

# MEMORANDUM

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| <b>From:</b>                | Catherine Brimble<br>Senior Landscape Officer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Service</b>              | WBC Landscape and Trees                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>App No:</b>              | 252179                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Address:</b>             | Unit 1, 171 Evendons Lane, Wokingham, RG41 4EH.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Proposal:</b>            | Application for the approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent 231351 for the erection of a 64-bed care home (Use Class C2) with site access, parking, hard and soft landscaping and other associated works following demolition of existing commercial buildings. Reserved Matters to be considered for Landscaping, Siting, Scale and External Appearance. |
| <b>Type of Development:</b> | Major All other developments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Site Visit Made:</b>     | 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

This RM application has been submitted alongside a condition's application 252255.

The outline planning approval requires through condition 8 that the RM application is accompanied by a Design Statement which should explain how the proposals conform to the requirements of the approved Design and Access Statement (DAS) and Parameters Plan. This document has not been provided and is required, although the covering letter indicates a DAS has been submitted.

### Design and Layout

The Design Statement will need to provide details of the design, scale and external appearance of the care home which was not addressed as part of the outline application. Several CGI images were provided at outline as to what the building could look like with scant details given in the DAS indicating the building would be 2.5 storeys high and contain three wings connected by 2 'glazed links'. The floor plans and elevations now provided through this RM application show a large bulky building with no differential in the roof heights to distinguish the three separate wings

and neither is there any reference to the glazed links between the wings. The main elevation which includes the front entrance, draws attention to the two of the gable-ends of the wings which are partially blank due to a lack of windows. Overall, the design of the care home building will need to address the requirements of Core Strategy policy CP3 which state proposals should be of an *appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life*. Also, the Wokingham Borough Design Guide principles NR5, NR6 & NR7 provides further information on the need to reduce the massing and form of the building and to introduce some articulation into the roofline.

I see that the conditions application includes a Site Sections Plan which also shows the footprint of the care home at outline and how this has changed as part of this RM application. Further details and explanation of these changes including the proposed increase in the footprint of the building, will need to be provided in the requested Design Statement.

This application now includes the paddock space into the red line of the Site Plan, although not the Landscape Masterplan. It is not clear what this land is to be used for and why it is now being shown as part of this application. Further details of this area will need to be included in the Design Statement.

The bin store is shown adjacent to the site entrance in an area identified on the parameters plan as green infrastructure. This is not an acceptable location for the bin store and will need to be relocated to the side of the care home as previously indicated on the Indicative Site Layout provided with the outline application. Wokingham Borough Design Guide principle NR11 clearly indicates that servicing of non-residential buildings should be sensitively considered and located away from the arrival points and street frontages.

A number of structures are shown on the Proposed Site Plan other than the care home building and where details will need to be provided, these are:

- Cycle store
- Garden Store
- Potting shed
- Summer house
- Pergola
- Bin store

I suggest that several of these structures could be rationalised and combined, such as the garden store and potting shed, so there will be fewer structures on the site. The cycle storage and bin store could also be combined to the side of the care home. It is important that the open spaces around the care home are relatively structure free as this is still a countryside location and proposals will need to respond to its setting in accordance with Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

## Arboriculture

A RM application will normally include an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) in order that we can understand the effects of the proposed development on the trees in and surrounding the site. This has not been provided but an Arboricultural Report including a Tree Protection Plan by Mark Welby dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 2025 been submitted through the Conditions application and I will comment on the tree issues as part of this application.

The proposed tree removals are detailed on the TPP in a separate table and other tree works are detailed in section 4.4 of the Arb Report. This includes the removal of dead stems within the group of Scots Pines identified as #17. These are growing on the corner of Evendons Lane and Blagrove Lane in a visually significant location. We will need to understand how many of this group need to be removed for safety reasons and whether their removal will affect the viability of the remaining pines as they have grown up together. This is important as this group was previously indicated as helping to mitigate the visual impact of the care home in views from Evendons Lane. Once we fully understand the extent of the removal, the landscape proposals will need to show replacement tree planting in this area.

The mixed broadleaf hedgerow (# 12) along Evendons Lane is shown to be retained as part of the proposals. This hedgerow is very sparse and contains a lot of elm (mostly dead or dying) and bramble with several other broadleaf species. When looking at the Proposed Levels drawing (25047 - ARC - XX - XX - DR - C - 6000 - P4) submitted under the conditions application it is clear this vegetation cannot be retained due to the increase in levels across the site to accommodate the FFL of the care home and the need to grade the levels back down to existing at the site boundary. I have no objection to the removal of hedgerow #12, as it is relatively poor quality, however a suitable replacement hedgerow with trees will need to be identified on the landscape drawing.

In considering the trees and vegetation to be retained as shown on the TPP in relation to the Proposed Levels drawing, there appears to be other conflicts where proposed changes in ground level across the site encroach into the construction exclusion zone inside the tree protection fencing. This is not acceptable and will need to be re-examined to design out any ground level changes in these areas, as ground level changes however small could lead to the decline in health of the retained trees.

The parking bays within the RPA of #28 a category B Oak, but outside the location of the tree protection fencing, will need to be identified as being no-dig on the TPP, i.e. constructed above the existing ground levels (see area in question below). The Proposed Levels drawing indicates existing ground levels will be reduced in this area to form the finished surfacing level, and this doesn't account for the further excavation required for construction of the parking bays (approximately 430mm based on construction details). A 600mm reduction in ground levels in the RPA of the retained tree is not acceptable and a design solution will need to be found to ensure a no-dig solution can be implemented in this location instead.



