

# MEMORANDUM

|                             |                                                                                        |                |        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| <b>From:</b>                | Catherine Brimble<br>Senior Landscape Officer                                          |                |        |
| <b>Service</b>              | WBC Landscape and Trees                                                                | <b>App No:</b> | 252129 |
| <b>Address:</b>             | 247 Finchampstead Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3JR.                            |                |        |
| <b>Proposal:</b>            | Full application for proposed development of 1no. detached, three bed chalet bungalow. |                |        |
| <b>Type of Development:</b> | Minor Dwellings (1-9)                                                                  |                |        |
| <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 within the settlement boundary, although just beyond the north-western boundary of the site it is designated as countryside. Finchampstead Road is designated as a Green Route and features houses that have been altered over time. The dwellings to the west of Finchampstead Road in this area all have long rear gardens many of which has extensive tree cover.

Many of the trees within the site and on the site boundaries are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO 1896/2022) made up of a woodland, group and individual trees. The open undeveloped and well treed character of the site contributes to the wider wooded landscape character of the countryside beyond the settlement boundary giving a verdant and semi-rural appearance.

The previous application for a large, detached dwelling on this site (232154) was refused at appeal. The current proposed dwelling, although smaller than the previous dwelling, is located in a similar position in the rear garden and so the current proposal will still be backland development that will be at odds with the existing housing fronting onto Finchampstead Road. Although it is noted by the Inspector that there are some examples of backland development further along Finchampstead Road *‘.....they are not highly characteristic of the pattern of development in the area. Additionally, the existing backland developments are modest single storey buildings and are located within a far more discreet position*

*within the streetscene than the appeal site. Consequently, public views of the existing backland dwellings are extremely limited.'* (Paragraph 11).

Paragraph 12 of the appeal decision goes onto say: *'The appellant has also suggested the incorporation of additional boundary treatments/vegetation would further screen the proposed development. The appeal scheme would nevertheless not reflect the character of the surrounding area. Moreover, vegetation should not be relied upon to screen otherwise unacceptable development, particularly as there can be no guarantees over its long-term retention.'*

I do not consider this revised application can, or has addressed the issues raised by the Inspector, as any development in the rear garden will cause harm to the open and undeveloped landscape characteristics of the area. This is contrary Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Local Plan policies CC03, TB06 and TB21.

With regard to the trees within the site, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment by GHA Trees dated 6<sup>th</sup> August 2025 as been submitted to support the application. Unfortunately, the information is not very helpful as the only plan that is provided is the Tree Constraints Plan showing the site without the development proposals. Even this is now out of date as the survey date is 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022, and I understand the two trees that make up G13 have now been removed. We will therefore need to be provided with an up to date and accurate Tree Constraints Plan as well as an initial Tree Protection Plan showing the proposed development (dwelling and drive / parking area) in relation to the TPO trees. The AIA will need to provide detailed information as to the impacts of the proposals on the protected trees and their respective root protection areas. Not providing accurate and up to date information regarding impacts on TPO trees is contrary to Local Plan Policy CC03.

In order to make a preliminary assessment of possible impacts on the protected trees and taking measurements from the Block Plan drawing which shows the details of the location of the proposed dwelling and drive, I make the following observations:

- The proposed dwelling is in partially within the RPA of tree T8 a category A Sweet Chestnut. BS 5837 Section 5.3 'Proximity of structures to trees' states at 5.3.1 *'The default position should be that structures are located outside the RPAs of trees to be retained. However, where there is an overriding justification for construction within the RPA, technical solutions might be available that prevent damage to the trees'*. I see no overriding justification for the current proposals to develop within the RPA of an important protected tree.
- A large part of the garden area to the east of the dwelling is under the canopy of T8. Where trees are in close proximity to a dwelling such as in this instance, this can often cause some apprehension to occupiers which is exacerbated by seasonal nuisance such as leaf drop in the autumn, and in the case of chestnuts and their spiky casings, and shedding of twigs in high winds resulting in pressure to reduce or remove the trees. This tree is an important landscape feature that contributes to the landscape character of the area and therefore its removal would be unacceptable.
- Most of the proposed drive is either within the RPA of T8 or T12, with a significant portion of the RPA of T12 within the site affected by the drive location. The AIA as not provided detailed information as to the effects of this

substantial coverage within the RPA's. Neither has it addressed the existing impacts of the neighbouring hard surfacing associated with the car showroom where impermeable surfacing comes very close to the base of the trunk of T12. In these types of cases, we would normally expect the RPA to be adjusted to take account of offsite influences as highlighted in paragraph 4.6.3 a) of BS 5837.

Based on the above assessment and lack of detailed information on the impacts of the proposed development on the TPO trees, it is my opinion the proposed development will also cause harm to important protected trees within and on the site boundaries and therefore is contrary to Local Plan policy CC03.

| Conditions & Reasons (if required) |                               |         |            |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|------------|
| N/A                                |                               |         |            |
| Date:                              | 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 | Signed: | C. Brimble |