

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	251421
Address:	Land At Old Forest Road, Wokingham.		
Proposal:	Full application for erection of 53 no. dwellings with associated landscaping, parking, drainage, open space and other associated works.		
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

Site Location

The site is located to the south of a diminishing part of the countryside between Wokingham and Winnersh settlement areas. Directly to the north of the site is Toutley Road a recently built transport corridor part of the Wokingham Relief Road.

The site is not in a valued landscape

Part of the southern site boundary is adjacent to Wokingham Settlement area and within the J1 'Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay' Landscape Character Area (LCA) (see Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment WBLCA- 2019). The land is classified as overall low quality and sensitivity with the greatest capacity for change.

The key issues affecting the LCA include marginal agricultural land around settlement edges kept in hope value – which could apply to the site, however it has the benefit of woodland to the west which extends into the site, and a significant tree belt across a key north south axis through the site. Old Forest Meadows, an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space is located to the east.

Many of the site trees are included in the Ancient Tree Inventory and are protected by TPO. Another key issue is the pressure for large scale development in the

marginal wedge of land between the 2 key settlements of the borough leading to urbanisation of the countryside. As such the Landscape Strategy is to '*conserve the open character of the landscape between settlements and to enhance the existing urban/rural interface.*' Key aspects to be enhanced includes the '*remaining fields next to transport corridors with potential for habitat creation and improved screening of transport corridors*'.

Landscape guidelines include; *protecting the remaining area of open land separating Winnersh and Wokingham to provide a physical and visual separation or gap between settlements, reinstate or repair hedgerows, conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries, hedgerows and large species trees. Enhance a sense of place through careful design.*

Arboriculture

A tree report is received from Goodger Design Associates; '*Tree Condition Survey, Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Tree Protection Recommendations*' – June 2025 which I have already reviewed in relation to a previous application – PA 243115.

Treed Character of the site

There are 2 significant north – south treed axes across the site; one of which extends from Old Forest Road and forms the access into the site, and a secondary axis further to the east which links a tree belt along an access track from Old Forest Road and divides the site. Along this axis most of the trees are protected. In addition to these is the 'southern' boundary which extends SW – NE and consists of a group of screening trees of mixed native species to the west, and to the east a boundary of scrub with hedgerow Oak trees spaced at distances between 22 – 30m. No enhancement tree planting is proposed along this SE edge as trees would be in rear gardens and not protected. The NE part of the site narrows to a point, and the SW boundary extends to the woodland which forms a belt of trees to the SW boundary which includes significant 'A' and 'B' quality Oaks and a group of Field Maple and Ash.

Protected Trees

The site contains many trees mostly to the perimeters some of which are within the site and others outside of it but material to the application. There are trees close to the SW site boundary that are protected by TPO 0507/1989. The order includes 3 tree that appear to be outside of the redline boundary of the site which are 3 Oak trees T30, T31 and T32. T30 is an 'A' quality Oak whilst the others are 'B' quality. The root protection areas of these 3 trees extend marginally into the communal garden space of the flatted blocks, with T31 close to an area of hard landscaping. These trees will all be retained and protected during development.

T27 and T28 in the SW corner, both Oaks are also protected by TPO 0507/1989, as is G25 a group of Ash, Sycamore and Oak extends along the southern site boundary. At the northern end of the access road Trees T19, T18, and T20 are protected by the same order.

Trees that form the significant axis on the site are all protected by TPO 0507/1989 and includes trees T9-G16.

Tree Constraints

The proposed layout extends an existing access road from Old Forest Road into the site and utilises a gap in the significant axis to the east to extend development into the eastern extent of the site. Of these T15 is an 'A' quality Oak. T14, T13 will be felled, which along with T12 already removed will facilitate a road connecting development both sides of the development. T9, T15 and G16 will be retained. The extended road will be constructed on 'No Dig' principles and permeable paving laid where it touches the RPAs of T11 and T15 on the north side of the access. There is no pedestrian footpath to the north edge only the southern side. In order to avoid kerbs in an already tight area would a shared surface be more appropriate – or does the kerb upstand also prevent overrunning into the adjacent space?

There are a pair of parking bays next to T9 – which I consider ill judged on a difficult corner and an incursion into a landscaped area which also accommodated visitor parking on the NE side.

Tree T4 Oak has half of its RPA in the rear garden of Plot 48 – It looks as though the cycle shed will be located deep in the RPA, but should be re-located as close to the outer parts of the RPA. A caveat is required to the effect there is to be no building within the RPA of the trees where the RPA extends into the rear garden.

Parking bays are located in the RPA of T3 Oak, parking bays will be constructed using 'low to no dig permeable surfacing which is acceptable. Please include in AMS.

