

Vastern Court, Caversham Road, Reading: 328974

Planning Application number: 200328/OUT

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OFFICER RESPONSE TO REVISED I33 'VASTERN ROAD SECTIONS' DATED 11 JULY 2022 (RECEIVED 14/7/22) - COMPARISON WITH ID33 DATED 6 MAY 2022.

The Council provided a note on Vastern Road tree planting (ID39) following the Round Table discussion on 3/5/22 - this confirmed the species in the central reservation; location of culvert and locations of services, providing officer comments on the constraints this posed to tree planting indicated in submissions.

The appellant submitted a Vastern Road Section document (ID33) which confirmed the width of space for tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage, posed how TPO 09 could be retained and indicated tree types for planting. Darren Cook (ID44) and Sarah Hanson (ID45) responded directly to this document.

The appellant has provided an amended 'Vastern Road Sections' document, dated 11 July 2022, (revised ID33) which includes a drawing showing the services and a number of other changes, but which does not respond to ID39, i.e. no written acceptance or acknowledgement of the tree planting restrictions is given. It's the Council's understanding that when the appellant was asked to *produce a note summarising the trees/landscaping/services located along Vastern Road* that it would be in response to ID39 as opposed to a revised ID33. The Council consider that the appellant should be required to respond directly to ID39. It is also noted that the appellant had not responded to ID44 or ID45 either directly or in the revised ID33.

The submission of the revised ID33 was accompanied by a brief explanatory email stating '*The Inspector previously asked for the Appellant to produce a note summarising the trees/landscaping/services located along Vastern Road*' and when the appellant was asked to confirm changes between the original I33 and the revised version, they stated (in Mr Parkinson's email of 14/7/22):

'please note the additional figure 2 on page 2 showing the services locations, and the additional wording on page 5 (Tree Selection) in light of these'.

The Council do not consider that this covers all the changes, which are highlighted and, in view of the lack of explanation or commentary from the appellant, are discussed below:

1.0 5m Exclusion Zone

The original Figure 2 was:

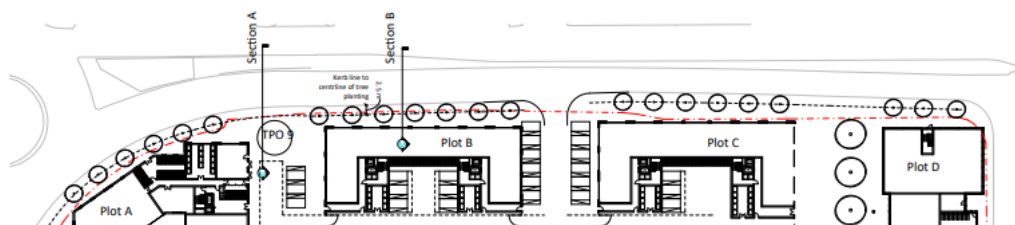


Figure 2. Plan of Vastern Road boundary showing line of trees planted along a line 2.5m from the kerb line.

This has been replaced with a new Figure 2 showing the services along the Vastern Road pavement (going into the corner with Caversham Road) and Figure 3 with the revised

position of potential tree planting, as a result of these services (effectively an amended version of the original Figure 2):

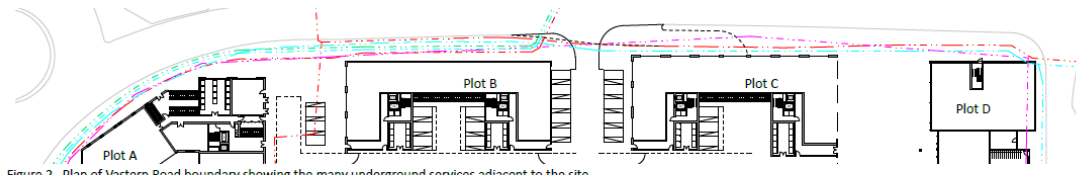


Figure 2. Plan of Vastern Road boundary showing the many underground services adjacent to the site

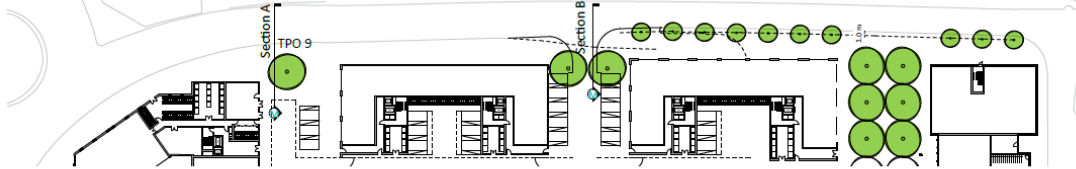


Figure 3. Plan of Vastern Road boundary showing line of trees planted along a line 1.0m from the kerb line where services permit and large canopy trees between the building plots

No commentary is offered alongside these amendments.

The services are not labelled on Figure 2, but it is assumed that the appellant has accepted the existence of the services highlighted in ID39 ‘Note on Vastern Road tree planting’.

