



READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES

2000

SECTION 78 APPEALS

PROOF OF EVIDENCE ON REASON FOR REFUSAL No. 9

**SARAH HANSON, Natural Environment Officer; BSc, ABC L4 Dip Arb,
MArborA**

Appeal by: AVIVA LIFE & PENSIONS UK LIMITED

Appeal Site: Vastern Court, Vastern Road, Reading

Appeal Against: Refusal of Planning Permission by Reading Borough Council for: Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. Demolition and redevelopment to comprise: up to 115,000 sqm GEA in one or more land uses comprising: Residential (Class C3 and including PRS); Offices (Use Class B1(a); development in Use Classes A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away), C1 (hotel), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car parking; provision of new plant and renewable energy equipment; creation of servicing areas and provision of associated services, including waste, refuse, cycle storage, and lighting; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; provision of attenuation infrastructure; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the approved Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.

Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/E0345/W/21/3289748

Reading Borough Council Reference: 200328/OUT

Date: March 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Personal details

- 1.1 This Proof of Evidence (PoE) has been prepared by myself, Sarah Hanson, Natural Environment Officer within the Planning Department at Reading Borough Council (RBC). I have a degree in Environmental Biology, a Level 4 Diploma in Arboriculture, am a LANTRA certified Professional Tree Inspector, a Professional Member of the Arboricultural Association and have 22 years of experience in my current role, during which I have completed extensive Continued Professional Development in trees and landscape matters.
- 1.2 Since joining RBC in 1999 I have processed tree work applications and provided professional input for planning applications on both tree and landscape matters, taking lead of the Natural Environment Team in 2014. The role has involved input on a wide range of planning proposals, planning appeals and giving evidence at appeal hearings and public inquiries. I was the lead author and project manager for the Council's second Tree Strategy, adopted in March 2021. As an officer processing tree work applications over the 22 year period, I am also very familiar with common conflicts between trees and buildings.
- 1.3 I have provided advice to the planning department on proposals at Vastern Court since 2019, including the application subject to this appeal.
- 1.4 I am familiar with the appeal site and surrounding area, along with local planning policy background and other adopted Council documents relating to the natural environment.

2.0 The proposed development and Reason for Refusal

2.1 The appeal relates to the non-determination by Reading Borough Council (RBC) for the following development at Vastern Court, Vastern Road, Reading, planning application reference 200328/OUT:

Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. Demolition and redevelopment to comprise: up to 115,000 sqm GEA in one or more land uses comprising: Residential (Class C3 and including PRS); Offices (Use Class B1(a); development in Use Classes A1, A2, A3 (retail), A4 (public house), A5 (take away), C1 (hotel), D1 and D2 (community and leisure); car parking; provision of new plant and renewable energy equipment; creation of servicing areas and provision of associated services, including waste, refuse, cycle storage, and lighting; and for the laying out of the buildings; routes and open spaces within the development; and all associated works and operations including but not limited to: demolition; earthworks; provision of attenuation infrastructure; engineering operations. All development, works and operations to be in accordance with the approved Development Parameters Schedule and Plans.

2.2 Following submission of the appeal, the application was considered at Planning Applications Committee (PAC) on 15 February 2022 where members agreed that had they been able to determine the planning application, they would have refused it for the reasons set out in the report (CD 3.1 & 3.2). 12 reasons for refusal were recommended by officers. Of relevance to this PoE is reason for refusal No. 9 (RfR9), as amended following PAC, which states:

The proposed layout, scale and quantum of development fails to demonstrate the satisfactory delivery of required landscaping principles, appropriate protection and retention of protected trees and hence fails to demonstrate it will maximise opportunities to enhance the Green Network. Therefore, the development is contrary to NPPF 2021, The National Model Design Code (July 2021), Policies EN12, EN14, EN15, EN18, CR3, CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019), Reading Station Area Framework (2010), Reading's Biodiversity Action Plan (2021) and the adopted Tree Strategy.

3.0 Scope of Evidence

3.1 The case for the Council (RBC), as it relates to RfR9, was set out in my Statement of Case (SoC), which was attached as Appendix L of the Council's main SoC from Stephen Jupp, dated February 2022. My planning evidence on behalf of RBC addresses the specific following matters:

- National & Local Policy, along with national guidance to support RfR9
- Evidence that the appeal scheme fails to demonstrate how the required tree planting on the Vastern Road and Caversham Road can be accommodated
- Evidence that the retention of trees has not been properly considered
- Evidence that opportunities to maximise the Green Network have not demonstrated.
- A summary and conclusion, setting out a summary of my evidence and concluding that planning permission should not be granted for the appeal proposal.

3.2 My PoE should be read in tandem with that of:

- Mr Stephen Jupp - main Planning PoE
- Mr Michael Doyle - Design & Townscape PoE

4.0 Site and surroundings

- 4.1 The Site and Surroundings are detailed at section 1 [paragraphs 1.8 to 1.14] of the planning officer's committee report (CD 3.1). It is bordered to the north by the historically tree-lined Vastern Road, with this north, and the west boundary being lined by protected trees. The site currently offers a wide landscape buffer between the back of the pavement edge of the car park, which rises up above the level of the pavement as it heads west.
- 4.2 In natural environment terms, the following apply to the site in question:
- a) The site is located within the Council's designated Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15),
 - b) The site is within a 'low canopy cover' Ward, as defined in the Council's adopted Tree Strategy, i.e. a Ward with less than 12% tree canopy cover,
 - c) The site is bordered to the north by Vastern Road, which is defined as a 'treed corridor' in the Council's adopted Tree Strategy (shown in Appendix 3 of that document).
 - d) A TPO protects seven trees on the Vastern Road and Caversham Road frontages
- 4.3 All of the above results in the site being in a location where tree retention and planting is a high priority.

5.0 Policy & other guidance

Relevant National and Local Policy and National Guidance are discussed in section 2 of my SoC.

National Policy

5.1 National Policy Planning Framework 2021 (CD 7.36)

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) includes a new paragraph relevant to this appeal, that being paragraph 131. The relevant element of this paragraph is reiterated below:

‘...Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places...’

5.2 The National Model Design Code (July 2021) (CD 7.17)

The National Model Design Code (July 2021) also includes relevant guidance within its ‘Nature’ section (within Part 2 Guidance Notes) (CD 7.18):

N.3.iii Street Trees, Point 27 ‘Position’ states:

‘Careful positioning to allow space for the mature trees without causing obstruction or interfering with property, infrastructure, street lighting or junction sightlines’...

N.3.iii Street Trees, Point 27 ‘Function’ states:

‘Ensure street trees and green infrastructure provide for a range of functions and benefits...’

5.3 The ‘right tree, right place’ concept is included within the Council’s adopted Tree Strategy, as referred to in 2.2.5 of my SoC. Allowing space for large canopy trees on the Vastern Road frontage, as part of the overall tree planting without causing ‘obstruction or interfering with property’ is relevant to RfR9 and compliments the ‘right tree, right place’ guidance within the NPPF and the Council’s adopted Tree Strategy.

Local Policy

5.4 EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network (CD 4.20)

5.5 As explained in EN12, the Green Network comprises:

- *Sites with identified biodiversity interest - Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, protected and priority species and their habitats, Priority and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal); and*
- *Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together - designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links*

5.6 As is stated:

‘All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map’.

5.7 Supporting text in 4.2.61 states:

‘..most Green Links shown on the map are a mixture of existing and potential links, i.e. whilst there are existing aspects that contribute to the Network there is also significant potential for development to make a further contribution to improve the Network’

5.8 Supporting text in 4.4.62 states:

‘Opportunities will be sought in conjunction with development proposals, to enhance the quality and integrity of the Green Network’

5.9 It can be seen from the Proposals Map (CD 4.57) that the site sits between existing, identified Green Links (shown in green) and ‘Areas of identified biodiversity interest’ (shown in blue), hence that planting on this site could contribute to the linking of these areas:



Figure 1: Extract from Proposals Map

5.10 Given the current nature of the site, it is acknowledged that the appellant is likely to be able to demonstrate a net gain in Habitat Units (using the DEFRA Metric). In accordance with EN12 the development proposals would need to clearly show that opportunities to maximise the Green Network could be achieved within the context of the Development Parameters, which should include large canopy trees; a key part of the Green Network. The appellant has not done this.

5.11 EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLANDS (CD 4.22)

This policy states:

‘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...’

‘New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.’

