



5th February 2026

Design Statement for Landscape Proposal

Project: 220 London Road, Wokingham, RG40 1SW

Clients: Ian Mulley and Kelly Debenham

References: Lindsey Abbott (tree officer) comments

Issues covered:

1. Front left (west) cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) hedge
2. Trees to north-east of property in rear garden of Three Frogs pub – Leylandii type (× *Cupressocyparis leylandii*)

Comments from Tree Officer:

Comments in full are on the attached Memorandum, but the pertinent points seem to be:

Front left (west boundary) hedge:

“Similarly, an existing dense laurel hedge on both the eastern and western perimeter of the front garden provides **substantial boundary definition, privacy, and relief from built surfacing between neighbouring properties** and the pub car park. The existing mature hedge on the eastern perimeter of the Site's front garden will be retained while the existing hedge on the western perimeter appears to be shown for removal. As per the submitted Planting Plan (Ref: New Leaf Design, Drawing No. 01.5000, Rev. C 19/11/2025), it appears the established hedge on the western perimeter will be replaced with the same or a very similar plant species – *prunus lusitanica*—in **a plant size that will take considerable time to establish** (Ref: “150-175cm hedging plants at 2 plants per metre”). Retention of the existing laurel hedge along the western boundary would save time and cost for the applicant while **maintaining its contribution to the adjacent Green Route along London Road**. (Local Plan Policy CC03-Green Infrastructure, Trees, and Landscaping)”

Designer comment:

whilst removal and replacement of this hedge is not crucial to the implementation of the scheme, it may be helpful to understand my reasoning for this decision, especially as juxtaposed against the front right laurel hedge, which has been earmarked for retention. These are as follows:

- Maintenance of the hedge has been somewhat neglected, meaning that it has occupied an unnecessarily width relative to its height. The hedge is currently around 2.5m high, and nearly 2m wide. I have assessed that it would be difficult to renovation-prune this hedge back to a more typical width for a hedge of this height (75cm – 1m)
- Cherry laurel is not an ideal hedge to maintain: it is rather too fast growing, requiring two cuts per year, very vigorous, and the leaves are so large that when trimmed with a hedge-

trimmer, you end up with a lot of large leaves cut in half with brown edges, which can be unsightly.

- I regard any evergreen hedge as subject to high hedges legislation, which means that any neighbour could at any time request that it be reduced in height to 2m. This is the same as the height of the fence on the west side of the hedge. Therefore the hedge is providing little additional privacy in addition to the fence.
- Portuguese laurel is slightly slower growing and easier to manage because of the smaller leaves. It is of a fairly erect habit and easy to keep to 75cm – 1m in width. It is also a darker, more attractive green.
- Sadly neither species are of great ecological benefit, being non-native, but being somewhat denser, *Prunus lusitanica* is arguably a slightly better nesting/cover habitat for birds. Neither species are likely to be of huge benefit to pollinators, as regular trimming will tend to remove flowers.
- I did not consider the obvious native evergreen species (*Ilex*, *Taxus*) to be suitable for this situation, but *Prunus lusitanica* seemed to me the better of the two laurels.
- With regards to the comment that the hedge will take a long time to mature, I have specified it at a size which will reach the same height (but not width) as the existing hedge within 2 years, assuming a growth rate of circa 45cm per year vs the 60cm per year of *Prunus laurocerasus*.
- As a designer, I avoid ever specifying *Prunus laurocerasus*, not only for aesthetic reasons, but also because it contains more than 30x the cyanide content of *Prunus lusitanica*. The fumes given off by cut foliage have been known to overcome people taking a carload of clippings to a council dump, and I am keen to avoid that eventuality – people often forget how toxic it is.
- Having a narrower hedge of the same height would allow for more ornamental plants in front of the hedge, which have been specified as both evergreen and of benefit to pollinators. Retaining the existing wider hedge would preclude this and therefore provide less ecological benefits.

In summary, whilst removal of this hedge is not essential for implementation of the landscape proposal, I have recommended for what I consider to be sound design, maintenance, aesthetic and ecological reasons on the basis that it will perform the same visual and amenity function as the existing hedge within 2 years. With regard to the highlighted clauses, my opinion therefore is that it will also provide boundary definition (in addition to the fence), privacy, relief from built surfaces, contribute to the adjacent green route, and provide a more sustainable replacement of equal or greater value within two years.

