

Memo

To: Marcelina Rejwerska, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC: GS Ecology

Date: 29th July 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

Planning Application Ref: PL/26/0801

Application Type: Full planning permission

Address: 98 Conisboro Avenue, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7JF

Proposal: Erection of a new dwelling

I have previously given pre-application advice for this site on 17th November 2025 (application reference: PL/25/1461). The site is located in Caversham, a naturally verdant area where trees and soft landscaping contribute to the character and appearance of the area. There is an 'A' category Sweet Chestnut tree in adjacent land to north (100 Conisboro Avenue), along with other 'B' and 'C' category trees within and adjacent to the site. There is also an 'A' category Beech tree in adjacent land to the north (100a Conisboro Avenue), albeit its canopy and RPA does not extend into the development site's area, however the shading it casts may impact the development site. An image from the PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT, shows the trees and soft landscaping within the development site's boundaries (red) below:



Extract from DAS – north (left hand side); south (right hand side)

Planning History

I note application PL/24/0054 was refused in June 2024. One of the RfR being: *'Incorrect and insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal would not lead to a biodiversity net loss, and that the existing vegetation including hedgerows and trees will not be harmed by the development, contrary to Policies EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.'*

The decision was then appealed, however dismissed. The impact to trees, the verdant character of the area and biodiversity was discussed within the appeal and were included within the main issues.

Key Points in Pre-Application Advice

- Proposed bike store is in close proximity and within the RPA of the Sweet Chestnut tree in an adjacent property, and bin stores within RPA of a Plum trees.
- Clarity and specific works required to the Privet hedge along the eastern boundary, along with other vegetation/tree work.
- Demonstration of the ground works, including hard surfacing and foundation installation whilst within the RPA of the on-site 'B' category Silver Birch.
- Service routes and installation methodology.
- New fencing installation within RPAs.
- Demonstration of landscape principles.

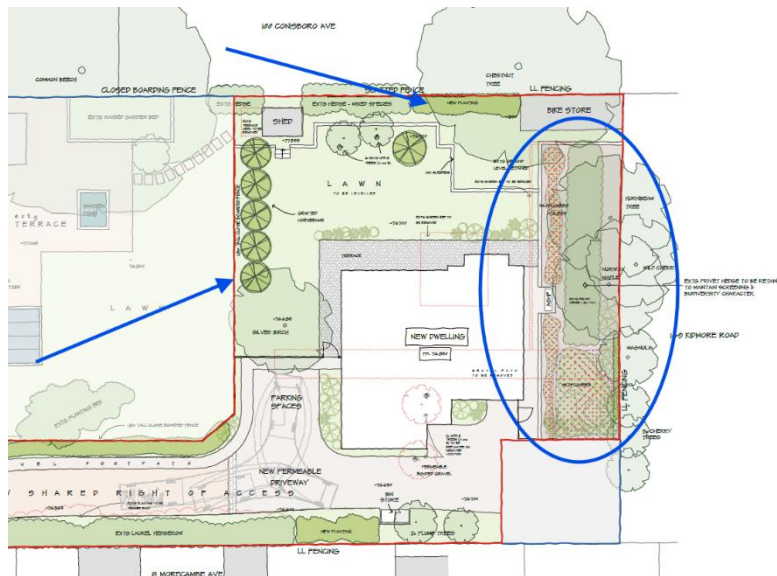
Current Proposal – Trees

With reference to the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, 7th December 2023, Ref: MW.2308.CAC.AIA, Rev B (Issued 24th February 2026), I note the following:

I note that the measurements of the trees are the same as that recorded in August 2023, which is almost three years ago, but it is assumed branches and stem diameters have grown since then, hence canopy spreads and RPAs may extend further than that currently demonstrated. The quality of the trees may also have changed since this time, such as due to periods of extreme weather. It appears the report has been updated to cover the amended proposal, but the trees have not been resurveyed?

I firstly note that Section 3.2. mentions two Apple trees will be relocated (although only provides one identifying tree number being '#08'). I questioned this in my pre-application advice as removing them and replanting would seem more feasible and relocating trees has a questionable likelihood of establishment – new tree planting is included so it would seem more practical to replace the two Apple trees (see further comments within paragraphs that relate to services and landscaping). These trees have not been included in the tree survey, so I am unclear on their size, maturity and thereby feasibility of relocating them. Methodology for relocating the two Apple trees, has not been provided, nor has any of the other methodology for new landscaping within RPAs, shown in the Site Plan, May 2026, Drawing No. 3902/221, Rev F (Issued 25th March 2026). I have attached extracts below of the Site Plan and TREE PROTECTION PLAN, 17th December 2023,

