

Arboricultural Method Statement

To support the discharge of Pre-Commencement Planning Conditions under two Planning Application approvals as noted below.

Planning reference:

1. WBC Planning Application **251036** (approval received 2 July 2025) regarding Condition 4 (Retention of Trees and Shrubs) and Condition 5 (Protection of Trees)
2. WBC Planning Application **242506** (approval received 3 December 2024) regarding Condition 3 (Protection of Trees) and Condition 9 (Retention of Trees and Shrubs)

Site address: Aston Rise, Remenham Lane, Aston, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 3DE.

Applicant: Josh Lewsey and Katie Hudson

Introduction

This Arboricultural Method Statement is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council in support of discharging the above pre-commencement planning conditions for the proposed development at Aston Rise, Remenham Lane, Aston, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 3DE.

The purpose of this statement is to outline the comprehensive tree enhancement and replacement scheme that the owners intend to implement. It will also provide evidence to show that the tree planting scheme adds significant enhancement to the grounds of the property, and provide rationale as to why the tree replacement scheme implementation has begun, with the intention of securing approval from Wokingham Borough Council to continue.

Background

The owners purchased the property in June 2024 with the intention of significantly enhancing the site with sympathetic building works within the residential curtilage (red outlined area on drawing 20.828 PL.2000) as well as improving the biodiversity and health of the non-residential curtilage (blue outlined area on drawing 20.828 PL.2000). Throughout, the owners have consulted and received support from the National Trust, neighbours, qualified professional advisors, authorities and relevant stakeholders. Whilst commencement of the tree works within the residential curtilage have yet to begin, tree works within the non-residential curtilage (and specifically woodland, that is not under the terms of the planning consent) started in the early summer of 2025.

A preliminary tree survey was undertaken by Sylva Consultancy in February 2024, prior to the clients' acquisition of the site in June 2024. A follow-up survey was subsequently

carried out in August 2024 to inform ongoing site assessments. In preparation for works to the non-residential curtilage and under professional guidance, it became apparent that it was necessary to undertake regenerative works to improve the health of this area based on a number of trees exhibiting poor quality, disease and a lack of structural integrity. Some trees were also highlighted as presenting an immediate safety concern and either needing removal or pruning. A felling licence was subsequently attained from the Forestry Commission in February 2025, and work began during the early summer of 2025 to address these matters within the woodland.

During the initial works (to the non-residential curtilage), the owners were made aware that immediate work was also required to a small number of trees, close to, on the boundary of, or within the residential curtilage. None of which were close to the buildings nor would be impacted by the planned building works, but because of their condition (classified as U or C2) and their proximity to public footpaths (thereby creating a safety concern), the owners decided to follow the advice and undertake routine maintenance or removal.

This decision was made based on:

1. The distance of the trees from the buildings and any planned works.
2. The condition of the trees – some of which were causing an immediate safety concern and/or of limited environmental value (as highlighted by the arboricultural survey)
3. It wasn't at the time clear when works to either the outbuilding or main house would actually begin and they felt it irresponsible to wait indefinitely to undertake safety or routine maintenance tree works.

The tree felling licence (Application Ref: 019/129/2025) was obtained from the Forestry Commission by Wessex Woodland Management Ltd on behalf of Mr Lewsey and Miss Hudson. Wessex Woodland are a specialist firm who have also been retained to provide professional guidance and to implement the replanting enhancement programme. A copy of the Forestry Commission Tree Felling Licence is included, as is the proposed replanting scheme and the arboricultural survey relating to both the residential and non-residential curtilage. The felling licence was granted on 18 February 2025, and pruning and felling works took place during early summer 2025, with the planned replanting due to take place in November 2025.

Tree Felling Justification

The felled trees exhibited poor vitality and structural integrity, posing an elevated risk. Removal was therefore immediately necessary to ensure safety and facilitate the approved development works. All works were undertaken in accordance with best practice guidelines, including British Standard BS3998:2010 “Tree Work – Recommendations”, and with due regard to local authority requirements.

Tree Protection Plan

The original tree survey showed that a number of trees on the boundary, close to or within the residential curtilage were of unremarkable or poor quality (grade C or U) and therefore following professional advice and adhering to the conditions of the Tree Felling Licence, were either pruned or removed.

This left T20, T21 & T22 remaining, and the protection of these is the purpose of this document and the associated A-Tec Design drwg 30 & 31. Please refer to this for further information.