5.12 The need to include large canopy trees is supported by the supporting text which, in 4.6.28, states:

‘There will be a need to use appropriate large canopy species that are adaptable to future predicted climatic conditions (native species if possible and where appropriate in order to deliver biodiversity benefits), particularly the higher temperatures and potential drought conditions predicted in summer’

5.13 Seven trees are protection by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 3/06 (CD 7.38). The appellant has not demonstrated that existing protected trees have been properly considered or that there will be a successful long-term, sustainable relationship between those indicatively shown to be retained and any new building. Similarly, the appellant has not demonstrated how the required tree planting can be accommodated on the Vastern Road Frontage, extending into the corner with Caversham Road. This is shown within both the Design Code September 2021, DAS and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). Further comment is given in Section 6 below.

5.14 EN15: Air Quality (CD 4.23)

This policy states:

‘Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality’

5.15 Paragraphs 4.2.78 & 4.2.79 explain the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within which the Vastern Court site sits.

5.16 Supporting text in 4.2.80 states:

‘...Other mitigation measures may also include travel plans, restrictions in car access or parking, planting, green walls or certain types of paving that absorb NO2...’

5.17 The site’s location within the AQMA results in the need to maximise tree planting on site to meet with Objective 4 of the Tree Strategy (see 2.2.5 of my SoC).

5.18 EN18: Flooding and sustainable drainage systems (CD 4.26)

This policy states:

‘Wherever possible, SuDS provision should maximise ecological benefits, link into the existing Green Network, incorporate tree planting and landscaping and avoid damage to existing significant trees, including through changes to the site hydrology. All new developments in areas of flood risk should give priority to SuDS’

5.19 The benefits of large canopy trees are given in 5.43 below. They are an important and useful element in flood alleviation hence should be incorporated to support the aims of this policy.

5.20 CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM (CD 4.8)

This policy has many requirements; the relevant parts to RfR9 are:

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- *Landscape;*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

5.21 The historical tree-line character of Vastern Road would be reinstated and enhanced by suitable tree planting on the frontage.

5.22 CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING (CD 4.48)

Relevant elements of this policy are:

Proposals for new development will need to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area and will be assessed against the following criteria:

i. All proposals on sites of more than 1 hectare within the central Reading boundary will need to provide new public open space or civic squares integrated with surrounding development. Smaller developments will contribute towards improvements to the public realm;

ii. Imaginative uses of open space and the public realm, which contribute to the offer of the centre, will be encouraged, and new open spaces should be of a size and shape to be flexible enough to accommodate such uses. The provision of water features, trees (including street trees) and other planting, as well as hard landscaping, to create high quality spaces, will be expected, where appropriate;

5.23 The use of large canopy trees on the frontages will make a positive contribution to the quality public realm.

5.24 CR11: STATION/RIVER MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA (CD 4.56)

This policy includes:

Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area will:

v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, with green infrastructure, including a direct landscaped link between the station and the River Thames;

5.25 CR11e, NORTH OF THE STATION

This policy relates specifically to the appeal site and states:

‘There will be retail and leisure development on the ground floor activating the streets and spaces including the new northern station square, with other uses including residential and offices on upper floors. Retail will have good pedestrian links to, and will not have a detrimental impact on, the rest of the retail core of the centre. Public car parking will be provided. A high quality route incorporating a green link should be provided through to the Thames. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment, and should consider opportunities to open up the culverted Vastern Ditch and enhance it as an ecological feature’.

- 5.26 Considering other policies and adopted documents together, the ‘green infrastructure’ on this site should incorporate tree planting on the frontages, with the nature of that planting being led by these adopted documents.

Other adopted documents

- 5.27 In addition to the above national and local policy, other adopted documents provide support for the tree and landscape requirements on the site.

- 5.28 SPD Sustainable Design and Construction (CD 7.7)

This refers to the use of large canopy trees in 5.4 where, in listing the benefits of trees, states:

‘The preference will be to, where possible, use large canopy species that provide more benefits for climate adaptation’

- 5.29 Reading Station Area Framework (RSAF) (CD 7.1)

This states in 5.12, page 27, (in relation to Vastern Road) that:

‘Potential changes to Vastern Road could reduce the dominance of speeding traffic and transform the character of the road from a bypass at the edge of the town centre into a tree lined avenue as a central element of the town centre public realm, by planting in the central reservation and creating planted verges’.

Paragraph 5.22 (page 29) states (in relation to Landscaping) that:

‘There should be new tree planting along Vastern Road, for instance, including the central reservation. Landscaping may also incorporate green roofs, living walls and sustainable drainage systems (see Chapter 10). The biodiversity value of landscaping is particularly significant where the elements of landscaping form green corridors that connect with existing open spaces, waterspaces and areas of biodiversity significance’.

Chapter 8 (Urban Design Framework) refers to (in 8.1, page 44):

‘Promoting high quality buildings, streets and spaces; Creating permeable development that strengthens north-south links and improves connectivity across the area; Integrating public spaces and active frontages to establish vibrant, safe and enjoyable areas and create a focus to the sites’.

- 5.30 Figure 8.2 (page 45) provides guidance on where the major & minor paths and public spaces should be, with figure 8.3 (page 47) indicatively showing landscaping within the desired framework, which includes tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage:



Figure 2: RSAF map extract

- 5.31 It should be noted that whilst the RSAF is a live and current document, it was adopted 12 years ago in 2010. Since then, RBC has adopted a new Local Plan, has declared a climate emergency and has a revised Reading Climate Change Action Plan, Tree Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). Hence these more current policies / documents / requirements should be used to guide the principles within the RSAF.

5.32 Tree Strategy 2021 (CD 7.8)

Details on the adoption of this Strategy and the relevant aims and objectives are given in 2.2.3-2.3.5 in my SoC.

- 5.33 The site is within a ‘low canopy cover’ Ward, on a designated ‘treed corridor’ and within the AQMA, hence in a priority area for tree retention and planting, which is vital, especially on the frontage, and should provide an increase in canopy cover overall on the site.

5.34 Tree Strategy identifies ‘treed corridors’ across the Borough, consisting of railways, roads and watercourses. The ‘treed corridor’ designation recognises the importance of maximising tree planting along these routes. Paragraph 1.65 of the Strategy defines ‘treed corridors’ stating that they are:

‘... a priority for tree retention and planting to provide green corridors into, out of and through the town’.

With paragraph 3.94 stating [in relation to biodiversity]:

‘Whilst woodlands tend to be the most important, trees within the urban environment play a vital role by providing corridors and stepping stones for wildlife’

5.35 It is relevant to note that as recently as the 1970s Vastern Road was a tree lined road on both sides; some remnant Plane trees still existing on the north side. Tree Planting on the Vastern Road frontage would re-establish this lost double-sided avenue on this main route.

5.36 Biodiversity Action Plan 2021 (CD 7.9)

The link between this document and the Tree Strategy is explained in 2.2.6 of my SoC. Sections 2.2.7-2.2.9 of my SoC explain how the BAP supports EN12.

National Guidance / resources

5.37 BS5837:2012 ‘Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction’ (CD 7.33)

National Guidance is given in this British Standard in relation to new planting in development proposals and successful retention of existing trees whilst avoiding future conflict. This British Standard is the standard guidance used by arboricultural professionals and it is an expectation that development follows the recommendations within it.

5.38 Clause 5.3.4 on new buildings in relation to existing trees in relation to shading, privacy, direct damage, future pressure to remove and seasonal nuisance. It states (in relation to future pressure for removal):

‘A realistic assessment of the probable impact of any proposed development on the trees and vice versa should take into account the characteristics and condition of the trees, with due allowance for their future growth and maintenance requirements. To maximise the

probability of successful tree retention, the following factors should be taken into account during the design process

d) Future pressure for removal. The relationship between buildings and large trees can cause apprehension to occupiers or users of nearby buildings or space, resulting in pressure for the removal of the trees. Buildings and other structures should be sited allowing adequate space for a tree's natural development, with due consideration given to its predicted height and canopy spread'.

5.39 Arboricultural Research Note (Issued by the DOE Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service): 'The Ultimate Size and Spread of Trees Commonly Grown in Towns' dated May 1990 - Appendix 2

This document provides comment on likely management of existing trees if 'too big for their surroundings' and the need to provide adequate space for new trees to avoid future conflict.

5.40 The Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service was originally established in 1976 with government funding from the Department of the Environment (and its successors) and was based at the Forestry Commission's Research Station at Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham. In 1983, the service was placed under the management of the Tree Advice Trust; an independent charity. The aims of the Tree Advice Trust were to develop the highest possible standards of arboricultural expertise and practice and to advance professional development. The Trust's staff conducted research directly and worked closely with their neighbours in the Forestry Research Station to develop awareness throughout the arboricultural sector. The Trust's Arboricultural Practice Notes and Arboriculture Research Notes gained a highly valued reputation as key reference documents. The Trust ceased to trade in 2013 but the contents of its published research and practice notes were passed on to the Arboricultural Association to maintain their availability.

