



24 January 2025

Development Management & Compliance
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Sent by email to planningenquiries@wokingham.gov.uk

From Berksgtplanning@gmail.com

**Planning Application: 243228 Site Address: Reddam House Bearwood Road
Sindlesham Wokingham RG41 5BG**

**Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. two storey building to form a
boarding house with associated plant equipment, landscaping, highway and other
related works, following demolition of existing outbuildings.**

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on this application, which has a material impact on the significance of Bearwood College, a historic designed landscape which is Registered by Historic England at Grade II*. The inclusion of this site on this statutory register requires great weight to be given to its conservation.

Thank you for consulting the Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to proposed development affecting a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, as per the above application. The Berkshire Gardens Trust (CGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites, and is authorised by the GT to respond on its behalf in respect of such consultations.

Having previously visited site when assessing the sports facilities development proposals and having taken part in pre-application discussions with the developers (December 2024) we have taken cognisance of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and the Ecological Appraisal to further inform ourselves of likely impacts on the significance of this part of the site.

The significance of the RPG is its 19th century parkland setting with a lake, Pulhamite rock and water garden and a Wellingtonia Avenue of established Sequoiadendron Giganteum Glaucum trees providing the main approach to GII* Victorian Reddam House School. Regrettably Bearwood College RPG is on the HaR register having become fragmented in ownership resulting in lack of management for trees affecting the designed views, (in particular) to and from the House and lake.

It is considered that the demolition of the 20th century buildings to make way for the proposed two storey L shaped boarding house block is supported. The proposed building will be to the east of the main School building and in an area already littered with ad hoc 20th century support service buildings. The parkland in this area has been largely downgraded due to development. There are however many well established trees, of good grade quality and a Cedar which has a TPO on it in the area proposed for the new building.

Whilst the proposed Boarding House plans are supported there are some concerns over the loss of so many trees and that building mitigation plans have had to be drawn up due to the footprint overlaying the root protection zones of some trees. The main victim being the TPO Cedar. The development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the RPG when weighed against the public benefit of providing student accommodation (NPPF Dec 2024 16.215). It is understood that other locations and orientations for the building have been considered but this proposed location works out best for the building and interconnectivity with Drake House (existing boarding accommodation). In addition the canopy of the Cedar will overhang the large amount of proposed air handling and other plant on the roof of the southern wing. Hopefully this would not have any impact on the tree but may cause efficiency and tree debris effects on the equipment on the roof.

Another concern is that the grass and soft landscaping proposed in the courtyard to the east of the new building may fail to establish due to increased footfall and recreational use of the space by students. It is likely that bare ground will ensue as it has today. It will take years for the proposed new tree plantings to establish too. This element of the plans may need a revisit to take sunlight/shade considerations into account to ensure that the viable planting schemes are put in place. Any revisions could be dealt with by Condition.

We write to advise you of our support in principle for this application, but note concern on the less than substantial harm impact on the RPG.

We would be grateful to be advised of your decision, or if further information is submitted.

For further information, we refer you to the Gardens Trust publication *The Planning System in England and the Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens* (2024), which is available online at <https://thegardenstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Planning-System-in-England-and-Protection-of-Historic-Parks-and-Gardens-2016-v1.pdf>

Yours faithfully

Helen Parvin
Planning Advisor to the Berkshire Gardens Trust
cc: The Gardens Trust