

Planning Officer: Mr S Davis

Planning Application Ref: AL/27/20/PL

Location: Springfield and land to rear, Hook Lane, Aldingbourne, PO20 3TE

Description of works: Demolition of the existing dwelling & construction of 2 No. 2-bed, 3 No. 3-bed & 4 No. 4 bed houses including access, landscaping & associated works (resubmission following AL/51/19/PL).

Comments on Application:

- I have considered this application by means of a desktop review, using the information and plans submitted as well as online resources.
- The applicants have employed **Lizard Landscape Design Ltd** to prepare an Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement along with a Tree Retention and Protection Plan for this project.
- The Tree Survey data is comprehensive and accords with the requirements of BS5837:2012. I am broadly in agreement with the retention category ratings for on and off-site trees, although I detect a tendency to undervalue a number of trees identified as Category C (low quality) that might qualify as Category B (moderate quality) and should therefore have greater influence over any site layout proposal.
- In broad terms, the proposal as it stands can only be implemented by removing the majority of large evergreen trees, that are of obvious landscape value. A number of these have also been identified as Category B trees, a rating I can comfortably support.
- The high canopy Monterey cypress, old native maple trees and other established trees (albeit of low quality) along the north boundary add a mature outlook and provide visual amenity to the surrounding area. They will no doubt be of considerable value to those occupying new dwellings to the north (Barratt Homes development) and beyond. Extensive intrusion into root protection areas of those cypress and a developing oak (all Category B) will be required to facilitate construction of the access road. This is high risk work and demands regular on-site supervision by the project arboriculturist. If this development were to proceed as described, then appropriately supervised installation of the 'No-dig' sections would have to occur and before any other substantive groundwork or construction of dwellings occurred. It may be necessary for a 'sacrificial' layer of the cellular confinement system (Cellweb or other similar product) to be employed throughout the construction phase.
- There does not appear to be a surface water drainage strategy for the site, only a statement of broad intent. This fundamental element of the design ought to be addressed to our satisfaction in association with layout proposals, so that we are not subsequently held hostage to flood mitigation measures which could then impact heavily on retained trees and landscape plans. I believe this element critical to the success of any development at this site - the most recent proposal (in support of AL/51/19/PL) involved unacceptable (potentially catastrophic) intrusion within the root protection area (RPA) of a Category A oak (also the subject of a Tree Preservation Order, TPO/AL/1/20). We must know where the soakaways, attenuation tank(s) and drainage route out to the existing waterway (north boundary) are to be located.
- Foul water and other service-runs in and out of site have not been shown, so potential exists for additional RPA incursion to satisfy those requirements.

Conclusions:

- The proposal seeks to fully exploit the available space but without sufficient regard for the highest quality trees existing; the majority of which could be retained in harmony with and provide instant value to a more sympathetic design. To achieve this most desirable outcome, I suggest further revision of the plot layout/numbers would be required, perhaps in conjunction with a re-alignment of the access road closer and parallel to the south boundary – thus eliminating substantive RPA intrusion of and capturing those north boundary trees within extensive rear gardens.

- I find the extent of proposed tree loss and RPA intrusion at this site difficult to justify on arboricultural grounds, especially in relation to any positive benefits that may arise from the development.
- There are no detailed soft landscape proposals (tree planting) to ensure adequate mitigation for the loss of so much high canopy.
- Drainage and service-runs are unknown and must be approved in association with the overall layout, to ensure adequate safeguarding of retained trees.

Recommendations:

- As it stands, I feel unable to lend my support to this scheme and so must register an **OBJECTION**.

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team