

WENSLEY ROAD READING

ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT & METHOD STATEMENT

for

READING BOROUGH
COUNCIL



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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. For the Arboricultural Method Statement, see section 4.
- 1.2. The site is currently a residential area comprising of three multi-storey blocks with associated parking, garaging and play area. The proposed is to provide further housing on the site utilising the open spaces between the blocks where possible as part of a holistic re-design of the area.
- 1.3. This impact assessment is intended to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of the proposed design on the trees on-site, and where necessary, recommends mitigation.
- 1.4. The development proposals are in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations'. Adequate protection can be provided to ensure all retained trees are protected throughout development in the form of barriers and/or ground protection.
- 1.5. All of the A category trees are to be retained and protected throughout the development.
- 1.6. Large areas of existing hard surfacing currently within the RPA of higher category trees will be removed and returned to soft landscaping.

- 1.7. Number of trees to be removed as a direct result of the current design

BS Category	Number of individual trees	Number of groups	Number of Trees within Groups
U	10	0	0
A	0	0	0
B	22	2	40
C	34	11	169

- 1.8. The relationship between the buildings and retained trees is sustainable and does not result in any situations which may result in unreasonable pressure to prune requests from future occupants.
- 1.9. The layout proposes to keep the large high category Turkey oaks within the interior of the site and improve their growing environment.
- 1.10. The Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) has been compiled in conjunction with the Tree Protection Plan (TPP) for the purpose of feasibility and planning, as per Figure 1 of BS5837:2012. These detail any mitigation which will be necessary to ensure the protection of retained trees throughout the development.
- 1.11. Three trees T87, T90 and T93 are to be removed due to declining health. This is a management decision made by Reading Borough Councils tree department. These trees are to be removed regardless of development.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. ACD Environmental was instructed in December 2019 to prepare the following Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement by Reading Borough Council. Reference should be made to the appended Tree Protection Plan (PRI22568-03).
- 2.2. This Method Statement is to be made available to all operatives on site during the construction process, so that they understand the scope and importance of the measures set out for tree protection. Implementation of the protection methods and other details within this report are integral to ensuring protection for the retained trees.
- 2.3. For details of trees to be retained, and locations and types of special protection methods, reference should be made to the latest revision of Tree Protection Plan (ref: PRI22568-03), which should be displayed prominently on site for all staff to see.
- 2.4. To ensure accuracy and avoid future costly adjustments, the Tree Protection Fence must be set out by a surveyor/engineer with all node points being marked clearly on site for the fencing contractor to work to. The AutoCAD version of the Tree Protection Plan is available on request.
- 2.5. This report is based on the recommendations given in BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations'.
- 2.6. A search has been conducted by contacting the local planning authority to ascertain if there is any statutory protection on this site. It was confirmed to ACD on the 10th of September 2019 that none of the trees on this site are protected by a tree preservation order, nor is it within a conservation area.
- 2.7. The controlling authority is Reading Borough Council.
- 2.8. Any questions relating to the content of this report should be directed in the first instance to: ACD Environmental, Courtyard House, Mill Lane, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1EY, 01483 425 714/07796 832 490, quoting the site address and report reference number.
- 2.9. The following abbreviations have been used throughout this document:
 - Root Protection Area – RPA
 - Construction Exclusion Zone- CEZ
 - Tree Protection Plan – TPP
 - Tree Protection Fencing – TPF

3. Arboricultural Impact Assessment

- 3.1. The site is currently a residential area comprising of three multi-storey blocks with associated parking, garaging and play area. The proposed is to provide further housing on the site utilising the open spaces between the blocks where possible as part of a holistic re-design of the area. The proposed layout followed public consultation where the requirements and layout arrangement were founded by the public.
- 3.2. This impact assessment is intended to evaluate the direct and indirect impacts on the trees on the site in relation to the proposed development. Any potential tree impacts are identified as per BS5837:2012 section 5.4, and details are given of proposed mitigation.
- 3.3. Any potentially damaging activities proposed in the vicinity of retained trees are identified, such that mitigation to significantly reduce or avoid this impact can be detailed in the Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan as recommended in BS5837:2012 section 5.4.2.
- 3.4. The development proposals are in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations'. Adequate protection can be provided to ensure all retained trees are protected throughout the development.
- 3.5. The tree survey for the site is at Appendix 2 of the Tree Report for the site ACD reference PRI22568ts
- 3.6. This assessment is based upon the supplied layout drawing by RBC-WLR_HTA_00_DR_0100-B- Proposed Site plan
- 3.7. **Evaluation of impact of proposed tree losses**

