Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/E0345/W/21/328974

Planning Application number: 200328/OUT

Site Address: Vastern Court, Caversham Road, Reading

RBC Natural Environment Officer response to Appellant's 'READING PARK STATION RPA for trees Caversham Rd' document dated 18th August 2022

It is assumed that the document is meant to compliment that within 6.1.4 of the Design Code (17/08/22) which states:

6.1.4 (Urban Edge), included as a mandatory element:

> *'The development will retain existing trees along Caversham Road of high value where reasonably practicable taking into account the need to accommodate a vehicular access from Caversham Road, the permitted building lines and root protection areas'*.

The appeal scheme is being determined based on the parameters plans, not the Illustrative Scheme. The footprint of Plot A, on the parameter plan, in relation to trees T17, T18, T7 & T8 (of the AIA) is provided in the appellant's Figure 2. This demonstrates, that T7 & T8 cannot be retained and that no space is available for mitigation planting in that prominent location – confirmation is also given that they could not be retained on the Illustrative Scheme either. Whilst the AIA states that their loss (along with loss of other frontage trees) can be 'mitigated with new landscaping the detail of which would be submitted at the reserved matters stage', this has not been demonstrated by the appellant as a result of the very limited space available for tree planting on the Vastern Road, and Caversham Road, frontage due to the extent of the parameter plan footprint, combined with the confirmed underground constraints (services). This is commented on further in ID39, ID45 and the Council's response to revised ID33. In this respect, the AVR4 – Illustrative Scheme Cumulative in the DAS is misleading as it appears to indicate either the retention of these, or new trees (it is unclear):

Retained or new trees on Vastern Road frontage of Plot A?

AVR4 – Illustrative Scheme Cumulative in DAS

The above AVR4 also appears to indicate a non-fastigiate tree form (at a size significantly larger than planting size), which would not be feasible unless subject to regular pollarding or crown reduction. Neither fastigiate nor regularly reduced trees are desirable on this frontage, if planting is actually feasible at all in view of underground constraints, but large canopy trees are appropriate instead, as detailed in my Proof of Evidence.

Figure 2 further demonstrates and confirms that the footprint of Plot A, as shown on the parameter plan, is closer to T17 & T18 than the existing building. As such, the RPAs will be detrimentally impacted by construction of the new building within RPAs that currently consist of an area with grass and structures of minimal construction (paths, low wall and steps). This impact will likely be compounded by the increased foundation depth for the proposed multi-storey block, as opposed to the current single storey restaurant. Whilst it is assumed by the appellant that the roots will not extend beyond the existing building line, we do not know this with certainly as we do not know the depth of the existing foundations and roots can extend under adjacent buildings if growing conditions are favourable. In addition, the closer proximity will require pruning to allow for Plot A itself and for working space (scaffolding) and creates further pressure for pruning as a result of canopies being close to multiple residential windows – a situation that currently does not exist. Currently, the upper canopies of the trees can be allowed to grow over the single storey building, providing a wider canopy with greater environmental benefits and avoiding the need to prune to the detriment of the trees' appearance:

A multi-storey building in close proximity will require pruning, as commented above, of these high amenity value trees.

The only element agreed from the appellant's RPA document is that, if approved, an Arboricultural Method Statement would be required to try and limit the harm and would need to include demolition.