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David Lane,

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17th December 2021

Dear David

Re: Mill Green Boat House, Caversham, Berkshire

I have prepared a further response to the Local Planning Authority with regard to the proposals to reinstate an access to Mill Green Boat House. There appears to be some confusion with regard to:

- (i) the labelling on the Tree Protection Plan (TPP) with regard to the extent of surfacing within the area;
- (ii) the specification for the access and the subsequent impact on the roots of offsite trees.

(i) To clarify: the TPP annotates the existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the access to the Boat Yard and where the existing container and car parking are located. Otherwise, there is a small 'bank' which forms the transition between the existing pedestrian footpath and the sump. It is understood that there is no surfacing on this 'bank'.

(ii) I have prepared a plan (Footpath Plan – FP/MGBHCB/01 B) to help clarify the proposed footpath methodology and demonstrate that this will not have a negative impact on these trees through the removal of roots. However, it is noted that the offsite trees and hedging are of low quality and have a limited life expectancy. I understand that this is agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

The TPP shows that the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of the offsite trees (G3) are contained within the 'sump' or – as related to 1 no. Sycamore – are beneath an existing hardstanding area. The bank between the 'sump' and the pedestrian footpath will be partly lowered to regulate the proposed reinstated access. These works are above the level of the offsite trees. There will be no roots present within the area of bank to be removed.

The proposed surfacing will be above the existing ground level of the 'sump' as roots may be present here. Some works will be required to remove/scape away the existing vegetation and associated leaf litter and create a sound base for the surface. Additionally the excavation of the bank (see above) will need to be blended to the sump. I have called these works 'minor grading and compaction' but I am happy to amend the wording to satisfy the Local Planning Authority's requirements. As part of the proposals therefore no roots from the offsite trees will be removed. The

permeable surface will facilitate water percolation to retained roots and will allow gaseous exchange between the underlying soil profile and the atmosphere. There will therefore not be a detrimental change to the rooting environment of these offsite trees.

There is a proposed excavation of 250-300 mm within part of the rooting area of an offsite hedge (H1) as part of the reinstated access. The Tree Officer has expressed concern on the potential impact on the hedge. To avoid any damage to the roots here a reinforced mesh could be laid instead of excavating. This could be a medium grade 11 mm thick mesh which would be pinned in place and would reinforce the underlying soil profile, protect roots and be suitable for the proposed occasional vehicular use of the access.

The Tree Officer has commented on the value of the trees and stated that *'The BS5837 category is not relevant; any tree to be retained is a material consideration and should be given due'*. However, whilst most things within this report are a material consideration the weight applied to the trees is relevant to their value. In this case the trees are not 'important' as set out within Policy EN14 of the Reading Local Plan. They are low quality and unremarkable trees of limited life expectancy and with low amenity value. They are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order and are not worthy of protection and could be removed by their current owner without any permission from the Local Planning Authority. The weight applied to the trees within the planning process must subsequently be limited. However, this application will retain the trees and has set out a reasonable and suitable specification to achieve this. There will be no unacceptable harm to the offsite trees.

I trust that this addresses and clarifies the concerns raised by the Local Planning Authority. If you should require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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