5.41 The introduction section of this document states:

'Arboriculturalists are frequently faced with the problem of managing trees that are too big for their surroundings. This may be the result of established trees being retained and incorporated into intensive development to create a mature appearance'.

Large canopy trees

- 5.42 It is the case that tree sizes (large, medium and small) are generally defined by their ultimate height, even 'large canopy' trees tend to be defined in this way. This is not particularly helpful when there are tall, but narrow form, trees available. Canopy shapes can be divided into: Broad spread, narrow spread, conical, spired, columnar, ovoid and weeping. In terms of general tree size (defined by height), a 'large tree' is taken to be one with an ultimate height of 20+ metres, as defined in The Hillier Designer's Guide (Appendix 3). For the purposes of this case, a 'large canopy' tree is taken to be an ultimately 'large tree' (in terms of height) with a broad spreading canopy. It is worth noting that GreenBlue Urban (tree pit specialists) define a 'large canopy tree' as one with a canopy diameter of 10m after 25 years (with reference to their Soil Volume Guide 1.1 - Appendix 4) - trees can significantly exceed this during their lifespan, which could be hundreds of years.
- 5.43 The greater environmental benefits of large canopy trees, over that of smaller canopy trees, are well documented. These include shelter and shading from wind, rain and sun, reduction of urban temperatures as well as the temperatures of watercourses, rain interception (flood alleviation) and greater wildlife habitat provision. In this specific case, they would also provide greater softening of the extensive building mass and provide a visually positive street scene. Ensuring the successful long-term integration of these, both existing and new, is therefore vital to ensure they can reach their optimum size which is when their environmental benefit
- 5.44 In biodiversity terms, broad spreading native and wildlife friendly trees provide a much greater wildlife benefit than narrow form trees as their greater biomass and surface area provides more resources for invertebrates, birds, and other wildlife. For example, a greater insect population would provide more food for bats and birds whilst longer branches provide more nesting opportunities for birds compared to narrow form trees

- 5.45 The Policy backing for tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage, and that this should consist of large canopy trees is detailed above. The appellant has failed to demonstrate that sufficient room for large canopy trees can be accommodated and that they can reach their full potential without conflict with the proposed buildings, i.e. whilst avoiding the need to prune to provide a sustainable long-term relationship.
- 5.46 The Policy backing for the retention of existing trees, and successful, sustainable long-term retention of those trees, i.e. without needed to prune, is detailed above. The appellant has failed to demonstrate that this will be possible.

6.0 The Council's Case

- 6.1 Paragraph 5.42 provides clarity on what is considered to be a 'large canopy tree', i.e. a 'large canopy' tree is taken to be an ultimately 'large tree', that being one of 20+m in height at maturity, with a 'broad spreading' canopy. The policy backing for the incorporation of these detailed in this PoE. The appeal scheme fails to demonstrate how the required landscape principles can be accommodated.
- 6.2 The existing, protected trees are shown on the TPO plan within Appendix 1. The policy backing for the retention of existing, high-quality trees is given in the PoE. The appeal scheme fails to demonstrate proper consideration and successful incorporation of protected trees in order to comply with policy and other adopted documents and national guidance.
- 6.3 The need, within policy, to 'maximise the inclusion of biodiversity' to 'enhance the quality and integrity of the Green Network' is explained in this PoE. The appeal scheme fails to demonstrate how it has maximised opportunities to enhance the Green Network

The appeal scheme

- 6.4 Within the Planning Application Booklet (original and revised) and DAS (page 110), parameter plan 17043 PP-102 (CD 1.2.10.3) shows:



Figure 4: Parameter Plan

6.5 Within the Design Code September 2021 (CD 1.47), the public realm character areas are shown in 3.5, pages 28-29, as:



Figure 5: Design Code public realm

6.6 Within Section 7 'Illustrative Scheme. Landscape', pages 228-229, of the September 2021 Design and Access Statement (DAS) (CD 1.55) -, an illustrative Landscape Masterplan is given in 7.8, with the red line of the site boundary indicated. This illustrates the very limited perimeter width for tree planting, particularly if the development be built out to the greatest extent in accordance with the parameter plans



Figure 6: Illustrative Landscape Masterplan

Landscaping

- 6.7 Within the Design Code, 6.1.4 (Urban Edge / Vastern Rd & Caversham Road frontages) includes the following as a mandatory requirement:

‘Street tree planting must be considered where this is possible to provide’

And as discretionary requirements includes:

‘Mature tree specimens could be provided to mitigate any losses from site enabling development. Large species where possible.’

‘Areas of planting to provided where the width of the footway permits without hindering pedestrian and cycle movement’

- 6.8 Street tree planting is an absolute requirement hence the use of the term ‘where possible’ is very non-committal and does not demonstrate how the required large canopy trees will be accommodated, particularly if the scheme if built to the maximum extent, as shown on the Parameter plan. The reference to ‘large species’ is non-specific in that it does not define these. From submissions and visuals provided, it appears that the applicant has taken ‘large species’ to be ‘tall but narrow’ species - this can be seen from the visual illustrations in Section 6 ‘Illustrative Concept’ of the DAS (CD 1.54), for

example P.176-177 and on Page 206-207 (last page of Section 6) - extracts are provided below for ease of reference:



Figure 7: DAS Visual 1



Figure 8: DAS Visual 2

- 6.9 These main frontages should include ‘large canopy species’ and importantly allow sufficient space for these without creating future conflict. Examples can be seen across the Borough of where inadequate space for trees has been provided and the ultimate result of this; that being severe pruning and/or loss of trees. One example is at 45 Crown Street, RG1 2SW; the photographs below showing the trees first in 2014 and then in 2020:



Figure 9: Crown Street before tree works



Figure 10: Crown Street post tree works

- 6.10 The visuals within the DAS show tree planting along the entire Vastern Road frontage (as can be seen above), so are not consistent with the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan. Nor is Section 7.1 ‘Landscape Strategies’ of the DAS (P.210) consistent with the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan, with Figure L10 ‘Green Infrastructure’ showing a ‘green fringe’ along the whole Vastern Road and Caversham Road frontages. The lack of consistency contributes to the failure to demonstrate delivery of the required landscape principles:



Figure 11: DAS Green infrastructure

6.11 Also worth noting is that these visuals imply a continuous ground level between the road and site for the entire length of the Vastern Road frontage, which does not reflect the existing situation; the site being higher than the adjacent Highway land for part of the length. Submissions do not clarify how this level change will be incorporated in order to provide a continuous ‘ground level’ provision for tree planting. For ease, below is a comparison of the existing and illustrative levels, the latter taken from P.178-179 of the DAS (other visuals within Section 6 also show a ‘continuous’ ground level):



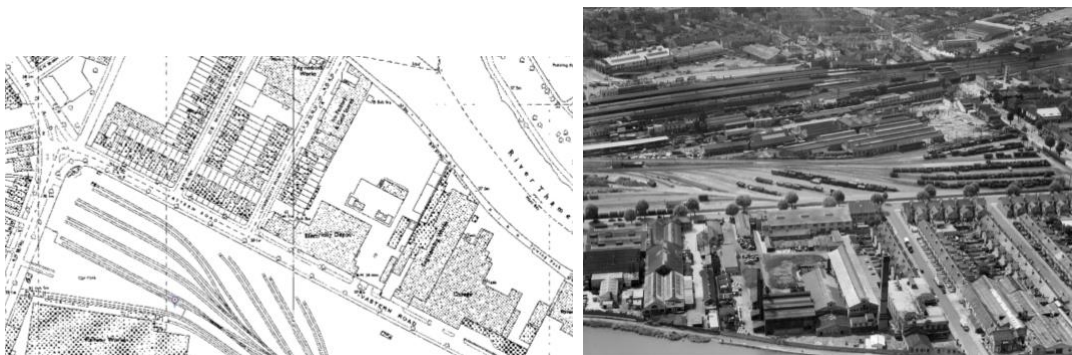
Figure 12: Existing levels



Figure 13: Proposed levels

6.12 The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan, as per the Building Plots Parameter plan in 5.2 (page 110) in the DAS (CD 1.53), indicates a potential (maximum) built footprint directly abutting the Highway for Plots A (Vastern Road and corner), C & D; with Plot B having a thin strip of land between Plot B and the Highway. Little to no land within the site boundary is therefore allocated for a tree planted buffer within that footprint, as required by policy, the Tree Strategy, as shown in the RSAF and as indicated in the appellant’s Design Code and elsewhere in the DAS.

