

Memo

To: Marcelina Rejwerska, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC: GS Ecology

Date: 19th February 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

Planning Application Ref: PL/25/1263

Application Type: Householder planning permission

Address: 146 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD

Proposal: The extension and refurbishment of an existing Listed house. New off street parking and external landscaping.

146 Southampton Street is a Grade II Listed Building. The site is located on a 'treed corridor' and is within an AQMA. There is a Silver Birch tree subject to TPO 5/25 on the frontage, which contributes to the street scene and 'treed corridor'. The existing rear and front gardens are both predominantly soft landscaped; the long front gardens being mentioned in the property's listing.

I had previously commented on this application on 27th October 2025 and objected on tree and landscaping grounds as the application required the removal of the Silver Birch tree protected by the TPO, along with several other trees on the frontage and rear garden. The impact of the loss of this Silver Birch tree in particular was not simply mitigated through replanting and the need to remove it had not been fully demonstrated. There were also concerns that any mitigation planting for the tree and soft landscaping loss would not be sufficient, as there is limited planting space for replacement trees to reach their ultimate size without resulting in future conflict with structures. A new Arboricultural Impact Assessment has now been submitted to support this application. The author of the new AIA is the same as the one who submitted the AIA for a recently approved development at the adjacent property of 144 Southampton Street.

With reference to the ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND METHOD STATEMENT, 30th January 2026, Reference: AAAIA146S, I note the following:

Section 5.0 states '*T1 has a Tree Preservation Order following a previous application for these works*'. A TPO was served on this tree as it is a tree of high amenity value, within an AQMA and on the frontage of a 'treed corridor'. This development previously sought to fell

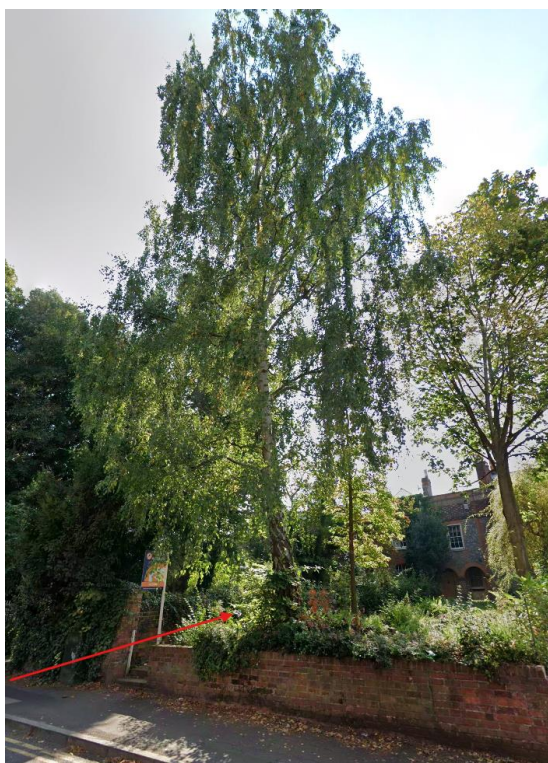
this tree; hence we deemed it appropriate to serve a TPO given its importance and development related pressure to remove it. We would have been happy to clarify why a TPO was served, however we were not asked and I have therefore clarified this above.

Section 6.0 states '*The removal of T3, T4 and T5 is required for the implementation of the proposed development*'. Whilst T1 Silver Birch is now being retained, the Tree Protection Plan, 30th January 2026, still refers to replacements of the T1 Silver Birch tree, which should be omitted for clarity purposes as the Silver Birch tree is to be retained.

Whilst the no-dig/special surfacing methods for installing the driveway are fine in principle, I am slightly unclear what is meant by '*The ground levels on the side of the proposed driveway close to the stem of Tree 1 fall away sharply; therefore, excavations for the proposed driveway will not be required.*' With reference to the Proposed no dig approach for driveway, Drawing No. P112, I note this shows the ground level sections, but doesn't show a ground level change by the stem of T1 (neither do the elevations) so clarity should be sought on this. Will any part of the ground level adjacent to T1 have to be raised to marry the driveway levels? It does indicate that the proposed levels will follow the existing exactly, so it is assumed that no fill is required. I note that the AMS does not cover how existing hard surfacing, such as the pathway, will be removed as it required.

