

MEMORANDUM

From:	Stuart Ryder Landscape Architect Consultant		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	251463
Address:	Julkes House, Julkes Lane, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG2 9JJ.		
Proposal:	Householder application for the proposed erection of outbuilding to form swimming pool enclosure.		
Type of Development:	Other Householder		
Site Visit Made:	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

Summary of the proposals

The proposals are for a building with external dimensions of approximately 8 x 12m with an associated 90° leg of approximately 4m x 4m which is similar in dimension to a residential unit. It is single storey and is proposed to be rendered to match the recent house construction and would have a tiled pitch roof, again to match the house construction.

The outbuilding's primary use is to house a swimming pool measuring 10m x 3.5m. The leg to the building would accommodate a sauna and shower area. Presumably pumping and filtration equipment is housed outside of the building. Bifold doors are indicated in the NW and NE elevations facing the main residential property and blank elevations would face out in all other directions.

There are no existing trees or hedges indicated on the submitted material. Nor is there any landscape treatment indicated on the proposal drawings to understand how the building and any associated pump building would be assimilated into the surrounding rural landscape.

The Planning Application form indicates that no trees or hedges are affected by the proposals but aerial photography of the Site indicate a belt of trees running across it where the swimming building would be approximately located.

Landscape baseline

This is a rural landscape described in the submitted Arbtech report's Executive Summary as '*densely rural, agricultural area of Reading Wokingham.*'

The Site is located within the C1 – Arborfield River Terrace LCA as described in the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment, 2019. This is a rural part of the Borough with key landscape attributes including:

- Small deciduous woodlands, some of ancient origin and containing BAP priority habitat punctuate the agricultural landscape providing visual diversity within the open arable fields, and form a backdrop to views, as well as providing important ecological habitats
- Dispersed settlement pattern linked by tree-lined rural lanes emphasises the open and rural character of the landscape.
- Valued area for recreation with a network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.
- A tranquil area with a sense of remoteness, removed from roads and visual intrusion of settlement.

The Landscape Strategy for LCA C1 includes the objective of '*to conserve and enhance the quiet, rural and agricultural landscape with its scattered rural settlement and rural lanes.*'

Landscape Guidelines for C1 include the following that are applicable to the Site and these proposals:

- Conserve and enhance the small woodlands which punctuate the arable landscape. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-character native species and coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodland.
- Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland and hedgerow planting (with hedgerow trees), using locally occurring native species in order to create green links to other woodland habitats
- Reinststate or repair hedgerows with native species where there are opportunities to do so. There has been recent planting of new hawthorn hedgerows, and this should be encouraged and continued.
- Maintain the rural character and sparse settlement pattern of Arborfield and dispersed farms through control of new development and avoiding spread of development into the area. Resist the development of large or tall structures which could obscure the open views across the open landscape.
- Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale materials and landscape– as well as sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable landscape attributes.
- Resist proposals that introduce extensive or obtrusive elements e.g. pylons on the visually sensitive landscape.
- Protect the perceptions of tranquillity/remoteness dark skies in the landscape, through the management of development, ensuring development, including infrastructure, does not spread into the river terrace.

As well as these useful character descriptions and guidance for development within the C1 area it has been included as part of the River Loddon Area of Landscape Value in the Wokingham Valued Landscape Assessment – September 2024. In short, it is a valued piece of landscape within the Borough where there is a need for sensitive design proposals.

Visual receptors

There is a public vantage point to Julkes House from Barretts Lane to the north of the property. This lane is a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) and has path reference ARBO3. There is unlikely to be any public vantage to the proposed swimming pool building as line of sight to it is blocked by the recent extension.

There is also a current Public Right of Way (PRoW) application in to have the lane to the immediate west of Julkes House recognised as a PRoW. This application has reference DMMO Application 18 and was made by the British Horse Society indicating that it would have Bridle Path status if consented. Users of this route, whether placed on the Definitive Map or not, would have clear sight to the west of Julkes House including the proposed swimming pool building.

Private visual receptors may also exist in the form of residential properties to the east of the Site.

Landscape Character Effects

There has been a loss of trees on Site with the central belt of trees as evident in aerial photography of the Site now removed. This removal adversely changes the character of the Site and contextual rural landscape. It does not appear to have been consented by any previous planning consent and is a detriment to the immediate landscape and the wider LCA C1 and the River Loddon Area of Landscape Value.

The details of this felled belt of trees may be contained in any arboricultural information from the previous house extension. A simple measure on Google Earth indicates that the felled area spanned approximately 340m².

Nor would the proposed development assist with delivering the overall landscape strategy to conserve and enhance the LCA C1. It would rather continue the loss of tree planting, increase the sense of non-rural development, intensify the sense of settlement and decrease rural tranquillity. The proposals combined with the recent residential extension increases the sense of scale of the overall development that with matching render and tile roof to the house will appear larger in the local landscape.

There are no proposed landscape mitigation measures to either replace the removed 340 m² of trees or to assimilate the proposed swimming building and any associated pump rooms into the local scene.

Visual effects

The proposed development, its scale and appearance would all be legible from the route to the west. I cannot attest to its public use at the moment for walking or horse riding and I would recommend discussing the usage of the route with the appropriate PRoW Officer.

This visibility and sense of change to the rural location is an adverse visual effect for the section of the DMMO Application 18 route that runs around the paddock to the south west of the Site. This measures approximately 130m on Google Earth and could actually be greater if the view is longer to the south west.

Landscape Planning Policy

Core Strategy(CS) Policies

There are three applicable CS policies typically reviewed with their landscape content or context as summarised below;

- **CP1 – Sustainable development** – landscape is part of the broader aim of maintaining or enhancing the high quality of the environment and the proposals should not fundamentally alter the quality of the local landscape – **conflict** is found;
- **CP3 – General Principles for development** – with landscape explicitly referenced in sub-point c) which requires '*no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*' the important landscape features of intimate, rural landscape have experienced detrimental effects from tree felling - There is **conflict** with the landscape aspect of this policy.
- **CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)** – seeks '*to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment*' with both these objectives have clear landscape and visual dimensions - The proposals are in **conflict** with maintaining the quality of the environment part of these objectives but would not threaten the separate identity of any settlements.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD)

With regard to the MDD three policies are generally seen to have a landscape dimension:

- **CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping** – relates to the form of design proposals and sub-parts 2d) & 3) of the policy are pertinent to these proposals. There is no appropriate planting proposed to support this application so the proposals are considered in conflict with this policy; and
- **TB21 – Landscape Character** – is directly applicable to the principal of whether the proposals can be accommodated at this location and both sub-parts of this policy require consideration. The first part is whether the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment has been taken into account and it has not. The second part seeks that '*Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.*' To this end the swimming building does not retain the character of the local landscape. There is clear **conflict** with both parts of TB21.

NPPF

NPPF Sections 15 – which amongst other matters includes Paragraph 187 b) on the intrinsic qualities of countryside – The proposals are in **conflict** with the

recognition of the intrinsic qualities of this part of the local countryside and possibly Paragraph 187 a) should the River Loddon Area of Landscape Value be considered a 'valued landscape' for the purposes of the NPPF.

For all the reasons above which include landscape, visual and arboricultural harm I object to the proposals.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
None provided given the objection to the proposals.			
Date:	31/7/25	Signed:	Stuart Ryder