- 6.13 There is a lack of commitment to the required tree planting along the Vastern Road frontage and on the prominent Vastern Road / Caversham Road corner. Submissions are not clear how planting along the entire frontage of Vastern Road will be provided, as required, nor how the existing level change will be incorporated.
- 6.14 The historical character of Vastern Road is shown by the remnants of the Plane tree planting on the north side of the road and is shown on the below map extract from the 1970s and 1948 photograph (Vastern Road running east-west); the latter courtesy of Historic England, Aerial Photo Explorer:



Figures 14 & 15: Historic tree lined Vastern Road

From the Vastern Road / Caversham Road corner, partly into Caversham Road (heading south) and into Caversham Road (heading north-west), this tree lined character of the streets is clear. Allowing sufficient space on the frontage of the development to accommodate appropriate street tree planting will enhance that character of the area. From our better knowledge of trees (compared to the time of Victorian planting) and with the need to respond our climate emergency and resulting aims of the Tree Strategy, due consideration is required by development on this site to allow greater space for tree planting on street frontages.

- 6.15 The buffer on the Vastern Road frontage has to accommodate landscaping alongside the pedestrian and cycle routes and it is unclear from submissions how sufficient space will be provided for all three. 5.2 'Development footprint' (page 108) of the DAS states:

‘A 5 metre clear zone is specified, to allow for future development of the pavement, to allow for designated pedestrian and cycling routes to come forward within this area’.

6.16 A 5 metre width buffer is insufficient for large canopy trees. The planting appears also to rely on Highways land, partly in front of Plot B and entirely in front of Plots C & D and on the Caversham Road / Vastern Road corner, if the maximum footprint were ultimately proposed.

6.17 BS5837:2012 ‘Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction’ (CD 7.33) gives guidance in 5.6 on new planting within developments and states:

‘All new tree planting proposals are an essential consideration in the layout, design and future use of a development site, the local landscape character and the contextual surroundings. .. careful consideration needs to be given to their ultimate height and spread, form, habit and colour, density of foliage and maintenance implications’.

6.18 Section 5.6 of BS 5837 relates to 6 ‘New planting adjacent to structures’ and advises:

5.6.1 The purpose of the new planting should be understood from the start of the design process so that long-term structural landscape objectives inform decisions regarding appropriate locations and species.

5.6.2.1 New planting should normally be selected and located to ensure that adequate space is allowed for future growth of root systems, stems and canopies to maturity, without this causing direct physical contact with and potential direct damage to nearby structures, or causing obstruction of access, light or other nuisance.

5.6.2.6 The obstruction of light and views, the creation of shade by new trees, and the likely extent and density of tree crowns when fully grown, should be taken into account when designing new planting adjacent to buildings. Design and species selection should allow the enjoyment of reasonable light and shading where desirable as the trees develop into mature specimens.

6.19 It is helpful to note that in the Arboricultural Research Note (Appendix 2), it states:

Introduction: Arboriculturalists are frequently faced with the problem of managing trees that are too big for their surroundings....In other instances the problem arises because the species selected from planting was inappropriate for the space available, for example, between buildings. In either case expensive management is needed to

make the tree fit man's environment rather than to improve the growth of the tree'. Recommendation: 'When selecting tree to plant into an urban streets and other restricted positions in towns consideration should be given to the likely mature spread and height of the species so that expensive pruning does not become a requirement. In addition, use of a tree with an ultimate mature size appropriate for the surroundings should ensure that otherwise valuable trees so not have to be felled prematurely for their size'.

- 6.20 The above national guidance is useful in highlighting the need to fully consider landscaping within development proposals at an early stage to ensure successful long-term integration of the required trees. By omission, development that fails to demonstrate this, fails to demonstrate consideration of this guidance and the principles within it.

Existing trees

- 6.21 A copy of the plan for TPO 3/06 is provided in Appendix 1 for ease of reference.
- 6.22 A comparison between the location of the trees in the TPO plan and the maximum footprint on the Parameter plan confirms that the retention of all but two of the protected trees would not be possible. This is confirmed on the Proposed Layout and Tree Removals plan within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), with those trees in grey shown to be removed:



Figure 16: AIA plan

No other submissions show these existing trees to be removed; only the two shown indicatively to be retained (as discussed above) are indicated elsewhere.

- 6.23 With reference to the Design Code, 6.1.2 (The Avenue / main street) states within the ‘mandatory requirements’ that:

‘The junction with Caversham Road must consider the possibility of retention of existing trees to create a green and inviting entrance to the development to encourage pedestrian and cycle through route’.

However, this should be an absolute requirement as established, high amenity Council and private TPO trees should be considered as a constraint.

- 6.24 In relation to tree loss, 5.3 of the AIA states:

‘However, the worse case, based on the maximum building footprint being delivered, would require the loss of 15 trees including 3 B category trees, 10 C category trees and 2 U category trees’.

This would require the removal of 5 of the 7 TPO trees, 3 of which are category ‘B’ trees, i.e. those which are expected to be retained during redevelopment. Arguably, being on the perimeter of the site, this could have been achieved and would give new development instant softening.

- 6.25 Paragraph 5.5 of the AIA goes on to say:

‘however should trees T8, T9, T11 and T12 need to be removed this will have an impact on the Vastern Road street scene which would be mitigated with new landscaping secured as part of a reserved matters or detailed planning application’.

As per Policy EN14 individual trees should be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance The principle of removing high quality, established trees should be avoided just because new trees can be provided - in this case it is unclear whether suitable mitigation can actually be provided. If this principle were accepted across the Borough, the age range of the tree stock would be negatively affected and we would lose the benefits of established, mature trees.

- 6.26 In relation to retained trees T17 & T18 on Caversham Road, 5.9 of the AIA states:

‘The location of the boundary for Plot A lies along the edge of the existing crown extents and requires consideration for future crown growth. Both London plane and Norway maple species are tolerant of pruning and the form of the trees will allow approximately 1.5m crown reduction of the eastern aspect of the tree canopies to suitable growth points, as such there is no concern raised regarding the maximum western extent of development proposed in Plot A’.

However, redevelopment of a site should be taken is an opportunity to give existing, high quality retained trees an improved environment, in this case greater canopy spread space to avoid the need for repeated pruning due to the position of a building. We have had to approve minor reduction of the Plane due to its proximity to TGI Friday (Appendix 6 - app ref 191718) which demonstrates that more space is needed that provided by the appeal scheme.

- 6.27 It is not clear how T16 (RBC Plane tree) will factor into the proposals to allow for access to the east-west route between the site and the adjacent site.
- 6.28 Paragraph 6.1.4 (Urban Edge / Vastern Rd frontage) of the Design Code includes the following as a ‘mandatory requirement’:

‘The development will seek to retain existing trees along Caversham Road of high value where possible’.

And as discretionary requirements includes:

‘Mature tree specimens could be provided to mitigate any losses from site enabling development. Large species where possible’.

- 6.29 In relation to the ‘mandatory requirements’ given in the Design Code, there is no evidence in submissions to indicate that existing, protected trees have been considered at all and the terminology *‘will seek to’* does not commit to tree retention, as is expected and required.
- 6.30 It can be seen from the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan that this only indicatively shows the retention of two of the seven TPO trees, those being T1 (Plane) and T2 (Maple) of the TPO - T17 & T18 respectively in the AIA. With reference to tree categorisation within BS5837:2012 *‘Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction’*, T1/T17 is an ‘A’ category tree and ‘T2/T18’ is a ‘B’ category tree.

Extract from the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan with two TPO trees referred to within the circle:



Figure 17: Extract showing retained TPO trees

- 6.31 It can be seen from this plan that the potential western edge of Plot A sits near the edge of the canopy of these trees, hence facilitative pruning would be required. The AIA confirms that pruning would be required, which would thereafter have to be repeated to maintain clearance, the trees then not being able to achieve their maximum potential and hence greater environmental benefits.
- 6.32 BS5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' gives guidance in 5.3.4 on new buildings in relation to existing trees in relation to shading, privacy, direct damage, future pressure to remove and seasonal nuisance. It give guidance, in relation to future pressure for removal, when integrating existing trees into new development, as detailed in Section 5.
- 6.33 It is reasonable to apply the same concern about proximity in relation to future pressure to prune a tree. Repeated pruning will create new wounds every time, each an entry point for pathogens, so potentially harmful to the health of the trees. A building in close proximity will result mean the trees cannot achieve their maximum size without conflict.
- 6.34 Arboricultural Research Note (Issued by the DOE Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service): '*The Ultimate Size and Spread of Trees Commonly Grown in Towns*' includes reference to the issues faced if trees are too big for their surroundings, as detailed in Section 5.