Table 1: Trees to be removed as a direct consequence of development

BS Category	Number of individual trees	Number of groups	Number of Trees within Groups
U	10	0	0
A	0	0	0
B	22	2	40
C	34	11	169

- 3.7.1. Those trees which are to be removed are shown with a red dashed canopy outline on the Tree Protection Plan ACD reference PRI22568-03.
- 3.7.2. Of the trees to be removed 77% are growing within 13 groups located around the site's perimeter. Only two of these groups were categorised as B (G15 & G38). These two groups were given a higher collective group rating for their screening value, yet individually the trees would have been categorised as C for their lower quality. These trees are to be removed to allow for road access, parking and house construction. Given the comprehensive redevelopment proposed, their retention is not feasible, and attempting to incorporate the trees into the design would result in the

development goals not being achieved. Whilst it is acknowledged the trees have some value in their current context, they are not of a quality that should compromise the layout, and it is judged acceptable to remove and provide replacement trees as illustrated on the landscaping plans.

- 3.7.3. Within the interior of the site are 16 category B London plane trees (T61-T75) growing either side of a pedestrian footpath. These trees are to be removed to allow the construction of one of the housing areas and new parking. If these trees were to be retained, then it would be recommended to thin out at least 50% of them due to their close proximity leading to very distorted crowns. This distortion would only increase as the trees grow, unless half of them are removed within the near future regardless of development.
- 3.7.4. In total, 22 individual B category trees are to be removed as a result of the layout design. It is acknowledged that the trees have value in their current site context. Given the comprehensive redevelopment proposed, their retention is not feasible, and attempting to incorporate the trees into the design would likely to result in an awkward layout design.
- 3.7.5. The layout has been produced to retain all the high-quality category A trees within site. In all circumstances, the proposed layout better their growing conditions by removing existing hard surfacing within their RPA's and returning to soft landscaping.
- 3.7.6. Ten of the trees proposed to be removed were found to be in a dead or terminal condition so categorised as U and should be removed regardless of development.
- 3.7.7. Replacement trees will be proposed through landscape design and will mitigate for their removal by providing robust long-term tree cover in keeping with the proposal and surrounding area.
- 3.7.8. In relation to the conception and design of development proposals, BS5837:2012 section 5.1.1 states: The constraints imposed by trees, both above and below ground should inform the site layout design, although it is recognised that the competing needs of development mean that trees are only one factor requiring consideration. Certain trees are of such importance and sensitivity as to be major constraints on development or to justify its substantial modification. However, care should be taken to avoid misplaced tree retention; attempts to retain too many or unsuitable trees on a site can result in excessive pressure on the trees during demolition or construction work, or post-completion demands for their removal.
- 3.7.9. In addition to the above, trees, T87, T90 and T93 are to be removed due to declining health over a number of years, this is a management decision made by Reading Borough Council and would take place regardless of development. These trees are showing signs of poor health and were categorised as low quality at the survey. These trees are not included in the tables at 1.7 and 3.7

3.8. Trees to be pruned

- 3.8.1. Only one tree requires pruning to facilitate the development, T82 a London plan tree. The works to this tree will consist of a crown reduction on the north side of the canopy by 2.5m to give a 4m crown clearance to the proposed building.
- 3.8.2. Should any further works become necessary it should comply with BS3998:2010 Tree Work or more recently accepted arboricultural good practice and be approved by the LPA and project arboriculturist prior to any commencement.