Having reviewed the Construction Logistics & Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) submitted through the conditions application it is noted that the proposed site compound shown on the site set up plan is at the northern end of the adjacent paddock. The access into the field from Doles Lane is currently across an unmade grassed area with a large tree growing close to this access. The location of the site compound will require a number of changes in this area which is likely to have an effect on the off-site trees growing to the north the compound in an informal area of open land adjacent to the highway. The AIA will need to survey these trees and consider the proposed impacts and suggest mitigation to reduce any harmful effects.

### Landscape

A Landscape Masterplan and detailed landscape drawings have been submitted as part of this RM application. I will only comment on the Landscape Masterplan as part of this application as there are a number of issues that need to be resolved prior to considering the detailed planting proposals.

As part of Outline application, the retention and enhancement of the boundary vegetation with appropriate structural planting was identified as being essential to the scheme in a countryside setting. In considering the Arboricultural Report and the Proposed Levels drawing, it has come to light that various additional tree and hedgerow removals will be required to implement the scheme. Therefore, the landscape scheme will need to include further additional planting on the site boundaries and in particular the following will need to be addressed:

- The group of Ash (#18 & #20) adjacent to Blagrove Lane is shown to be removed and replacement tree and shrub planting will be required. A native hedgerow and four new trees are proposed however this is not sufficient in order to provide that level of structural planting required and additional planting will need to be shown.
- Once we have more detailed information from the Arboricultural Consultant to understand the level of tree removal from the Scots Pines group (#17) the landscape scheme can then indicate replacement tree planting and understorey planting to reduce the visual dominance of the care home from Evendons Lane.

- As I have already highlighted the hedgerow along Evendons Lane (#12) is not only poor quality but will need to be removed to implement the scheme. The landscape proposals do not extend to the redline boundary of the site as it is assumed the existing vegetation will be retained. The landscape scheme will need to provide significant improvements along this southern boundary to visually mitigate the increase in size of the care home which is substantially larger and closer to the boundary than the existing structures on site. The area outlined in purple below will need to consist of tree and shrub planting to create a substantial landscape buffer.



- The existing access off Evendons Lane is to be stopped but the landscape drawing will need to indicate the removal of the exiting surfacing and brick walls as well as the type of planting proposed for this area to reflect the structural planting previously discussed. The reinstatement works and planting will need to extend to the site boundary.
- A partial replacement of the boundary vegetation adjacent to Blagrove Lane is shown north of the new access, however this may need to be extended as the sightlines may require further removal of the existing vegetation.

The Landscape Strategy Plan provided as part of the outline application indicated a number of trees to be included between car parking spaces within the car park. The level of tree planting in the car park now appears to be substantially reduced which is unacceptable. It is important that trees are included within the parking layout to provide a high-quality landscape scheme (in accordance with Local Plan policy CC03) that will help integrate an appropriately designed care home into its countryside setting on the edge of the settlement of Wokingham. Trees can be planted in narrow spaces between two parking bays, but underground soil cells will need to be used to provide sufficient rooting volume for the trees to survive in the long term. Underground soil cells can also be integrated into the surface water drainage strategy to incorporate some surface water storage during periods of heavy rainfall and therefore will need to be considered.

I had also highlighted through the outline application that the provision of adequate space for landscaping around the public facing parts of the development within the car park and entrance area is required to ensure the level of landscaping that relates to the semi-rural character of the site and countryside location. As previously suggested moving the cycle shelter to the side of the care home with the bin store will provide more space for landscape planting opposite the site entrance.

The current location of the bin store as already highlighted is unacceptable, as this area should consist of structural landscape planting adjacent to the site entrance.

The boundary details appear to be shown on the Landscape Masterplan. We will need to understand the boundary treatment strategy throughout the site and examples provided of the types of fencing to be used. As already discussed, the site is in a countryside location and therefore the use of 1.8m high metal railings on the southern and majority of the eastern boundary of the site is not appropriate, especially when 1.5m railings are proposed around the private spaces. It would be preferable for the fencing on the public facing boundaries to reflect the semi-rural character of the site, and as such something like chestnut cleft fencing, in association with a native hedgerow and tree planting should be used instead.

It is not clear the purpose of the open space to the west of the site, previously used as a paddock as this was not indicated as being included as part of the outline application. If this is now proposed as informal open space connected to the care home, then we wouldn't want to see any types of hard surfacing in this area as it will have a detrimental effect on the countryside setting of site. I also note that access into this site will be through the existing hedgerow and will require removal of a section of this hedgerow. It is not clear why the existing field access 12m further north is not proposed as this will not require the removal of existing vegetation. I suggest the access location is amended accordingly.

The landscape drawing indicates three red circles in the paddock area, what do these represent as these are not indicated on the key.

### Conclusion

The information submitted is insufficient for me to fully assess this RM application and therefore I cannot support the application in its current form. The applicant will need to provide substantially more detail as discussed in my comments.

### **Conditions & Reasons (if required)**

Possible conditions to be suggested once further information has been provided to address my comments.

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| <b>Date:</b> | 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 | <b>Signed:</b> | C. Brimble |
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