

Memo

To: Huimin Chen, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC: GS Ecology

Date: 27th May 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

Planning Application Ref: PL/26/0383

Application Type: Approval of details reserved by a condition

Address: 979 Oxford Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6TN

Proposal: Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 4 (Hard and Soft Landscaping) of application PL/25/0808

In my comments for application PL/25/0808 I emphasised the importance of tree planting, particularly on the frontage was highlighted within these comments, due to Oxford Road being 'treed corridor' as designated in our adopted Tree Strategy. The site is also within an AQMA, which adds additional weight to the importance of tree retention and mitigation replanting for the trees lost.

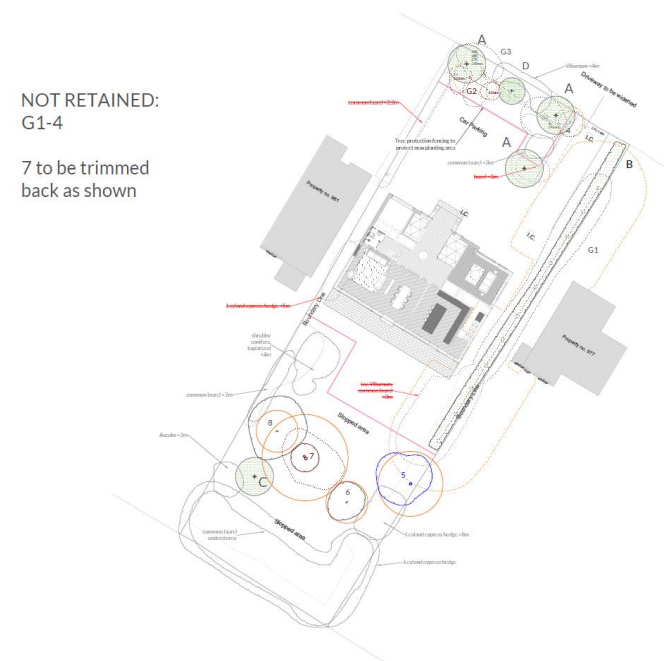
Condition 4:

Prior to first occupation/use of the building hereby approved, a scheme of hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must follow the level of indicative landscaping shown in the Tree Protection Plan, S1557-J1-P2, 21st July 2025, Rev: v2. This scheme shall specify means of treatment for hard surfaced areas, means of enclosure including mammal gaps where appropriate, specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted, along with the proposed hedging and tree pit specifications where appropriate, and must include a maintenance programme detailing all operations to be carried out in order to allow successful establishment of planting.

Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s) or in accordance with a timetable agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

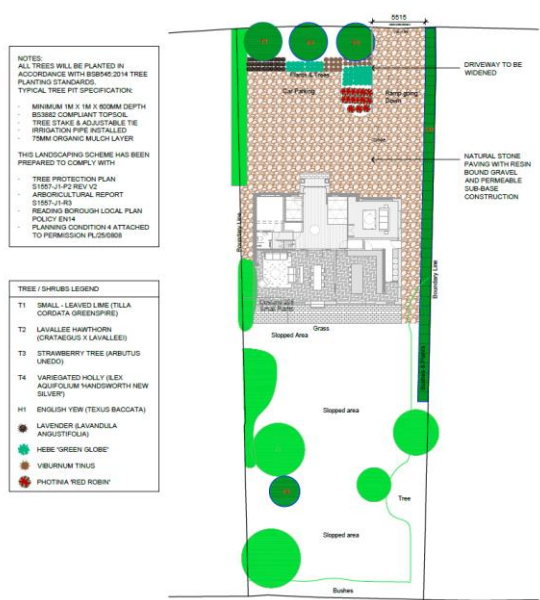
REASON: In the interest of ensuring that the landscaping of the development enhances the visual local environment and in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The indicative landscaping is shown below in the approved TPP referred to in Condition 4:



