

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	242063
Address:	Wind In The Willows, Islandstone Lane, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RJ.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed subdivision of the existing gypsy and traveller site and the expansion of the use to provide 4 additional pitches on site (6 pitches in total) alongside the erection of ancillary day rooms.		
Type of Development:	Minor Gypsy and traveller pitches (1-9)		
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 located in the countryside and in partly in Flood Zone 2 . The site is located in the 'Haines Hill Valued Landscape' – see WBC Landscape Topic Paper 2020.

The site is within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment – Area I4 – 'Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland' a landscape of high quality with moderate sensitivity and a low capacity for change. The 'Valued Landscape Attributes' of the site include;

Watercourses and vegetated drainage ditches create visual interest and are important for flora and fauna.

Rough hedgerows and hedgerow trees create an enclosed landscape, as well as providing important ecological habitats.

The intimate character of the small-scale pasture fields provides a distinctive sense of place.

A rural and tranquil landscape due to the settlement pattern of closely spaced farmsteads

The key issues affecting the I4 character area relating to the site are;

Effects on tree health or species composition of woodland and wet woodland as a consequence of pathogens and climate change.

Hedgerow loss and soil erosion associated with the expansion of fields and intensification of agriculture.

Past use of fertilisers and pesticides resulted in a polluted run-off affecting water quality and biodiversity,

Conversion of traditional sheep pasture to arable land uses or equestrian activities is changing the scale of the landscape and leading to loss of traditional features such as hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

Drainage operations associated with new building works and agriculture have resulted in loss of wetland habitats.

Unmanaged hedgerows and over-mature hedgerow trees are an ongoing threat to the character of the landscape.

Demands for upgrading the winding network of rural lanes with new signage, line painting and widening threatening the intimate rural character of the lanes.

*The Landscape Strategy is to **conserve and enhance the rural pastoral intimate character**. The **key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the small watercourse, ponds and drainage ditches, small scale pastoral fields, and wooded rural lanes**. There is an opportunity to restore wetland features, **reinstate hedgerow boundaries** and improve grassland management, particularly in horse paddocks.*

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the low density settlement pattern of farmsteads along rural lanes and the small village of Hurst.

An 'Arboricultural Tree Survey from Arbtech is submitted with the application – which includes a Tree Survey Schedule and a Tree Survey of the existing site including the existing built development. There are no protected trees on the site. There are 4 groups of trees, mostly native along the boundary drainage ditch and one group that creates a small copse to the SW boundary, and another to the NE of the site boundary. There are 5 hedges; 1 to the northern boundary, and a partial hedge separating the site towards its centre, another to the eastern boundary, which are native. Within the site and the access driveway the species are ornamental. There are many good quality large Oak trees and other native trees around the southern boundary, and a few others to the NW boundary. The individual, groups of trees and hedgerows provide the site with a largely intimate character, except around the entrance to the NE along Islandstone Lane.

There is no Arboricultural Impact Assessment drawing overlaid with the proposals that clearly shows the root protection areas of trees in relation to the proposed layout and the hard landscape proposals. I require this information to assess the impact of the development on the existing trees, and identify the mitigation required in order to protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other features as stated in Policy CC03d.

A 'Landscaping Plan' is submitted which shows some hedgerows to the individual plots, but does not show any trees. There is no plant schedule or indication of the native hedge species. One of the Landscape Guidelines for the I4 LCA is to;

Increase the extent of native deciduous woodland, using locally occurring native species in order to create a more mixed woodland character.

Conserve remnant standard trees within hedgerows and plan for the next generation of hedgerow trees with a programme of tree planting.

By adding some additional hedgerow trees within the site boundary or internal plot boundaries will aid compliance with Policy TB21 which requires that proposals demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment including landscape quality, landscape strategy, landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

SUMMARY

In order to fully assess the impact of the development on the landscape setting and boundary vegetation I require an *Arboricultural Impact Assessment drawing* that shows the design proposals overlaid with the Proposed Site Layout.

An updated Landscape Plan with more detailed planting proposals including Planting Schedule, as well as the cultivation notes already included, to comply with Policy CC03e which requires high quality ideally native planting.

Should the scheme progress, I require as a condition, an Arboricultural Method Statement including Tree Protection Plan, and any mitigation that may be required once the impact of the development on the existing trees has been assessed.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	19.9.24	Signed:	B. Crafer
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