

PLANNING REF : 242242
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 21 Flamingo Close
: Wokingham
: RG413SJ
SUBMITTED BY : The Chair Friends of Fox Hill
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/09/2024

COMMENTS:

Application 242242 is intended to meet condition 6 of the approved application 202539 but includes the unwarranted changes outlined below. Friends of Fox Hill therefore object to this application on the following grounds:

1) INCORRECT FOOTPATH ROUTING

This application is intended to comply with conditions imposed on application 203539 and refers to the approved plan 6768.PS.02 Rev F. However, the plan enclosed as Appendix A 12233 TPP 01 differs substantially from the approved plan. In fact, it is a duplicate of plan 6768/ASP 1.0 Rev D August 2019 by Aspect Landscape Planning, submitted as part of application 192419 that was refused in August 2020.

This earlier plan was labelled "Indicative 2.5km circular walk" and does not follow the detailed routing incorporated in the approved plan. Neither does it provide for walks of different lengths which would be required if the site was ever submitted for approval as a SANG. It does not show the 10m variance zone despite this being referred to in the text.

Application 203539 Condition 2 states "not excluding the exact location of the proposed footpath and kissing gates, which are not approved." The current application is less precise than before and does not appear to have been surveyed.

This application does not note the new PROW or Bridleway.

2) INCORRECT FOOTPATH CONSTRUCTION

This current application describes the construction of a woodchip footpath with edging from cut branches. This is referred to throughout and shown on the legend of the plan.

The approved plan 6768.PS.02 Rev F refers to a "Proposed 2m wide, minimum 2.3km length Hoggin Footpath". This is supported by drawing 6768/ASP.HWD Hard Works Details that describes the detailed construction of a hoggin surface laid at a 1:50 camber - not possible with woodchips. It also states softwood edging pegs to a depth of 450mm not branches.

Accompanying application 242107 - condition 4: construction details. This includes unchanged drawings 6768.PSCP.04 & 6768/ASP.HWD from 203539. Both show the footpath as made from Hoggin material.

On detailed examination of all documents from the approved application, we see that while Aspect Landscape Planning have designed a detailed hoggin path, their sister company Aspect Arboriculture have been talking about woodchip construction from the beginning.

While this may be a simple communication error, we must insist that

the approved construction is maintained.

A woodchip surface may be initially attractive but has a number of important drawbacks:

- It is not all weather suitable and would be prone to waterlogging in wet weather
- It would be prone to excessive wear by bicycles and horses
- It is not DDA compliant and would not be suitable for wheelchairs or buggies, especially on gradients and in wet weather. Condition 17 of 202539 states "The plan shall include measures to ensure that the footpaths are kept in good working order and remain safe for use by members of the public, including disabled users. The plan should be adhered to throughout the lifetime of the development".
- It degrades rapidly and would need constant maintenance to replenish. This is not addressed.
- There would be no local supply of woodchips once the removal of rhododendron is completed.

COMMENTS:

1) Comments/questions on Aboricultural method:

- Conditions 5,7 and 8 state Rhododendron should be removed prior to implementation of the proposed footpath i.e. the whole route has to be removed first?
- Condition 8 requires "updated surveys for protected species shall be carried out and the results used to provide recommendations, as per the mitigation hierarchy, to the location of the route of the path ". This has not been provided nor mentioned.
- There is no mention of how the Rhododendron roots will be killed off or what with.
- States sapling removal, are these not protected?
- A dam is to be built using fallen branches but where?

2) General comment

Although the approved application is for "Full planning application for the change of use of 14.77ha from existing private woodland to informal recreational land and associated infrastructure including pedestrian and vehicle access, car parking and footpath network and landscaping" the owners have made it clear that they intend to apply for SANG status at a later date. In fact, the documentation refers to a "SANG" throughout. It is therefore essential that all works are approved to the required standard for a SANG otherwise a lot of effort and expense will have been wasted.