

Memo

To: Huimin Chen, Planning

From: Amy Daly, Assistant Natural Environment Officer, Planning

CC:

Date: 22nd October 2026

Re: Consultation on an Application

Planning Application Ref: PL/26/1100

Application Type: Householder planning permission

Address: 182 Kidmore Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7ND

Proposal: Demolition of existing conservatory and Construction of single-storey rear extension. Construction of front porch

The site is located in Caversham; a naturally verdant area of the Borough of which trees and soft landscaping contribute to its character. Tree Preservation Order 180/07 is applicable to this property, protecting a Horse Chestnut on the frontage (along with other trees, however others are not within 15m of the proposal). There is also a Council owned grass verge adjacent to the property's frontage, where two Council owned trees (one Horse Chestnut and one Oak) sit either side of the entrance to the gated driveway.

With reference to the **ARBORICULTURAL METHOD STATEMENT, dated 27/08/2026, by Langtree Arb Consultancy**, I note the following:

Section **1.2 SCOPE OF REPORT** states '*LAC has been instructed to prepare an Arboricultural Method Statement only. No separate Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been commissioned or prepared as part of this instruction, and this report should not be interpreted as a standalone assessment of the planning merits or overall arboricultural acceptability of the proposed works*'. I am unclear why an AIA hasn't been submitted when an AIA demonstrates the acceptability of a development in relation to the impact to tree health - we require this so that we can assess said impact and mitigation. An AMS should then follow this and provide specific construction details and methodology. The impact to tree health as a result of the proposal has not been stated, hence the potential impact is not known and cannot be ensured it is at an acceptable level.

Section **1.4 LIMITATIONS** states '*This AMS addresses arboricultural protection and construction methodology in relation to retained trees. It does not replace the Principal*

Contractor's construction phase plan, risk assessments and method statements (RAMS), temporary works design, structural engineering design, utility design, Building Regulations obligations, ecological requirements or statutory health and safety duties'. We would expect any construction methodology in an AMS to be followed, as it would be listed as an approved document and included in a compliance condition, should permission be granted.

Section **3.1 TREE WORKS BEFORE CONSTRUCTION** states '*No tree removal or pruning is shown on the current TRPP as necessary to facilitate the proposed works*'. The TRPP is titled a 'Tree Removals and Protection Plan'. Using the term 'removals' indicates tree removals are required and retained trees aren't indicated on the plan i.e. no labels or key. I acknowledge no tree removals are required; however, referring to the document as a removals plan with no indication of retained trees is unusual and unclear – a plan showing tree protection is typically called a Tree Protection Plan (TPP).

Sections **3.4 GROUND PROTECTION** and **3.5 EXISTING HARD SURFACING USED FOR ACCESS** details why ground protection is not required. Whilst this is fine in principle, it would be prudent to indicate where the existing hard surfacing acts as ground protection on the TPP, using a colour coordinated key for this area. This would help us ensure that the protective fencing is in a suitable position in relation to the soft ground and existing hard surfacing.

The protective fencing shown in the Tree Removals and Protection Plan also seems unfeasible given this obstructs the access route. There is also no protection shown for the Council owned trees adjacent to the entrance. The RPA of T001 also has not been adjusted to take into account the existing dwelling's foundations (and other potential constraints for a tree's rooting area) in line with BS5837 guidance.



Tree Removals and Protection Plan – approximate access point (yellow arrow) vs protective fencing

Section **4.1 GENERAL EXCAVATION WITHIN RPAS** states '*For the purposes of this AMS, excavation within an RPA shall follow a 'root-sensitive excavation' methodology rather than conventional mechanical excavation through rooting soil. Hand tools shall be the default method. Small breakers may be used to remove hard materials where necessary, and a toothless excavator bucket may be used only in a controlled manner from outside unprotected rooting soil to carefully peel soil away in shallow layers*'. As this is an AMS, we expect methodology to be certain and site specific. Hand tools should be used by default, and where this isn't feasible, it is expected to justify the use of machinery

where it is required. Given the proposed porch has a relatively small footprint, I'm unclear why hand digging couldn't be undertaken (unless existing hard surfacing needs to be removed but this isn't specifically stated). Given it is also a relatively small structure, I wouldn't expect foundations need to be a significant depth.

Section **5.2 CONVENTIONAL STRIP OR TRENCH-FILL FOUNDATIONS** states '*The planning drawings do not specify the structural foundation type. If a conventional strip or trench-fill foundation is selected for the porch, the following controls shall apply in addition to the bespoke porch excavation and concrete pouring methodology in Sections 11.2 and 11.3*'. As this is an AMS, we expect the foundation type to be certain. All roots in this area would have to be severed regardless of their size and the RPA incursion, hence root loss, is currently unknown. The methodology within Section **11.2 BESPOKE METHOD – PORCH FOUNDATION EXCAVATION AND ROOT PROTECTION** indicates that works will stop, and local adjustments will be made to the foundations if the roots encountered must be retained. This seems impractical and a specific porch design will have been approved. What if adjustments to the foundations cannot be made whilst implementing a porch exactly as approved? The lack of AIA makes the RPA incursion and potential root loss difficult to fully appreciate. If an AIA was submitted to demonstrate the incursion and how it would be minimised, it would likely be deemed acceptable given the footprint of the porch is relatively small.

It would also be appropriate for the AMS to include demolition of the existing porch canopy.

The Tree Removals and Protection Plan shows a key for '*Special Construction Measures*', albeit I'm unclear what said special construction is other than that in Sections **4.1** and **5.2**, which effectively just details traditional foundation types.

I acknowledge Section **11.3 BESPOKE METHOD – CONCRETE POURING / ROOT INTERFACE** details the pouring of concrete which is positive. However, I am struggling to envisage how the materials are layered in the extract below as indicative arrows are pointing to the same areas.



To conclude, the application is not currently supported as the impact to the health of the trees has not been demonstrated. The details of installing the foundations for the porch are unclear/uncertain and the AMS doesn't account for the existing 'porch' canopy and pillars which may have existing foundations. The application is likely to be supported if

revisions are made to demonstrate and mitigate the impact to the trees to an acceptable level, given the RPA incursion is relatively minor. However, whilst the incursion is relatively minor (although the incursion is not stated within the AMS), the design should be certain and demonstrate how the impact to tree health will be minimised.

I have no objection to the demolition of the existing conservatory and proposed rear extension given no trees are within influencing distance of this element.