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Our Ref: PL/26/0458
Your Ref:
PP-14822673
Direct: ☎
16 April 2026

Your contact is: Nathalie Weekes, Planning

Dear Mr Deacon

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Application Number: PL/26/0458

Application Type: Approval of details reserved by a condition

Location: SONA GARDENS, NORCOT ROAD, TILEHURST, READING

Proposal: Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 4 (Landscaping Plan) of application PL/12/1465

I refer to your Approval of Conditions application as described above.

As a reminder, condition 4 reads:

4. No dwelling shall be occupied until details of both hard and soft landscaping for the frontage of the site have been submitted for the written approval of the local planning authority and the details shall include:

- (a) proposed means of enclosure; car parking layouts and other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials, structures (including refuse storage) and ancillary objects; and
- (b) proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g drainage, power, communications cables, pipelines etc. indicating lines, manholes etc to ensure that landscape areas do not conflict with services; and
- (c) planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants and tree type, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/planting densities where appropriate. Reason: in the interest of ensuring that the landscaping of the development enhances the visual local environment. Core Strategy Policy CS7 - Design & the Public realm

Information submitted:

Application form as received 2 April 2026

Decision notice for planning application 121456 as received 2 April 2026

Planning statement Sona Gardens as received 2 April 2026

~~0541 L1 B Landscape proposal plan~~ (Superseded as did not contain details of services)

0541 L1 C Landscape proposal as received 2026
Site photos from the agent as received 13 April 2026

Comment:

It is necessary to review the approved block plan and elevations plans and the decision notice granted for planning application 121465 in order to clarify what is required in respect of condition 4. Condition 2 listed all of the approved plans to clarify which plans were approved in the interests of proper planning. Condition 3 required that *'the development be completed using the materials and details as specified on the approved drawings'* for application 121456. Condition 7 required that *'no dwelling should be occupied until the access onto the Norcot Road has been constructed in accordance with the approved drawing and in compliance with the requirements of the Local Planning Authority for work carried out within the public highway'*. Condition 8 required that *'no dwelling shall be occupied until vehicle parking space has been provided in accordance with the approved plan'*. Condition 9 required that *'no dwelling shall be occupied until the drive serving it has been provided in accordance with the approved drawings to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.'*

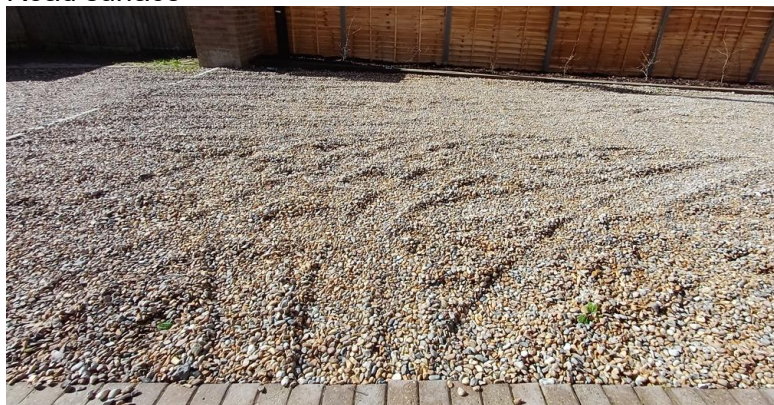
The case officer carried out a site visit on 16 April 2026. It was evident that some planting had been carried out at the site however the soft landscaping was limited with a lack of trees, or mulch on one planting. The quality and quantity of hard and soft landscaping appeared inadequate to soften the appearance of the development in close proximity to the Grade II listed water tower. The shingle/gravel that had been laid on the access road was uneven, loose and showed signs of cars tyres skidding on the surface. Rear gardens appeared to be only comprised of grass or artificial grass. No information was provided by the applicant in relation to the rear gardens.

Site photos 16 April 2024

Site in proximity to Grade II listed Water Tower



Road surface



Landscaping on site



Comparison to the hard and soft landscaped development completed on the other side of the Grade II listed Water Tower on Sona Gardens – in close proximity



Hard landscaping

The drive and access roads are labelled as tarmac with paved areas on the approved plans. An approval of conditions application cannot amend/vary the requirements of other conditions on the original planning permission such as Condition 9 which outlined the requirements for the 'construction of the drive' and Condition 4 which required use of the 'materials and details' as specified on the approved plans. If it is proposed to change a tarmac surface to shingle, then a S72 variation of condition would be required to vary/alter Condition 2, 3 and 9 of the original planning permission.

In addition RBC Transport have provided the following feedback in relation to information submitted for application PL/26/0458 and the proposed change of surface material to shingle: *The proposed introduction of a shingle surface on a shared surface driveway would not be acceptable given that it would need to be utilised by pedestrians as well as vehicles. Shingle will have a detrimental impact on the movement of residents and visitors in wheelchairs and with mobility issues.*

The proposed surfacing will therefore need to be of a firm surface to aid the mobility of all users.

As a result, the Highway Authority objects on the following grounds.

The proposed development does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of pedestrian facilities and, as a result, is in conflict with Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and Paragraphs 109, 115 and 117 of the NPPF.

