

Memo

To: Marcelina Rejwerska, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC: GS Ecology

Date: 11th August 2026

Re: **Consultation on an Application**

Planning Application Ref: PL/26/0923

Application Type: Householder planning permission

Address: 146 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD

Proposal: The extension and refurbishment of an existing derelict house. New off street parking and external landscaping

146 Southampton Street is a Grade II Listed Building. The site is located on a 'treed corridor' and is within an AQMA. There is a Silver Birch tree subject to TPO 3/26 on the frontage, which contributes to the street scene and 'treed corridor' status of the area. The existing rear and front gardens are both predominantly soft landscaped; the long front gardens being mentioned in the property's listing.

I had previously commented on a similar application (PL/25/1263) on three different occasions; 15th October 2025, 19th February 2026 & 20th April 2026, which was later refused.

It is worth noting that a proposal was approved next door at No. 144 Southampton Street under application PL/25/0313. No tree removals were required for this development and adequate tree protection and working methodology was proposed for any impacted trees, mainly to ensure that the Birch tree at No. 146 was not detrimentally affected. The front garden was mostly retained, and the driveway/path was made of 'Cellweb' allowing grass to pass through this material which preserves the soft landscaping. There was also no loss to the soft landscaping in the rear garden.

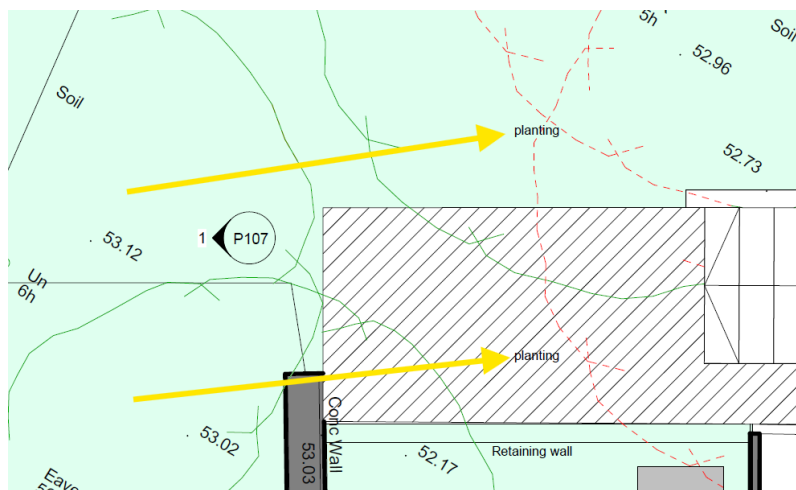
Rear garden

With reference to the Proposed Rear Garden Plan including Garden Rm, Drawing No. P106, Rev P3, Issued 23rd February 2026, and the ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND METHOD STATEMENT, 30th January 2026, Ref: AAAIA146S, I note the following:

I firstly note that the AIA has not been revised since the previous application. The Rear Garden Plan shows a new patio and tree removals, yet these trees have not been surveyed within the AIA, which they need to be so that any impact to the trees in the rear garden can be assessed, along with appropriate mitigation. The patio may fall within an RPA, but we have no plan that plots the RPAs of the retained trees in the rear garden.

Whilst the new tree planting shown is positive, the total number of tree removals is not clear, so I cannot comment further as to whether this is acceptable mitigation. Both new trees in the rear garden are proposed to be the same species; for diversity purposes, a variety of species should be used.