3.9. Protection for retained trees

- 3.9.1. BS5837:2012 section 6.2.1. states: 'All trees that are being retained on site should be protected by barriers and/or ground protection (see 5.5) before any materials or machinery are brought onto the site, and before any demolition, development or stripping of soil commences. Where all activity can be excluded from the RPA, vertical barriers should be erected to create a construction exclusion zone. A specification for protective fencing is given on the Tree Protection Plan. This consists of interlocking weld-mesh panels (e.g. heras) well braced by attachment to scaffold pole uprights driven firmly into the ground. Should any alternative method of barrier construction be proposed, the design should be approved by the local planning authority.
- 3.9.2. A 50cm offset has been given where protection fencing is adjacent to demolition or ground construction works. This is to allow for working room and has been found preferable than a works team haphazardly removing the fence when doing the works due to no working room. The resulting incursions from this method are small and favourable over the fencing being moved unofficially by works contractors.
- 3.9.3. Tree protection fence on this site will be installed in two stages. Firstly, the default position to protect trees during the demolition phase of the development. Secondly is the post demolition fencing to protect the newly exposed soft ground.

3.10. Demolition & Groundworks

- 3.10.1. To ensure damage does not occur to trees highlighted for retention, tree protection fencing must be erected prior to ANY plant machinery entering site whatsoever.
- 3.10.2. Several areas of existing parking areas and pedestrians' footways are to be removed and returned to soft landscaping. This will be conducted in a sensitive manner as per the method statement. If roots are found to be growing within the sub-base it will be left in situ and dressed with topsoil.

3.11. New Hard Surfaces within RPAs

- 3.11.1. There are three areas of proposed hard surfacing within the RPA's of retained trees;
- 3.11.2. Category A London Plane tree T82 has a proposed pathway shown within its RPA. the pathways equate to 17% of the unsurfaced area within the RPA. However, 62% of the overall RPA is currently hard surfacing which will be removed and returned to soft landscaping, thus there will be a net reduction of hard surfacing within the RPA.
- 3.11.3. Within the RPA's of trees T56, T57 and T58 is a proposed footpath and bus stop pick up location. This incursion equates to 19%, 15% and 16% respectively and are less than the 20% maximum of hard surfacing permitted within BS5837.
- 3.11.4. The proposed emergency vehicular access is located within the RPA's of T89 & T94. The largest incursion at this point is T94 at 9.4% of unsurfaced ground within the notional RPA. It should be noted that all trees in this location are proposed to have a large area of hard surfacing removed and returned to soft landscaping, in all cases this will lead to an overall net increase in the soft ground within the RPA's.
- 3.11.5. Within the four areas, a sensitive construction approach will be needed to limit the impact upon the underlying rooting systems. It is also anticipated that the surfacing will need to be built to adoptable standards. It is therefore proposed that the hard surfacing will be constructed above the existing ground levels within the RPA's of retained trees as indicated on the appended protection plan.

3.12. Construction within RPAs

- 3.12.1. There is to be no construction within RPA's of retained trees.

3.13. Shade and future pressure to prune

The site layout has been assessed in terms of shading and future pressure to prune. Given the orientation of the site, and the relationship between the proposed buildings and the retained trees, the juxtaposition is viable for long-term tree retention, and it is considered that shading by trees is unlikely to be a concern to future residents. As a result, it is considered unlikely that there would be any undue pressure to remove trees, or excessively prune from any future occupants.

3.14. **Services**

It is fundamental to tree protection that infrastructure design is sensitively approached, as trenching close to trees may damage roots and affect tree health and stability. Details of services have not been provided at the time of writing. The Tree Protection Plan, showing the constraints posed by retained trees will be passed to the infrastructure engineers to inform their design, ensuring that all services avoid areas of potential conflict. As per BS5837:2012 Figure 1, once further details become available as part of the detailed/technical design for the site, the TPP and AMS will be revised to incorporate these details for services for inclusion in the Tender documentation.

3.15. **Levels and Landscaping**

Full details of any changes in ground levels on site remain to be finalised. Any alterations to levels close to trees may damage roots and affect tree health and stability. Unless no-dig methodology is proposed for installation of surfaces within RPAs the original levels in these areas must be noted, retained, and integrated into the engineering design of the site. Landscaping operations within the RPAs of retained trees must be carried out in a sensitive manner and be subject to a detailed method statement and arboricultural supervision.

