

Planning Officer: Mr S Davis

Planning Application Ref: AL/51/19/PL

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

Description of works: Demolition of the existing dwelling & erection of 3no. 2-bed, 3no. 3-bed & 4no. 4-bed dwellings, access, landscaping & associated works

Comments on Application:

- 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 a substantial amount of the existing on-site tree population, of which there are several very large evergreen trees of obvious landscape value. A number of these have also been identified as Category B trees, a rating I can comfortably support.
- While some of the proposed tree removals along the south and east boundary can be tolerated to facilitate a quality development and with adequate compensatory tree planting detailed within a landscape plan; I find the quantity of tree removal (especially the high canopy Monterey cypress and old native maple trees) along the north boundary to be unjustified and unacceptable. Such trees add a mature outlook and provide visual amenity to the surrounding area and will no doubt be of considerable value to those occupying new dwellings to the north (Barratt Homes development) and beyond.
- The number and position of dwellings proposed for this parcel of land is such that very few trees of current and/or long-term value would be retained.
- I have subsequently been able to note the following plan: Engineering Details Drainage Strategy, dwg.no. 602-01, Rev A, 09.19. This shows what I assume to be a subterranean construction (attenuation tanks?) well within the root protection area of an off-site oak tree. That oak tree (T23) is a Category A tree and the subject of my recommendation for statutory protection (Tree Preservation Order). It has not been shown on the above plan. Outwardly and from a distance it appears to have high growth potential. The root protection area of this tree should remain sacrosanct – as shown on the Tree Protection Plans.
- The applicant has submitted a revised site layout proposal (1186/SK04 Revision04) and associated Tree Protection Plan dwg.no. LLD1680-ARB-DWG-002, Revision 04 for our consideration.

Conclusions:

- The proposal seeks to fully exploit the available space but without sufficient regard for existing trees and hedges; a significant quantity of which could be retained in harmony with and provide instant value to a more sympathetic design.
- I find the extent of proposed tree loss at this site unacceptable, especially in relation to any positive benefits that may arise from the development.
- The latest site layout proposal (unfortunately titled the same as 1186/SK04 Revision02) corresponds with the latest Tree Protection Plan dwg.no. LLD1680-ARB-DWG-002, Revision 03. The layout makes some minor positive amendments in terms of moving built structure away from tree stems and outside of crown spread, but there remains significant RPA

incursion and significant future change of land use, becoming high intensity residential over the root protection areas of important boundary trees. If that was not enough pressure to contend with, the heavy reliance of fragmented ground protection measures across the site carries a high risk of being inadequately maintained throughout any development. The latest site layout proposal represents an even greater threat to existing trees and hedges. The extent of RPA incursion has increased substantially, involving; the retreat of protective fencing line, increased reliance on ground protection measures and introduction of 'No-dig' construction method. Furthermore, the extent of tree (facilitation) pruning has increased. Irrespective of any successful implementation of such an ambitious suite of mitigation measures; the change in land use over the likely rooting area of retained trees and future residential pressure to prune the same, persist as undesirable outcomes from permitting this scheme as it stands.

- Should this application proceed to development then the drainage strategy would have to be revised to avoid incursion into the RPA of off-site tree T23, the most valuable tree overlapping the development. The potential for expansion of its root system would also have to be taken into account as part of that revision. I see no revision to the drainage strategy, so my concerns in that respect remain. It is worth reminding ourselves that 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 or landscape plans.

Recommendations:

- As it stands, I feel unable to lend my support to this scheme and so must register an OBJECTION. A reduction in the number of units from 10 to 7 (removing plot 2, 3 & 4) would allow for the long-term retention of important boundary trees, which I could support. Until such time as the long-term pressure on important boundary and off-site trees is addressed with a more sympathetic layout, I sustain my OBJECTION. Until such time as the long-term pressure on important boundary and off-site trees is addressed with a more sympathetic layout, I sustain my **OBJECTION**.
- I recommend the making of a Tree Preservation Order in respect of one pedunculate oak (T23 on the applicant's survey) to preserve its place in the landscape. I attach TEMPO form and GIS plan for this purpose.

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team