- 6.35 The requirements of policy, particularly EN14, is clear that development ‘*shall make provision for tree retention*’; that being successful long-term retention in order to protect trees ‘*from damage or removal*’. The adopted Tree Strategy supports the aims of this policy, particularly Objective 11 ‘Trees & Development’ (see 2.2.5 of my SoC).
- 6.36 Other national guidance recognises that existing trees should be properly considered and, where retained, need to be given sufficient space.
- 6.37 The appeal scheme does not properly acknowledge the loss of protected trees, with the parameter plans showing the maximum footprint abutting the Highway, hence with no possibility of retaining any of the protected trees, which sit on the site boundary of the Vastern Road frontage, as can be seen on the TPO plan in Appendix 1. Nor does the appeal scheme address tree retention, with only two of the seven protected trees being acknowledged in any submissions, except the AIA, with no demonstration that those two trees can be retained without repeated pruning being required as a result of proximity of Plot A. The appeal scheme therefore fails to comply with Policy, other adopted documents and national guidance.

Biodiversity & the Green Network

- 6.38 Sufficient landscaping will be provided to result in a biodiversity net gain.
- 6.39 The landscaping principles must, however, demonstrate that opportunities to enhance the green network have been maximised in order to comply with EN12, which on this site can also contribute to linking nearby ‘Green Links’ and ‘Areas of Identified Biodiversity Interest’.
- 6.40 Large canopy trees are a key element of the green network, hence the lack of demonstration that these can be accommodated results in a lack of demonstration that the biodiversity enhancements have been maximised to ‘enhance the quality and integrity of the Green Network’.

7.0 Summary & Conclusion

Summary

Landscaping

- 7.1 Landscaping is an integral part of this site to provide the ‘in principle’ features indicated in the RSAF and to meet local plan policies and the aims of our Tree Strategy and BAP (along with Reading Climate Change Action Plan, to respond to Reading climate emergency and aim for a carbon zero Reading by 2030).
- 7.2 The site demands large canopy trees on the Vastern Road frontage, with provision of tree planting extending round into Caversham Road, in order to respond to the need to maximise canopy cover due to the site’s designations with the adopted Tree Strategy. This in turn will maximise the biodiversity enhancements on the site as part of the overall landscape provision. The appellant has not, in my view, appreciated or acknowledged the need for large canopy trees.
- 7.3 As highlighted in my SoC and within this PoE, if the proposed parameters were approved, it is possible that (within the building height restrictions) they may not allow sufficient land for the required landscaping. It has not been demonstrated that the maximum developable footprint, alongside the minimum floorspace, would leave the space necessary for these other requirements. If development were to take place to the maximum extent permitted by the parameter plans this would not allow appropriate landscaping to be provided in accordance with a condition, contrary to the appellant’s stance that appropriate landscaping (not defined by the appellant) can be provided via condition. This is exacerbated by the lack of clarity on how the different levels (between the site and Highway) will be dealt with and how the required pedestrian and cycle path will be integrated with the required tree planting and with the public Highway.
- 7.4 Clear advice on tree and landscape requirements has been given to the appellant from the pre-application stage yet the appeal scheme fails to demonstrate how the required provisions will be accommodated.

Trees

- 7.5 As expected by policy EN14 and objectives of the adopted Tree Strategy, the successful integration of existing high amenity trees, particularly when protected by a TPO, is expected as part of the landscape delivery on new development sites.
- 7.6 The appeal submissions neither fully acknowledge the loss of protected trees nor confirm that the final footprint will allow any trees that are retained to be allowed sufficient space for growth without future conflict.
- 7.7 In my extensive experience of dealing with the conflicts between occupiers and trees, the matter of proximity of tree canopies to buildings is a common one and raises concerns over, for example, reduced light levels, potential damage to the building and perceived safety concerns. Such concerns then lead to pressure to prune trees which otherwise could have grown to their full potential, unimpeded, if greater space had been afforded for their canopies. As detailed in 5.43, there are multiple benefits of large canopy trees over narrow crowned trees. The ability to reach their full potential is important in order to maximise the environmental benefits they provide.

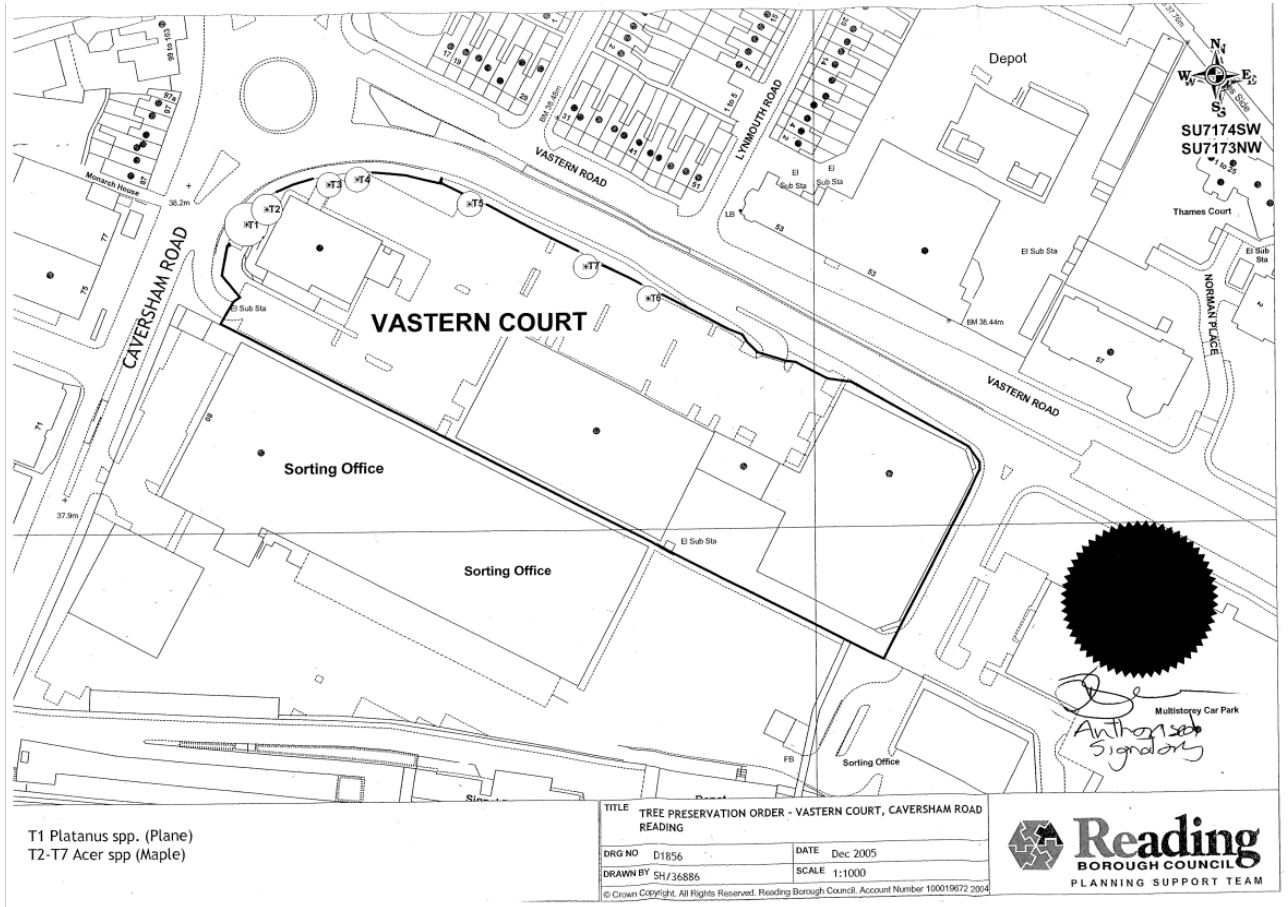
Biodiversity & the Green Network

- 7.8 The site is situated in a location that provides an opportunity to link existing, identified 'green links' and 'areas of identified biodiversity opportunity'. As such, alongside ensuring a net gain in biodiversity, the biodiversity provision should be maximised to, in turn, maximise the enhancement of the Green Network.
- 7.9 This enhancement should be maximised, not just through the successful integration of existing large canopy trees, but also through the planting of large canopy trees on the Vastern and Caversham Road frontage, which would also accord with other policy requirements.
- 7.10 The nature of the proposals, with reference to the Parameter plan, Design Code and DAS discussed within this PoE, do not demonstrate that final development can allow provision for these large canopy trees.