TPP - PL/25/0808

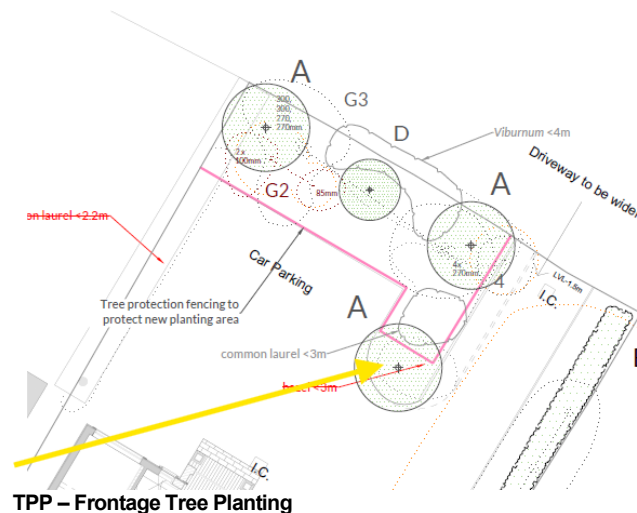
The proposed landscaping is shown in below, with reference to the PROPOSED NEW LANDSCAPE PLAN, Drawing No. 002, Issue B (dated 1st May 2026):



Newly Proposed Landscape Plan

With reference to this Landscape Plan and to the 'Landscape Scheme' document (6 pages), by Collstone Developments Ltd, I note the following:

Four trees are expected to be planted on the frontage, as shown in the approved TPP. I note only 3no. trees have been proposed on the frontage with 'PHOTINIA 'RED ROBIN' (shrub) have replaced one of the expected trees, set further back from the frontage, as shown in the TPP (see below for said expected tree).



I have attached and extract from the AIA which demonstrated the species presented to us at the application stage. Said tree was a small-leaved Lime tree (*Tilia cordata* 'Greenspire'). A *Photinia* 'Red Robin' shrub, is not an appropriate replacement species for a small-leaved Lime, as these Lime trees have much greater ultimate size potential than that proposed. Therefore, as this planting was agreed as indicated in the TPP, a tree species with the same (or similar) growth/size potential as a small-leaved Lime is expected.

5.9 Replacement planting

Please see tree data table above for comments on the individual trees proposed for removal. See plan S1557-J1-P2 for the locations of proposed planting:

A = small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata* 'Greenspire') 14-16cm girth, 85 L pot (3 no.)

B = native hedging – English yew (*Taxus baccata*) hedging whips or plants 70-90cm - 3 per linear metre.

C = variegated holly (*Ilex aquifolium* 'Handsworth New Silver') 1.5-2m, 15L pot

D = Lavallée hawthorn (*Crataegus x lavallee*) 8-10cm, 45L pot

The LPA may wish to stipulate that precise species and cultivars are adopted in any such scheme.

AIA – Planting Species Proposed

I also note T3 of the Landscape Plan is also not a species with the same size potential as that originally proposed at the application stage. This was intended to be another small-leaved Lime tree. We expect species of a the same or similar size potential of that originally demonstrated to us, which a 'STRAWBERRY TREE (*ARBUTUS UNEDO*)' does not.

To support the above, I highlighted in my second version of previous comments the following:

Whilst the report positively proposes to plant 4no. trees on the frontage, 3no. of these are the same species. The Tilia genus is already an abundant genus within the Borough and

for biodiversity purposes, the use of different species would be more beneficial – providing a diverse species palette in a planting scheme is one aim of our adopted Tree Strategy. However, the species choice can be agreed via condition with indicative landscaping, as shown on the TPP, secured via a condition.

We indicated the need for diversity in planting at the application stage hence requested changes to the 3no. Lime trees alongside the agreed 1no. Lavallée Hawthorn; but we expect species of a similar size potential as that originally proposed. For clarity, I am happy for 1no. of the replanted trees to be a small-leaved Lime alongside the agreed 1no. Lavallée Hawthorn, but the remaining 2no. trees should be of a different species yet similar size potential as the small-leaved Limes originally proposed.

T2 & T4 of the Landscape Plan are fine in terms of species as we agreed to these at application stage. T2 being the Lavallée Hawthorn, mentioned above. So an alternative, larger species is required for T3 plus an additional tree in the place proposed for *Photina*.

The Landscape Plan also refers to hedging, 'H1' along the southern boundary. H1 (*Taxus baccata* - Yew) is labelled on the Landscape Plan which is clear and positive. The Landscape Scheme document states species, size and spacing so I can confirm I am happy with this.