The Rear Garden Plan is also not entirely correct. Planting is shown on hard surfaces and in green areas, so it is difficult to assess what is truly proposed:

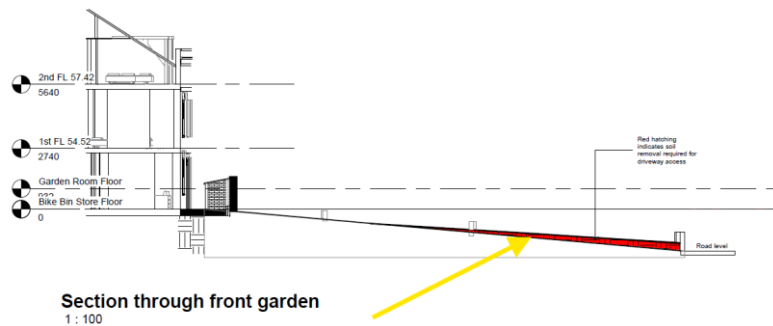


Rear Garden Plan – unclear planting

Front garden

With reference Proposed Front Garden, Drawing No. P108, Rev P4, Issued: 30th March 2026, and the 'Section Through New Drive To Illustrate Soil Removal', Drawing No. P111, I note the following:

The Section Plan of the new driveway is a concern as it shows soil removal within the RPA of the protected Birch tree. We do not consider this acceptable as the BS5837, section 7.4.2.1 states that '*The design should not require excavation into the soil, including through lowering of levels and/or scraping, other than the removal, using hand tools, of any turf layer or other surface vegetation*'. Therefore, we do not consider this acceptable. The AIA also does not detail any excavation to install the driveway which I discuss further below, and instead uses a cellular confinement system, so it is a concern what is truly proposed to install the driveway. The Section Plan also doesn't label the cellular confinement system and how the ground levels would marry with the cellular confinement system.



Section Plan Through New Drive – excavation required

There are several references to this being a ‘no dig’ method for installing the driveway in the AIA, but excavation is clearly required within the Section Plan. The AIA also states in Section 6.0 ‘*The ground levels on the side of the proposed driveway close to the stem of Tree 1 fall away sharply; therefore, excavations for the proposed driveway will not be required*’, so the extent and need for excavation, is particularly unclear. I assume the AIA has not been revised since my latest comments for the previous application, but it will need to address my previous and current concerns with the latest plans. As stated in my previous comments:

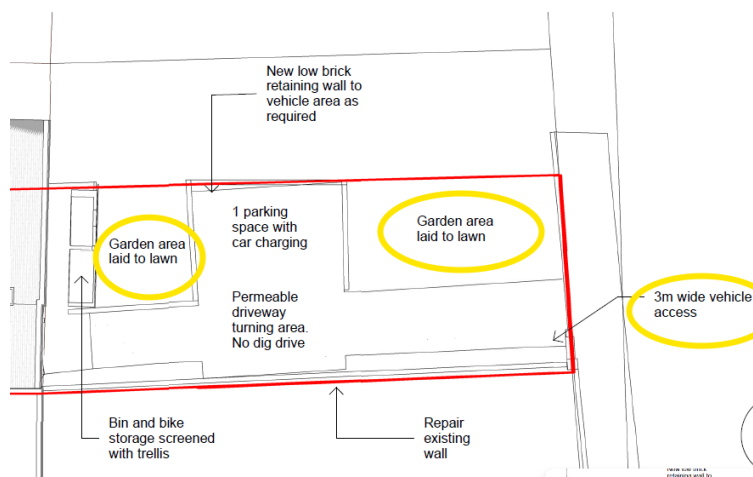
there are references to severing roots which I’m unclear as to why any root severance needs to take place if a cellular confinement system is being used. Whilst severing roots less than 25mm in diameter follows the principals of the BS 5837 2012, I am slightly unclear why any root severance would need to occur given this is no dig construction method to avoid excavation and thereby root severance. Given that the new driveway will cover 15.6% of the available rooting area of a protected tree, it is quite hard to envision the extent of potential root severance and why it needs to occur at all.