Conclusion

- 7.11 Clear guidance was given in my memo of 28/2/19 (CD 7.39) in response to pre-application 190513 on both tree and landscape expectations. Concerns and reiteration of these expectations were given in my memo of 27/4/20 (CD 2.9) on the current application. The appellant's submissions have not satisfactorily addressed these matters hence do not demonstrate compliance with Policy and other adopted documents.
- 7.12 Given the uncertainty of final footprint, it is not clear from submissions how the existing TPO trees could be retained and if they are, how they could be provided with sufficient space to avoid future conflict. The Illustrative Landscape Masterplan illustrates the confined space for tree retention and tree planting on the main frontages if, in accordance with the Parameter plans, development was built out to the greatest extent. In addition, the Parameter submissions under consideration include a minimum floorspace and it has not been demonstrated that this, alongside the building height restrictions, would allow sufficient land for other factors, such as landscaping and tree retention.
- 7.13 Given this uncertainty and lack of confirmation that the required landscaping and tree retention provisions could be accommodated in a final design, it is not considered that conditions could satisfactorily address these matters and secure the necessary requirements. The appellant's SoC was limited in its response to these matters hence did not provide information to assist in order for the Council to conclude differently.
- 7.14 I consider that the appeal proposals are not fully in accordance with the National and Local policies, adopted documents and with the national guidance discussed in this PoE. The Inspector is therefore respectfully requested to dismiss the appeal .

Appendix 1 - Plan for TPO 3/06



T1 Platanus spp. (Plane)
 T2-T7 Acer spp (Maple)

TITLE		TREE PRESERVATION ORDER - VASTERN COURT, CAVERSHAM ROAD READING	
DRG NO	D1656	DATE	Dec 2005
DRAWN BY	SH/36886	SCALE	1:1000
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**Appendix 2 - Arboricultural Research Note (Issued by the
DOE Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service): 'The
Ultimate Size and Spread of Trees Commonly Grown in
Towns' dated May 1990**



Arboriculture Research Note

Issued by the DOE Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service.

THE ULTIMATE SIZE AND SPREAD OF TREES COMMONLY GROWN IN TOWNS

by S J Hodge, Arboriculture Researcher, and J E J White, Dendrologist,
Westonbirt Arboretum.

Summary

Published information on the ultimate sizes of the commonly planted amenity trees reflects performance in open grown positions. This Note reports sizes of trees growing in urban conditions. If the data are used when selecting trees for urban situations the need for future expensive pruning and early felling can be reduced.

Introduction

1. Arboriculturists are frequently faced with the problem of managing trees that are too big for their surroundings. This may be the result of established trees being retained and incorporated into intensive development to create a mature appearance. In other instances the problem arises because the species selected for planting was inappropriate for the space available, for example, between buildings. In either case expensive management is needed to make the tree fit man's environment rather than to improve the growth of the tree.
2. Knowledge of the maximum height a species may achieve under ideal conditions and the height and spread normally found in town plantings is therefore important for designers.

Published Data

3. Gruffydd, (1987) details normal ultimate crown spread. However these figures may have little value where the terminal shoot of a tree has been cut out in the nursery to encourage development of a bushy head ~ (BS3936). This tends to produce a number of wide-spreading, upward sweeping branches. In addition the microclimate of a town, proximity of buildings and traffic may all influence the development of the crown.
 4. Mitchell, et al (in press) provide the height of the tallest tree of the species recorded in Britain. These trees were generally growing in rural areas. Plantings in towns frequently utilise selected cultivars so that the maximum height may differ from the true species. This is especially true when propagation has been by budding or grafting when the root stock, the scion and the environment will all affect the development of the tree.
 5. The table summarises the published data on tree sizes for the 23 species most commonly encountered in towns. In addition the table includes information based on observation of the same species growing in urban situations.
-

Species group	Tallest Known (Mitchell <i>et al</i>) (m)	Ultimate Spread of the Crown (Gruffydd) (m)	Normal Ultimate Height in an Urban Situation (m)
Maple	30	18	18
Cherry	13	8	9
Rowan	20	H	9
Birch	28	14	17
Whitebeam	23	10	18
Lime	44	16	30
Sycamore	37	20	28
Ash	41	18	17
Plane	48	18	30
Hawthorn	16	8	9
<i>Robinia</i>	29	14	15
Common alder	25	14	15
Hornbeam	30	16	18
Beech	46	20	30
Cypress	40	12	24
Crab apple	12	8	7
Wild cherry	31	16	18
Willow	32	14	18
Pine	36	8	20
Apple	-	9	8
Plum	12	8	8
Oak	42	20	22
Horse chestnut	37	20	28

Recommendation

6.

When selecting trees to plant into urban streets and other restricted positions in towns consideration should be given to the likely mature spread and height of the species so that expensive pruning does not become a requirement. In addition, use of a tree with an ultimate mature size appropriate for the surroundings should ensure that otherwise valuable trees do not have to be felled prematurely due to their size.

References

Gruffydd, B. (1987) Tree form, size and colour - a guide to selection planting and design. E and F N Spon, London.

Mitchell, A. F.; Hallett, V.E; J.E.J. White (in press) Champion Trees in the British Isles. Forestry Commission Field Book 10. HMSO, London.

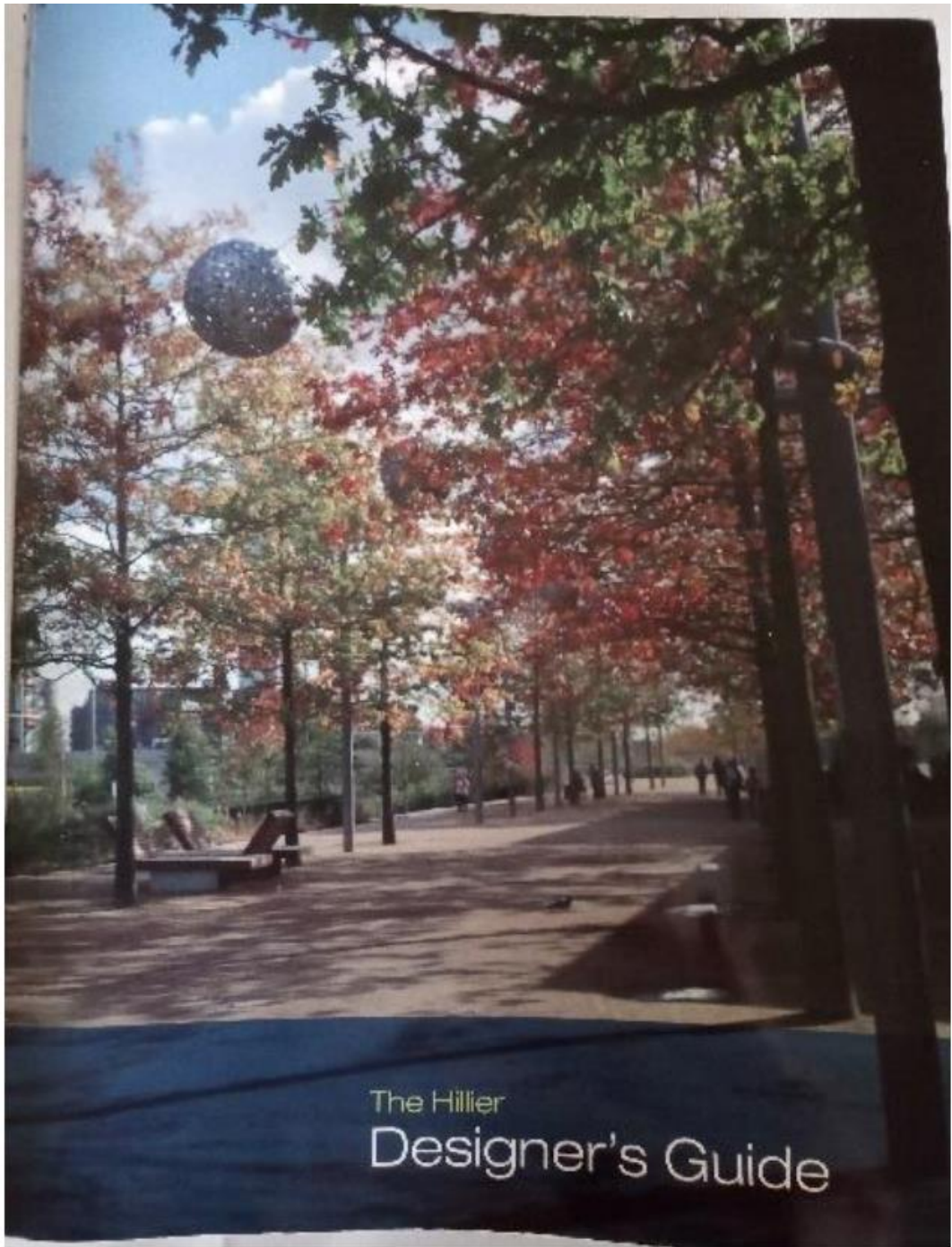
May 1990

Published by:— Arboriculture Advisory & Information Officer

Appendix 3 - Hillier History & The Hillier Designers Guide (extracts - for reference to tree size)

The Hillier Designers Guide (Appendix 1) is a guide produced by Hillier Tree Nurseries to provide advice on tree selection and is well used by the tree & landscape industry as a reference. For information (taken from their website):

'Hillier was founded in 1864 by Edwin Hillier and remains a family run nursery with the fifth generation now actively involved in the business. Hillier employs 500 people across its wholesale nursery, trees and garden centre divisions and is based in Ampfield in Hampshire. Hillier has been involved in the RHS Chelsea Flower Show from the early days and is the most successful exhibitor in the show's history with a record 72 consecutive RHS Chelsea Gold Medals. We have run many major contract growing projects, including for Olympic Park, London; Commonwealth Games, 9 | P a g e Glasgow; Rose Bowl, Hampshire Cricket Club; Bullring Shopping Centre, Birmingham'



Hillier Nurseries Limited
Ampfield House, Ampfield, Romsey Hampshire SO51 9PA
Tel: 01794 368733 Fax: 01794 368813
Email: trees@hilliertrees.co.uk
www.hilliertrees.co.uk

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Introduction

How to use the 'Designers Guide'

Select a tree

- certain factors need to be considered.

