

Memo

To: Huimin Chen, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC: Transport DM

Date: 8th May 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

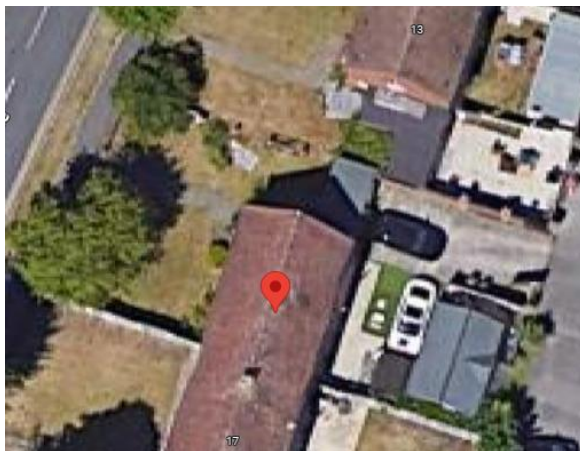
Planning Application Ref: PL/26/0375

Application Type: Householder planning permission

Address: 15 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6LJ

Proposal: Proposed Single storey Rear and side extension and a Porch conversion

The site of 15 Coley Avenue is within an AQMA. It is also within a Conservation Area where trees and soft landscaping contribute to the natural verdancy of these areas. The frontage of the site is currently a green front garden with a path. The rear garden of the site has a significant amount of hard landscaping, appearing to have been converted into a parking area, which is not ideal within Conservation Areas. Coley Avenue is also an area of high treescape value, as designated in our adopted Tree Strategy, being a tree-lined street, where the majority of the properties have green, soft landscaped front gardens which contribute to the street scene.



Google Maps – cars being parked in rear garden

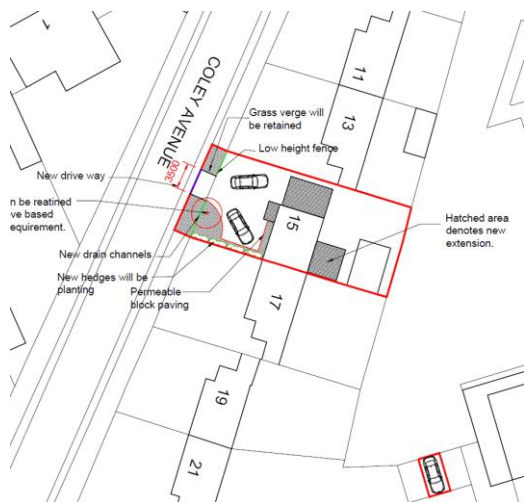
With reference to the LOCATION & BLOCK PLAN, March 2026, Drawing No. P1724-01, Rev A, I note the existing car parking arrangements in the rear garden are not plotted so the extent of the site's true existing parking arrangements isn't demonstrated. It is clear from the Google image above that cars are being parked in the rear garden of the property, along with an allocated space outside of the property's boundaries to the south-east.

The proposed two additional parking spaces on the frontage will remove the majority of the soft landscaping on the frontage, which is not supported as this will have a significant negative impact on the characteristic street scene. The only mitigation planting for the loss of soft landscaping shown is a small section of hedge on the southern boundary of the frontage. This is not sufficient when removing a significant area of green front garden that is within a Conservation Area, forms part of the character of the road, and within an AQMA. It will also remove an area of the Council owned grass verge, further impacting the Street Scene. The extent of the vegetation removal is not clear. From Google StreetView, the front garden contains further vegetation than just grass and the extent of this vegetation removal hasn't been demonstrated.



Google StreetView – vegetation in front garden

I am unclear on the extent of the proposed block paving. The indicative arrow in the Block Plan points to a perimetral red line rather than an area, so the extent of hard surfacing and the different materials proposed is unclear. It is not clearly stated that any of the existing grass/vegetation within the site will be retained (as it does the grass verge). The entrance of the driveway is 3.5m wide, which seems excessive and will remove more of the Council owned grass verge than is necessary. I will leave Transport to comment further on this based on their requirements.



Block Plan – existing car parking to south east; differences in land ownership not clear

The land ownership on the Block Plan is not clear and doesn't demonstrate that the highway adjacent to the frontage of the property is Council owned. The new '*Low height fence*' conflicts with a public pavement. Fencing obstructing a public pavement is not appropriate. The Block Plan is also not accurate in terms of built structures (or land ownership) compared to that showing on iShare below:



iShare – red area showing Council highway on property frontage

With reference to the Arboricultural Report, 30th April 2026, Reference: MW.2604.CAR.AIA, I note the following:

Section 4.2.1, states '*No trees need to be removed to facilitate this proposal*'. Section 4.3.1, states '*There are no plans for any tree surgery work at this stage*.' No tree works or removals are required which is positive. However, '*no plans for tree surgery at this stage*' is not clear. Is any pruning required to facilitate the development? The site is within a Conservation Area, so any tree works not outlined as part of this planning consent (should it be granted), will require a Section 211 notice; hence it should be fully considered whether any facilitative pruning is required. The Block Plan also needs to omit '*Tree can be retained or remove based on the requirement*'. I am unclear on what said requirement is, however this tree is proposed to be retained so the Block Plan should clearly state that to ensure consistency and accuracy across documents.

