

MEMORANDUM

From:	Catherine Brimble Senior Landscape Officer		
Service	SDL Landscape and Trees	App No:	251816
Address:	Parcel S, Buttenshaw Avenue, Arborfield.		
Proposal:	Application for the approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent O/2014/2280 (dated 02/04/2015). The Reserved Matters comprise details of the erection of 4 detached dwellings together with an associated internal access road, parking and landscaping. Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9)		
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 site is surrounded by mature trees many of which are protected by TPO 1445/2012. A scheduled ancient monument (Moated site north of the Moat House) is to the north and west of the site.

Comments were made as part of a pre-app consultation which included a site plan and information on the size and form of the dwellings, however no detailed arboricultural information was provided. Therefore, it is only as part of this application I can now comment on the relationship of the proposed dwellings to the existing trees.

The landscape setting of the adjacent Moated site is essential to maintain and therefore we will need to ensure as much of the existing vegetation on this boundary is retained and enhanced as part of this development. Views into the site from Biggs Lane will also need to be carefully considered to ensure the well vegetated character of this site is maintained

Layout

I note that the dwelling on Plot 2 has been moved to the south-east from that shown on the layout drawing provided with the pre-app in response to the Heritage Officer's

comments. The advice given was to reduce the visibility of this dwelling in the same views of the Moat House when approaching from Buttenshaw Avenue especially as the size of the proposed dwelling is similar to that of the Moat House. This has been achieved in part but will need to be accompanied by additional tree planting on the western side of the access road.

Plot 1 has a number of arboricultural constraints that I will discuss in more detail in a later section. One of the issues of concern is the location of a dwelling of this size and the orientation with a garage which requires a turning head to extend into the existing mature boundary vegetation. This then requires the removal of a number of trees with very little space to the back of the turning head for any level of appropriate replacement planting. The garage and associated turning head will need to be removed from this plot as it is essential that the development proposals strengthen the landscape provision on the boundary with the scheduled ancient monument and not adversely impact it, which this layout does currently.

Arboriculture

An Arboricultural Implications Report by SJA Trees and dated July 2025 has been provided with this application. The documents also contain a Tree Protection Plan (TPP) in Appendix 4.

The trees to be removed as part of the proposals are discussed in section 4 of the Arboricultural Report and detailed in Table 2 (mature trees only). It would be helpful if all trees to be removed are included in this table as these contribute to the verdant character of the site. Missing from the table are the following trees 63, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200 & 1752.

The Tree Constraints Plan also show trees 180, 182 & 183 as being removed, but retained on the TPP. I seem to remember from the site visit the cherry tree(183) looked of very poor quality so perhaps this should be removed, however if the hawthorn (182) and sycamore (180) are worth retaining for their long-term potential, these will need to be shown as being retained.

I have no objection to the removal of the relatively young trees that are not protected by the TPO in the vicinity of plots 3 & 4 provided the landscape scheme includes sufficient replacements. The larger category B Oak (181) and Copper Beech (184) trees to the west of these plots are retained as part of the proposals with the access drive skirting around the edge of the root protection area of these trees.

Much of the area covering plot 1 has been previously developed and although the buildings have been removed there are still a number of areas of hardstanding and foundations that need to be removed, and these are identified on the TPP which will require supervised demolition.

Along the treeline parallel to the eastern boundary of plot 1 is an overgrown hedgerow of sorts which although is not shown on the Tree Constraints Plan, it is identified on the Levels Strategy drawing which indicates the existing site features as part of the topographic survey. I presume this vegetation will be removed and we will need to understand how the area of no-mans-land between the two existing site

fences on this eastern edge can be incorporated into the garden of plot 1 without a detrimental impact on the TPO trees.

The position and size of the proposed dwelling on plot 1 raises a number of concerns and issues in relation to the existing protected trees which will need to be addressed:

- The proposed dwelling is within the shadow pattern of existing off-site trees on the western boundary. This will have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of rooms on this side of the property. I also note the main window of the lounge faces east and the group of mature trees of which the canopy of the largest Oak (187) even after its proposed reduction will potentially overshadow this room at certain times of the day.
- The Arboricultural Report has indicated trees 64 & 187 will need minor canopy reductions to enable the dwelling to be constructed. Although this will provide an initial canopy reduction from the dwelling of 2.5m I suggest this will be an ongoing issue for future residents. Where trees are in close proximity to a dwelling such as in this case this can often cause some apprehension to occupiers which is exacerbated by seasonal nuisance such as leaf drop in the autumn and shedding of twigs in high winds resulting in pressure to reduce or remove the trees, or as the trees grow, the branches will start touching the roof. These trees are important landscape features that contribute to the landscape character of the area and therefore their removal would be unacceptable.
- As previously mentioned the provision of a turning head requires the removal of a large horse chestnut (62) and a dead ash (61) plus the incursions into the RPA's of other surrounding trees. I understand why the dead tree would need to be removed, however the horse chestnut could be retained if the turning head is removed. The turning head is not necessary if there is a redesign of the plot, and garage is removed.
- Other proposed incursions into the RPA's of a number of trees are listed in Table 4 of the Arboricultural Report which mentions footings for brick wall close to plot 1. It is not clear where these walls are located as these are not indicated on Site Information Plan showing boundary features. Further information is required.

The main issue in relation to the existing trees within the site is the position and size of the dwelling and garage on plot 1 which is unacceptable on arboricultural grounds for the reasons given above and will need to be addressed.

Levels

A Levels Strategy drawing is provided with the application showing existing levels across the site and proposed FFL's for the dwellings and those for the access road. No other proposed levels are indicated and will need to be provided especially in relation to trees to be retained as any ground level changes in the RPA of the trees is unacceptable.

It appears the levels will need to be raised by up to 1m on plot 1 to achieve FFL of the dwelling based on some of the existing levels on the north-eastern side of the dwelling. We will need to understand how this can be achieved without retaining walls and raising ground levels within RPA's as mentioned above.

Landscape

The layout will need to allow for the retention and enhancement of the existing boundary vegetation. This is especially important on the boundary with the scheduled ancient monument, the northern boundary with Biggs Lane and the western boundary opposite the dwelling on plot 2.

As previously discussed, the inclusion of the turning head in plot 1 is unacceptable not only due to the impact on the existing trees but also as there is insufficient space at the back of the turning head for an appropriate landscape buffer to the Moated Site. This area will need to be redesigned to address these concerns.

The Landscape Masterplan indicates the location and types of the proposed new planting and boundary details.

Timber closeboarded fencing is proposed between plot rear gardens and on the northern and part of the eastern boundary of plot 1 which is set in by approximately 1m to allow a mixed hedge to be planted between the fence and the boundary of the site. This will need to be increased to 2m to allow for substantial hedgerow to be planted and mature and to include hedgerow trees to fill in gaps in the existing vegetation at a higher level.

The inclusion of the metal estate railings on the public facing boundaries is appropriate and which could be extended along the access road to the Moat House and alongside the Moat House boundary.

Additional tree planting on the western side of the access road is required to reduce the visibility of the dwelling on plot 2 in the same views as the Moat House when approaching from Buttenshaw Avenue.

Additional tree planting will be required in the rear gardens of the four plots in order to replace the trees that will be removed by the proposed development.

Conclusion

The current layout relative to plot 1 is unacceptable for the reasons identified in my comments. This is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP3 and Local Plan policy CC03. However, this can be easily resolved by making a number of alterations to the proposals on this plot.

The other issues raised will also need to be addressed through amendments to the scheme and the information provided.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Possible conditions to follow once changes have been submitted.

Date:	14 th October 2025	Signed:	C. Brimble
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