3.16. **Boundaries**

All plot boundaries will need to be designed, positioned and installed to avoid damage to retained trees. When within RPAs, this will include hand excavation of all post holes, and the lining of any post holes with a non-porous membrane to stop leachates from the concrete damaging tree roots.

4. Arboricultural Method Statement

TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE APPENDED TREE PROTECTION PLAN REFERENCE: PRI22568-03

4.1. Phasing of operations for tree protection

4.1.1. Implementation of tree protection measures on the site must be carried out in the following order

- 1) Tree removals and tree surgery
- 2) Line of tree protection fence to be set out to node points by surveyor
- 3) Accurate erection of tree protection fence and ground protection
- 4) Site accessible to construction/demolition traffic
- 5) Sensitive demolition
- 6) Post demolition fencing installed
- 7) Construction
- 8) Removal of tree protection fencing
- 9) Remedial tree surgery (if required)

4.1.2. The above phasing must not be changed without approval from the project arboriculturist and agreement with the Council.

4.2. Restrictions within tree protection areas

4.2.1. Inside the exclusion area of the fencing, the following shall apply:

- No mechanical excavation whatsoever
- No excavation by any other means without arboricultural site supervision
- No hand digging without a written method statement having first been approved by the project arboriculturist.
- No lowering of levels for any purpose (except removal of grass sward using hand tools)
- No storage of plant or materials
- No storage or handling of any chemical including cement washings
- No vehicular access
- No fire lighting

4.2.2. In addition to the above, further precautions are necessary adjacent to trees:

- No substances injurious to tree health, including fuels, oil, bitumen, cement (including cement washings), builders sand, concrete mixing and other chemicals shall be stored or used within or directly adjacent to the protection area of retained trees
- No fire shall be lit such that flames come within 5m of tree foliage.

4.3. Avoiding damage to stems and branches

- 4.3.1. Care shall be taken when planning site operations in proximity of retained trees to ensure that wide or tall loads, or plant with booms, jibs and counterweights, can operate without coming into contact with retained trees. Such contact can result in serious injury to them and might make their safe retention impossible.
- 4.3.2. Consequently, any transit or traverse of plant in proximity of trees shall be conducted under the supervision of a banksman, to ensure that adequate clearance from trees is at all times maintained. In some circumstances, it may be impossible to achieve this without pruning works known as 'access facilitation pruning'.
- 4.3.3. Access facilitation pruning shall be kept to the barest minimum necessary to facilitate development and shall be carried out in strict accordance with the guidance below (Tree Surgery). Under no circumstances shall construction personnel undertake any tree pruning operations.

4.4. Tree protection fencing

- 4.4.1. The Tree Protection Plan (see the latest revision of: PRI22568-03) shows the alignment of Tree Protection Fencing (TPF), which is to be installed prior to any of the following taking place:
- Demolition
 - Plant and material delivery
 - Soil stripping
 - Utility installation
 - Construction works
 - Landscaping
- 4.4.2. Stages for installation of TPF:
- 1) Hand clearance of any vegetation to allow clear working access.
 - 2) Setting out of fencing points
 - 3) Fencing erected
 - 4) Site accessible to demolition/construction traffic
- 4.4.3. To ensure accuracy and avoid future costly adjustments, the Tree Protection Fence must be set out by a surveyor with all node points being marked clearly on site for the fencing contractor to work to.
- 4.4.4. Once erected, all TPF will be regarded as sacrosanct, and will not be removed or altered without prior recommendation by the project arboriculturist and approval of the local planning authority.
- 4.4.5. The typical TPF construction is suitable for areas of high intensity development, and shall comprise of interlocking weld-mesh panels, well braced to resist impacts by attachment to a scaffold framework that is set firmly into the ground. A detailed specification can be found on the TPP.
- 4.4.6. Should any alternative method of barrier construction be proposed, consultation with the project arboriculturist will be obtained to clarify the efficacy of the revised design prior to informing the local planning authority and obtaining their consent.
- 4.4.7. Once the exclusion zone has been protected by barriers and/or ground protection, construction work can commence.
- 4.4.8. All weather notices should be erected on the barriers (for example see figure below).