I have then listed other matters from my latest comments for the previous application, that have not been addressed:

- *Is there an increase in height of the boundary wall as this will bring the wall closer to the main stem of T1?*
- *the amount of hard surfacing shown on the frontage at this development is more significant than that at no. 144. If the parking/driveway arrangements at no. 144 were considered appropriate I question why this development can’t have the same parking/driveway arrangements to reduce the hard surfacing on the frontage, thereby retaining more soft landscaping and space for mitigation planting*
- *The replanting on the frontage shown is questionable in terms of their locations and proximity to other trees and structures. If the driveway/parking arrangements could be reduced to match that approved at no. 144, then there would be further space for mitigation planting on the frontage.*
- *Whilst the brick pier closest to T1 has been omitted which is positive given my previous concerns, I am slightly unclear on whether there are changes proposed to the other brick pier (closest to the boundary of 148 Southampton Street), as this also falls within an RPA*

- *I note the removal of the existing steps hasn't been include within the AIA and how the ground levels following the removal of the steps would marry with the driveway and kerb edge. The removal of the steps should be covered in the AIA, as they are within an RPA and in close proximity to the base of T1 Silver Birch. It is also unclear how the ground levels of the site would marry with the levels of the public pavement*
- *I am slightly unclear how the driveway ground levels will marry following the removal of the existing footpath. Once the footpath has been removed, the soft ground adjacent to it will be higher so it is assumed that where the footpath will be removed, the ground level will be risen to match that of the adjacent soft ground, so they are level with one another, with the cellular confinement system laid on top...The soft ground cannot be lowered as it is within an RPA, so we need to ensure that the ground can be risen where it will be lower following the footpath removal.*
- *The small sections of green space adjacent to the proposed driveway and no. 148's boundary are unlikely to be able to facilitate any planting. If any planting was proposed in these areas, I question whether they would be able to be retained due to vehicles passing close by using the driveway and potentially causing damage*

With reference to the Proposed Site Plan, Drawing No. P100, Rev P1, Issued: 8th July 2026, I note that the driveway access is proposed to be widened to 3m. Is this feasible with T1 Silver Birch adjacent to said access? With planning permission overriding TPO legislation, it must be ensured that this is feasible and doesn't lead to the tree ultimately being felled if planning permission cannot be implemented with its retention. I also question whether there is sufficient space for the tree to continue growing, being early-mature, it is expected to continue growing. The Proposed Site Plan doesn't plot the tree, so it is difficult to envisage whether this is feasible. It also makes several reference to the garden being laid to a lawn but doesn't show any planting including trees.



Proposed Site Plan – new access & front garden

The Front Garden Plan still makes reference to replacement trees for the protected Silver Birch, stating 'New Himalayan birch to Tree consultant specification to replace silver birch'. The Silver Birch is being retained, so referencing replacements for it is concerning and should be omitted. Three new trees are also shown, yet only one is labelled.

Transport have also previously advised that there is no requirement for a parking space at this property. The need for a parking space vs the potential impact to a protected tree of high amenity value, along a 'treed corridor', and within a AQMA is questionable. The loss of a significant amount of the front garden for the parking space is also a concern. The appeal for no. 97 London Road (full planning permission, application ref: PL/24/1148, appeal A ref: APP/E0345/W/25/3363140 & Listed Building consent application, ref: PL/24/1111, appeal B ref: APP/E0345/Y/25/3363142) is deemed relevant here – this was dismissed and discusses the loss of front gardens and excessive hard surfacing, which detracts from the Listed nature of the property. This would also appear the case for this proposal. It is also, as previously stated, considerably more than that approved next door hence more than is required in policy and transport terms.

To conclude, I currently am not supportive of this application due to the inconsistency in methodology for installing the driveway – it is a concern that the AIA proposes a 'no dig' method yet the Section Plan shows excavation. It has been made clear in comments for the previous application that the soft ground cannot be lowered within the RPA of the protected Birch tree on the frontage. Previous concerns have not fully been addressed and the need for the frontage garden (included in the property's listing) to have this extent of hard surfacing is questionable compared to that approved at No. 144. Whilst the omission of the outbuilding in the rear garden leaves more space for planting in the rear garden, the trees in the rear garden have not been surveyed so any potential impact cannot be assessed. The quality of submissions, given the planning history and previous comments is disappointing. Lastly, there is the fundamental question of excessive hard landscaping proposed to the detriment of the listed building setting.