

**From:** Hanson, Sarah <Sarah.Hanson@reading.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 12 October 2020 15:12  
**To:** Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** Giles Sutton (GS Ecology) <giles@gsecology.co.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: 55 Vastern Rd, Reading (200188)

Jon,  
With reference to attached plans:  
Landscape General Arrangement plan 448.LA.101 E  
Illustrative Masterplan 448.PL.SL.002 E  
Planting Framework Plan 448.LA.102 E  
Tree Rooting Volume Plan 448.LA.103  
Tree Rooting Volume Table 448.LAND.TN.001

I have added comments in green:

#### **Natural Environment Officer Comments**

I have set out below the comments received and added our response in red.

*In terms of tree species, I note the changes which are positive, albeit they still include Prunus, which I advised should be omitted due to over-representation in the Borough. It is useful to have the canopy spread after 25 years shown on the plan. This helps to demonstrate that the buffer planting strip adjacent to the river is too narrow for large canopy trees – future conflicts, hence the need to prune, can be seen. I previously stated that large canopy trees were required on the river frontage and that a greater set-back was required to achieve this. The application has provided the former but not the latter.*

*We have reduced the quantum of Prunus but wish to retain those still planned to provide seasonal variety to our planting mix. Please find attached our revised planting framework plan which demonstrates that we have updated the tree species along the river edge from Beech to Oak. The buildings have not been set back further, but where we have chosen to plant trees and with the 25 year future canopy as shown I hope you agree that we will not experience any conflict. Reduced number of Prunus noted, albeit disappointing to have them included still. Change of species along the riverside is noted – all native and large canopy. Whilst the projected 25 year canopy just about avoids direct conflict between buildings and canopies, the trees will live considerably longer and get bigger during theirs and the buildings lifespan. Close proximity requires pruning to give reasonable clearance and can result in future pressure from occupants to prune to e.g. 1) alleviate perceived safety fears, 2) to avoid direct contact, 3) improve views. I maintain that a greater buffer for tree planting should be (and have been) provided and is justified by the need to successfully accommodate large trees, long-term, in line with the objectives of our Tree Strategy (2010 and 2020).*

*I note the size of trees (at planting) proposed which will help to provide a greater clear stem height adjacent to road access, i.e. to allow vehicles to pass underneath. Greater stock size does, however, come with a need for greater aftercare. This is noted and we will ensure that our landscaping is well managed and maintained across the development which will be secured through our residents management company. Landscape Maintenance condition will be required.*

*The other changes to non-tree landscaping, as explained in Joe Harding's email of 15 July to the EA, sound positive. I assume the EA and GS Ecology will be commenting on this. Yes, please see our email response from 5<sup>th</sup> October with our latest EA response. We are preparing a mitigation strategy for the planting along the River Thames and further input from yourself on planting species would be greatly appreciated. In order to respond to our Tree Strategy, revised BAP, the EA and Ecology comments, focus on native species and wildlife friendly planting is required. Given the importance of the river as a bat foraging route, I would suggest that planting needs to include night scented flowers and shrubs with pale flowers that are more easily seen in poor light, i.e. attract insects at dusk.*

*I note that they are considering their energy strategy further to we await details in this. I hope that green roofs will be factored in as required by policy to improve biodiversity on the site. It will be disappointing if the development (and potentially others in the Borough) come to the conclusion that they can only be energy efficient OR maximise biodiversity. I appreciate that both are important but I hope a balance is achieved. We agree with this point regarding a balance and we hope that we can secure our all electric scheme and provide the green roofs and PV*

panels. No information or locations of green roofs are provided and should be agreed prior to a decision as part of the landscape strategy.

*I don't think that my comment re services and landscape provision has been answered. I maintain that a certain degree of detail is required prior to a decision. My email of 22/5/20 stated:*

*I requested confirmation of soil volume provision and my comments were clear on the reasons for this request. The applicant's response is that this will be dealt with via condition. This is not an acceptable response. Whilst full details can be agreed via condition, the applicant should submit a basic plan now showing the likely service route corridors and areas allocated for soil root provision, i.e. that can be allocated to roots either as soft landscape beds or under hard surfaces - those unimpacted by structures (above and below ground). Please find attached additional information which shows the rooting volumes for the proposed trees. We have calculated this using GreenBlue Urbans rooting volume calculator. Please also note that minor changes have been made to the overall layout to accommodate highways updates, a revised landscape general arrangement plan has also been attached for your information.*

The information provided is useful and I assume that the applicant is satisfied that service routes can be accommodated outside all the rooting areas indicated?

I would be grateful for clarification on one point. The rooting provision of trees on the riverside landscape buffer is shown and seems to be limited to the areas indicated. Why? Would the trees not have access to the rooting environment of the landscape strip as a whole – at least either side of the access to the river at least? This would help with the Oak which currently is showing as having a below target volume provision. The other tree with below target volume is the Field maple adjacent to the café's outdoor seating area, but I appreciate the constraints for this tree.

Regards,

Sarah Hanson  
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**From:** Hanson, Sarah <Sarah.Hanson@reading.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 21 October 2020 12:09  
**To:** Markwell, Jonathan <Jonathan.Markwell@reading.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: 55 Vastern Road

Jon,  
Further to our chat this morning and taking the following into account:  
*CR11g, RIVERSIDE: Development should maintain and enhance public access along and to the Thames, and should be set back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river. Development should continue the high quality route including a green link from the north of the station to the Christchurch Bridge, with potential for an area of open space at the riverside. The main use of the site should be residential, although some small-scale leisure and complementary offices will also be acceptable. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

**EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLANDS**

*Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced.*

Which refers to 'priority tree planting areas/routes, as defined in the Tree Strategy' and 'There will be a need to use appropriate large canopy species that are adaptable to future predicted climatic conditions'

**EN13: MAJOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

*Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature.*

*SPD – Sustainable Design & Construction includes the importance of trees for various reasons including along wildlife corridors (which would include the Thames) and 'The preference will be to, where possible, use large canopy species that provide more benefits for climate adaptation'.*

Tree Strategy (adopted 2010 and revised 2020) – both identify the Thames as a 'treed corridor', i.e. where tree retention and planting is a priority.

In relation to the 10m buffer, they have taken this as the building line, particularly on the western half of the site. The policy states 'at least 10m' and by virtue of providing only 10m they have restricted tree species type (looking long term). We have to consider the proposed tree planting in the long-term, i.e. over the potential life span of both the tree and building, both of which should be more than 25 years. The 25 years predicted canopy spread is therefore not of great relevance and in any case, shows conflict arising in that period, i.e. the canopies will reach the building line. It is reasonable to expect residents to want clearance of 1-2m minimum from the edge of the building/balcony and to want pruning to maintain views.

The current proposals do not allow a long term sustainable relationship between the riverside buildings and large canopy trees and therefore this can reasonably be included in an overall condition dealing with the detrimental impact on the Thames environs.

**The development, by virtue of its size and proximity to the river, allows insufficient space for a successful long-term relationship with large canopy trees within the riverside buffer.**

**Contrary to EN13, EN14 and objectives of our adopted and revised Tree Strategies.**

By the way, what happened with green roofs? If they still have not agreed to those, that could be an additional reason for refusal – CC3, EN12, aims of the BAP?

Regards,

Sarah Hanson  
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