Annex

The planning permission allows for the construction of the annex, as illustrated on drawing 30. The building footprint encroaches into the RPA of trees T20 & T21.

Accordingly, the RPA has been truncated, and a hand-dig area has been denoted. This extends to 1m from the footprint of the building to allow access for excavations.

The line of the Tree Protection Fencing has also been defined.

House

The works to construct the extensions to the house will be undertaken on completion of the works for the construction of the house extension. As such the area of garden to the southeast of the house is naturally separated from the working area.

There are no trees within close proximity of the house. Heras fencing will be erected on site to provide a complete separation of the north and south gardens from the working area.

Arboricultural Method Statement: Hand-Dig Excavation & Tree Protection Measures

1. Hand-Dig Excavation Within the RPA (Vacuum Excavator Method)

Excavation within the Root Protection Area (RPA) will be undertaken using a combination of vacuum excavation and hand tools to prevent damage to significant roots.

1.1 Scope of Works

Applies to the hand-dig strip shown on the Tree Protection Plan.

Required where the proposed building footprint encroaches into the RPA.

1.2 Methodology

Site marking

The hand-dig zone will be marked out using biodegradable spray paint or pin flags.

Ground protection installation

If machinery must cross soft ground, temporary ground protection will be installed before works begin.

Vacuum excavation

A vacuum excavator will remove loose soil using suction, exposing roots without tearing or shearing. The operator will work slowly and maintain a safe distance from exposed roots.

Hand-tool refinement

Once roots are visible, remaining soil will be removed using trowels, forks, and brushes. Picks, mattocks, and mechanical augers are prohibited.

Root retention and pruning

Roots <25 mm will be retained wherever possible.

Roots >25 mm will not be cut without arboricultural approval.

Any pruning will be carried out with sharp, sterile tools.

Root protection during works

Exposed roots will be wrapped in damp hessian if left uncovered for more than 15 minutes.

Backfilling

Excavations will be backfilled with the original soil or a sand/loam mix and lightly compacted by foot.

Supervision

See below

2. Tree Protection Fencing (BS 5837 Specification)

2.1 Standard Fencing Design

Weld-mesh panels (e.g., Heras type) mounted on a scaffold framework.

Scaffold uprights driven into the ground outside the RPA.

Horizontal rails fixed with clamps to create a rigid structure.

Minimum height: 2 m.

Signage: "TREE PROTECTION AREA – KEEP OUT" at 10 m intervals.

2.2 Prohibited Activities Inside Fenced Areas

No storage of materials, spoil, fuel, or chemicals.

No mixing of cement or washout.

No fires, plant movement, or ground compaction.

3. Additional Measures for Fencing Installed Beneath the Canopy or Inside the RPA

Where fencing must be erected within the RPA or beneath the canopy, the following enhanced precautions apply:

3.1 Working Beneath the Canopy

Manual handling only — no vehicles or plant permitted.

Crown protection — low branches wrapped with hessian or protected with timber battens.

No ground penetration — scaffold uprights must not be driven into the ground within the RPA.

3.2 Alternative Fencing Supports

Above-ground bracing using scaffold feet on timber sleepers.

Counter-weighted bases positioned outside the RPA where possible.

Stabilisation rails fixed to prevent movement.

3.3 Ground Protection for Access

If operatives must enter the RPA to erect fencing:
Scaffold boards laid over a compressible layer, or
Interlinked ground protection mats to spread load and prevent compaction.

3.4 Arboricultural Supervision

See comments below

Any roots encountered will be treated in accordance with Section 1.2.

4. Supervision

Given the domestic scale of the development and the homeowner's demonstrated long-term commitment to tree care, continuous arboricultural supervision would be disproportionate. For the Category A tree, a targeted approach is proposed: the project arboriculturist will provide a pre-start briefing and attend for a single supervised visit during the hand-dig excavation within the RPA. All subsequent works will follow the detailed method statement, supported by a photographic record maintained by the homeowner. This approach ensures robust protection of the Category A tree while avoiding unnecessary cost, and remains fully aligned with the principles of BS 5837

5. Summary

This method ensures that:

Excavation within the RPA is non-destructive.

Tree protection fencing is robust, stable, and BS 5837-compliant.

Additional measures prevent damage when fencing is installed beneath the canopy or within the RPA.

