

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	250414
Address:	Wyse Hill Lodge, The Village, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4JR.		
Proposal:	Householder application for the proposed creation of a new access and associated landscaping.		
Type of Development:	Other Householder		
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 along the Village B3348 which is one of the key routes through Finchampstead village, it has a rural character of countryside houses set back from the road in large plots generally screened from the view. Hedgerows with hedgerow trees with Oak predominate. Leading into the village the landscape character of large mature Oaks and other native trees are a key feature of the setting and views to the north west. The site is opposite the southern edge of the 'Forest and Rides' Valued Landscape.

Hedgerow Oaks, such as T1 Oak on the site are recognised as a 'Valued Landscape Attribute' of the N2 LCA 'Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland' where the site is located;

- **Rural character of the pattern of pastoral fields interspersed with scattered woods** and hedgerow oaks which provide visual diversity as well as continuity with the adjoining forested landscape of the Finchampstead Ridges.

The site is mostly located within the village settlement area, although the development location is within the countryside. The rear garden is side onto 'The Village' and its northern boundary is characterised by a close board fence which has been erected at the back of a roadside ditch between the fence and the road. The fence is partly covered by vegetation which helps to enhance the rural roadside

setting. The ditch is between the fence and a verge to the edge of the highway. The ditch has been regularly maintained.

The main feature of the northern site boundary is the group of trees dominated by a Veteran Oak tree (T1) that occupy the north-western end of the rear garden, which is also the location of the proposed development of a parking area. There is a group of trees to the northern site boundary consisting of Yew, Sycamore, Beech and H. Chestnut, and a single Sycamore tree which are protected under TPO1910/2022. A large Veteran Oak tree (T1) also to the NW boundary is protected by TPO1691/2019, and a Sycamore to the SW corner of the rear garden is also protected by the TPO.

The Veteran Oak tree T1 is recorded on the Woodland Trust's 'Ancient Tree Inventory' ref. 65229. The Veteran Oak tree is an important feature tree in terms of its amenity value approaching Finchampstead Village as well as its biodiversity.

A previous application for a driveway in this location in 2022 was shown as being within 1m of the stem of the Veteran Oak tree and measured 8.25m deep and 8m wide. To achieve access from The Village, the driveway must extend over the ditch to connect to the road, and a new culvert built beneath.

The latest application has increased the area of the new drive to 10.5 deep x 10m wide and is offset from the stem of the Veteran Oak tree by 1m – 1.3m. The entrance splay from the road is 7.5m wide narrowing to 3.5m wide at the site entrance. The driveway represents a significant incursion into the root protection area of the Veteran Oak T1, and T3 and a reduced incursion to other protected trees on the site; T2, T4, T5, T6.

Although there is a drawing of the Visibility Splays there is no indication of how much vegetation will need to be removed to meet the Highways policy of no vegetation beyond 600mm high.

The 'Government Standing Advice PPG' states that Veteran trees are afforded a greater degree of protection amounting to 15 times the diameter of the tree as opposed to 12 times for non-veterans.

Tree T1 Veteran Oak is recorded in the Tree Survey Schedule as being A1, 2 quality in the tree survey, (see Table 1 BS5837:2012) 1, and 2 meaning the tree has arboricultural and landscape qualities – but does not add 3, for cultural / conservation qualities contribution e.g. Veteran trees. It is accepted by the Council that T1 is a Veteran tree, although clearly not acknowledged by the Arboricultural Consultant

The calculation for the root protection area of T1 is incorrectly shown on the Tree Constraints Plan as 14.1m (12 x the stem diameter) instead of the correct 17.70m (15 x the stem diameter) that would create the recognised Veteran tree buffer.

The NPPF 12/23 states in paragraph 188c;

'development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such

as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons⁶⁷ and a suitable compensation strategy exists’;

The Tree Protection Plan includes the percentage incursion into the root protection areas of trees affected by development – but it does not include any existing incursion. BS5837:2012 paragraph 5.3.2 states;

5.3.2 The cumulative effects of incursions into the RPA, e.g. from excavation for utility apparatus, are damaging and should be avoided. Where there is evidence that a tree has been previously subjected to damage by construction activity, this should be taken into account when considering the acceptability of further activity within the RPA

It is clear from the Tree Survey Plan that the root protection areas for T1, T3, T4 is shown as a circle into the road – this is incorrect, as the rooting area of the trees stops at the northern side of the ditch. The RPA is likely to spread out asymmetrically in undeveloped areas to the south of the ditch within the garden.

I note that the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement para. 5.1.10 includes a preliminary method statement for the installation of Greenfix Geoweb tree root protection system over the root protection area of the trees, and at paragraph 5.1.14 a method for installing the culvert and lowering the raised bank which will take place within the RPA of trees T1, T3 and a small area of T6.

BS 5837:2012 Paragraph 5.3 Proximity of structures to trees states;

5.3.1 The default position should be that structures (see 3.10) are located outside the RPAs of trees to be retained. However, where there is an overriding justification for construction within the RPA, technical solutions might be available that prevent damage to the tree(s) (see Clause 7).

Although the applicants have recommended the use of no-dig construction within the root protection area, BS:5837, subclause 7.4 ‘Permanent Hardsurfacing within the RPA’ states the following: *"This subclause does not apply to veteran trees, where it is recommended that **no construction**, including the installation of new hard surfacing, occurs within the RPA."*

‘Government Standing Advice on Veteran Trees’ is to ensure adequate protection from development proposals, and the Veteran tree buffer zone should be un-encroached by development with all infrastructure located outside of it. See below;

A buffer zone around an ancient or veteran tree should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5m from the edge of the tree’s canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree’s diameter.

Where possible, a buffer zone should:

- contribute to wider ecological networks
- be part of the green infrastructure of the area

It should consist of semi-natural habitats such as:

- woodland
- a mix of scrub, grassland, heathland and wetland planting

You should plant buffer zones with local and appropriate native species.

You should consider if access is appropriate and can allow access to buffer zones if the habitat is not harmed by trampling.

You should avoid including gardens in buffer zones.

You should avoid sustainable drainage schemes unless:

- they respect root protection areas
- any change to the water table does not adversely affect ancient woodland or ancient and veteran trees

It is accepted that the buffer zone for T1 is within the garden and subject to minimal impact from footfall, however hard surfacing needs to be outside of the buffer zone.

The development is proposed in the most sensitive of areas over the root protection area of a Veteran tree, in very close proximity to its stem. The area of the driveway proposed is larger than that of the previous application in 2022. Although some mitigation information has been submitted the development is still contrary to the protecting the buffer zone and the Government Standing Advice. Development represents an encroachment within an area that should be free from construction.

T1 is not recognised as a Veteran tree in the submitted tree information despite the evidence; it is recorded on the Woodland Trusts Ancient Tree Inventory and exhibits the features of veteranisation. T1 provides amenity value within its setting on the approach to Finchampstead Village. There is no guarantee that the mitigation proposed will not result in the demise of the tree.

'General' notes on 'Proposals: conception and design' at paragraph 5.1.1 of BS 5837 (2012) state that: The constraints imposed by trees, both above and below ground (see Note to 5.2.1) should inform the site layout design 'Certain trees are of such importance and sensitivity as to be major constraints on development or to justify its substantial modification.'

Policy CC03 of the Local Plan requires trees, hedges and other landscape features are retained and protected through development. The proposals fail to provide full protection.

I see no overriding justification for the current proposals to develop within the RPA of important trees on site principally a Veteran Oak tree T1.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	10.3.25	Signed:	B. Crafer
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