

Memo

To: Marcelina Rejwerska, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC:

Date: 30th July 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

Planning Application Ref: PL/26/0846

Application Type: Approval of details reserved by a condition

Address: 42 Bath Road, Reading, RG1 6PG

Proposal: Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 5 (Landscaping) of application PL/25/1767

This application seeks to discharge Condition 5 of application PL/25/1767, where permission was granted to install a new lift. The site is subject to TPO 62/06, where T11 a 'C' category Sycamore was approved to be felled as part of the development, subject to mitigation replanting.

Condition 5 states the following:

No development shall commence on site until details of the proposed soft landscaping, to include a minimum of three new trees, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include:

- a) specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment)*
- b) tree pit specifications*
- c) schedules of plants, noting diverse species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, to include a minimum stock size of 12-14cm girth, and 3m in height at the time of planting*
- d) implementation timetable;*
- e) a maintenance programme detailing all operations to be carried out in order to allow successful establishment of planting;*

The approved soft landscaping scheme shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by 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: These details are required prior to commencement of development because of insufficient information contained within this submission and 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.

With reference to the Soft Landscape Management & Maintenance Plan, 4th June 2026, Ref: J260364-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-T-L-0600, Rev P01, and the SOFT LANDSCAPE PROPOSAL PLAN & TREE PIT DETAIL, 4th June 2026, Drawing No. J260364-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0200, Rev P01, I note the following:

Section 3.2 of the Maintenance Plan states, *'If, however, the soft landscaping works fall outside of the planting season, (October – March) all planting works are to be carried out at the earliest opportunity during the next planting season, unless, at the client's request, appropriate planting and maintenance operations are in place to accommodate planting out of season'*. Planting should always be carried out during the current or next available planting season which is November-March (not October). Section 1.4 'NOTES' of the Landscape Plan/Tree Pit Diagram acknowledges planting season in November-March, so it should be ensured this is consistent throughout documents. It would be useful to know when this is planned so we are aware of when it is due to be undertaken. I note an implementation timetable hasn't been provided and it is uncertain when the planting will take place. It would provide us with some security if the contractor could discuss this with their client and the implementation of the planting could be agreed. Section 5.0 of the Landscape Plan/Tree Pit Diagram provides an implementation programme, albeit it is still somewhat unclear when the planting will take place and discusses planting outside of planting season.

Section 5.2.4 of the Maintenance Plan states, *'Within the first 3 years, during peak growing periods and periods of prolonged dry weather/drought, the following manual watering rates and minimum watering frequencies are to be used as a guide: • Trees – Minimum 35 litres per tree per week in accordance with industry best practice guidance (Hilliers Nurseries) i.e. 14-16cm-35L, 16-18cm-80L; 18-20cm-80L; 20-25cm-100L per tree.'* Whilst this is mostly fine, watering should take place for the first three growing seasons (not years) and specify the months classed as growing season (April-October). The amount of water should also be increased during dry/drought weather (see comments below) and should always be watered weekly during the growing season – the use of the term 'peak' growing season is somewhat vague.

Further to the above, it then states, *'Watering frequency shall be increased as necessary during periods of high temperatures, low rainfall or visible signs of plant stress'*. I'm unclear who will be responsible for monitoring said stress, when the only inspections mentioned are annually/on an adhoc basis for formative pruning, or annually for stake and tie adjustment (which will likely be removed after the first two growing seasons). I also note that Section 4.1.1 states *'The client or client appointed contractor will be responsible for regular maintenance of the scheme'*, so it's unclear who will be responsible for watering and monitoring the trees, but it would provide us with security if this could also be agreed between the contractor and client.

Section 5.3 'Tree Planting' of the Maintenance Plan states '*The Following guidance and recommendations are in accordance with BS8545:2014 'Tree: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations'*'. This code of practice has been updated to the BS8545:2014+A1:2026 'Trees from nursery to independence in the landscape – Code of practice, hence the latest guidance should be referred to and followed.

The stock size is 14-16cm in girth, hence the stock height should be between 425mm-600mm. I note that the stakes are 900mm tall above ground level, but the stake should be more than one third of the height of the tree. 3.2.2 of the Landscape Plan/Tree Pit Diagram '*ALL STANDARD TREES TO BE DOUBLE STAKED WITH CROSS BAR AND TIED, USING 1.65M LONG, Ø75MM ROUNDED TREE STAKES, 75MM BRACE, RUBBER TIE AND SPACER BLOCK. STAKES NOT TO EXTEND MORE THAN 900MM ABOVE GROUND LEVEL*', however 900mm above ground level not sufficient in height for this stock size so this requires amendment.

Section 5.3.1 of the Maintenance Plan discusses formative pruning. As above, I am unclear who will be inspecting/monitoring the trees and assessing whether any formative pruning is required. Section 5.3.3 of the Maintenance Plan states '*The health and development of young trees is to be assessed annually and on an adhoc basis as required during the year to inform maintenance operations and any required actions. Assessment to include; foliar appearance, leaf size, leaf canopy density, extension growth and girth development*', yet the persons responsible to assess this is unclear.

Section 5.3.5 of the Maintenance Plan states, '*Between Years 3 & 5, the installed tree shelters and guards are to be removed and recycled where required*'. I wouldn't consider tree guards/shelters necessary for a site of this nature. Shelters and guards aren't included on the tree pit diagram, so this is irrelevant.

The ground cover and shrub planting details are fine and are positive contribution to the soft landscaping within the site.

As an aside, we are still waiting replacement trees for the approved felling of several other protected trees, including one Yew (T16 of TPO; application reference: PL/25/0824), two Hornbeams (T8 & T9 of TPO; application reference: PL/26/0540) and one Lime (T18 of TPO; application reference: PL/26/0540), it may be prudent for the contractor to discuss this with their client as we will be expecting replacements during the next planting season. It needs to be ensured there is sufficient space for all outstanding replacement trees and would seem reasonable to suggest that this is considered now and undertaken with these landscaping works. The replacement for the Yew should have been planted last planting season (November 2025 – March 2026), yet this is still outstanding. The replacements for the two Hornbeams and the Lime are due this upcoming planting season (November 2025 – March 2027).

To conclude, the condition is not currently supported at discharge. The time the planting will take place is uncertain/unclear. Whilst the species and stock sizes are agreeable (other than the stock size height); the tree pits and maintenance should refer to the most up-to-date relevant codes of practice. A time of implementation needs to be determined for security purposes, as does the responsibility for assessing and maintaining the trees to ensure successful establishment. The watering requires further detail/clarity prior to discharge.