Figure 1: Tree Protection Sign (digital copies available for download at: www.acdenviromental.co.uk)

4.5. Site storage, parking, welfare facilities

- 4.5.1. The site will require provision for; site storage, contractor parking, welfare facilities, temporary services/drainage, material drop of points, etc.
- 4.5.2. No details of these provisions are available at the time of writing of this report.
- 4.5.3. None of the above provisions will be sited within RPAs of retained trees without the input or the project arboriculturist and the consent of the Local Authority.

4.6. Tree surgery and removal

4.6.1. Those trees which are to be removed are shown with a red dashed canopy outline, on the Tree Protection Plan ACD reference PRI22568-03

4.6.2. The following surgery works are to be carried out:

Tree number	Species	Operation
T82	London Plane	Reduction to the north side of the crown by 2.5m leaving a northern crown radius of 6m

4.6.3. All trees to be removed are indicated on the Tree Protection Plan.

4.6.4. If any further tree surgery works are required, a proposed specification will be submitted to, and approved by the Local Planning Authority before any works are carried out.

4.6.5. All work will be carried out in accordance with BS 3998:2010 Recommendations for Tree Work, industry best practice and in line with any works already agreed with the Council.

4.6.6. The tree surgery contractor is responsible for carrying out any relevant health and safety risk assessment, and insurance, prior to any work being carried out.

4.6.7. The statutory protection afforded by the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Countryside and Rights of Way Act will be adhered to. If further advice is required, particularly if bats are discovered during tree work, it will be obtained from Natural England or other competent persons and recommendations adhered to.

4.6.8. The stumps of any trees removed from within the Construction Exclusion Zone or the RPAs of retained trees will be either; cut flush to ground level and left in situ or ground out using a stump grinder. They will not be winched out.

4.6.9. All operations shall be carefully carried out to avoid damage to the trees being treated or neighbouring trees. No trees to be retained shall be used for anchorage or winching purposes.

4.7. Soft landscaping within RPA

- 4.7.1. All landscaping and associated ground preparation within exclusion zones will be carried out sensitively to ensure root damage is mitigated as much as is practicable. At no time is any heavy plant to be used within any protected area. Removal of existing vegetation will be carried out by hand, turf may be removed using a mechanical turf stripper or by hand.

Turfing

- 4.7.2. Stages for turfing gardens and open spaces:

No plant machinery¹ to be used in the area for whatever reason

- 1) Remove TPF to allow access to area.
- 2) Do not reduce any high spots or excavate in any way.
- 3) Existing poor-quality turf may be removed with a turf stripper.
- 4) Use good quality topsoil to level any low-lying areas and hollows and provide a fine tilth to lay turf on. This imported soil must not result in a level increase of more than 100mm in any area.
- 5) Import turves by hand in wheelbarrow
- 6) Lay turves

Planting

- 4.7.3. Should the soil be compacted or have a poor structure which may hinder the development of any new planting, soil decompaction techniques may be used upon consultation with the project arboriculturist.

- 4.7.4. Stages for planting within tree protection areas:

No plant machinery to be used in the area for whatever reason

- 1) Remove TPF to allow access to area.
- 2) Remove existing vegetation by hand, turf may be removed using a mechanical turf stripper.
- 3) Do not reduce any high spots or excavate in any way.
- 4) Import good quality topsoil by hand (with wheelbarrow) into area.
- 5) Level to a depth of no more than 100mm with hand tools
- 6) Dig individual planting pits for each plant by hand (including hedging which must not be trench planted)
- 7) Any mulch should also be imported and spread by hand.

- 4.7.5. No works will be carried out within any protected areas if the soil moisture is of a level likely to allow compaction to occur.