T32 the canopy and RPA extends slightly into the communal garden space of the northern block which is similar but to a lesser extent for the southern block. The RPAs must be protected from built form going forward.

Ditto T24 along the southern boundary regarding plots 23 and 28 but the incursion is minimal.

There are existing trees along the access mostly grouped close to where the junction is with the main body of the site. Tree T18 (east side) and T20 (west side) have half of their canopies / rpa within the access / gardens of dwellings adjacent to the route. The advice is that these 2 trees must be crown lifted to 4-5m height deadwooded and crown thinned up to 15%. The access road will also be a 'No Dig' surface and permeable which is acceptable, however consideration must be given to the levels in order that the root flare of the retained trees is bridged sufficiently and levels can be graded where they enter and exit the site to meet with the existing. 2 other trees within the access T19 and T22 will be felled to facilitate development. We need to see how the RPA of the retained trees will be protected and ameliorated/access to moisture from an appropriate construction detail.

A mown grass footpath is shown extending from the access to the flatted blocks mowing over root protection areas needs to be assessed and a method included as appropriate in the AMS.

Please ensure that the access through the tree belt (T15 and T9) is designed in a subtle way so the edges are smooth and the amount of engineering in this area is minimal in order to preserve the setting and rooting environment of the trees as well as creating a sense of place that enhances both the retained landscape character and the integration of the dwellings. Site specific construction details needs to be included in the AMS.

Transport Information

Referring to the transport drawings the access road width is 5.5m narrowing to 4.8m wide approaching the entrance. A 2m wide footway is proposed on the north side of the access road which includes the retained tree T18. It would be preferable for the footway to be a shared surface to minimise the construction in the RPA. To the south side of the access planting is proposed. Between the new planting are the access drives to existing properties on Old Forest Road which are retained – although the 2 trees to be removed are shown as retained on the Landscape Strategy Plan as they are on the Planting Plans, lighting plan, hard landscape plans. The access road will be constructed using a 'No Dig' technique.

SuDS

The site drains SW to NE

There are existing ditches on the site adjacent to the site boundary where it is proposed to discharge surface water, with one discharge point to the existing ditch located through the centre of the site. The second discharge point will be located to the NE of the site into an existing boundary ditch.

Permeable paving is proposed across the majority of the site but tarmac is proposed to the footpaths and some of the driveways, but there are permeable driveways as well. Can there not be permeable paths and driveways across the whole site as well as the proposed permeable internal roads?

There is no space for swales within the layout.

The attenuation basin is in the NE corner of the site – 28.15m x 13.6m at its widest point on the western side. The basin is hard against the northern planted boundary and a dashed line around the basin which I understand to be a footpath is actually going through the boundary planting. The space has the ability to be an open area of public space to be enjoyed by residents but the proportion of the basin to the surrounding space leaves a small amount of amenity space. The path is also hard against a planting strip 40 cms wide next to plot 53. It seems as though this area hasn't been considered for anything other than a drainage basin, where usable green space is at a minimum.

I cannot see any information regarding the detail of the construction / depth / gradient of the detention basin. The 'Presentation Planning Layout' shows a landscaped setting for the basin and as previously mentioned it should be a large enough area that can be used by the residents.

Site Layout

The site layout has been refined over a number of meetings with the applicant. There are key issues that affect the layout which highlight the squeezing in of development in a narrow elongated space which tapers in the lowest part of the site where the detention basin is located leaving little space around it so that it can function well as a public open space.

The same issue arises with the location of the play area next to the vehicle crossover into the dwellings located to the east. The lack of space is highlighted by the inclusion of parking bays both to the north and south of the space which compromises the available space to enhance the setting of the development and views of the landscape through the site. The space proposed for the LAP is close to the road/footway on a restrained crossing into the other part of the site, the fenced area next to the roads will still represent an incursion into the RPA of T11 a retained tree.

There is no opportunity shown to landscape the spaces behind the flatted blocks to create a sense of place in potential community garden space.

There are some areas of incidental landscaping, and the enhancement of the northern edge of the site adjacent to Toutley Road is an opportunity that has been successful.

Soft Landscape Drawings

The site landscaping will be managed by a management company following handover from the main contractor after the defects liability period which looks to be 5 years.