Soft Landscaping

The originally approved block plan illustrates one tree within each of the grassed rear gardens and in addition to a tree is sited to the front of plot 1. The elevation plans also illustrate a tree in the gardens and vegetation to the front of the houses.

Insufficient information has been provided in the landscaping plans. The RBC Natural Environment team have raised concerns relating to Landscaping Scheme which is not acceptable for the following reasons. The soft landscaping is not consistent with the approved plans which indicate 4 trees, inclusion of additional trees is supported by policy EN14 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 & the Reading Tree strategy. It is not clear whether the current occupiers have been included in the proposed landscaping scheme. It is prudent to get occupiers involved in species choice as they will need to be happy with the trees. Photos submitted show artificial grass (seems some exists now), which is undesirable around trees and has negative environmental impacts. The RBC ecologist has also objected to the use of artificial grass. Photos on Google Earth dates 2022 and 2025 do not show any trees planted in the rear gardens and also no garden appears to have been covered in artificial grass. No information has been provided by the agent in relation to the rear gardens. The landscaping plan does not show how the hedging would be planted and whether it is to be laid in a double staggered row. The saplings do not look in a healthy condition and the plans shown do not appear to have any mulch. The proposed soft landscaping is contrary to Policies CC7 Design and the public realm, EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network and EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland of the Reading Local Plan 2019 and NPPF (as amended) paragraph 8 c), 136 and 192.

Character of the area

The location is situated in close proximity to the Grade II Listed 'Water Tower'. The 'Water Tower' is Listed Grade II, the listing states that it is as late 19th. Century, *"of red bond brick, in a circular plan, 3 stages, each with semi-circular header blind arcading, punctuated alternately with sash windows with glazing bars and semi-circular heads set in orange brick surrounds. Each stage has a moulded brick string course. The top stage has circular windows with glazing bars in groups of 3 with small opening lights in centre. Planked entrance door with semi-circular head and flat canopy on north. Loading bay with derrick on west in first stage."* The water tower has windows looking out over the surrounding area.

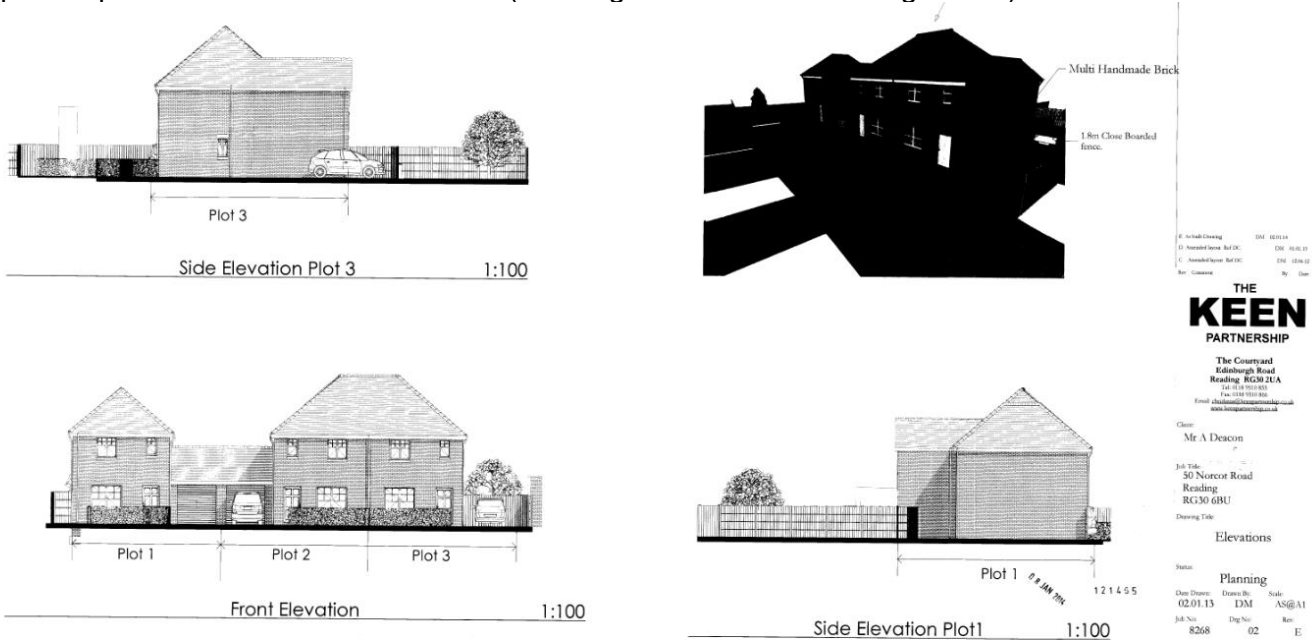
The development falls in close vicinity, within the setting of the Water Tower and soft landscaping is important to soften the appearance of the newly built development. The use of artificial grass and the lack of trees result in a detrimental impact on the Water Tower. It is important that an acceptable level of

planting is undertaken. The RBC Conservation officer considered the current provision being proposed inadequate contrary to policies EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment and EN6 New development in a local context of the Reading Local Plan 2019 and para 213 of the NPPF.