- **Species characteristics** – berry, flower, leaf, autumn colour, native, etc. Refer to our descriptions as they are factual, informative and honest. We have included colour photos of every tree as it's what our customers want and a picture is worth a thousand words! In this edition we have included more additional seasonal photos inset.
- **Size of tree** Ultimate tree size shown as small (5-10m), medium (10-20m), large (20m plus).
- **Size after 25 years** Since the lifespan of various species can be anything between 30 and 300 plus years, an indication is given of the approximate size likely to be reached in 25 years. This is shown as the tree shape symbol, and sizes given as height x diameter spread in that order.
- **Suitability to site conditions** Full explanatory notes in the index cover tolerance of dry or wet soils and lime. Each tree is given a hardness rating.

Specification

Once you have selected your tree species you need to consider the following:

■ Size of tree when planted

All trees are specified as girth size with their 'girth' being measured in centimetres one metre above ground level (i.e. 12-14cm girth).

Semi-mature trees start at 20cm girth and progress in increments of 5cm, e.g. 20-25cm, 25-30cm, etc.

Conifers and multi-stemmed trees are generally measured by height in increments of 50cm, e.g. 350-400cm and supplied as a feathered or bush form.

When conifers are specified by girth size, this indicates a clear stem is required.



Bare root tree lifting

The following pictures indicate the size of tree to expect for your specification.



Quercus robur
14-16cm

Check availability

Not all species are commercially available in all sizes. We have shown by ticking the relevant boxes our usual availability of stock and in broad terms this is a sensible guide to what is generally available on the commercial market.

Table Showing approximate Height/Girth Size

Girth (cm)	Description	Height (m)
8-10	Standard	2.5-3.0
10-12	Select standard	3.0-3.5
12-14	Heavy standard	3.5-4.0
* 14-16	Extra heavy standard	4.0-4.5
16-18	Advanced nursery stock	4.0-4.5
* 18-20	Advanced nursery stock	4.5-5.0
20-25	Semi-mature	5.0-5.5
* 25-30	Semi-mature	5.5-6.0
30-35	Semi-mature	6.0-6.5
* 40-45	Super semi-mature	7.0 +

* sizes shown in picture



Bare root tree

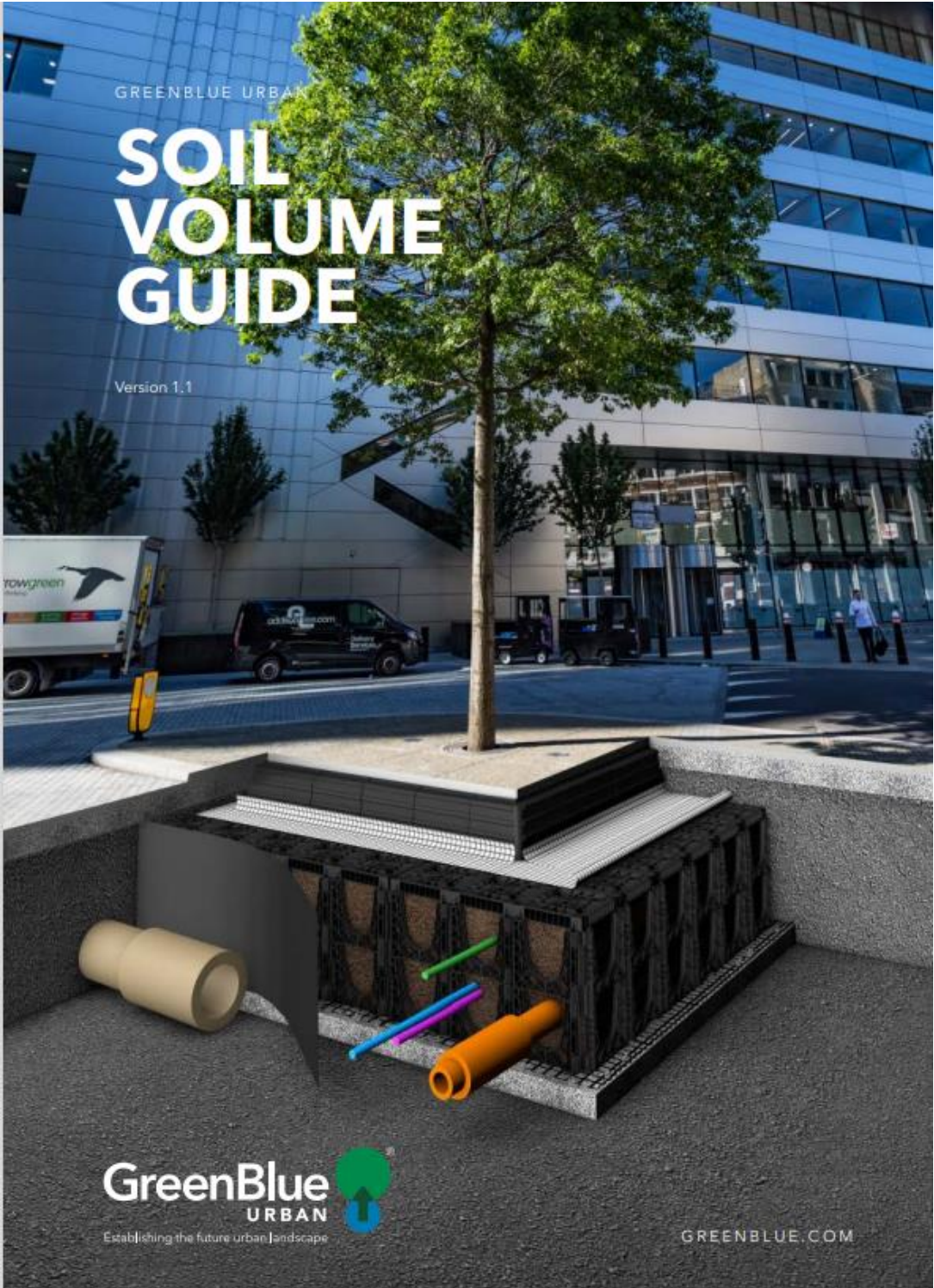


Co-extruded polythene bag

Appendix 4 - Green Blue company information & Urban Soil Volume Guide Version 1.1 (extracts)

GreenBlue Urban are a long-established company regularly used by tree & landscape professionals for guidance on tree planting, particularly in terms of tree pit design. For information (taken from their website):

'Founded in 1992, GreenBlue Urban was set up to research and provide solutions for assisting trees in their battle to establish in urban spaces. With the goal of drastically improving urban planting success and increasing leaf canopy in urban areas, we began a programme to analyse the challenges, causes of failure and reasons for premature mortality in urban trees, which continues to this day. We have examined the impact the poor planting can have on urban infrastructure, identified key issues in both of these areas and systematically researched possible solutions and designed practical products and systems to address them. Local authorities, landscape architects, engineers and other related professionals increasingly turn to GreenBlue for guidance and best practice advice on tree planting implementation. As the UK's market leader in specialist tree pit products, we are able to offer more than 20 years of frontline experience in the field. Our support service, unrivalled in the tree-planting world, can help you to achieve your vision'



Trees and soil volume

For over a quarter of a century, GreenBlue Urban has been working to ensure that every tree, wherever planted, has the chance to achieve species potential. Now, we are closer than ever to arriving at this objective, and it is very clear that the soil volume provided for the tree is probably the most critical single element in achieving long term establishment.

There are many studies from leading academic institutions, and practical examples of real-life testing, providing formulae for calculating correct soil volume provision. These are worked out using different methods, including nutritional requirements, water storage, root establishment characteristics and others. GreenBlue Urban have carefully reviewed a large number of these and are pleased to offer this publication as a guide to best practice.

