

Date:
06/05/2020

Attention:
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading
RG1 2LU.

Our Reference:
4332 – The Abbey School – New Planting Scheme Letter – 2005–06gg.docx

RE: Proposed Construction of 2no. new sixth form classrooms reference SF13 and SF14, adjacent Plantroom and Stairs together with establishment of vehicular and pedestrian access at The Abbey School, Reading.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to recent correspondence, I write regarding the proposed development at The Abbey School, Reading. The proposed development involves the extension of the existing school buildings including 2no. new sixth form classrooms, plantroom and stairs, as well as establishment of vehicular and pedestrian access. I have been asked by agents of The Abbey School to provide a brief letter discussing the new tree planting, which has been proposed to replace existing trees that are to be removed to allow proposed development.

The following document has been provided:

- 181006–1400–PO5 – Proposed Site Plan.

The proposals require the removal of 4no. Scots Pine trees to allow the installation of new classrooms and accommodate the relocation of the access road. The trees are mature specimens, estimated to be in the order of 70 (+/- 10 years old), ranging in height between 7.5 metres and 9.5 metres. Three of these trees (T1, T3 and T4) had been previously categorised in the Tree Survey reference 4332–The Abbey School–Arboricultural Survey Report–1912–12gg, as moderate 'B' Category and one (T2) as a low value 'C' Category tree. Tree T2 was downgraded owing to poor, suppressed form and historical management which has resulted in a large wound following removal of the co-dominant stem to the north. The remaining contribution of all four trees was estimated at the time of the survey to be at least 20 years, but less than 40 years.

Scots Pine is a relatively long-lived species, reference to published data a life expectancy of 150–200 years is given (Helliwell. D. R, 2003, 'Visual Amenity Valuation of Trees and Woodlands', Arboricultural Association, Hampshire). However, this estimate is based on trees in an open grown situation, life expectancy of trees can be greatly reduced by the inhospitable conditions presented by the urban environment. Examples of urban factors that have the potential to be detrimental to tree health include:

1. Soil compaction, resulting in reduced root proliferation and function.
2. Additional heat exposure emitted and reflected by buildings.
3. Rainwater interception by hard surfacing, with resultant reduced moisture levels beneath in soils for the use of roots.
4. Nutrient depletion beneath hard surfacing.

There is an existing hard surfaced access road located close to the trees, which has been measured to be between 0.5 – 1.5 metres from the stems. The hard surfacing of the access road has been calculated to occupy between 30% and 45% of the Root Protection Areas supporting the trees T1 – T4. This means that only 55%–70% of the Root Protection Areas are located in soft ground.

It was noted during the Arboricultural Survey that T1, T2 and T3 displayed comparatively sparse crowns. Such reduced photosynthetic activity displayed by these trees correlates with soil compaction, nutrient deficiency and reduced rainwater associated with the existing hard surfacing presented by the existing access road. It is understood that the existing access road located to the north of the trees is the only route to the east of the site and thus must be retained. As such, the less than ideal growing conditions to the north of the four existing trees will persist.



Photograph 1 – As viewed from the north showing T2 and T3 Scots Pine in centre of group displaying comparatively sparse crowns.



Photograph 2 – As viewed from the west showing T4 in the foreground and relationship with existing access road.

It is proposed to replace the existing 4no. Scots Pine trees with 10no. new semi-mature evergreen specimens. The replacement scheme will include the planting of:

1. 4no. Scots Pine trees at the boundary of the school to the east of the existing trees. This will require the removal of existing hard-surfacing of the car parking area to the south of the Netball Court.
2. 4no. Stone Pine and further 2no. Scots Pine specimens in planters adjacent to the new 6th Form Parking Spaces.
3. Semi-mature trees of 20–25cm girth and heights of 4.5–5.0 metres from a reputable UK nursery.



The excerpt of the Landscape Plan above shows the proposed new tree plantings in mid green colour. The 4no. replacement Scots Pine trees at the southern boundary are proposed to be planted approximately 1.5 metres into the site from the southern boundary. The area available would provide more than adequate soil volume in soft ground for the trees to establish and thrive. This greatly improves upon the current conditions associated with the existing trees. These four trees have been positioned at approximately 7.5 metre spacings, providing enough space for the crowns to develop into maturity, whilst minimising future conflict with the Netball Court to the north and access road to the west. The four new trees will be located directly adjacent to an existing tree belt. Thus, providing potential for improved connection for wildlife habitat.

In addition to the 4no. replacement trees at the boundary the scheme has made provision for the planting of 6no further Pine trees within planters adjacent to the new parking area. These new trees will soften the surrounding hard-surfaced environment and provide year-round colour and tree cover for the enjoyment of the users of the school.

The replacement planting scheme is to be implemented by the incorporation and preparation of soils sufficient to support the new trees. This will involve the removal of existing hard surfacing and the importing of enough clean topsoil to support the new trees. The soils are to be ameliorated, where required to maximise favourable conditions for the trees to thrive. Planting will be conducted using industry best practice, including the use of appropriate planting apparatus, including double-staking and underground irrigation systems. Following planting the trees will be subject to a three-year aftercare plan, including tree watering, which is to be continued until the trees are fully established.

In summary it is considered that the new planting scheme provides opportunity to increase the canopy cover at the site. The replacement trees will be semi-mature specimens, of good size to have an immediate presence in the landscape. The 4no. replacement trees proposed to be planted at the boundary will enjoy similar views to the surrounding areas to

those existing; and will have significantly enhanced growing conditions compared to the existing trees which will improve the future viability of the tree stock.

Yours Sincerely



Jason Mills