

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	251774
Address:	1B Old Sawmill Lane, Crowthorne, Wokingham, RG45 6LN.		
Proposal:	Outline application for the proposed erection of 2no. self-build dwellings with associated parking and access. (All matters reserved except for means of appearance and landscaping)		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (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 a modest development location. It is also located within the high quality landscape character area 'Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands' a landscape of high sensitivity with the lowest capacity for change.

The site is located along a historic lane in an area associated with *Crowthorn Farm*, providing the access to the buildings and the forest during the 19C. The forest started to be divided into parcels in the 1900 OS map, and by 1913 the parcels started to be divided up for housing. Land to the north of the lane and associated with Crowthorne Farm started to be urbanised by 1960 a process completed in 1970.

It is noted on the OS maps that verges of trees to the north and south of Sawmill Lane are retained and remain today with the trees protected by TPO 0059/1973. The long gardens of Rowan Drive back onto the northern verge, and the long rear gardens of Ellis Road to the south are adjacent to the southern verge.

A more urban character persists in the east corner of Old Wokingham Road and Old Sawmill Lane with the group of 4 terrace dwellings next to the site and a group of garages to the east of them.

The historic forest character persists along the verges of Old Sawmill Lane and extends beyond the edges of the lane. These trees are protected by TPO0059/1973 which is divided into 'Areas' – the area of the order that directly affects the site is Area 1 which consists of 3 Oak trees growing outside of but adjacent to the NW boundary.

An Arboricultural Development Report is submitted with the development which identifies 4 trees materially affecting the site; T1 which is in the rear garden of the neighbouring site No. 1 Sawmill Lane, T2 and T3 which are located just outside the western site boundary in the neighbouring garden. T4 is a Crab Apple located in rear garden abutting the north site boundary.

The 2 Oak trees T2 and T3 are both protected by the order and categorised 'A3' in the Tree Survey Schedule, meaning the trees are valued for mainly cultural values including conservation with category A 'Trees, groups or woodlands of significant conservation, historical, commemorative or other value (e.g. veteran trees or wood pasture).

It is clear that Sawmill Lane has a distinctive sylvan character which contributes to the immediate and medium distance public amenity, it is a relic of the historic Windsor Forest associated with the forest hunting rides – of which Old Wokingham Road is likely to be one. In that respect it is important the trees are protected and their amenity and biodiversity preserved.

I note the tree canopies and root protection areas of trees T2 and T3 extend into the west side of the garden. I also note that a new close board fence with gravel boards to the ground are erected within the root protection area of the protected Oaks and may have damaged some of the roots which are in the upper 600mm of the soil.

The Tree Protection Plan is overlaid with the proposed site layout. It is immediately clear that the canopy of T2 is affected by the proposed development (canopy starts at 3m on the west side, and the crown spread to the east is 9m). It is proposed in the remarks on the Tree Survey Schedule to shorten branches of T2 by 2m to suitable growth points on the east side to a height of 8m. The shortening of the branches is necessary to avoid the western flank wall of the house on the western plot. In my view this is not a sustainable option, and the canopy would need to be cut back regularly to avoid the house wall and is not beneficial to the tree, and the tree may end up being felled for this and other reasons such as leaf fall, acorns, shedding branches and black mites.

There is also the issue of the root protection area within the garden space where building over it with a patio, shed, garage under PD rights would cause more damage to the protected trees. The rooting area may also be subject to excavating for planting which could adversely affect tree roots. The same is true for T1 – although not protected the tree has to be cut back regularly to prevent the canopy from touching the rear wall of No. 1 Saw Mill Lane.

Regarding the proposed layout – this is for 2 detached dwellings of the same footprint. There is insufficient garden space for the western plot although the plot division is not shown on the drawings in assuming that it would be following the line between the dwellings it is clearly insufficient. The footprint of the proposed dwellings follows a building line established by Plots 1-4 (terrace) It is noted that there are steps up to the terrace.

There is no other building typology that matches those proposed in the immediate vicinity. As the dwellings are detached there is no scope to move the dwellings away from the influence of trees T2 and T3 , and it is doubtful that this could even avoid the issues with the trees stated above. Placing 2 dwellings on the site is overdevelopment and not sustainable.

As it stands I am unable to support the scheme due to the adverse impact on protected trees which is contrary to Policy CC03 of the Local Plan, which aims to protect and retain existing tree, hedges and other landscape features. The proposals do not protect or enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Date:	3.10.25	Signed:	B. Crafer