

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	243126
Address:	Front Plot At Shinfield Court, Church Lane, Three Mile Cross, RG7 1HB.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached single storey building to form a members-only retail club (Use Class Sui Generis) with associated parking and access following demolition of the existing building.		
Type of Development:	Minor All other developments		
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 in the countryside and within the South of M4 Strategic Development Location. The site is on the edge of Landscape Character Area (LCA) I3 'Grazeley Farmed Clay Lowland', the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) states this is a moderate quality landscape of moderate sensitivity and a modest capacity for change. The site faces LCA J3 Spencers 'Wood Settled and Farmed Clay', also a moderate quality landscape. Arguably, the site has more in common with this LCA where key issues include;

Hedgerow and tree loss and soil erosion associated with settlement expansion

Potential for agricultural land to be kept in 'hope' value, and therefore not well managed, particularly around settlement edges and on the urban fringe.

Pressure for large scale residential development and supporting infrastructure, such as the South of the M4 Strategic Development, impacting landscape character and leading to further pressure to amalgamate the separate settlements

There is continuing pressure for new roads or additional lanes on existing roads, associated with the South of the M4 SDL....leading to visual intrusion of transport corridors and fragmentation of the landscape.

The site is associated with an area of commercial development along Church Lane halfway between Thre Mile Cross to the west and Shinfield to the east. A small area of housing on the south side of Church lane is close to the site on the north side, but the site has more in common with the layout of the commercial sites.

The key characteristics of the site include a treelined frontage and there are footpaths not far from the site on both sides of the road. Although Church Lane is not a Green Route, its character is broadly rural and is lined with hedgerows and trees and the experience is of a broadly rural landscape. Where commercial development is located is mostly set to the rear of hedgerows – and where there are none they are usually opposite maintaining the sense of rural character.

To maintain the landscape character of the *Spencers Wood Farmed and Settled Clay* the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the rural character of the agricultural landscape. The key aspects to be enhanced and actively managed are the pattern of hedgerows, remnant parkland, trees and avenues... In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the rural character of the landscape and gaps between settlements while maintaining the integrity of settlement identity

The Landscape Guideline for J3 include;

Conserve and manage hedgerows with standard oaks as important wildlife habitats and landscape features, as well as the links they provide across the landscape and between areas of woodland. Reinststate or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so. Plan for the next generation of hedgerow trees with a programme of tree planting.

Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries, hedgerows and large-species trees to provide visual screening and a positive interface between the built up and rural areas.

Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.

The proposed building is around 4m in height and is 25m lon and 15m wide. The building is orientated broadly north-south and has the short end facing the road minimising the visual impact from Church Lane. Additional landscaping to screen the building is required with some large species trees supplied as advanced nursery stock 18-20cm girth.

The location of the proposed building is set back by 8.5m from the application boundaqry and 12m from the footway. Within the front boundary to Church Lne there is a Horse Chestnut tree 'B' quality. With the proposed layout the tree will not survive the proposed incursion into its root protection area from the extended car park. The tree must be retained and this can be done by a slight redesign that can reflect that of the curved edge of the parking area on the other side of the entrance. This will provide a better design visually, protect the root protection area of the tree and retain the public amenity.

It is regrettable that so many of the trees in the site will need to be removed, however there is space for all of them to be replaced along the site frontage to Church Lane with additional landscaping as indicated on the 'Site Plan – Dwg. 731-01 Rev. J. The site plan is showing the overall intentions including landscaping, as a condition I require a Landscape Design plan which includes hard landscaping, materials used and any mitigation where close to trees, the plan to include boundary treatments including existing, new planting. The Landscape Plan must include Planting schedule and specification as well as cultivation notes and maintenance information so that the replacement and new trees, hedges and shrubs thrive into maturity in accordance with BS8545:2014.

Please adjust the design so that T8 can be suitably retained and resubmit plans asap and update and resubmit the tree information within an Arboricultural Method Statement and updated Tree Protection Plan as a condition to comply with Policy CC03 and TB21 of the Local Plan.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
CL7 – Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection information			
CL5 – Hard and soft landscape proposals			
Date:	21.1.25	Signed:	B. Crafer