

Memo

To: Huimin Chen, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC:

Date: 29th July 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

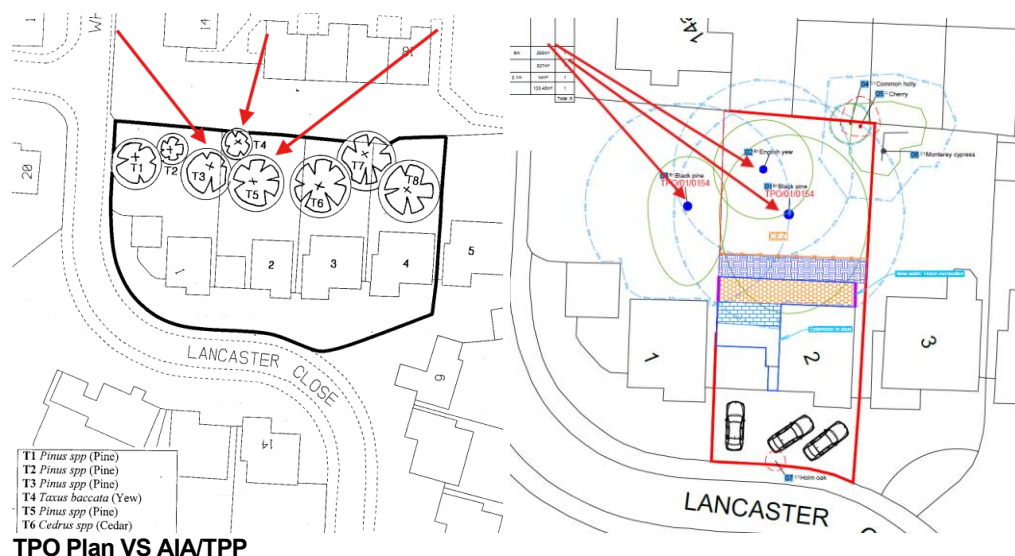
Planning Application Ref: PL/26/0804

Application Type: Householder planning permission

Address: 2 Lancaster Close, Reading, RG1 5HB

Proposal: Proposed single storey rear / 2 Storey side & a garage conversion.

Tree Preservation Order 154/001 relates to several properties at Lancaster Close. At 2 Lancaster Close, T4 and T5 (Yew & Pine respectively) are within the garden of this property. T3 (Pine) from the neighbouring property at 1 Lancaster Close, has a canopy and RPA which extends into the property in question. T5 is referred to as 'Pine 01' in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, 30th January 2025, MW.2501.LCR.AIA., Rev A. The Pine in the rear garden of 1 Lancaster Close (T3) is referred to in the AIA as 'Pine 03'.



Planning History:

Application PL/25/0233 sought planning permission for a single storey rear/two storey side and garage conversion. The Natural Environment Team visited the site on 11th April 2025, to assess the development and to fully appreciate the proximity of the proposal and the protected Pine tree (T5 of TPO). It was explained to the applicant that in order to minimise the impact to the health, it would have to be demonstrated that development within RPAs could be built above ground level and thereby minimising excavation and the impact to tree health. On 14th April 2025, I provided comments for this proposal, which appeared to originally propose the use of traditional foundations. The rear extension was shown to be a 'no-dig' design within the AIA/TPP, but no details/methodology of this were provided but was entirely within the RPA of the protected Pine tree (T5 of TPO), as well as a portion of the RPA of the protected Pine tree located in the neighbouring property (T3 of TPO). The garage conversion and side extension used traditional foundations and thus the entire footprint of these elements were demonstrated to be excavated within a portion of T5 Pine's RPA.

Revised plans were then submitted which included the use of pad footings and steel beams for the foundation design, accompanied by Rev A of the AIA. I commented on these plans on 19th May 2025; however, the level of excavation was still substantial and thus the application was not supported due to the significant impact on tree health.

Overall, the main concerns were the proximity of the dwelling to the Pine tree (T5 of TPO) and the associated future pressure to prune or remove the tree, alongside the direct impact to tree health due to the level of excavation and RPA incursion. RfR 1 is cited within the decision notice as follows:

The proposal fails to demonstrate that it would not cause harm to protected trees of high amenity value due to the proximity of TPO trees to the development area, the potential future pressure to prune or remove the protected T5 of TPO no: 154/001, and the need to excavate within Root Protection Areas (RPAs), all of which pose too high a risk to the health of the protected trees. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the aims of Reading Borough Council's adopted Tree Strategy (2021).