It can be seen from the position of these that the indicative tree planting is now considerably more constrained than that indicated on the Original Figure 2 and differs to that shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan within Section 7.8 of the September 2021 Design and Access Statement (CD 1.55). In relation to the tree planting along the Vastern Road frontage, Figure 3 limits this to the frontages of Plots C & D, entirely on Highways land, and limited to ‘a line 1.0m from the kerb line where services permit’. The appellant is confirming that tree planting could only potentially be accommodated in this location and within the limited width (root space). This, however, does not address or take into account the matter of canopy conflict discussed during the Round Table discussion, i.e. to meet with the statutory requirement, the lowest branches would have to be 5.5m above the road at the time of planting - this is dealt with on page 1 of ID39. In addition, no confirmation is provided that the utility providers would be content with a tree planted in such close proximity to their service route (reference the last paragraph of ID39) or that a suitably sized soil volume could be provided for the required large canopy trees.

The appellant has therefore not demonstrated that any tree planting along the Vastern Road frontage would be feasible within the confines of the proposed parameters.

2.0 TPO 09

Due to the addition of a Figure in 1.0, figure 5 (of original ID33) is now Figure 6 and Figure 6 is now Figure 7. Figure 7 has been amended to account for the revised indicative tree planting - the original version (below, left) and revised version (below, right) are provided for comparison:

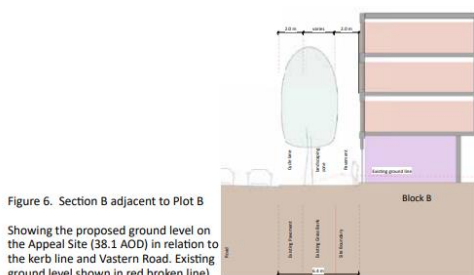


Figure 6. Section B adjacent to Plot B
Showing the proposed ground level on the Appeal Site (38.1 AOD) in relation to the kerb line and Vastern Road. Existing ground level shown in red broken line)

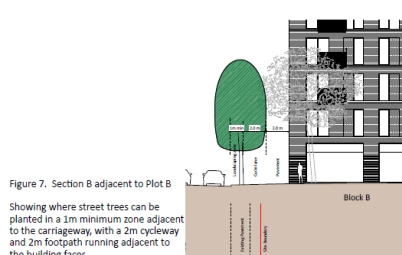


Figure 7. Section B adjacent to Plot B
Showing where street trees can be planted in a 2m minimum zone adjacent to the carriageway, with a 2m cycleway and 2m footpath running adjacent to the building faces.

No changes have been made to address the responses given in ID44 & ID45 to the original ID33 - Figures 4, 5 & 6 (previously 3, 4 & 5) remain unchanged.

It is worth noting that the retention of TPO 09, if even proven to be feasible, is based on an amended footprint for Plot A, so is contrary to the Parameters Plan Revision P2 which the Inspector is being asked to approve.

3.0 Cycle lane / Pavement / landscaping arrangements

This has reduced from 3 figures to 2 with amended text to be consistent with Section 1.0.

It does not make it clear that this relates to Blocks C & D only, but this can be implied from Figure 3.

It is noted that the text associated with Figure 9 states: *'If the desired cycle lane is one way on each side of Vastern Road, there can be a larger minimum (1.5m) landscaping zone adjacent to the kerb'*. However, this 1.5m is not consistent with the 1.0m zone identified in Figure 3 hence it is unclear whether additional width is possible in view of services' constraints.

It should also be noted that the Transport Development Control Manager sets out that no points he identified within ID44 have been referenced, and therefore, the proposed retained width for the segregated footway / cycleway is still non-compliant when assessed against LTN 1-20.

4.0 Tree Selection

The appellant's statement on tree selection and suitability is dealt with in ID45.

Additional text has been added as follows:

'Where the planting proposed will interact with land subject to any wayleaves or easements, then agreements can be reached at reserved matters stage with those utility providers to ensure that the planting does not adversely affect the services present nor prevent the utility providers from accessing their apparatus. Rootbarriers and rootcell systems - both of which control root spread - could be utilised as part of this process'

This leaves the feasibility of tree planting to the reserved matters stage where upon, if the appeal is allowed, the appellant could build out to the full extent of the parameter plan footprint, leaving potential tree planting confined to the limited locations in front of Plots C & D (which has not been agreed with Highways). If at that point it is determined that tree planting is not feasible, then the scheme will be without tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage contrary to EN14, the adopted Tree Strategy and Reading Station Area Framework, in addition to the appellant's indicative planting. The matter should be confirmed prior to a decision. It is considered that without this certainty, on the limited planting at least, the parameter footprint is not acceptable.

The limited planting strip will also restrict species choice, in terms of limiting their ultimate size due to limited soil volume availability hence 'large trees' (height and/or spread) won't be feasible, making space within the site boundary even more important.