

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	260362
Address:	Sequoia Field and Barn End, Wellingtonia Avenue, RG45 6AD.		
Proposal:	Application for permission in principle for the erection of up to 9 No. dwellings.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9) PiP		
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

1.0 SITE LOCATION AND CHARACTER

The site is located in the countryside and straddles the administrative boundary of Wokingham and Bracknell Forest, although the majority of the site is within Wokingham.

The site is accessed off an important meeting of routes at the roundabout that serves Heath Ride, Lower Wokingham Road (a Green Route), Dukes Ride, Wokingham Road and Wellingtonia Avenue. The site access is just south of the entrance to Wellingtonia Avenue where there is a view of Sequoia Field Farmhouse which has the look of a stately home perceived beyond a metal gate and brick pillars.

The proposed development will use the existing access to Sequoia Field Farmhouse.

The key feature that dominates the site is Wellingtonia Avenue 1 km in length which is populated with 88 *Sequoiadendron giganteum* all of which are a roughly the same height of 30m +. The trees are protected by TPO 0055-1972 and are also recognised as Veteran trees by the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association. There are 56 trees along the southern side of the avenue where they loom over the site. Inside of the line of Wellingtonia trees and within the site is another line of trees which extends over 400 metres towards Fishers Copse a Local Wildlife Site to the west.

Tall hedges line both sides of Wellingtonia Avenue consisting of Hornbeam and Beech on the south side and evergreen Rhododendron and Laurel on the northern side. On the southern side of Wellingtonia Avenue the land consists of paddocks adjacent to the site and beyond that the land is wooded until it meets PROW FINC36

The site is located within an area of land that consists of commercial, residential and agricultural uses where buildings are sporadic with no common layout or typology. Outside of the site on the north side of Wellingtonia Avenue are generally large detached dwellings in very long plots extending to the boundary with Heath Ride.

2.0 VALUED LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

A number of Valued Landscapes within Wokingham Borough were initially identified through a Topic Paper on Valued Landscapes by WBC dated January 2020 to respond to paragraph 187 (a) of the NPPF and prepared as part of the evidence base for the Emerging Local Plan Update and associated Policy NE6. Further work has recently been undertaken to make refinements to the boundaries of the valued landscape areas to update the assessment and this has now been published in the Valued Landscapes Assessment dated September 2024 as part of the evidence studies produced for the current consultation related to the Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19).

it is noted that (a proportion of) the application site falls within Forest and Rides Valued Landscape. The NPPF indicates that these landscapes will need to be protected and enhanced, so therefore we will need to understand how development on this site can address this aspect.

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA), dated November 2019, identifies a number of different landscape character areas (LCA's) across the Borough and provides key information regarding each of the LCA's. The site falls within LCA M2 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands', a moderate quality landscape.

Key characteristics and valued landscape attributes pertinent to the site;

- large areas of mature mixed and deciduous forest, much of which is ancient which are BAP priority habitats. Woodland has a high proportion of conifers where Scots Pine are particularly distinctive and provide a sense of place.
- Strong linear character of long straight roads that originated from the former historic forest rides though the Royal Forest of Windsor and form a cultural record of the past.
- The dramatic Wellingtonia Avenue with impressive 150 yr old redwoods that provide a landmark feature and importance historical associations.
- Low density settlement pattern with large detached houses set back from the rides set within large wooded gardens enclosed by surrounding woodland. Open access to woodland and heath much owned by the National Trust.
- Heavily enclosed character contrasts with distinctive long but framed views across the Blackwater River Valley. The undeveloped character and sense of remoteness from lack of built development.

Key issues affecting the M2 LCA include;

- Effects on tree health or species composition as a consequence of climate change
- Lack of recruitment of young trees required to rebalance the age structure of parkland and hedgerow trees
- Continued pressure for infill within low density pattern of development and extension of linear development along roads, leading to loss of local character as well as woodland, mature trees and heathland.
- Pressure for new residential development impacting on landscape character leading to loss of tranquillity, erosion of road verges

The landscape strategy is to conserve and enhance the existing character in terms of development the aim is to conserve the wooded setting and maintain the low density domestic character.

The Landscape Guidelines for LCA M2 pertinent to the site include;

- Conserve distinctive wooded skylines considering the impact of development where is could be highly visible from adjacent character areas.
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape including ancient woodland.
- Conserve, enhance and manage the landmark trees particularly along Wellingtonia Avenue. Encourage only sensitive development works in proximity to these trees ensuring their long term retention. Plan for the next generation of landmark trees with an ongoing planting strategy
- Conserve and enhance the integration of urban edges through wooded boundaries and large species trees to provide visual screening
- Encourage the retention of wooded edges along roads through planting and minimising fencing and other boundary structures while retaining views of open heath / pastoral land
- Maintain the low density domestic character of settlement set within large plots avoiding further infill and ribbon development.
- Retain the tranquillity of rural roads and protect the perception of remoteness through management of development.

3 SITE PROPOSALS

A Site Location Plan-4590-01 – Scale 1:2500 is submitted which shows the proposed access and area for development.

The Planning Statement in paragraphs 2.2 states;

‘ Access to the site is taken from Wellingtonia Avenue roundabout via a private single access track approximately 65m in length enclosed by steel gates and brick/concrete piers’

And paragraph 2.3;

'To the east side, the main built form is that of Sequoia Farm House which is a substantial largely 2 storey family residence comprising multiple bedrooms, kitchens and living quarters. The dwelling is accessed via the same entry as the subject site'

Development is for up to 9 dwellings.

We note that the applicant proposed a shared access however the Location Plan shows a different layout to the existing which straightens the road and will conflict with the root protection areas of the Wellingtonia trees protected by TPO0055/1972. These trees are classified as Veteran trees, which will result in a larger root protection area consisting of a buffer zone where very minimal landscaping will likely be permitted.

It is also noted that another row of trees is located south of the protected Wellingtonias very close to the site boundary. Please note that root protection areas of trees should be located outside of rear gardens to prevent future issues of conflict between development and existing landscape features in accordance with Local Plan Policies CC03 and TB21.

Arboricultural Implications Assessment will be required as part of the technical details consent, but it is important to flag up at this stage the importance of the trees within the site and their contribution to the character of the setting. It is important the tree constraints inform the design layout.

The site is within the countryside where development will not normally be permitted. The existing site contains a mix of development including commercial and housing, with agriculture and further commercial in the immediate setting. There appears to be no consistent pattern of development and no relationship between existing built form. The housing on site is sporadically located with only Sequoia Field Farm House designed at the head of a long driveway to maximise views from the roundabout to the south.

The high hedgerow boundaries to Wellingtonia Avenue help to provide visual containment to the site, despite the hedges being deciduous in the main on the south side. There is no wider view into the site from the roundabout, and views from the closest roads are screened with fencing, hedges and woodland. The dwellings closest to the site on Wokingham Road are single storey behind close board fencing with some vegetation. All that can be seen is the attractive clay tiled roofscapes.

The site could easily accommodate the number of dwellings proposed whilst providing generous garden sizes and enhanced amenity to the public realm. Overall the screening reduces the level of harm in the countryside.

As it stands the proposed redline site boundary is different to the description of development and as such the potential harm to existing trees carries a high degree of harm such that the proposals conflict with Policy TB21 and the landscape guidelines which require landmark trees to be conserved and enhanced. The proposals also conflict with Policy CC03 as the proposals will fail to protect and retain existing trees and vegetation.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Date:	17.4.26	Signed:	BRC