

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	252726
Address:	Chilterns, Thames Drive, Charvil, Wokingham, RG10 9TP.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of a self-build dwelling with annexe, attached two bay carport and associated landscaping works following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuilding.		
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

Site backs on to the River Thames and is just south of Hallsmeet Ait , a wooded island in the river.

The site has the following constraints;

Phase 1 Habitat - Improved Grassland – Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, and Improved Grassland adjacent to NE and to the SE opposite the site. The site is also adjacent to the NE site boundary. Loddon Valley Gravel Pits Adjacent to SE boundary. Thames Drive is a PROW CHAR6.

The site is in and surrounded by the countryside.

The site is located in the River Thames – Valued Landscape, where Valuable Landscape Attributes include;

- Distinctive river channel landscape which sweeps through the surrounding landscape and provides a natural feature as well as a recreational resource.

- The open mosaic of arable land, pasture and wet meadow provide scenic qualities and visual diversity.
- Diverse wetland and waterside habitats including BAP priority habitats wet woodland, reedbed, lowland fen and grazing marsh provide scenic quality as well as important ecological habitats.
- Picturesque and historic settlements on the floodplain edge provide a cultural record of the past and contribute to scenic quality
- Recreational value with presence of waterside towpaths including the Thames Path National Trail, and the Thames providing a venue for the active and passive activities as well as events such as the Henley Regatta.
- Views of the river and its setting; views tunnelled along the river channel contrast with wider views to the slopes of the Chilterns AONB and to adjoining parkland including designed views such as that of Temple Island from nearby Fawley Court. The scenic quality of the landscape provides local distinctiveness and gives this area a very strong sense of place.
- Peaceful character of the undeveloped floodplain, with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies when removed from the roads and visual influence of settlement, which provides an accessible but unspoilt rural retreat in close proximity to urban areas.

The site is within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment – Area A1 Thames River Valley. This is a high quality landscape.

The Landscape Strategy for LCA A1 is to conserve and enhance the peaceful, natural character of the meandering river channel, network of streams and channels, belts of bankside woodland and distinctive willow pollards and other trees and picturesque floodplain edge settlements. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the river itself, and the adjacent open rural landscape and its features including: large country houses and their associated parklands and pleasure grounds which are important to local landscape character, woodland and wetland habitats, and traditional rural features including pollarded willows. In particular there is an opportunity to consider restoration of the hedgerow framework, and restoration of pasturage along the floodplain, in areas where arable land uses now dominate. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern and maintain the low density domestic character.

ARBORICULTURE

A Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement – Ref. 25_5837_01_24 is submitted with the application. The report includes a Tree Survey and Constraints Plan, a Tree Assessment Plan and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, and appendices / tree survey schedule.

The site includes 8 'A' quality trees, 18 'B' quality trees and 10 'C' quality trees, and 2 hedges.

The species covered include some ornamental non-native conifers such as Lawsons Cypress, and Atlantic Cedar, but most of the trees are native including Field Maple, Beech, Poplar, Silver Birch, Plum, Weeping Willow, Cherry. Of these 2 trees are to be removed an T1Apple 'U', and Silver Birch , H2 Mixed hedge, T16 Rowan and T17 Goat Willow – these last 3 items are 'C' quality hedge.

The trees being planted in a large garden in a beneficial location quite close to the river provide an almost parkland character to the site interior, although most of the trees are placed along the boundaries, particularly the NE boundary, which must provide something of a buffer to NE winds.

Mitigation for tree loss and to enhance development are included on a Landscape Plan and includes areas of meadow planting and 15 new specimen trees, and 2 substantial sections of new hedgerow.

The development includes the demolition of the existing dwelling to be replaced by a new dwelling of a contemporary style. The proposals also include a new access off Thames Drive as well as adjustments to the entrance layout and changes to the surfacing.

There are incursions into the proposed driveway which affect trees T8 Silver Birch , T9 Beech and T13 Cypress. A No Dig construction technique using Cellweb or similar is proposed and will be a permeable surface to the driveway whilst protecting and retaining the trees.

The proposed garage is located within the RPA of T9 Beech, T10 Birch, T11 Birch, T12 Birch. In order to mitigate the impact on the trees the garage will be constructed on mini screw piles with elevated concrete beams to avoid construction in the RPA.

The proposed dwelling encroaches into the RPAs of T19 Birch, T20 Cherry Plum, T22 Beech, and T24 Birch. T19 and T22 will also require crown reductions to facilitate the dwelling a 1m reduction to the southern crown of T19, a 1.5m reduction to southern crown reduction. Reducing the crown will need to be carried out regularly and is not really sustainable in the long term, and alternatives such as locating the footprint away from the RPA is recommended in BS5837:2012. Shifting the dwelling to the south west by 1m would centralise the footprint in the centre of the plot and avoid RPAs and canopy reduction.

A screw pile and beam construction with stone gabions will be used to support the dwelling above ground floor level which I assume is to avoid flooding events. We would also like to see diversion of rainwater into the voids beneath the garage and the dwelling to ensure that the tree roots are well irrigated. Please include this and the foundation design in an Arboricultural Method Statement required as a condition of planning permission.

There will be encroachment into the RPAs of T19, T20, T22 and T24 from the path, but will be constructed using No Dig construction as previously.

Access steps up to the dwelling will be supported on mini screw piles to avoid excavation in RPA. The mitigation proposals are acceptable and should be included along with a Tree Protection Plan in a revised and updated Arboricultural Method Statement to include mitigation for the shed and ensuring the rainwater is diverted into the void beneath the dwelling to ensure irrigation/nutrients to the trees.

There is encroachment from the new shed into the RPA of T3 – include mitigation for shed base in revised and updated AMS.

Although root incursions from development can be managed technically, the situation could be managed better by centralising the footprint 1m away from the north east boundary, which would avoid most of the required canopy reduction and most of the incursions into the RPA. It would also increase a sense of permeability that the existing dwelling has within the site and a more visual relationship with the river landscape to the west from the PRow conserving the scenic qualities and natural character of the river corridor and the scenic value of the riverside villages.

PLANTING AND HARD LANDSCAPING

The Outline Planting Plan – 1398/5.1.G 29.10.25 is acceptable

The Landscaping and Materials Plan 1398/3.1.E 29.10.25 is acceptable.

The wildflower mix is for wetlands which is acceptable.

H2 is an existing hedge along the NE boundary composed of Hawthorn, Plum and Privet. It is proposed to be enhanced with Dogwood, Hazel, Purple Willow, Elder and Weigela – the latter works well in a hedge despite it being an ornamental non-native shrub.

A new Yew hedge is proposed to the south west boundary which will provide an additional layer of hedge over that of the existing Beech hedge and Yew is better paired with Beech than Cherry Laurel that becomes a spreading rampant hedge, especially in favourable conditions and would require cutting back much more often than Yew.

Summary

I have no objection to a replacement dwelling, but draw attention to the proximity of the footprint on the north east side of the site where a wider offset from the trees and hedge would be advantageous in terms of permeability and visual connections from the PRow, to minimise incursions into existing tree roots and be beneficial to the scheme in order for the building to sit comfortably within the boundaries and not loom over the neighbouring dwelling – I can see the dwelling is located where it is to avoid this, but it gives the appearance of squeezing it into the site somewhat to one side.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

CL7 – Revised and updated Arboricultural Method Statement to include mitigation for shed. In accordance with Policy CC03/2d.

Date:	28.11.25	Signed:	BRC
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