Some clarity needs to be provided on the installation of the brick piers as they are extremely close to the base of T1 and I am unclear on the methodology proposed. The AIA states '*The installation of the brick piers, kerb edge and new driveway will need to be carried out by hand and following the methods outlined in the Arboricultural Method Statement to ensure trees are not damaged during the construction works.*', and then later states '*new brick tiers shall be laid on top of a no-dig load-bearing sub-base comprising a geotextile membrane, overlaid with a 3D cellular confinement system (e.g., CellWeb TRP) filled with clean angular Type 3 aggregate*'. Cellular confinement systems are used for surfacing to accommodate for future root growth are flexible to allow for root movement. I am unclear whether brick piers can be installed this way – there isn't an example of this in Appendix 4 like there is for the kerb edge and surfacing. It is assumed some foundations and thereby excavation will be required to support the stability of the piers. Clarity should be sought whether any excavation is required. Being so close to the base of the T1, if excavation is required, significant roots are likely to be found. If significant roots require severance, this can have a negative impact on tree health so a trial dig would be appropriate to determine whether the piers can be feasibly built whilst minimising any impact on tree health.

The brick piers are so close to T1, which is an early-mature tree that is expected to keep growing, that I question whether there is sufficient space to accommodate for future stem growth. The tree also leans towards the road, over the existing wall and proposed piers, and it is unclear whether there is enough space to install the piers here. The height and dimensions of the piers aren't demonstrated on any of the elevations/plans or mentioned within the AIA. There are concerns that there will be an increased pressure to fell the tree (which I am aware is the applicant's preference currently) as future conflict between the tree and structures is possible. This element needs to be considered with care as I am not currently satisfied on the feasibility of installing brick piers so close to the base and main stem of T1, whilst minimising any impact to tree health and accommodating for future tree growth.



Approximate location of one of the piers

I note that the boundary wall on the frontage needs to be repaired, however the tree protection fencing doesn't protect T1 from this. The protective fencing needs to be extended here to protect T1 from any harm associated with the wall repairs.

The trees in the rear garden haven't been surveyed, which they should given development is also taking place within the rear garden to facilitate the outbuilding. I had mentioned this in my previous comments as all trees within 15m of any part of the proposal need to be surveyed and protected from development related harm. I also mentioned in my previous comments whether the outbuilding was truly a necessary element of the proposal as it significantly decreases the soft landscaping in the rear garden, and combined with the new hard surfacing on the frontage, this is a significant increase in hard landscaped features and leaves limited space for mitigation planting.

There remains the question (as per Sarah Hanson's email of 8/12/25) of whether the degree of hard landscaping is, in any case, acceptable – as she pointed out, it is considerably more than approved at adjacent No. 144 so will be a significant reduction in soft landscape area on the frontage. The driveway could be redesigned to be more similar to that at no. 144 as this has significantly less hard surfacing.

To conclude, currently I am still not supportive of this application as the trees in the rear garden haven't been considered and adequate protection from development related harm hasn't been demonstrated. The outbuilding and decking in the rear garden are arguably unnecessary elements, and with the driveway significantly increasing the hard landscaping, it should be compromised that any other unnecessary elements of hard landscaping should be omitted. This limits space for tree planting, which is required given tree removals are required, there is a significant increase in hard surfacing, and the site is within an AQMA. In line with Policy EN14, new development shall make provision for tree retention and appropriate planting within the application site – in this case, particularly on

the frontage. On balance, I don't think it is unreasonable to ask for the outbuilding and associated decking to be omitted to retain or enhance the soft landscaping in the rear garden to mitigate for the loss of soft landscaping and trees on the frontage. The outbuilding also requires further tree removals as discussed in my previous comments.

The feasibility of installing brick piers so close to T1 needs to be further demonstrated. Whilst no dig methods have been suggested, I assume the brick piers will need foundations for support, so clarity needs to be sought on this. No dig methods for surfacing have been suggested, but I am not sure if this is appropriate for the installation of brick piers. None of the documents provided by the author of the AIA provide details of how cellular confinement systems can be used for the base of structures. I am also unclear whether future tree growth has been considered to avoid future conflict with the brick piers, as this will increase the pressure to fell the tree. Tree roots can also cause damage to structures and placing new structures so close to the base and well within an RPA of a tree is not ideal, hence this needs to be demonstrated further to ensure the piers can be feasibly built whilst minimising any impact to tree health and taking into account future growth. The final height and dimensions of the brick piers aren't shown in the elevations, so it is difficult to appreciate their final juxtaposition in relation to T1.

I am unclear on the ground levels and whether ground levels within RPAs will need to be changed at all to level the driveway. The AIA mentions a ground level change close to the base of T1 at the edge of the driveway and therefore it may be that the ground level needs to be raised here to marry the levels of the driveway.