

Memo

To: Anthony Scholes, Planning

From: Sarah Hanson, Natural Environment Officer, Planning

B J Unwin Tree consultant comments below. 27/1/2020.

CC:

Date: 21 January 2020

Re: Consultation on an Application

Application No: 191848

Address: Greyfriars Church, Greyfriars Road, Reading

With reference to GRE-4 171 01 – Proposed Block Plan approved under 190650, Proposed Site Plan 172 01, Tree document dated Oct 2019 from B J Unwin Forestry Consultancy and associated Tree Crowns plan, RPA plan and Tree Retention & Protection plan:

The site is within a 10% or less canopy cover area, as defined in our Tree Strategy, and as such is one where tree retention and planting to increase canopy cover is a priority. In addition, the site is on a very busy roundabout and in a location where pollution levels are likely to be high, hence appropriate tree retention and planting (of large canopy trees) is even more important, as acknowledged in 6.11.1 of the Tree Report.

The removal of several trees (T16 & T17) was agreed under 190650 on the basis that space was available within landscape beds for new tree (and other) planting; a condition attached to secure these details. The proposed site layout under this current application results in less space for landscaping, specifically due to the link structure. A comparison can be seen below; approved left, proposed right:

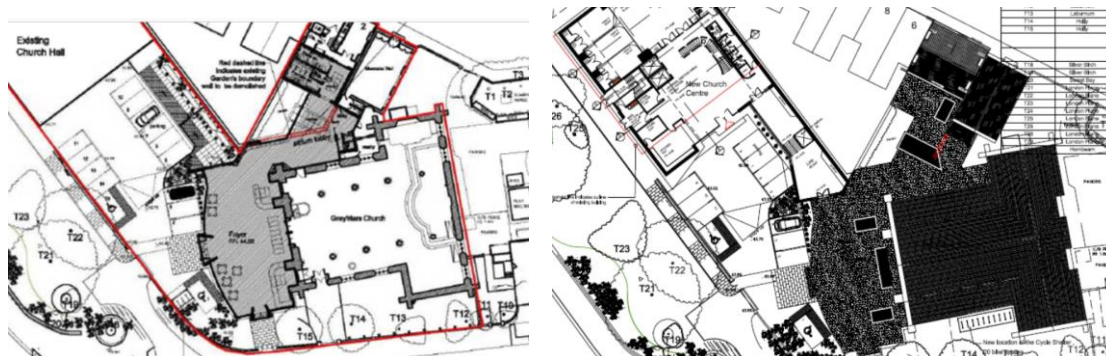


Table 4.3 of the Ecological Report confirms that there will be a canopy cover reduction as a result of the proposal: Tree canopy pre construction 750.3m sq; Tree canopy post construction 625.70 m sq. I am also aware that T12 has been lost since the 2019 approval (tree report does not include this loss). Currently no replacement or additional trees (to provide a net gain) are proposed which is not acceptable given the site's location, objectives of our Tree Strategy and the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

The trees at the adjacent Nursery (T1-T6, T9-T11 of the survey) are subject to TPO 48/13 and are not affected by the proposal. They are included within the tree survey with suggested works (repollarding, which both myself and a tree surgeon have long suggested is required but which the Nursery do not wish to carry out). As with 191650, these trees should not form part of any agreed works or approved documents and works should be dealt with separately via a Tree Works Application.

Any reference to pruning removed from Jan 2020 tree report.

Similarly, works are proposed to Council trees T21 and T28 on the road side of the trees, i.e. not related to the proposed development. Works to Council trees, unless agreed as facilitative pruning for the development, should be left in the hands of the Council.

Any reference to pruning removed from Jan 2020 tree report.

5.3.2 of the Tree Report states that T25 & T26 will need to be pruned to give 'ample' construction access. This non-specific pruning is not acceptable and in any case when looking at plan, including the Crown Plan, the crown of T25 is nowhere near the building. Clarification is required and whilst I note that 6.2.1 states: 'trim back 1.5m off scaffolding', no scaffolding distance (hence total pruning) is given. No pruning is indicated to T28 which already overhangs the existing building and will need to be pruned to both accommodate and allow access of the proposed – the impact on this tree's crown must be clarified particularly as the proposed building is taller.

It is hard to predict when this work will take place, by which time pollarded trees will have grown. We specify **minimum pruning of T25, T26 & T28 to allow construction of 5-board 1.5m wide scaffolding** in the Jan 2020 report. We can't do any more.

5.4.2 of the Tree Report indicates that the RPAs of T22, T25, T26 & T28 will be affected and that ground protection will be needed – this protection along with the position of fencing is shown on the Tree Retention and Protection Plan. This plan indicates that this will be on the adjacent Council land (path and adjacent soft landscape area) implying that construction access will be from Council land and not contained within the site and which would require the temporary closure of the footpath. Is this correct and has this all been discussed and agreed with Highways?

Construction access will be required on Council land. Greyfriars will need to do this as part of enabling works / agreements.

6.9.2 refers to new paths and the Proposed Site plan seems to indicate a new path outside the site – is this correct?

The path past the carpark and T22 won't change, we just show TGP to prevent rootzone compaction in case construction access needed here. The path past T25, T26 & T28 might have its building side affected by new foundations (foundations to be same place as existing). We assume the path will just be repaired as existing. So our comments are precautionary.

In conclusion, there are a number of things that need clarification, as detailed above, before it is clear whether the proposal is acceptable in relation to trees and landscaping.