

Planning Officer: Mr S Davis

Planning Application Ref: BN/50/20/PL

Location: Land west of Fontwell Avenue, Fontwell Avenue, Eastergate, PO20 3RX

Description of works: Demolition of existing structures on-site & erection of 42no. dwellings with access, parking, landscaping & associated works. This application is a Departure from the Development Plan.

Comments on Application:

- The applicants have employed Lizard Landscape Design Ltd to prepare an Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement (AIA&MS) along with a Tree Retention and Protection Plan (TRPP) 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 find it surprising that none of the developing roadside (Fontwell Avenue) trees are given Category A status.
- There is in my opinion an over-reliance on the identification of *tree groups* during the survey, where distinctly individual trees are worthy of being recognised as such and would have aided our interpretation of the impact from this proposal. Hopefully a suggestion that can be taken on board by the applicant/agent when considering any future project elsewhere in the district.
- There is much to commend the layout, given that nominal root protection areas for the vast majority of trees along the west and north boundaries are free of intrusion. The west boundary (marginally off-site) tree line is long-established with many high value trees and several of considerable landscape importance, so the root protection areas + buffer zone currently proposed should remain sacrosanct.
- I cannot say the same in respect of the east boundary (Fontwell Avenue) where the proposal includes a relatively high number of tree removals and crown reduction work (roadside). The boundary largely consists of a very well-maintained native hedgerow from which have emerged an abundance of (mostly) native, distinctly individual trees. This feature currently provides significant visual amenity and screening value that would take several decades to replicate. I find the extent of the tree removal/pruning in support of achieving adequate sightlines from the main site access disappointing. If there is no alternative to that location, then **mitigation for the loss of so much valuable hedgerow and tree stock must be ambitious and any planting scheme to be dominated by selection of native tree species of potential stature (min. 10-15m ht.) and longevity such that they will grow to enhance the local landscape. In respect of required detailed soft-landscape plans, I defer to Sue Howell, our Leisure and Landscape Officer.**
- Conflict between the location of protective fencing and carriageway turning point at SW corner of site will need to be addressed during any **subsequent revision of the TRPP.**
- **There does not appear to be an approved surface water drainage strategy for the site.** 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/landscape plans/open space provision.
- I draw attention to the nominal root protection areas (RPA) of retained trees and their growth potential as obvious constraints to the siting of any SUDS (e.g. attenuation pond) or introduction of subterranean utility apparatus.
- I have considered the Proposed Combined Services Layout, dwg. no. RES/U/16/CSL/01) as best I can and see only a few minor RPA incursions, which if undertaken in accordance with the AIA&MS (paragraphs 3.28-3.31) and under supervision from the project arboriculturist - ought to be tolerable. Of special interest is a proposed subterranean feature (manhole/inspection chamber?) within the RPA of T9 and T10. Should those trees be damaged to the extent they decline, the roadside (Fontwell Avenue) vegetation could be further eroded. **I recommend this element of the layout be revised, as to install such services near trees of high growth potential would probably require they be encased in concrete, thus increasing the risk of decline in those tree's health or their removal to facilitate installation.**

Conclusions:

- The proposal as submitted should be achievable in arboricultural terms, although there are areas of concern (as highlighted above), such that I could not lend this scheme my full support as it stands.

Recommendations:

- Subject to the above highlighted issues being resolved to our satisfaction, if you are then minded to approve the application, I recommend the following conditions be applied:
1. Before the site is occupied or any machinery is introduced to the site or demolition work or construction work or alterations to existing ground levels takes place a **PRE-COMMENCEMENT Site Meeting** is to take place between the Planning Authority's Tree Officer and the Arboricultural Expert representing the site owner(s) – at this meeting all protective fencing and ground protection measures will be inspected to verify they are 'Fit for Purpose' as required under British Standard 5837:2012 and have been erected and positioned exactly as shown on the **Tree Retention and Protection Plan, LLD1544-ARB-DWG-002 (Rev ---)**.

A schedule of Site Monitoring/Supervision visits and Reporting Procedures prepared by an Arboricultural Expert will be required and their extent will be agreed on at the site meeting to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority's Tree Officer.

Reasons: To comply with BS5837 and to ensure that retained trees are afforded due respect and appropriate levels of protection such that their ongoing health and vitality is not compromised, and they can continue to enhance the landscape and amenity of the area.

2. All activity at the site is to be carried out in strict accordance with: - **Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement, Lizard Landscape and Design Ltd, Ref. LLD1544-ARB-REP-001, Rev. 00, March 2020**

Reasons: To comply with BS5837 and to ensure that retained trees are afforded due respect and appropriate levels of protection such that their ongoing health and vitality is not compromised, and they can continue to enhance the landscape and amenity of the area.

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team