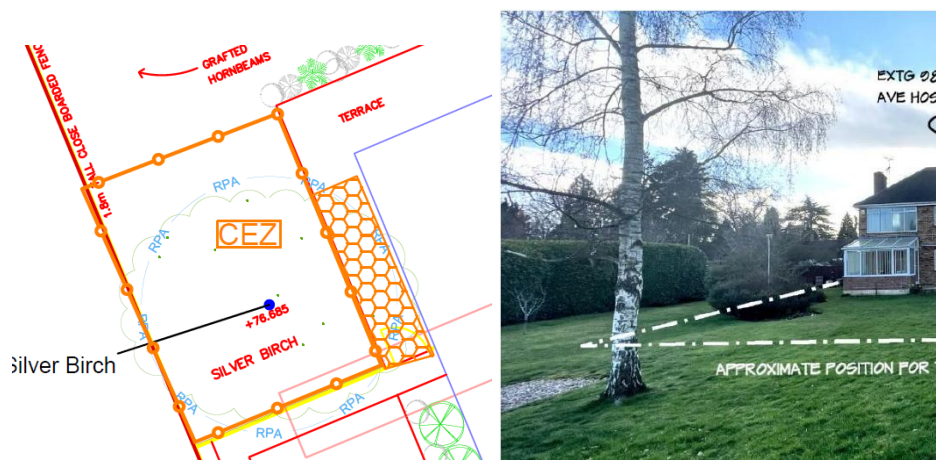
Drawing No. MW.2308.CAC.TPP.RevB, Rev B (Issued 14th February 2026), for comparative purposes.



Extract from Site Plan – new landscaping within RPA's

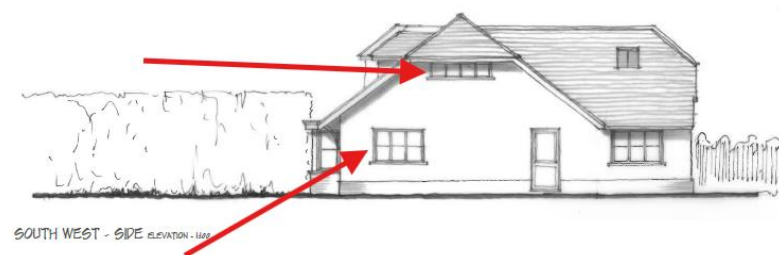


extending over the house footprint and only at 2m clearance, as can be seen in the DAS photos:



As an aside, the DAS photo and indicative boundary fencing position does not seem correct.

The pressure to prune or fell the Silver Birch will increase due to the juxtaposition of the dwelling and the tree. The canopy is growing in close proximity to windows which is likely to impact light availability and become a maintenance burden for future occupiers. I note the Silver Birch isn't shown in the north-west elevation of the Elevations 2, May 2026, Drawing No. 3902/225, Rev A; however, I attach an extract of the south-west elevation below, highlighting the windows likely impacted by the tree's canopy. No tree constraints plan has been provided to demonstrate shading arcs, which would be prudent so that the shading for future occupiers can be appreciated and assessed, both impacting the dwelling and rear garden amenity space.

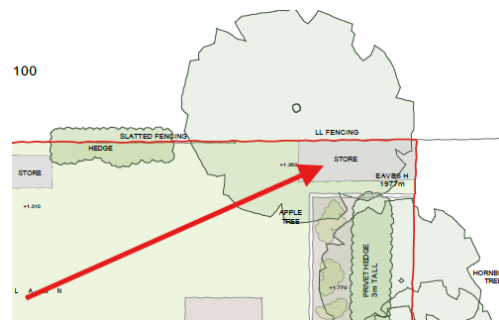


Extract from Elevations 2

Section 3.6. states '*the proposed dwelling is situated outside the RPAs of all retained trees and can be built without impact upon them*'. This is only just the case for the Silver Birch (assuming the RPA is correct) as it is shown extending to the adjacent proposed elevation. It is likely that the footprint of the foundations will extend further than the footprint of the dwelling itself, which I mentioned in my pre-application advice, although the foundation footprint is not clear. Also, as above, the recordings of the tree measurements remain the same as the AIA from 2023, and are likely to have changed during this time, including the size of the RPAs. The foundations, which will use concrete, encroach onto the RPA of the Silver Birch and the use of impermeable liners to prevent concrete leaching into the soil should be used and specified. The finding and treatment of

