

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	250655
Address:	Land at and to the rear of 238 and 240, Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, RG40 3QD.		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent 211889 (approved under appeal ref. APP/X0360/W/22/3295631 dated 13/12/2022) for the erection of 26 no. dwellings and associated infrastructure, landscaping and demolition of existing dwellings. Details of 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

The Inspector's Report following appeal APP APP/X0360/W/24/3352010 acknowledged the original Reserved Matters application (subject of the appeal) included the removal of all non-native evergreen trees along the eastern site boundary sited close to adjacent dwellings including Oak Manor, Willow Cottage and Orchard House.

Tree removal also includes the W1 woodland, the northern edge of which is marked on the Tree Protection Plan – Drawing Reference SJA TPP 23550-041a – March 2025 - as a dashed line which extends to the southern edge of Plot 5 between Oak Manor and Willow Cottage.

Although many boundary trees were proposed for retention, the Inspector found that the removal of the Lawson Cypress trees adjacent to the garden of Oak Manor in particular, would expose the residents to dwellings on proposed Plots 7 and 8. These trees will now be retained – ref. Trees T227-240. T241 is 'U' and proposed to be removed.

In addition, trees T213-214 will be retained along the eastern boundary of the site in the gap between Plots 5 & 6.

Planting / Planting Environment

However, the retention of the Leyland Cypress trees along the boundary will not create the optimum planting conditions for growing a new native hedge (including native evergreens) and new native hedgerow trees as proposed in the Softworks Plans. The proposed hedges and trees would reinforce the boundary and improve its quality both visually, enhancing the landscape character as well as providing opportunities for biodiversity and screening – see Softworks Plans Drawing Nos. 230122A L04 01-03.

In places on the Softworks drawings new native hedge planting is shown where trees are being retained;

- Hedging is proposed where there is a row of closely grown Yew (G136) shown as being retained.
- Beneath retained L. cypress trees T227-244

Planting within the root protection areas of retained trees, in sub-optimal conditions – such as beneath Leyland cypress which is moisture demanding plant, will not work and the planting is unlikely to thrive. There is a need to provide an effective screen to the buffer zones/adjacent dwellings but a different approach is required.

The rear buffer zone along the eastern boundary varies in width from about 4.8m to the rear of Plots 1-3, which allows plenty of access for maintenance and space for planting. Thereafter from the rear of Plots 4-9 the width of the buffer is reduced to 3m rear of Plots 4 and 10 and between plots 5 and 9 is between 2.95, with 2.75 at rear of Plot 8. The hedge width is shown on average at about 1.55m wide which leaves just a 1m wide access for maintenance (next to the rear garden fence) – which was felt to be possible despite the full length of the buffer strip measuring 120m in length. There is 1.5m high timber post and rail fencing at the back of the gaps between Plots 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 – however a gate could always be included for ease of access.

In addition, the hedging to the east boundary is proposed next to 1.8m close board fence, which is within the root protection area of retained trees and in some cases very close to the tree stems. The close board fencing will replace the post and wire fence that exists along the boundary at the present time and change the visual character as a result. In the event this boundary treatment is used a method for erecting the fence in root protection areas is required to be included in the AMS.

There is no enhancement planting proposed to the northern edge of the retained woodland in order to restrain the effect of an enclosing woodland on

the new residents.

A new hedgerow is shown along the whole of the western boundary, but no new hedgerow trees are included – this is a prime opportunity to plant successional/replacement trees within the proposed hedgerow. Hedgerow trees can be planted at 15m centres/in gaps between existing trees and should include native flowering species.

I note that *Acer campestre* is proposed to the eastern boundary hedge, but I suggest where close to the boundary with dwellings on either boundary the visual impact of flowering trees such will be an important addition.

I note that there is no native hedgerow proposed to the northern boundaries side on to Plots 25 and rear of 26. There are many trees retained in this area but there is scope for some hedge planting to the boundaries.

There is no replacement planting for trees T207-210 – and to the spaces either side of the pedestrian footway which is narrow but there is space for enhancement planting.

There is no replacement tree planting included alongside the east side of the vehicle access, which is a requirement and will help to mitigate the loss of so many trees across the site. A replacement acoustic fence may also help to mitigate the impact of the access road with its additional traffic.

Construction of Access Road

There is an illustrative drawing – Fig. 3 and a description of the approach to constructing the access road whilst protecting retained trees on the western side of the entrance. The description in paragraph 6.2.8 does not comply with the Arboricultural Association 'THE USE OF CELLULAR CONFINEMENT SYSTEMS NEAR TREES: A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE'. A permeable tarmac is required not an impermeable surface drilled with holes. We also need to understand what edging is proposed and how it will work whilst protecting the integrity of the tree trunk. We expect a site specific design.

Conclusion

Many of the trees now proposed to be retained are tall and thin trees with vegetation located high up the stem. Although the retention of the trees will help with screening the upper parts of the houses on Plots 6-10 the lower part will now be screened by close board fencing – an urbanising element that will replace the view of a landscaped edge between Willow Cottage and Oak Manor and the site.

Planting is still required to the east side of the vehicular access route and acoustic fencing would help to mitigate the impact of development on the residents, where a discussion may be a starting point/goodwill gesture.

There will be a difficulty in getting the hedges established in the locations shown against the proposed close board fence and within the root protection areas around the retained tree stems. A revised approach is required.

Planting in the root protection areas of retained trees is not included in the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement.

Vehicle Access into the site

A site specific design is required to be designed by both an engineer and the arboricultural consultant.

The Landscape, Tree and Landscape Management Conditions are required as per the conditions list from the appeal.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
See above			
Date:	23.4.25	Signed:	B. Crafer