The proposed changes to the frontage were also a concern, as it was proposed to remove all of the green space, including a relatively small, 'C' category Holm Oak tree, in order to facilitate new parking and thus impacting the streetscene. RfR 3 is as follows:

The loss of the open garden to the front would have a detrimental effect on the overall 'green' character and appearance of the streetscene and pattern of frontage, contrary to Policies CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and para. 135 of the NPPF.

Following the refusal, pre-application advice was sought for a single-storey rear and two-storey side extensions, including a garage conversion (application reference: PL/25/0938), for which I provided my first comments on 23rd July 2025. The development proposed at this time was similar to that proposed for application PL/25/0233, with the rear extension being built entirely within the RPA of T5 and the garage conversion & side extension also being within a portion of the RPA of T5. Whilst the rear extension proposed allowed for a further 0.5m of vertical clearance between the Pine tree (T5 of TPO) and the rear extension than that originally proposed, the excavation required for the foundations remained a concern, alongside the future pressure to prune/fell the tree due to the limited useable garden space. The AIA submitted for this pre-application advice was that submitted alongside PL/25/0233's application and thus was not reflective of the proposal.

I then provided further pre-application advice on 1st August 2025, following our site visit on 31st July 2025, where previous concerns had not been fully addressed. It advised that a future application would need to be supported with an updated AIA that is reflective of the proposal and demonstrated foundation designs which minimise excavation and RPA incursion.

I then commented a final time on 9th October 2025, where two different options for foundation designs were presented to us. Neither of these foundation designs were acceptable due to lack of clarity and insufficient information, and still the requirement to significantly excavate. The AIA was not further amended to be representative of the proposal. The rear extension was also altered, to bring its rear elevation 0.5m closer to the tree vertically and thus covering a larger portion of the Pine tree's RPA (T5 of TPO). The future pressure to prune/remove the tree remained the same as that which was a concern for PL/25/0233.

Throughout these previous comments, I had also mentioned that a patio would likely be desirable, due to the proposed rear extensions having doors leading to the rear garden. Any patio would further increase this future pressure to prune or remove the tree due to tree-related nuisance and the reduced amount of useable garden space as a result of development within the rear garden. Whilst patios can be constructed under PD rights, I had mentioned this would also fall within the RPA of T5 & T3 and would require excavation. PD rights do not override TPO legislation, of which said legislation protects tree roots in the same way that above ground parts are protected.

The parking arrangements and impact to the frontage remained the same as that for application PL/25/0233.

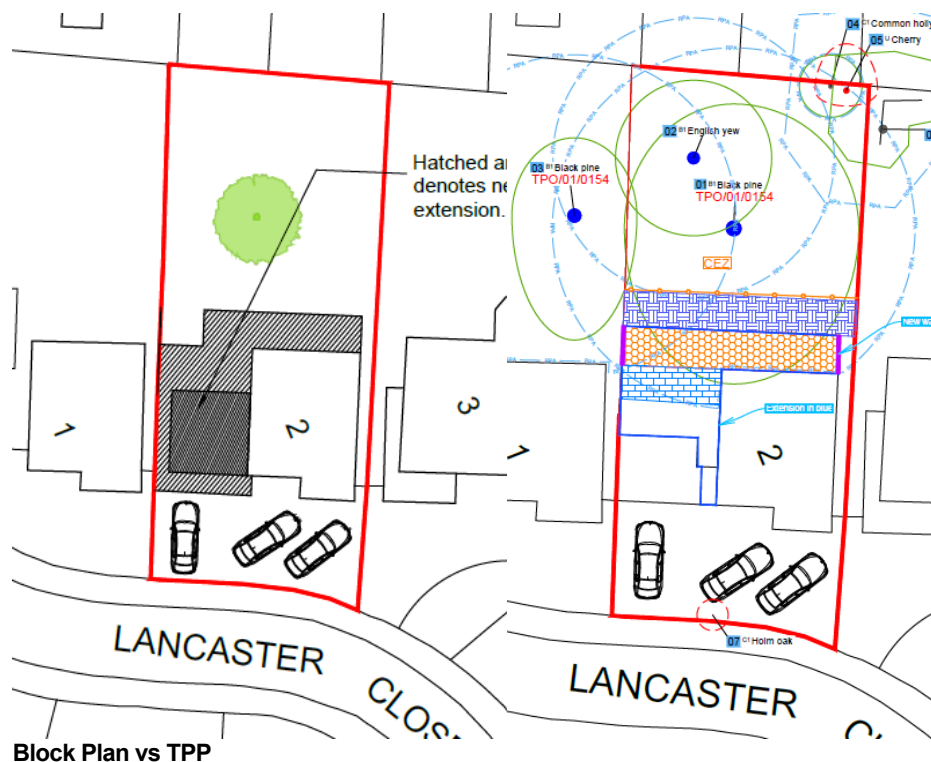
My conclusion in my final pre-application advise comments, is as follows:

