

Mill Green Boat House, Caversham, Berkshire

I am responding to comments made by the Tree Officer at Reading Borough Council with regard to an application to reinstate an access to Mill Green Boat House. It is noted that the proposed sections and specifications included with the Officers comments do not correspond to the specification set out in the Arboricultural Report:

`Excavation of the existing bank adjacent to the public footpath will be undertaken to regulate any levels here. As set out ... (in the Arboricultural Report) ... and as shown on the Tree Protection Plan there will be no roots of trees within G3 or H1 in this bank.

Once the bank is excavated some minor grading and compaction will be undertaken to produce a sound sub-base. A geo-textile membrane will be laid to add strength to the sub-base surface and protect the underlying soil profile. The area of the access will be filled with type 3 limestone comprising 40mm unbound mixture (as used for highway works, clause 805). It will be open graded to allow for natural drainage. The reinstated access is therefore assessed to be a minor and insignificant incursion within the RPAs of these trees in this location. It will not impact on the long term viability or amenity value of these trees'.

This specification is therefore for a predominately 'no dig' methodology in relation to the sump which runs along the line of the access. It has been designed to accommodate the potential presence of roots along the site boundary. The existing ground will be scraped to remove any ground vegetation – such as grass – that is present here and there will be some minor grading and compaction to provide a sound sub-base. Any impacts on roots will be insignificant.

The trees within this report are in mixed form and condition and have been graded as U-B category trees as set out in BS 5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations'. I note that the Councils Tree Officer has accepted the Category assessment of the trees. All the trees that could potentially be affected by the reinstated access are:

'U' Category trees - Those in such a condition that they cannot realistically be retained as living trees in the context of the current land use for longer than 10 years
or

'C' Category trees - Trees of low quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 10 years.

They are unremarkable trees of very limited merit and have a limited life expectancy. They are not protected by a Tree Preservation Order and the site is not located within a Conservation Area – which would confer some level of statutory protection on the trees.

The Tree Officer has suggested that the impact on trees would be a reasonable reason for refusal. However they have not stated the Planning reasons or justification for this stance. Within the Reading Local Plan Policy EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands states that: *'Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance...'*. These are not important trees in terms of their amenity value, form,

condition or function. Within any Planning Application there will be potential impact on trees. In this instance the applicant has set out a specification to protect trees outside their control as far as is reasonably possible and ensure their retention.

It would be useful if the Tree Officer could refer to a Planning Policy – either local or national – that they are basing any refusal of this application on. I would then be able to respond more fully to their objection.