Section 4.4 Construction Impact, states the following:

4.4.1 It can be seen on the appended plan that the new kerb and the drive surface are within the circular root protection area of the single tree within the front garden.

4.4.2 As the existing front garden drops in level slightly from the footpath and the garden path, installation of a nodig geocell comprising a cellular confinement system to spread loads over the root protection area is appropriate. This is detailed in the method statement and will minimise any impact upon underlying roots.

4.4.3 The installation of the drop kerb will require some excavation, albeit the impact on roots is likely to be minimal due to the existing service trenching that is clearly visible in the footpath. Nonetheless, a method statement for sensitive excavation is included in the method statement

Despite the statement in Section 4.4.3, I note that the RPA of T1 hasn't been adjusted due to existing services – existing services aren't shown on the TPP either. So, a significant area of T1's RPA will be impacted due to excavation for the dropped kerb and crossing. I don't consider the 'sensitive excavation' detailed in Section 11.4 as acceptable, as it is difficult to envision the extent of excavation (depth requirement not stated), extent of any root severance and thereby the extent of the impact to tree health. RPAs should be avoided where it is possible, so I suggest the dropped kerb and crossing are designed to avoid or have as minimal incursion on RPAs as possible.



AMS – no RPA adjustment or existing services shown

Section 11.4.6 states 'Roots 25 mm in diameter or greater shall be retained wherever practicable. Where severance of a root of 25 mm diameter or greater is unavoidable shall only proceed with the express agreement of the arboriculturist'. The retention of larger tree roots when facilitating the dropped kerb and crossing will not be feasible due to Highway requirements. The pavement will have to be a level surface, so retaining roots and paving over them is not appropriate. I suggest the parking access is changed further towards the north, in between the RPAs and thereby avoiding them, as currently the level of RPA incursion is not acceptable.

The use of a cellular confinement system for the driveway is positive. However, as above, I am unclear on the extent of different hard surfacing materials used. There are no Appendix in the AMS that demonstrate a diagram of the cellular confinement system

using the proposed paving options. I note Section 11.5 No-dig geocell surfacing, goes into detail about the installation of the cellular confinement system, however a cross-section diagram demonstrating this system and the paving option proposed would be useful. It also needs to be demonstrated how the driveway and public pavement/crossing will marry.

The Block Plan also proposed '*New drain channels*' directly adjacent to the base of T1. I have taken a measurement using a measurement tool on the Block Plan and this drainage channel is slightly less than 1m from the base of the tree. Section 11.2.3, states '*Street Works UK Volume 4 additionally defines a Prohibited Zone within 1m of the trunk of any tree, within which no excavation of any kind shall take place. This prohibition applies regardless of whether the Prohibited Zone falls within or outside the calculated RPA.*' Therefore, this new drainage channel is unacceptable and the methodology for installing services in the AMS is not site specific.

I note a section of the existing frontage wall, which is adjacent to T1, will have to be demolished. This isn't mentioned in the AMS at all.

With reference to the Tree Protection, 30th April 2026, Drawing Ref: MW.2604.CAR.TPP, I note that only one of the street trees have been surveyed. There is another street tree (within 15m of the proposal) further south of Coley Avenue. I note no ground protection or fencing has been proposed for the street trees. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated how these trees will be protected throughout the development.

To conclude, I currently object to the application as the Block Plan is inaccurate, including the existing built structures and the differences in land ownership i.e. Council vs private should be clear. The existing car parking arrangements are not accurately demonstrated, as the rear garden appears to be being used for parking. The loss of front garden and section of Council owned grass verge to facilitate the new dropped kerb, crossing and driveway is detrimental to the Street Scene. The extent of vegetation removal is not clearly demonstrated. Minimal mitigation planting for the loss of soft landscaping has been proposed which is insufficient - the rear garden is mostly hard landscaped so there is limited space for any further mitigation replanting for this loss of green space.

The methodology for installing the dropped kerb, crossing and vehicle entrance within an RPA is not acceptable, as the extent of excavation within an RPA and the associated impact to tree health is unclear, but the RPA incursion is significant and likely avoidable. Protection of the street trees has not been demonstrated. The partial demolition of the existing wall and installation of services within the RPA of T1, has also not been accounted for within the AMS. As a way of moving this application forward, I advise the dropped kerb, crossing and driveway entrance are designed to avoid or minimise the impact to RPAs.

Overall, the development fails to demonstrate and mitigate harm to trees, including Council owned street trees within an area of high treescape value, contrary of Policy EN14. It will have a detrimental impact to the natural verdancy of the street scene of Coley Avenue. The impact for the loss of soft landscaping has not been sufficiently mitigated and does not positively enhance a property within a Conservation Area or include any additional tree planting within an AQMA – both of which are priority areas for tree planting within our adopted Tree Strategy.