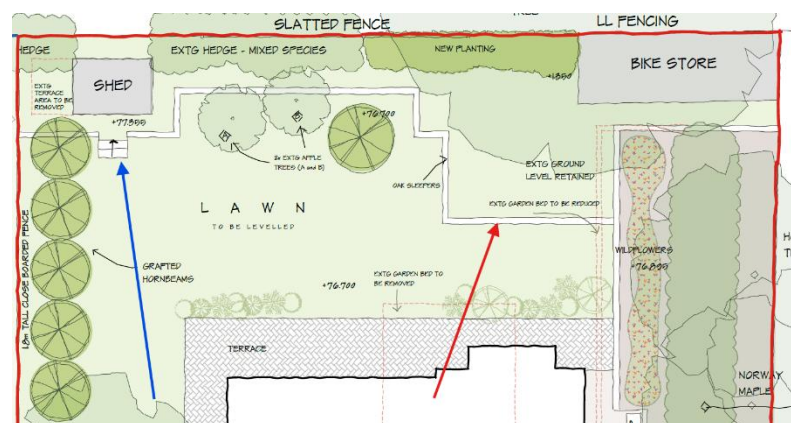
roots during excavation has not been provided but would be prudent to include given the encroachment onto the RPA.

Section 3.7. states *'the path within the RPA of retained birch #02 will be laid above ground using a 'no-dig' surface. As will the bin store base and the section of the adjacent driveway close to the trees in group #10'*. Whilst this is acceptable in principle, the bike store is located within the RPA of the Sweet Chestnut in adjacent land, and any works required to it are not clear – the Existing Site Plan, July 2023, Drawing No. 3902/101, Rev D, labels this as just a 'store', so it is unclear whether this will be demolished & rebuilt, remain the same, or have any alterations.



Extract from Existing Site Plan – unclear works to proposed bike store

The access to the bike store is also somewhat unclear as the locations of the proposed sleepers and planting areas appear to block the access. The shed in the rear garden has clear steps leading to it, which seems less than ideal for bike access and in any case how bikes will be taken to and from the dwelling to the bike store is questionable, as the existing vegetation and new planting will restrict the access if the shed steps were to be the access point (no path is proposed either).

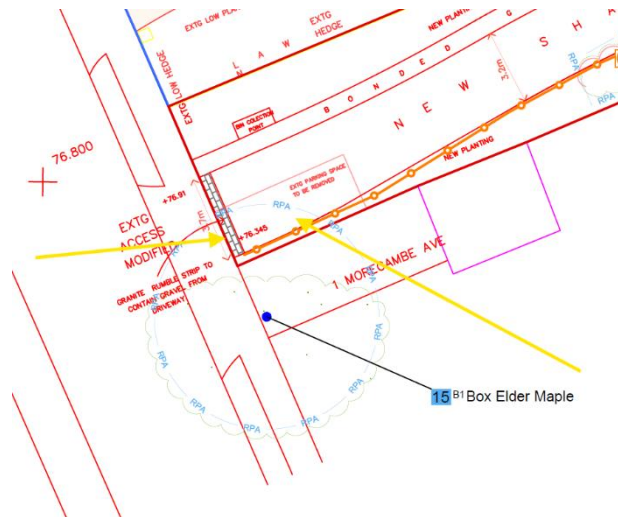


Extract from Proposed Site Plan – shed steps (blue arrow); sleepers (red arrow)

The crown clearance of both Plum trees (#10) are recorded at only 0.5m which is insufficient clearance for the bin stores to be constructed beneath the canopies, so some clearance pruning should be considered and demonstrated for said construction.

Section 3.8. states *'the drive does pass within the circular RPA of the off-site box elder #15. However, the area of the drive is already providing parking and root presence is considered likely to be minimal. Thus the new access is deemed low-impact and unlikely to result in detriment to it.'* The RPA has not been adjusted to suggest roots will not be present and thus extends into the area where the existing parking space is to be removed. It is possible that once the existing hard surfacing has been removed, roots may

be found beneath and thus the finding and treatment of roots should be specified as the RPA is within this area. The works to the '*granite rumble strip to contain gravel from driveway*' access point are unclear. The access is being widened and whether this will require excavation is not detailed, even though a section of it is within the RPA, so further clarity is required – assuming finding minimal roots yet not adjusting the RPA and providing associated working methodology to minimise the impact to tree health makes this questionable.