¹ Including rotovators

4.8. Demolition close to trees

4.8.1. All TPF to be installed as per approved Tree Protection Plan prior to any plant arriving on site.

4.8.2. Stages for demolition within tree protection areas:

No plant machinery to be sited on any exposed rooting area

- 1) Contact project arboriculturist to hold a 'toolbox' talk before starting work
- 2) Buildings to be folded in on themselves
- 3) Removal debris by hand or with plant machinery not located on any exposed rooting area.
- 4) Floor to be broken up with hand held breaker and pieces removed by hand. Slab floor can be lifted carefully by machinery if appropriate
- 5) Underlying ground levels to be retained. No excavation to occur
- 6) Any exposed roots and surrounding newly exposed areas to be covered with up to 100mm of topsoil, from elsewhere on site, or imported topsoil (to BS3882:1984). Soil may be placed in area by plant but must be spread by hand.
- 7) Tree protection fencing to be erected in final position post demolition fencing as shown on plan

4.8.3. No reduction in levels of the underlying soil surface will occur.

4.8.4. At no point are any heavy machinery permitted within the RPA.

4.8.5. Contamination of the soil by fuel and lubricant leaks must be avoided at all cost. If such a situation arises the project arboriculturist must be notified to assess the situation and prescribe remedial measures.

4.9. Soil remediation measures for compaction within RPAs

4.9.1. Stages for soil remediation for compaction within RPA. The following works must be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced soil remediation contractor:

- 1) Soil test to be undertaken to identify soil texture, nutrient content and pH. Based on the results, appropriate remediation measures to be undertaken.
- 2) Compaction test to be undertaken to identify soil compaction level.
- 3) Appropriate soil decompaction measures using a Terravent to reduce any compaction that may have occurred. To be used in a 1m matrix over the entire area previously covered by the fill.
- 4) Add layer of well composted mulch to a depth of 100-200mm over the RPA area.

4.9.2. Contamination of the soil by fuel and lubricant leaks must be avoided at all cost. If such a situation arises the project arboriculturist must be notified to assess the situation and prescribe remedial measures.

4.9.3. No plant machinery to be used in the area for whatever reason.

4.10. Installation of boundary fencing within protected areas

4.10.1. Stages for installing wooden fence posts:

No plant machinery to be used in the area for whatever reason

- 1) Remove TPF to allow access to area.
- 2) Dig post holes using hand tools, avoiding damage to the protective bark covering larger roots. Roots smaller than 25mm diameter may be pruned back using either secateurs or a hand saw, leaving a clean cut.
- 3) Damage or severance of roots above 25mm diameter must be avoided. If roots of this size are discovered, the hole should be relocated. If there are a large number of such roots it may be necessary to relocate the hole by half a fence panels length and adjust the fence panels accordingly.
- 4) Line hole with non-porous lining, for example durable polythene bag.
- 5) Insert post and fill post hole with concrete to ground level.
- 6) Trim polythene to ground level

4.11. Installation of play equipment within protected areas

- 4.11.1. Contact project arboriculturist to hold a 'toolbox' talk before starting work.
- 4.11.2. Tree Protection Fence to be moved as close to the tree as needed to allow access to the area.
- 4.11.3. All surfaces installed within the RPAs in the LAP area must be installed to a no-dig specification. For further details see landscape design details
- 4.11.4. Play equipment to be installed within the RPA using hand tools only as per landscape details plans.
- 4.11.5. Stages for installing posts for LAP equipment:

No plant machinery to be used in the area for whatever reason

- 1) Dig post holes using hand tools, avoiding damage to the protective bark covering larger roots. Roots smaller than 25mm diameter may be pruned back using either secateurs or a hand saw, leaving a clean cut.
- 2) Damage or severance of roots above 25mm diameter must be avoided. If roots of this size are discovered, the hole should be relocated. If there are a large number of such roots it may be necessary to relocate the hole by half a fence panels length and adjust the fence panels accordingly.
- 3) Line hole with non-porous lining, for example durable polythene bag.
- 4) Insert post and fill post hole with concrete to ground level.
- 5) Trim polythene to ground level

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13 January 2020

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