Tree Protection Requirements and Barriers

No equipment, machinery or materials shall be brought onto the site for the purposes of the development until fencing has been erected in accordance with the plans and particulars which shall have been previously approved by the local planning authority in writing.

The areas forming the Construction Exclusion Zone are to be protected by Tree Protection Barriers as per the recommendations in BS 5837:2012 (Figure 2) or as specified below.

This fencing is to be erected before any work commences on site and is to remain in place undamaged for the duration of all work or each phase. It will only be removed once all work is completed and if required by planning condition, with the formal consent of the local planning authority.

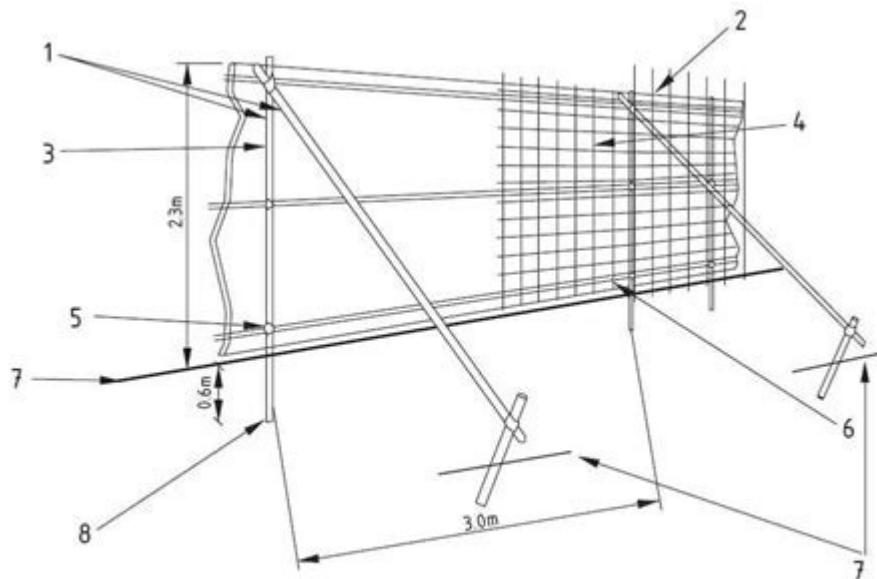
If the fencing is broken or removed during the course of carrying out the development, it shall be promptly repaired or replaced to the satisfaction of the local planning authority. Within any area fenced in accordance with this condition, nothing shall be stored, placed, or disposed of on the above or below ground, the ground level shall not be altered, no excavations shall be made, nor shall any fires be lit, without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.

Other than works detailed within this method statement or approved in writing by the local planning authority, no works at all (including storage or dumping of materials) shall take place within the exclusion zones defined by the protective fencing.

The fencing is to carry waterproof warning notices denying access within the RPA. The following signs or similar will be attached to the fence panels.



Typical Tree Protection Fencing



Standard scaffold poles

Uprights to be driven into the ground

Panels secured to uprights with wire ties and where necessary standard scaffold clamps