To conclude, we have made it very clear (in written comments and verbally on site) that foundations must be above ground level, with excavation confined to the piles – this has not been taken onboard. Any future application will need to take this into account and be supported by an updated AIA/AMS to demonstrate how the required excavation will minimise harm to trees. I would also suggest that the depth of the rear extension is not put forward at 2.5m and that continuing reference to a 'light structure' is omitted as it has no defined meaning. The concern regarding the future pressure to prune or remove the tree remains due to the proximity of the rear extension and the tree, I advise the applicant considers the proximity between the dwelling and T5 to alleviate our concerns. Given RfR 3, the parking arrangements/ frontage also need to be reconsidered

Current Proposal

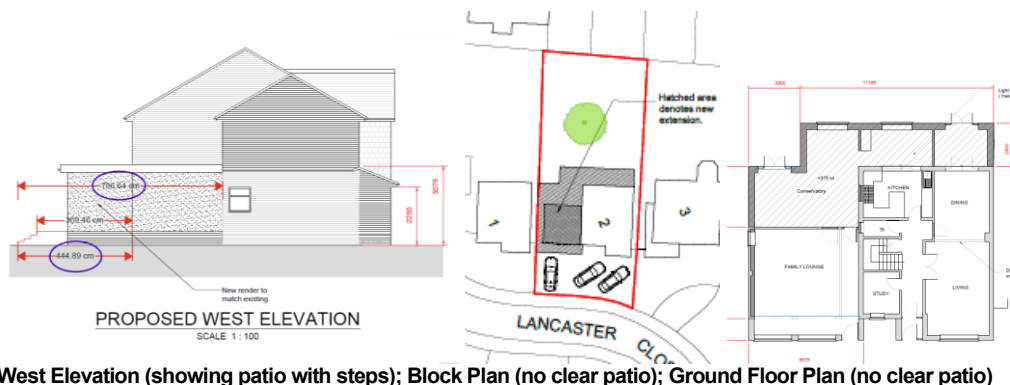
As with both previous applications (PL/25/0233 HOU & PL/25/0938 PreApp), the importance of demonstrating minimal to no impact on tree health to protected trees is high.

With reference to the LOCATION & BLOCK PLAN, May 2026, Drawing No. P1595-01, and the Arboricultural Report, 30th January 2025, Ref: MW.2501.LCR.AIA, Rev: A (Issued 13th May 2025), the arb report is not reflective of the current proposal and is that submitted for PL/25/0233:



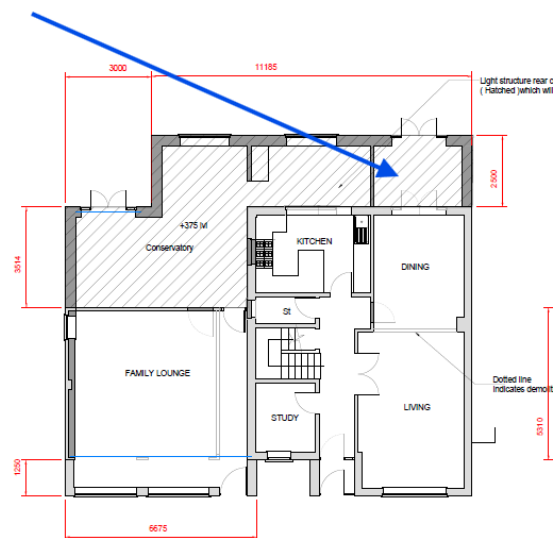
As advised in my pre-application advice, an updated AIA/AMS will be required which has not been submitted. The rear extension is within the RPA of the protected T5 Pine (along with the protected T3 Pine in the neighbouring property), and the garage conversion/side extension is also within the RPA of the protected T5 Pine, hence it is necessary to demonstrate how these will be constructed whilst minimising the impact to tree health. The proposal is not acceptable as it has not been demonstrated how these elements will be constructed whilst minimising the excavation and impact on the RPA – this AIA has not been revised hence unacceptable as PL/25/0223 was.

