

Dev App response pro-forma (Tree Service)

Tree Officer:	Jan Polnik	Date:	23/02/2024	Case Officer:	
Application:	23/03120/FUL - Oakdown Farm				
CC'd to:	Catherine Daly, Christopher Slack				
Docs Ref:	Proposed Site Layout AIA (Appendix 8.1) Site Sections Site Levels Masterplan Illustrative Landscape Sections Proposed Site Drainage General Arrangement				
Summary:	Insufficient detail on measures to ensure protection of protected woodland from construction activity. Removal of trees that may be in category 'A'.				
Recommend:	Refusal as scheme presented requires significant loss of existing hedges and trees contrary to policy EM1.				
Comments:	<p>General Overview: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPO/BDB/0687 is germane to this application and protects the woodland designated as 'W1'. W1 is formed of two areas of woodland that straddle either side of the entire length of the existing access that leads into the Oakdown Farm complex. This constraint is given due regard in the layout and development of the site. • The site is not inconsiderable in size, but because of previous rural management and farming practice, the presence of mature vegetation (i.e. hedges) and trees is generally confined to the perimeters of the existing field boundaries. There are not inconsiderable lengths of hedges and several trees within the main body of the site, but these are shown for removal as they do not fit with the proposed development layout. The scale of impact on biodiversity and loss of hedgerow is best left to the Bio-diversity consultee. • The AIA schedule of trees includes an assessment of the Tree Categorisation as required by BS5837. The Tree Service makes note that the assessment does not appear to be consistent with the guidance in the British Standard 5837 section 4.5.5 'Tree Categorisation method'; and that a number of trees may have been incorrectly categorised. The normative approach is to start with a Category 'A' and then re-evaluate that categorisation as per the Table 1, the 'cascade chart' in the Standard. Having reviewed the applicants schedule of trees there appear to be inconsistent application of the cascade chart criteria, which has led to fewer category 'A' trees that might exist on the site. Examples (not exhaustive) are: - T2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17 & 19. <p>Detailed Comments: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protected trees within TPO 0687 are designated as Groups G7 & G9 in the applicant's schedule of trees. Although shown for retention, there is a risk to their health & condition as it is the applicant's intention to service drainage requirements between Unit BG1 and the balancing pond shown for construction to the East of the protected woodland. The risk to the protected trees is in the construction of the balancing pond (excavation; soil level changes; damage to woodlands Root Protection Area due to traffic of plant & machinery), as well as the installation of drains connecting the pond and Unit BG1 which the applicant intends to install underneath the woodland by horizontal drilling and installation of required drains. The applicant has not provided any detailed assessment of the viability of this proposal nor any detailed work methodology to inform and assure the Planning 				

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	<p>Authority that the scheme is sustainable in retaining the woodland and maintaining its health & condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Site Section plans clearly indicate considerable and significant earth movements and soil-level changes across the site. It would appear that in part this is planned to be able to provide landscape opportunities to screen the development from existing developments and the principal roads surrounding the site; as well as helping with sound attenuation of traffic noise coming from the M3. This proposal effectively requires any and all hedges and trees within the main body of the site to be removed. • The removal of those hedges and trees would pre-suppose that the landscaping element of the scheme would be of prime importance to the applicant. The landscaping opportunities presented appear considerable, but the Tree Service urges caution as experience shows that earth movements at this scale and soil-compaction required to stabilise slopes is considerable and significant, and to then plant standard nursery sized trees into an engineered soil profile on top of such bunds requires considerable planning and detail. For example, the applicant has presented details of tree-pit specifications that the Tree Service assumes would be used in the engineered soil-bunds. The specification assumes trees of a nursery 'standard' size for immediate landscape effect, but this could be regarded as a high-risk strategy as it would require intense aftercare with a committed and well-resourced replacement plan. Establishment of wooded areas as proposed might be better achieved with mass 'forestry' type planting of whips/maidens which are known to establish faster and at a higher success rate. This, however, may compromise the expected landscape impact and noise attenuation objectives. The views of the Landscape consultee would be welcome.
Policy Ref:	<p>Adopted Basingstoke & Deane Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2029: -</p> <p>Policy EM1 'Landscape': requires that development proposals must respect, enhance and not be detrimental to the character or visual amenity of the landscape likely to be affected, paying regard to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The qualities identified within the council's landscape character assessment and any subsequent updates or relevant guidance (b) The visual amenity and scenic quality (c) The setting of a settlement, including important views to, across, within and out of settlements (d) The local character of buildings and settlements, including important open areas (e) Trees, ancient woodland, hedgerows, water features such as rivers and other landscape features and their function as ecological networks (f) Intrinsically dark landscapes (g) Historic landscapes, parks and gardens and features (h) The character of the borough's rivers and tributaries, including the River Loddon and Test, which should be safeguarded. <p>Policy EM10 'Delivering High Quality Development': development will be permitted under criteria 2(b) which requires development to 'Provide a high quality of amenity for occupants of developments and neighbouring properties, having regard to such issues as overlooking, access to natural light, outlook and amenity space, in accordance with the Design & sustainability SPD' (Ref Section 10.19).</p>