Weldmesh wired to the uprights and horizontals

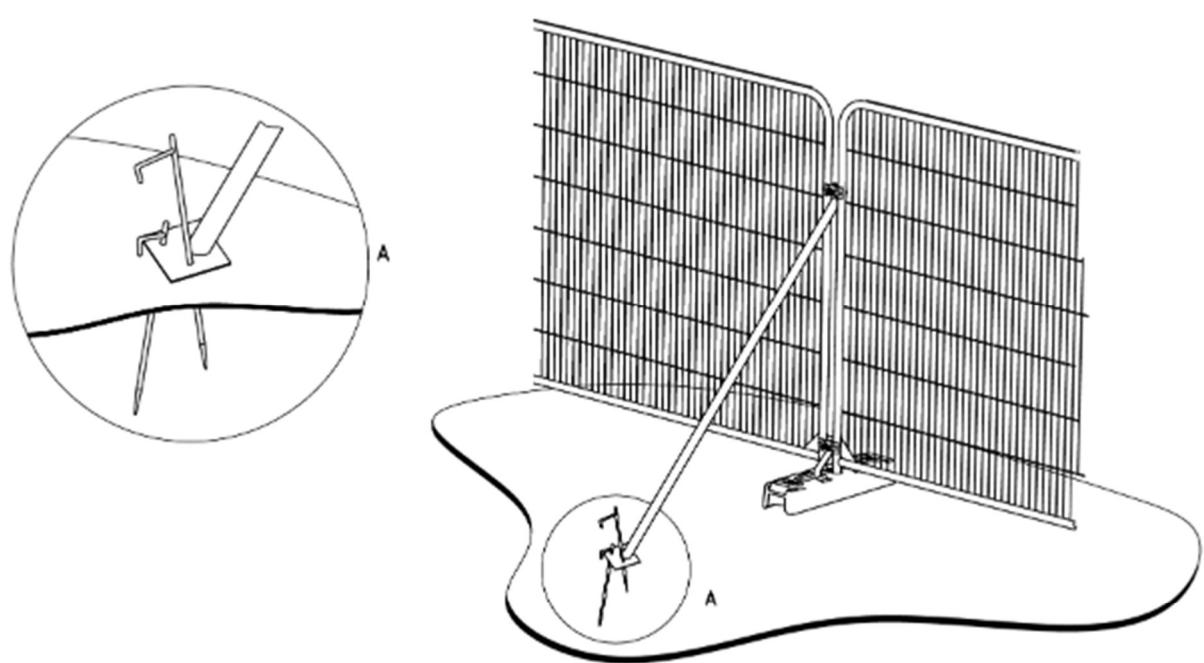
5 Standard clamps

6 Wire twisted and secured on inside face of fencing to avoid easy dismantling

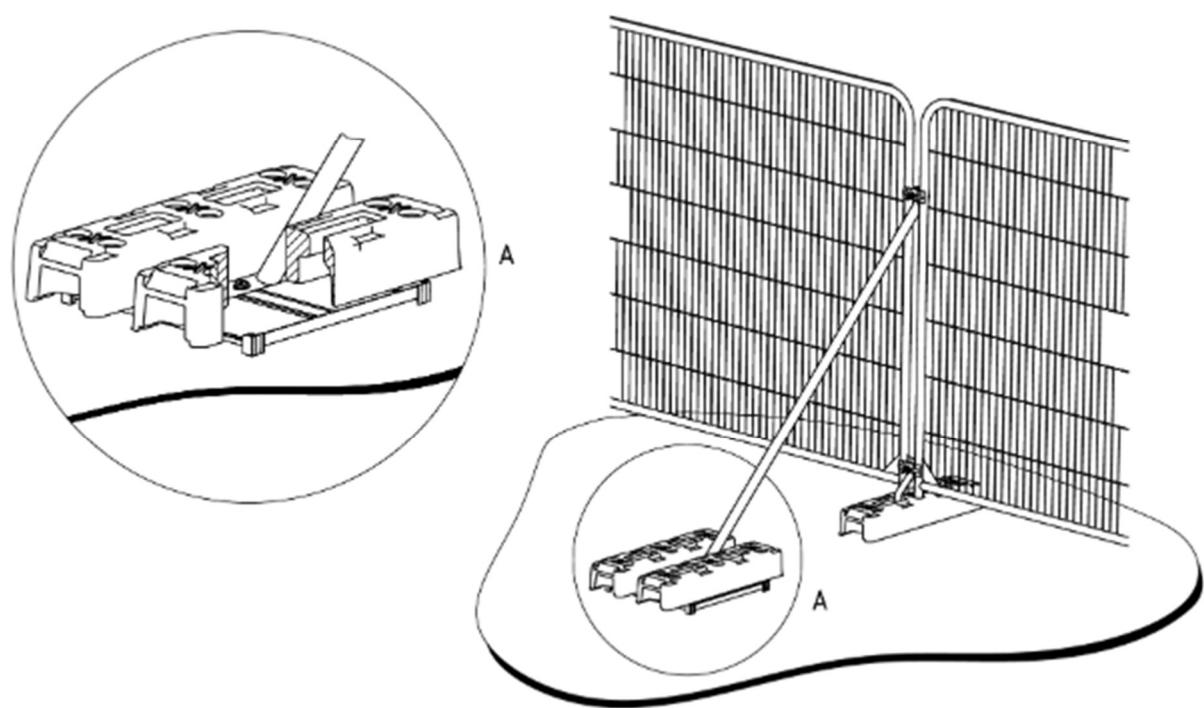
7 Ground level

8 Approx. 0.6 m driven into the ground

Tree Protection Fencing to be installed below crown



Stabiliser strut with base plate secured with ground pins



A – Stabiliser strut with base plate secured with ground pins or mounted on block tray

Arboricultural Site Considerations

A sign providing the following information is to be displayed in a prominent place.