Any soil volume guide can only be that; a guide. Differing clones of the same tree species can have different rooting requirements, and water draw can be widely altered by something as simple as a windier planting location, as wind speeds radically change evapo-transpiration rates from the tree.

This new guide is the first ever in the world to bring together these soil volume studies with the extensive knowledge that we have relating to tree species. Now, a quick reference will show the recommended volume for the species under consideration (based on canopy size at 25 years), and a useful explanation of the likely tree pit cost, and lifespan of the tree given the volumes available.

We welcome you to our latest tool for specifiers helping us all to establish the future urban landscape.

How to use this guide

Indexed alphabetically, more than 80 tree species are listed with their corresponding recommended soil volumes. All of the species in this book have been placed into the classes below. For species not listed in this publication, a generalized target soil volume has also been provided.



Small Tree

(3 m / 10 ft Canopy Diameter): 5½m³ / 190 cu ft



Small to Medium Tree

(4½ m / 15 ft Canopy Diameter): 10m³ / 350 cu ft



Medium Tree

(6 m / 20 ft Canopy Diameter): 14m³ / 500 cu ft



Medium to Large Tree

(8 m / 25 ft Canopy Diameter): 24m³ / 880 cu ft



Large Tree

(10 m / 35 ft Canopy Diameter): 31m³ / 1100 cu ft

These five categories can be used as a reference point when referring to pages [30](#) and [31](#) of this publication in order to assess projected tree longevity, soil volume and cost of planting.

You can click the tabs on the left to navigate through this guide.

Appendix 5 - Core Document list and references (applicable to RfR9)

- 1.2 Outline Planning Application Booklet, dated Feb 2020, by Barton Willmore, received 27/2/20
- 1.16 Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report, ref: 190312-PD-11a, dated Jan 2020, by Tim Moya Associates, received 27/2/20
- 1.34.10.3 Building Plots 17043 PP-102 Rev P2
- 1.47 Design Code Sept 2021 Collado Collins Architects rec 8/10/21
- 1.53 Design and Access Statement - 06 - Development Parameters Sept 2021 Collado Collins Architects rec 8/10/21 (Section 5 of the DAS)
- 1.54 Design and Access Statement - 07 - Illustrative Concept Sept 2021 Collado Collins Architects rec 8/10/21 (Section 6 of the DAS)
- 1.55 Design and Access Statement - 08 - Illustrative Landscape Scheme Sept 2021 Collado Collins Architects rec 8/10/21 (Section 7 of the DAS)
- 2.11 Natural Environment Officer, received 27/4/20
- 2.12 Natural Environment Officer, received 25/1/22
- 3.1 Officer's Committee Report, presented to Reading Borough Council Planning Applications Committee February 15th 2022
- 3.2 Officer's Update Report, presented to Reading Borough Council Planning Applications Committee February 15th 2022
- 3.3 Committee Minutes for Reading Borough Council Planning Applications Committee February 15th 2022
- 4.8 Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- 4.20 Policy EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network 4.21 Policy
- 4.22 Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- 4.23 Policy EN15: Air Quality 4.24 Policy

- 4.26 Policy EN18: Flooding and Drainage**
- 4.48 Policy CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading**
- 4.56 Policy CR11: Station/ River Major Opportunity Area**
- 4.57 Reading Borough Local Plan Proposal Map November 2019**
- 7.1 Reading Station Area Framework SPD (Adopted December 2010)**
- 7.7 Reading Borough Council Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (December 2019)**
- 7.8 Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)**
- 7.9 Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 2021)**
- 7.16 The Reading Climate Change Partnership's (RCCP) Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (November 2020)**
- 7.17 National Design Guide (2021)**
- 7.18 National Model Design Code Part 1: The Coding Process; and Part 2 - Design Guidance (2021 - NMDC Part 1 and Part 2)**
- 7.33 British Standard 5837: 2012 Tree in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - BS Standards Publication**
- 7.36 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
- 7.38 Tree Preservation order 3/06 & TPO Plan relating to Vastern Court**
- 7.40 Natural Environment Officer comments on the Pre-application ref 190513 dated 28/8/19 (saved to file 3/3/22)**
- 7.41 Pre-application response sent by LPA to Applicant 6/12/19 (saved to file 3/3/22)**

Appendix 6 - Tree works application decision 191718



Mr. Matthew Loader
Gristwood and Toms
Blaise Nursery
Kings Weston Road
Lawrence Weston
Bristol
BS11 0XF

Francois Martin
Executive Director for
Economic Growth and
Neighbourhood Services

Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU
☎ 0118 9373787

Our Ref: 191718
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎01189 374294
sarah.duckworth@reading.gov.uk

2nd December 2019

Your contact is:

Sarah Duckworth, Planning & Building Control

Dear Mr. Loader,

REFUSAL OF WORKS & CONSENT FOR LESSER WORKS ON A LONDON PLANE TREE AT VASTERN COURT, CAVERSHAM ROAD, READING - PROTECTED AS T1 OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER 3/06

Thank you for your application dated 28th October 2019 regarding the above.

You have applied to carry out the following works:

T1 - Plane

- Carry out a 2m canopy reduction and an all-round canopy lift to give 3m clearance over footpaths and steps.

This tree is a significant street tree which provides considerable amenity value to Caversham Road. The tree has a large and spreading crown which extends over the highway and is growing close to the adjacent restaurant TGI Fridays.

The Borough Council would not usually support the full canopy of an otherwise healthy protected tree due to the harm this work will have on the long term health and amenity of the tree. To date no information has been submitted to demonstrate that a complete reduction of the tree is necessary in order to alleviate any recorded health and safety concern regarding the tree.

Vastern Court is located in an area of the Borough identified as an Air Quality Management Area where retention of large canopy trees is of greater importance. Furthermore, the tree is growing in an area of the Borough which is identified as having a canopy cover of 10% or less. The tree is visible in far reaching views on the approach from

Caversham Road, sections of which are also designated a 'Tree corridor' within the Borough's adopted Tree Strategy. The Borough Council seeks to preserve and enhance the trees in areas with limited tree cover and along these designated 'Tree Corridors' with a commitment to protect the existing trees.

In view of this, your application to carry out an entire canopy reduction of the tree by 2m has been refused.

I recognise that the low canopy and proximity of the tree to the adjacent building and street furniture may create a nuisance. In view of this, lesser works to provide reasonable clearance between the property and street furniture and to raise the canopy over the paths and adopted highway are approved, subject to the conditions below:

Approved works

Plane (T1 of TPO 03/06)

- Crown lift to give 3m clearance above ground level and 5.5m over the public highway.
- Reduce lateral branches on east (TGI Friday) side of the canopy back to suitable reduction points in order to create 3m canopy clearance to the building using nearest suitable reduction points.
- Reduce branches on west side of the canopy where necessary to create up to 1.5m clearance from the street light using nearest suitable reduction points.

Conditions

1. All tree surgery shall be in accordance with BS 3998: (2010) Tree Work - Recommendations.

Reason: To ensure that all works are carried out in an acceptable arboricultural manner

2. Climbing spikes shall not be used whilst undertaking any form of works on living trees, except on trees to be felled.

Reason: Spikes can cause extensive long-term damage

Informatives

1. You are advised that, in accordance with Part 4, 17 (4) of The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012, this decision is valid for one pruning operation (as per the approved specifications) to be undertaken within two years from the date of this notice, after which the consent lapses and a new application will be required.

2. Removal of dead or dangerous wood: This does not require the formal consent of the Council. However written notice must be given 5 working days in advance of removing dead wood. Where a branch is deemed to be 'dangerous', i.e. where works are 'urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm', you are required to give notice to the Council 'as soon as practicable after the works become necessary'.

3. Disturbance of wildlife: It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to disturb roosting bats or nesting birds. It is advisable to consult your tree surgeon/consultant to agree an acceptable time for carrying out any work. Wildlife and habitat controls are administered by Natural England who can be contacted on 0300 030 6000

4. It is best to avoid works in the period immediately before or during bud burst and leaf fall to minimise the effect on the long-term health of the tree

If you wish to appeal against the Council's refusal of consent to undertake a full canopy reduction of the tree, or against any of the conditions attached to the permitted works, please contact the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of receipt of this letter to obtain the relevant forms:

The Environment Appeals Team
Trees and Hedges
The Planning Inspectorate
Room 3/25, Hawk Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Email: environment.appeals@pins.gov.uk
Tel: 0303 444 5584

If you suffer any loss or damage as a result of this refusal of consent, you may be entitled to recover compensation from the Council. If you wish to make a claim you must do so within 12 months from the date of this decision (or, if you appeal to the Secretary of State, within 12 months from the date of his decision). Claims should be made in writing to the Insurance Section, Reading Borough Council, Civic Centre, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU.

If you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Duckworth

Sarah Duckworth
Assistant Natural Environment Officer