

Memo

To: Sian Hickey, Planning

From: Sarah Hanson, Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC:

Date: 8 February 2024

Re: Consultation on a discharge of conditions Application

Application Number: 231815

Application Type: Approval of Conditions

Address: Hamilton Academy 40 Christchurch Road Reading RG2 7AY

Proposal: Discharge of conditions 5 (arboricultural method statement), 6 (landscaping scheme), 7 (biodiversity enhancements), 8 (muga fence) and 11 (construction method statement) of planning application 231025.

The approved Block Plan is Drawing No. 23-062 0100 C02. I note that this discharge of conditions applications includes a revised Block Plan (C03); the changes described as: *Landscape Amendments to Central Area; Play Area Added; Electric Vehicle Parking and Cycling Updated*. Rev C02 (left) and C03 below for comparison:



I will leave you to consider if it is appropriate to encompass these changes as part of this application. The changes result in the amendment of landscaping in the central area which is not of concern. The inclusion of EV charging points in the rear parking area raises no tree or landscape concerns. It would seem to me that the inclusion of the new play area in the School allotment gardens is a significant change (see further comment below) and requires arboricultural comment.

Condition 5 – Arb Method Statement

With reference to the **Arboricultural Method Statement ref J64.56, dated 11 December 2023 from Broad Oak Tree Consultants Ltd:**

I note that, as required, this includes a report on a trial excavation to assess any roots present on the west side. As you are aware, I initially visited (as requested) when the dig started but was not completed as necessary. I had expected to be advised on the date the dig was going to be completed in order to have the opportunity to view it myself, but for whatever reason, I was not kept informed.

Based on the APPROVED layout, the AMS is largely acceptable, however there are three points that need to be addressed:

- Section 9 should include a comment on how the raised level of the no-dig area will be married with the adjacent surfacing.
- 13 Arb Supervision – this should be expanded to oversee the installation of the no-dig parking area along the east boundary and within the RPA of T2 (following the excavation as specified). It should also include the initial visit to agree tree works, check off tree protection (prior to any works) and regular ad-hoc visits throughout construction.
- TPP – for completeness, the no-dig area for the parking bays within the RPA of T2 should be annotated.

HOWEVER, it is not acceptable insofar as it does not address the now proposed play area within the RPAs of T14 (at least) at the rear. A new section for this is required and the play area shown on the TPP IF this addition is being dealt with through this application.

Condition 6 (landscaping etc)

With reference to **Landscape Plan Site Overview 2023-L6615-002 B, Soft Landscape Plan Sheet 1 of 3 2023-L6615-003 B, Soft Landscape Plan Sheet 2 of 3 2023-L6615-004 B, Soft Landscape Plan Sheet 3 of 3 2023-L6615-003 B and Planting Schedule dated 22/11/2023** (note lack of clarity as to whether these are the proposed plans - see further comment under Landscape Maintenance):

On a general note, the Landscaping Plan Site Overview does not show the proposed play area at the rear - if this is to be included, it should be shown on the plan.

- Sheet 1 of 3 - 2 Judas trees are proposed south of the central parking spaces at the front of the site. Whilst I have no objections to this species, they are specified as 'bushes' - given the limited width of the landscape strip, with parking spaces and car park adjacent, I question the appropriateness of having

anything other than a single, clear stem tree here. Confirmation of soil volume provision in that soft landscape strip is required to confirm that it is sufficient for whatever species is proposed.

- Sheet 2 of 3 - this includes a Bird cherry which is a good native so there is no issue with the species, However, this is specified as a 'bush', as opposed to a single stem tree, which is unusual for this species. Perhaps if space (width) is of concern, a single stem *Prunus padus* *Albertii* could be specified - an upright form of Bird cherry. A Laburnum is included which is often cited as being of concern around children due to the poisonous nature of all of its parts. Children can be educated but it's a point for the applicant to consider. In any case, the soil volume provision in that location should be confirmed as it appears very restricted.
- Sheet 3 of 3 - the mulched zone around the Oak and Beech (as shown on the TPP) is not included, as it should be.
- Girth size of the proposed trees should be stated on the Planting Schedule along with clear stem height.

In relation to Hard landscaping, there is inconsistencies between that shown on the Block Plan is Drawing No. 23-062 0100 C03 and that shown on Landscape Plan Site Overview 2023-L6615-002 B (if this is the plan under consideration) hence that needs to be resolved. Any surfacing within the RPA of retained trees should be porous, hence the tarmac of the new parking spaces at the front should be porous tarmac. On the east side over the no-dig area it is unclear if this is gravel or block paving - either is fine.

Is boundary treatment proposed? I can't see this specified on plans as required by part a of this condition.

With reference to the Landscape Specification and Management Plan ref L6615 dated February 2024:

- The drawing references cited on P.4 and in the appendix are not those submitted separately or within this document
- 2.1.2 refers to two new Cherry trees on the frontage, however these are not shown on the relevant Landscape Plan referred to above (see further comment below)
- 2.1.3 refers to a list of tree species for the central area, none of which have been included on the above referred to plans (see further comment below)
- 4.1.2 includes reference to BS5837 but states 2005, when it should be 2012. In any case, I don't see the relevance of this BS in this section.

In case the drawing within the Landscape Specification document are those proposed, these are **Landscape Plan Site Overview 2023-L6615-002 C, Soft Landscape Plan Sheet 1 of 3 2023-L6615-003 C, Soft Landscape Plan Sheet 2 of 3 2023-L6615-004 C, Soft Landscape Plan Sheet 3 of 3 2023-L6615-003 C and Planting Schedule dated 22/11/2023:**

- The Landscaping Plan Site Overview does include the now proposed play area

- Sheet 1 of 1 - Two Cherry trees (*Prunus avium*) are proposed as opposed to two Judas trees. Ideally we wish to avoid Cherry as the genus *Prunus* is over-represented in the Borough. Soil volume provision should be stated to demonstrate it is sufficient as these are fairly large trees, and root barriers provided around the soft landscape area (or wider root cell area if required) especially as Cherry as shallow rooted.
- Sheet 2 of 3 - this is completely different to Rev B. I've no objections, however the applicant might want to consider if Silver birch is suitable given its ultimate size. Soil volume provision for these large trees should be stated to demonstrate it is sufficient.
- Sheet 3 of 3 - the mulched zone around the Oak and Beech (as shown on the TPP) is not included, as it should be.
- Girth size of the proposed trees should be stated on the Planting Schedule along with clear stem height.

Condition 11 (construction method statement)

With reference to the Construction Management Plan 20th November 2023 Rev 1.1, this makes no mention of tree protection as specified in the AMS, as it should.

In conclusion some clarity and amendments are required, as above.