guidelines;

**Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through hedges, new wooded boundaries and large-species tree planting to provide visual screening and to enhance landscape character**

I have no objection to the proposals in terms of impact on the protected trees, or the character of the site. It is possible to enhance the boundaries with new tree planting as well as enhance the site interior with ornamental planting.

I required an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to be submitted which deals with any impact on the trees from demolition / construction, and provides tree protection information

Landscaping and Tree Protection is required as conditions

CL5 Condition - A Planting Plan including schedule and specification, and a hard landscape drawing.

CL7 Condition – Tree Protection

| Conditions & Reasons (if required) |          |         |           |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| Date:                              | 03.04.25 | Signed: | B. Crafer |