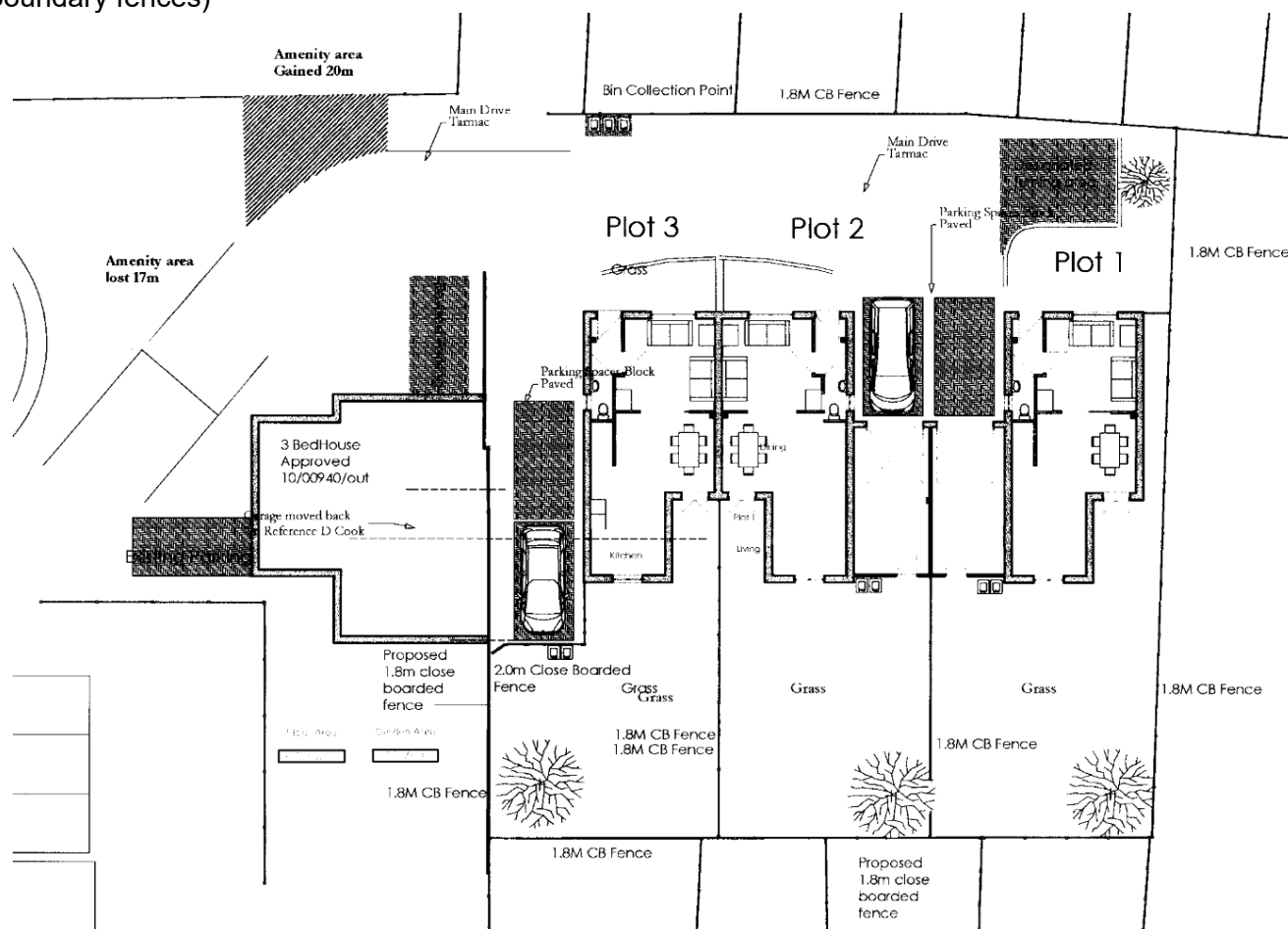
July 2022 Google Earth website showing areas of artificial grass and a lack of trees.



Approved plan 8268/02 Rev E Elevations (showing a tree in each of the gardens)



Approved plan 8268/03 Rev G Site Plan (showing a tree in each garden and a tree in front of plot 1, front garden areas to be planted, main tarmac drive, paved parking spaces, grass in gardens and 1.8m boundary fences)



Copies of the decision notice and the approved plans for application PL/12/1465 can be found on the Reading planning portal website at:

https://publicregister.reading.gov.uk/pr/s/planning-application/a0zP2000003Ln4SIAS/pl121465?c_r=Arcus_BE_Public_Register&tabset-7417a=3

A site visit was conducted on Thursday 16 April 2026 to confirm the level of works that have been completed on site. The agent was asked to respond to concerns relating to the level of landscaping provided and it was clarified by email on 15 April 2026 it was considered by the applicant's contractor that adequate provision had been made. A recommendation has been made, based on the information as submitted by the agent.

Given the above, Condition 4 is not discharged at this time and the application is **REFUSED**.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me by email.

Yours sincerely

SDV

PP

Nathalie Weekes
Senior Planning Officer