

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	252455
Address:	The Old Thatch, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TH.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. 4 bedroom dwelling to include rooflights plus car port following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings.		
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 in Countryside, located on the single-track Drift Lane, a restricted byway FINC36.

The site is divided by 2 landscape character areas as defined in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) these are 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands' and 'Blackwater River Valley with Open Water'. Both of these landscape character types have moderate quality landscape, moderate landscape sensitivity and a modest capacity for change. The site is also located in the 'Forests and Rides' Valued landscape.

Lower Sandhurst Road is a pleasant country lane and dwellings along it are generally large in generous plots that are well landscaped. Building design is various with no common style that unites them except they generally respond to the sense of place, which is characterised by the wetland landscape and Moor Park to the south, and the wooded character of the rising topography to the north. The site is set back to the north of Sandhurst Road located to the rear of a dwelling known as Moor Green House.

The site is accessed from Lower Sandhurst Road via Drift Lane which is characterised by mature trees, which extend into the site. There are no protected trees within the site and the site is not in the Conservation Area.

Arboriculture

An Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA) Rev. A 9.10.25 is submitted with the application as well as a Tree Constraints Plan 2/25, Tree Protection Plan Rev. A 10/25 and (Preliminary) Arboricultural Method Statement Rev. A 9.10.25.

The AIA contains a Tree Survey Schedule which identifies 64 single tree features and 3 groups of trees of which 5 trees and 1 group of trees are to be felled. The reasons for felling are not stated on the schedule but cross referring to the Tree Protection Plan (TPP) most of the trees are 'C' quality and conflict with the proposals among which is G32 a group of 2 'B' quality Beech trees, on the southern boundary.

The proposed house footprint includes a path that starts in NW from circular driveway and extends to the front (west) and south sides of the house linking to the east facing terrace. The path cuts through the RPA of G32 as it leads to the rear patio. It would be preferable to retain G2 as it is a significant group of trees along the southern site boundary, along with hedging / thickets which appear in the Tree Constraints Plan, although these items have not been surveyed. and not included on the TPP. These boundary hedges are clearly important to the setting, they are essential features of the landscape characteristic of this rural landscape of fields surrounded by trees and hedgerows that provide a setting for this country home.

Removing landscape features urbanises the countryside and contrary to Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 that require the retention and protection of trees, hedges and other landscape features, and that proposals retain and enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. Core Strategy policy CP1 requires development maintains and enhances the high quality of the environment, and Policy CP3 highlights a number of points development must meet; see CP3 a), c), d), f).

I also note that the existing western plot boundary hedge and trees are to be retained – its not clear what they are as they are not included in the Tree Survey/Schedule, but are important as the front of the site is to be used for storing materials for recycling from the demolition, and for the storage of excavated soil, which should be reused on the site rather than removing it from site. The retained trees and hedges will need protecting from materials storage.

Returning to the AIA Rev. A, it is stated that the existing house will be demolished. It is noted that the existing house has made an incursion into the RPA of T34 although the rooting area is unlikely to be a circle, no offsetting for the building/access has been included.

I also note the new circular driveway will also represent an additional incursion into T34. Although the TPP says that the driveway will be permeable, no mitigation for this has been included in the AMS. It would be useful to see current incursions into T34 and how further development could be offset and how such as using 'No Dig'

approach and amelioration to ensure the longevity of this important tree which is actually offsite along Drift Lane and important to the public amenity..

Also a more detailed method is required in the AMS regarding the careful demolition and removal of built material in the RPA of T34.

I also note that there is an extension to the circular driveway to the north, and a soft grass path feature that which extends around the garage to the rear terrace.

The Tree Protection is in 2 phases; demolition and construction with fencing being realigned in in RPA of T34, following demolition of the existing dwelling. Currently the only incursion into the collective site RPA is T34 an 'A' quality Oak tree which looks like an old boundary tree and is offsite, so the maximum protection should be afforded to it.

BS5837:2012 states in paragraph 5.3.2 *The cumulative effects of incursions into the RPAs e.g from excavation for utility apparatus is 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 in the RPA.*

There are no treeworks specified other than the felling, have the canopies of trees along Drift Lane been checked and are the canopies high enough that large material delivery vehicles will not cause any damage to the trees?

A preliminary Arboricultural Method Statement is submitted but this will need to be updated to address the points not covered to date, and some of these items also included in the AIA, summarised below;

- Any treeworks to tree canopies along Drift Lane and any need for ground protection to avoid compaction?
- Resolve the issue of the disappearing hedges and thickets to the southern site boundary
- Review G2 4No. Beech trees – can they not be retained?
- Review offsetting of T34 and update AMS with careful demolition, mitigation for driveway
- Review tree protection information to include retained tree feature to the western boundary as appropriate
- An indication of areas for material delivery and storage of excavated material, and indication of working area for chemical based products associated with construction.

Site layout

There is a clear level change extending eastwards into the field and although the design of the terrace is not an issue, the construction of path and terrace will encroach the RPA of G2. G2 Beech consists of 4 tree stems, is 17m in height and 710mm stem (is this the collective measurement of the 4 stems?) The canopy is well balanced at 5-6m. It is possible to retain this group and manage the incursions into G2. Shading on the terrace will only occur at the southern end, and with some

canopy reduction can be slightly reduced. Its not clear from the levels and drawing on the TPP how the terrace will look.

I have no objection to the proposals as such but require a review of some of the tree items especially retention of G2.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Date:	4.11.25	Signed:	BRC