There are existing trees close to the northern site boundary that are establishing to provide a screen to traffic along Toutley Road. The 'Presentation Planning Layout' Dwg. No. 092404-ELS-01 show a well landscaped scheme that includes additional trees and hedges to the northern boundary, and 6 new trees within the site layout, and an additional 2 trees within the area for the detention basin. Although in total there are 34 trees proposed which more than accounts for trees lost to development. The trees and additional hedging along the northern boundary will help to enhance the setting of the development so that it is partially screened. In this way the application fulfils part of the Landscape Strategy for LCA J1 to *enhance the existing urban/rural interface.*

The site layout leaves very little space for incidental landscaping, although some smaller spaces are located on corners, alongside flank walls of dwellings and some of the site edges. The layout concentrates on the area in the NE of the site that includes the detention basin, the 'central' axis which includes a small play area and some more linear improvements to the central southern boundary and the west side of the access road. The 2 flatted blocks to the west of the site have lawned areas between the rear of the buildings and the trees along the boundary. There are hedges / landscaping between dwellings which helps to break up the parking.

A drawing 'Planting Plan Overview' 8814.PP.1.0 – May 2025 is submitted which breaks down the site into 4 smaller areas to provide detailed planting plans. The

overview drawing also includes the Plant Schedule. The 4 No. detailed drawings are labelled 8814.PP.1.1 1- 4, and there is a separate document entitled ' Specification for Landscape and Horticultural Works' Ref. 8814.Lan.Spec.001 – May 2025.

The tree list includes native tree species as well as some native with ornamental cultivars such as *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra' and the ornamental non-native *Magnolia loebneri* 'Merrill' and *Magnolia stellata* specified as a small tree. A total of 34 are proposed.

Shrubs are ornamental including mostly evergreen but with some deciduous dogwood. A single climbing species '*Clematis montana rubens*' is specified. In terms of hedging there is a native hedge included with 7 species which is acceptable. Other single species hedges comprise of Hornbeam, Sweet box hedge, Photinia, *Prunus lusitanica* 'Myrtifolia', *Osmanthus burkwoodii*, *Euonymus japonica* 'Microphyllus' and *Elaeagnus ebbingei* 'Gilt Edge' there are 2 ornamental shrub mixes which include grasses, *Euonymus*, Lavender, *Heuchera* and *Liriope*. A shade mix is included.

There are swathes of bulb planting by the detention basin and an open space shrub mix including dogwood and 3 evergreen shrubs.

The planting plans are acceptable although there is no landscaping to the space to the rear of the flatted blocks. The specification document does not include a watering regime but leaves it to the discretion of the contractor / management company. It would be still useful to include a watering regime but to clearly stipulate the sustainable criteria that Aspect have included.

I can see no tree pit details

Hard Landscape Drawings

Drawing Nos. 8814.HSP.2.0 – Hard Landscape Plan – May 2025 - 2 drawings;

The plan shows asphalt to the surface of the entrance road – although this extends over the RPAs of retained trees close to the junction with the internal estate roads – the asphalt will need to be permeable. Asphalt is also proposed to the footpath adjacent to the access road, and it too must be permeable. A site specific paving detail must be included in the AMS and in highway construction details and it made clear with all drawings including the correct information.

Internal estate roads are proposed to be permeable block paving in a herringbone pattern. Parking bays are in a contrast colour and pattern again laid as a permeable surfacing.

Flag paving proposed for dwelling frontages, granite crossovers

The hard landscape design allows for an interesting and varied use of different paving whether it is the laying pattern, colour and type of material which contributes to a high quality design environment.

The road extension to dwellings in the east of the site needs to be fit for purpose but also be designed and constructed in a sensitive way to preserve the setting / RPAs

of the high quality retained trees, and to ensure the play space is safe and inviting. Currently it is confined in the SW corner next to a footway and road, and has the effect of being squeezed into an unlikely location. Visitor parking bays are also included on the eastern side within the RPA and then there are the pair of parking bays on the SW side which also puncture the space. There is no other suitable space for a play area, in the area of the detention basin, or elsewhere where the play area can be overlooked. These observations highlight the fact that although this version of the scheme is an improvement there are too many dwellings and not enough space to make it a truly integrated development.

My colleague from GI will have more comments on the play aspect.

Conclusion

We require an Arboricultural Method Statement as a condition of planning permission which includes site specific construction details in the collective RPA including permeable asphalt and its efficacy. Also include proposals for the amelioration of the growing areas of all the existing retained trees, and where the RPA is encroached access to moisture – in case of the access road consideration of this where to a certain extent the RPA is offset in adjacent gardens which cannot be relied upon so we need to see how the RPA will be compensated for access to moisture.

A caveat is also required to prevent building within rear gardens where the root protection area of trees extends T4.

The AMS and Tree Protection Plans need to be reflective of the final approved design.

The Planting Plans might be subject to change – so will need to be updated as a condition of planning permission. Tree Pite details are also required for planting trees in different locations e.g. in areas of soft landscape and next to hard landscaping. The plans need to reflect the final approved design.

We require more information on the size, gradients and cross section of the detention basin.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
CP1, CP3, CC03, TB21			
Date:	19.8.25	Signed:	B. Crafer