<p>Tree Protective Barriers must be regarded as sacrosanct and must not be removed or altered without prior consultation with either the Local Planning Authority (LPA) or the arboricultural consultant responsible for the site supervision.</p>
<p>Ground protection must not be lifted or removed without prior consultation with either the LPA or the arboricultural consultant responsible for the site supervision.</p>
<p>Damage caused to protective fencing or ground protection must be reported to the site supervisor immediately to ensure efficient repair.</p>
<p>No materials, chemicals, machinery, or vehicles must be stored within the Construction Exclusion Zone as defined on the Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and identified on site by fencing and above ground root protection.</p>
<p>No materials must be rested against a tree's trunk or machinery chained to it.</p>
<p>No pruning of trees may be undertaken by anyone other than an arborist, and all work must be approved by the supervising arboricultural consultant.</p>
<p>Any physical damage caused to a tree retained on site must be reported to the site manager so remedial work can be undertaken without delay.</p>
<p>Builder's sand, which contains salt, must not be used to back fill excavation within or in close proximity to tree roots, as this can have a toxic affect. Sharp sand can be used instead.</p>
<p>Material that will contaminate the soil, e.g. concrete mixings, diesel oil and vehicle washings, must not be discharged within 10 metres of a tree stem.</p>
<p>Fires must not be lit in a position where their flames can extend to within 5 m of foliage, branches, or trunk. This will depend on the size of the fire and wind direction.</p>
<p>Notice boards, telephone cables or other services must not be attached to any part of a tree.</p>

Tree Replacement and Enhancement Scheme

In recognition of the ecological and aesthetic value of trees, and to mitigate the loss of canopy cover resulting from the felling of the trees, Mr Lewsey and Miss Hudson have committed to a substantive tree planting scheme. This scheme will significantly enhance the site's arboricultural and environmental value, contributing to local biodiversity and amenity.

- Species Selection: Replacement planting will adhere to the conditions of the felling licence and comprise a selection of mixed native broadleaf as selected for resilience, wildlife value, and landscape character. Species to include, amongst others Common Oak, Whitebeam, Hornbeam, Beech, Bird Cherry.
- Planting Density: Over 200 new trees will be planted as guided by the felling licence, some of which will already be 'standard' and semi-mature. This density is a high multiple of the number of trees removed, and will distributed to optimise site conditions and visual impact.
- Biodiversity: Mr Lewsey and Miss Hudson are committed to increasing the overall biodiversity within the grounds and have, (in consultation with the National Trust) already made significant investments in support of this. (Other examples being the introduction of bees, wild flower meadows and mixed native hedgerows).
- Planting Methodology: All trees will be sourced from certified nurseries and planted in accordance with BS8545:2014 "Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations". Planting will occur during the next suitable season (autumn/winter), with appropriate soil preparation, staking, and mulching.
- Aftercare and Maintenance: A ten-year maintenance plan will be implemented, including regular watering, formative pruning, and monitoring for pests and diseases. Failed specimens will be replaced to ensure the long-term success of the scheme.

Conclusion

The felling of the diseased or structurally impaired trees was unavoidable due to their declining condition, and all works were carried out in accordance with professional standards, by appropriate qualified professionals and adhered to national authority guidance. The proposed tree planting scheme will not only compensate for the loss of the removed trees but will also deliver a significant net gain in biodiversity, landscape quality, and enhance the natural beauty of the site and surrounding area.

Whilst we acknowledge that the conditions of the planning stated that no works (within the residential curtilage) should be initiated before pre-commencement planning conditions had been met, we hope that we have acted in good faith and in the spirit of the conditions and provide an explanation with supporting evidence to explain the rationale for our actions and our planned efforts to enhance the site.

We therefore respectfully request that this statement be accepted in support of discharging the relevant pre-commencement planning considerations. Our intention is to ensure compliance with the approved scheme and enhance the value of the site. We look forward to working collaboratively with the council to deliver an improved and sustainable landscape and welcome the chance to demonstrate the progress related to the above.

Contact Details

For further information or clarification regarding this method statement or the tree replacement scheme, please contact:

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