With reference to the PLANS AND ELEVATIONS, May 2026, Drawing No. P1595-02, I note that a patio and steps are shown; however, this is not included within the Block Plan or floor plans. The rear extension will bring the dwelling 2.5m closer to the T5 Pine, and the patio will encroach a further 2m closer to the tree. The details of this patio are not clear (not shown on block or floor plans) and the construction of it is not covered within the AIA, which is unacceptable as the lack of detrimental impact to tree health has not been demonstrated. The patio appears to be raised and will cover an even more significant proportion of both T5 & T3 Pines' RPAs. Whilst excavation for the patio will have a direct impact, it will also require concrete that will leach into the soil and lead to a level of soil compaction. Placing a large patio beneath the canopy of the tree (not included in PL/25/0233's application) will also significantly increase the future pressure to prune or fell the tree. Excessive shade, tree-related nuisance and limited remaining usable garden space due to the increased development, and the rear garden being significantly covered by the canopies of the protected T5 Pine and the protected T4 Yew, are a concern and a factor that needs further consideration – I will leave you to consider where this complies with Policy H10 in regard to this. A tree constraints plan has also not been provided to demonstrate shading arcs, so we cannot assess light availability and whether it would be acceptable. The patio is also within the tree protection zone of the TPP, where no construction should be occurring.



The elevations also describe the rear extension as a 'light structure', as it did during pre-application. I am unclear what is meant by this, but the foundation design remains the same as the previously unacceptable proposal. I acknowledge that the FOUNDATION DETAILS drawing indicates a piled foundation; however, this is an isolated, indicative foundation section drawing without any context to show the ground level or marriage of to the existing ground floor level, therefore failing to demonstrate acceptability.

When we visited for pre-application advice, the applicant advised us this would effectively form a white goods room/kitchen area. It is relevant in terms of considering the tree impact of the proposal for the use of the room to be clarified, due to associated service routes.



Ground Floor Plan (room for unknown use)

It should also be noted that the condition of T5 Pine is suboptimal, and this level of excavation and ground works will no doubt have a significant impact to its health. It is a 'B' category, protected tree of high amenity value, and therefore any impact to its health must be resisted, especially when there is no mitigation for the impact proposed. I would not expect the tree to tolerate this level of RPA incursion - an RPA is considered the minimal amount of undisturbed rooting area the tree requires to maintain its condition and thus this development would lead to a detrimental impact to its health. 1.5 of the AIA states 'a tree's root protection area (RPA) represents a minimum area in m² that shall be left undisturbed around it', hence I am unclear why the AIA has considered this level of incursion as acceptable. However, the AIA has not updated to assess the full scale of the current

proposal put forward so an assessment of acceptability has not been made. This RPA incursion being deemed as acceptable will set an unwelcome future precedent for other development, impacting protected and non-protected trees across the Borough.

4.12 of the AIA states '*it is my opinion that regular monitoring visits would not be necessary for this project*' – this is not agreed given the significant works within the RPA of a protected tree and no information regarding the patio construction. It is also not agreed that the works are 'low impact', as mentioned in 4.13.

The frontage of the proposal remains the same as application PL/25/0233, hence remains unacceptable and was included as a RfR for PL/25/0233.

It has also been debated that this proposal and the previous are similar to the single storey rear extension permitted at 1 Lancaster Close (application reference: 210059). However, we have dismissed this as a factor as this development is of a significantly larger scale, impacts a larger portion of RPA, does not demonstrate minimal excavation as that development could (also undertaken with arb supervision), and brings the dwelling and hard surfacing significantly closer to the tree and thus the future pressure to prune/remove the Pine tree is considered substantial. 4.9. of the AIA states '*of note is that a similar extension was permitted in 2021 for the adjacent dwelling under consent reference 210059*' – each application is assessed on its own individual merit, and this application varies significantly to that permission.

To conclude, the development is unacceptable on tree grounds as the AIA is not reflective of the proposal and thus the impact and mitigation to the health of protected trees have not been accurately demonstrated to ensure they are at an acceptable level – we have advised on several occasions that tree related concerns are significant yet they have not been adequately addressed. The development will no doubt have a detrimental impact to the health of the protected Pine tree T5. There will also be an incursion of the RPA of the protected T3 Pine in the neighbouring property due to the rear extension and patio construction, which may also negatively impact its health. We currently have no details of how the patio (and steps) will be constructed, the foundation design is unclear and remains unacceptable, and concerns regarding the future pressure to prune/remove the tree still stand and are more significant compared to the previous proposals due to the patio.

I recommend the application is refused on tree grounds, with a RfR as follows:

- The proposal fails to demonstrate no harm to protected trees of high amenity value and is likely to lead to future pressure to prune or fell protected trees. As such the proposal is contrary to Local Plan Policy EN14 and to the aims of Reading Borough Council adopted Tree Strategy (2021).