I note the tree pit specifications within the Landscape Scheme doesn't provide a sectional diagram to demonstrate the tree pits, which is required. It mentions the use of stake (no specification or height given) & ties and irrigation pipes, so providing a sectional diagram of this would be useful to demonstrate this. It is difficult to assess whether tree pit depths are appropriate, as I am unclear on the size of the rootball/root system as this is not stated. The stock sizes of the proposed trees also vary, hence their pit dimensions will vary. I advise that the latest guidance for tree planting/pits is referred to, being the BS8545:2014+A1:2026 'Trees from nursery to independence in the landscape – Code of practice'. For example, a tree that is 10-12cm in girth, has a different pit specification to that of 12-14cm, of which both these stock sizes are included in the Landscape Scheme. The mulching states depth, but it should also include a radial measurement of the 'mulch zone' around the base of the newly planted trees. The level area of mulch should also not be touching the base of the tree

In addition, in terms of stock size of new trees, only the girths have been stated for T1-T3 and only the height for T4. For clarity, we require both the girth and height at the time of planting to be stated.

The extent of the retained vegetation is difficult to appreciate as the TPP, Demolition Plan and Landscape Plan perimeters of vegetation don't appear to be completely reflective of one another. The Landscape Plan should be clear, with appropriate labelling, of retained vegetation.

I note that the means of enclosure aren't fully demonstrated. The Landscape Scheme, mentions means of enclosure as '*Boundary fencing will include mammal gaps measuring 100mm x 100mm at ground level to allow movement of hedgehogs and other small mammals between gardens. This supports biodiversity objectives.*' I do not note the material of the boundary fencing stated so it is unclear whether the existing boundary treatment will remain or if there is newly proposed. I acknowledge some planting will act as boundary treatment i.e. southern boundary being H1 Yew hedging, but is fencing proposed adjacent to it? I do not note said mammal gap locations marked on the Landscape Plan. This could be resolved by stating the boundary treatment will remain as

existing, or demonstrate the newly proposed including the fencing mentioned, with the mammal gap locations shown (their acceptable size is stated in the Landscape Scheme document). Each individual perimetral boundary treatment must be clear as these can vary.

The maintenance programme is not sufficient in that it is vague and lacking detail. For example, it states '*watering during dry periods*'. This is unclear in that what a dry period would be classed as. The growing season is between April-October, and the watering should state the amount of water over a period of time i.e. 25L per week for the first three growing seasons, with additional watering during periods of drought. This needs to be a detailed maintenance programme that details inspections, adjustments/removals of stake and ties (specifically when), reapplication of mulch, formative pruning & removal of dead, diseased or damaged branches etc. The Landscape Scheme states '*pruning and hedge trimming*', so further detail mentioned above would be needed.

The hard landscaping in the Landscape Scheme details the use of different materials. The Landscape Plan doesn't have a key which demonstrates which material is proposed in what location and extent of which; so it is difficult to appreciate the extent of the paving vs gravel. The Landscape Scheme states '*NATURAL STONE PAVING WITH RESIN BOUND GRAVEL AND PERMEABLE SUB-BASE CONSTRUCTION*' – paving and gravel are different materials so I am unclear on which is proposed, and if both, the extent of each.

The planting season proposed in the Landscape Scheme is acceptable as it states November-March, which is correct. Although, it uses the term 'typical' for the planting season – planting must be planted during the current or next November-March planting season, which ever is soonest (I acknowledge it is stated '*Planting will take place during the first available planting season following completion of the development*'). But for absolute clarity, the planting season is November-March so the use of 'typical' is not necessary – planting should be carried out in the current or next available planting season (November-March), which ever is soonest.

To conclude, currently there is insufficient information to discharge to condition. The tree planting on the frontage is of a lesser number of trees than agreed at application stage. The trees should be of a similar size potential as that demonstrated (small-leaved Limes), but with a diverse range of species included. The maintenance programme needs to be further detailed – I have provided some examples above. The differences in hard surfaced materials need to be clear, using different colours with keys, or being clearly labelled. Tree pit sectional diagrams also need to be provided, with reference to the latest practices and taking this into account with the their stock size and size of their root systems to calculate an appropriate tree pit size. Both the height and girth at time of planting needs to be stated for the trees.