In contrast, the eastern boundary laurel hedge has been retained specifically because I accept that it has greater amenity value and being of such stature, forms part of a group of plants on both sides of the boundary that give significant privacy to both neighbours.

In situations such as this, there are often competing pieces of legislation or local planning guidance. Here we have the Green Route and other local planning policies, as well as a potential future high hedges issue, along with a potential clash between Green Route policy and ecological concerns, in that the proposal would provide more ecological benefits than the retention of the existing hedge.

Nonetheless, if it is the tree officer's belief that, having weighed up all the relevant policies and considerations, it would be better to retain the hedge, this position can easily be accommodated, and the landscape proposal revised to show its retention accordingly.

Trees to NE of the garden in the Three Frogs pub car park

Comments from Tree Officer:

“There are no protected trees within the Site that would impact the proposed development, however there are two existing mature evergreen trees (appear to be Leyland Cypresses) located at the Three Frog pub car park’s northwest corner. The lateral limbs of these trees overhang the Site near the existing garage and the root protection zone is likely to extend into the Site as well. These substantial trees provide privacy between the Site and the Three Frog pub car park. We will need to understand as part of this application the impacts of the proposed extension closest to the eastern boundary, on the off-site trees. The proposed development will need to avoid harm to trees outside the site boundary, especially as these are visible from the Green Route. (Local Plan Policy CC03-Green Infrastructure, Trees, and Landscaping)”

Designer Comment:

These trees have now been surveyed and plotted on the plan. This is a small group of three Leylandii planted in a small section of leftover ground between a garage/storage unit and the western boundary of the Three Frogs pub. The trees appear to actually be an overgrown, long-neglected hedge, and there appear to be remaining stumps of other trees in the original hedge which may have been crowded out and then felled.

These three trees are labelled T1, T2 and T3 on the plan, and only T1 is of a size that would affect the proposed works, being of approx. 600mm girth at 1.5m above root flare, and therefore having a sizeable RPA, which I have shown on the plan in accordance with BS5837:2012. T2 and T3 are in the process of being crowded out by T1.

The issue here is such that I think an arboricultural consultant needs to be involved to look at any potential solutions. Speaking solely as a designer though, I would comment as follows:

- The trees potentially fall under high hedges legislation, and where this clashes with other legislation, it is not clear to me what would take precedence. The trees will no doubt be assessed in relation to BS5837:2012, but the green route and conservation area legislation will also play a role.
- Given where they are planted, and their spacing, it is very difficult to believe that these trees were originally planted as anything other than a hedge, and certainly not as intended to mature to specimen trees. They are less than 1.5m apart from each other, and T1 is within 1m of the boundary fence – it is scarcely credible that a tree of potentially >30m mature height and 8m mature spread would be planted less than 1m from a site boundary, and as a designer I would consider it inappropriate to do so.
- In order to preserve privacy, these trees do not need to be any taller than 5m
- I do not consider these an appropriate species for the situation **as trees**, though they might be considered appropriate as a hedge, which is what I suspect they were intended to be. They are an incredibly vigorous species with an imposing height and width and a substantial root spread.
- As such, my assessment is that the Three Frogs have unintentionally put my clients in a rather difficult situation by planting and yet failing to maintain a hedge.
- Whilst I believe the trees offer little visual or ecological benefit, T1, which is already crowding out and suppressing T2 and T3, could be retained if it were topped to an agreed height mutually acceptable to both neighbours and maintained regularly at such a height. If not, I fear that it will only become more inappropriate to the situation.

However, I am not an arboricultural consultant, so I recognise that this issue must be ironed out between a consultant and the council and an acceptable solution found. I did not visit the rear garden when I conducted my site visit as I was only engaged to produce a landscape proposal for the front garden, hence the exact position of the trees relative to the proposal were unknown to me.

I do hope that between them, all parties can reach an acceptable compromise that will not hinder the clients' entirely reasonable development proposal.

Kind regards,



Ivan Tucker

Landscape Designer

HND (Garden Design)