



Project Name: Wensley Road, Phase 1

Date: 31st March 2020

Planning Application Number: 200122

Response to Reading Borough Council: Leisure and Open Space

Loss of Recreational Open Space

Whilst there will inevitably be a loss of open space in order to facilitate the new social housing, the measures taken will consolidate and enhance the resultant public open space. Specifically these include:

- Better relationship between existing and new homes and public greenspace providing car-free / more direct routes / parking to greenspace.
- A well defined central greenspace, framed by residential blocks, which has been made wholly playable with a more legible pedestrian footpath.
- Better definition between public, semi-private and private space. New homes will have private space, and the existing flats will be provided with private communal gardens for residents use only. The new private / communal private open space totals 5,043m² in addition to the 4,378m² of public open space. The net loss of usable open space to facilitate the new homes is therefore 1,854m².

Loss of MUGA and Pump Track / Play generally

We would be happy to develop specific proposals for the improvement of Courage Park and its connectivity with the site if instructed to do so by RBC.

Within the site we have endeavoured to mitigate the loss of these facilities through the introduction of outdoor exercise equipment for older children and adults of all ages. We have also sought to enhance the connectivity between the site and adjacent active travel / recreation networks in line with Sport England's 10 Principles of Active Design. This will be achieved through new signage and wayfinding and improved footpath connections.

As stated, we are seeking to enhance play value by increasing the area of playable space within the central greenspace and by providing play opportunities for a wider range of ages including under 5 year olds.

The total under 5's playable area shown on plan is circa 300m², which is in excess of the Sport England Fields in Trust guidance of 100m² for a LAP.

We believe the character of the play elements within the central space generally should be consistent in character with the wooded setting and therefore utilise timber and other natural materials where possible. We would not normally mention specific products at planning stage as



from experience sometimes our clients have specific manufacturers that they are required to specify as stated in the ERs. We would welcome a discussion with RBC as to whether this is the case.

It is suspected that the play trail figure has been misread. The play trail is 200m long as stated in section 5.6 of the DAS.

The 468m² figure is a typo. We would confirm that the MUGA itself is 302m² as stated below the diagram in section 5.9.

Loss of Vegetation

Our proposal seeks to retain the maximum number of mature trees and other vegetation including all Category A trees within the site. The tree removals proposed facilitates the provision new dwellings. We have endeavoured to provide a well-considered and robust replacement tree strategy as set out in the DAS. This includes new succession planting for the Turkey oaks with companion planting in the central greenspace; new street trees and replacement buffer tree planting along the south eastern site boundary. We will provide a wider variety of tree species than is currently on site which enhances biosecurity. These will comprise native species and species that are disease resistant and drought tolerant. We have also selected trees with flowering and fruiting properties in order to enhance ecology and biodiversity.

In addition we are proposing to diversify the grassland within the central greenspace to improve biodiversity and habitat potential.

RBC Natural Environment

Cat C Turkey Oaks

The three Turkey oaks 87, 90 & 93 (Category C) oaks are to be removed. These are marked for removal on the Tree Protection Plan and addressed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment at Sections 1.11 and 3.7.9; it is stated that these trees are to be removed due to declining health and not in relation to the proposed housing development.

Tree Removals

The total number of trees to be removed 265, comprising both individual trees and trees in groups. This figure does not include 10 Category U trees which will be removed as part of planned works by Reading Borough Council.

As you note, the number of individual trees to be removed is 66nr, and we are proposing 184nr new trees as stated in the DAS. This is an uplift of 118 trees.

The majority of the tree removals relate to trees within groups: 209 of the 265 total number of tree removals i.e. 80% of total removals. Whilst these trees undoubtedly have amenity and ecological



value we would highlight that the trees themselves are of variable quality, have had a lack of management, and include some self-seeded specimens. The trees within groups have been classified as a mixture of Category B and C. Of the 209 trees within groups, 169 are Category C, which is 64% of the total number of tree removals.

Our proposed tree planting strategy is substantial and well considered. If however the trees within groups continue to be counted within the total net tree figure, we may need to consider an alternative approach to the tree planting strategy to demonstrate a net gain in tree numbers. One area we could review is the replacement buffer planting on the south eastern site edge. At present it is proposed to re-create this through the introduction of either extra heavy standards or semi-mature trees. However, an alternative approach is a woodland creation approach which would involve re-establishing this edge through a mixture of whips, feathered forms and extra heavy standards. Given that this would involve the planting of a greater number of smaller specimens it would likely allow us to demonstrate a net gain in tree numbers overall.

Hard Surfaces Within RPAs

The incursions into the RPA were calculated taking into account of the existing garaging as in the experience of ACD Environmental that structures such as footpaths are rarely a hindrance to trees of this species. The Arboricultural Method Statement can be updated to clarify this if required. The AMS can be updated to include hard surface removal within RPA's as the Tree Officer has requested.

Site Levels

We will be looking at site levels in detail as part of the Stage 3 works, but we would advise that we will be looking to retain site levels within RPAs as close to existing as possible.

Proposed Tree Palette

We can provide a clearer version of the tree strategy diagram in section 5.10 of the DAS. We will also be doing detailed planting plans as part of the Stage 3 works which will show individual species, sizes, numbers etc.