Extract from TPP – existing parking space to be removed and '*granite rumble strip to contain gravel from driveway*'

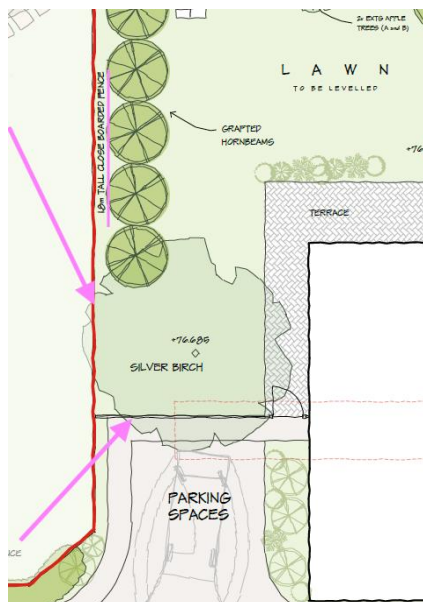
Section 3.10. states '*for this project, a pre-start meeting/tree protection audit before demolition starts is proposed.*' Then, Section 3.11. states '*it is my opinion that regular monitoring visits would not be necessary for this project*'. However, Section 4.7 states '*Installation of 'no-dig' surfacing: under arboricultural supervision*'. Whilst for the new access/driveway this seems feasible, some of the 'no-dig' surfacing is for the terrace along the western perimeter of the dwelling (within the RPA of the Silver Birch). It is assumed the terrace (as part of the landscaping) won't be constructed until the dwelling (or at least the dwellings foundations) are complete, so it is slightly unclear how feasible the phasing of works are, as landscaping is often one of the last stages of construction. The Site Plan also shows the lawn to be levelled, of which the lawn area also extends into the RPA of the Silver Birch and around its base/main stem, so this is unclear, but ground levels should not be altered within RPAs. Demolition and site clearance also follows the 'no-dig' surfacing construction, which is also questionable phasing of the works.

Section 3.12. states '*as the proposed construction work is comparatively "low impact", the default British Standard tree protection specification seems somewhat onerous. Therefore, it is my opinion that an adequate level of protection can be provided with a lesser specification*'. Whilst in principle it is low impact, the proximity of works to trees within a fairly tight space and has the potential to impact trees hence braced Heras fencing would be appropriate, as is shown on the TPP.

Regarding the '*Pre-start Audit/Meeting*', Section 4.11. states '*it is an opportunity to discuss any conflicts with the approved AMS and to seek changes if necessary*' – there should be no deviation from any of the approved works without prior discussion and written agreement from the LPA and this should be clear. I would expect the AMS submitted to take into account all potential conflicts as far as is practicable to identify now, based on the author's experience.

Within the 'Installation of 'No-Dig' Geocell Surface' methodology', Section 4.36. states 'site analysis of the soil type and its structural characteristics will be required before determining the specific depth of products to be adopted, for example, footpaths normally require a depth of 75mm and, 100mm to 200mm depths are used for residential driveways, while greater depths may be required for the passage of heavier traffic such as for construction access and delivery vehicles.' It would be prudent to determine this at this stage so that the depth of the cellular confinement system can be ensured that it is appropriate (and specified) for the nature of this construction.

Whilst Section 4.45. 'Stages for installing wooden posts', details the methodology for installing the fencing, which is acceptable in principle, the existing/retained vs proposed fencing is not clear on any of the plans. Some of the fencing is located beneath the canopy of the Silver Birch, which only has 2m of ground clearance - some of the fencing proposed is 1.8m in height so clearance pruning is likely required. The boundary treatment between the parking spaces and the garden is unclear but is shown as a fence in the elevations.



Extract from Proposed Site Plan – fencing beneath canopy of Silver Birch

The section of hard surfacing between the parking spaces and fencing is within the RPA of the Silver Birch, yet no ground protection is shown and it is not shown to be built from a 'no-dig' surfacing option within the AIA/TPP:

[illegible]

Extract from Outline SuDS Layout & Location Plan – surface water pipes within RPA of Silver Birch & attenuation tank adjacent to relocated Apple trees and newly planted tree

The lawn is also proposed to be levelled in the Site Plan so how this will impact the trees, including the Silver Birch, is a concern.

To conclude, the proposal is not currently supported as the accuracy of the data is questionable given it was recorded almost three years ago (August 2023), hence the data

needs to be updated. Further elements of the proposal need to be considered in relation to the impact on trees. I encourage that sharding arcs are provided, facilitative tree pruning & services runs demonstrated, and the phasing of construction is reconsidered due to questionable feasibility. The development may be acceptable, but the AIA/AMS will need to be updated to be site specific/up-to-date and consider further aspects of the proposal; however, it is not appropriate to condition this currently due to insufficient and out-dated information. Whilst the new tree planting and soft landscaping shown is positive, the feasibility of relocating the Apple trees and the impact of landscaping works within RPAs is a concern given no working methodology for this has been provided. The true impact to the 'B' category Silver Birch and the future pressure to prune or remove the tree is also a concern. All other information that requires further demonstration, is detailed throughout this memo.