

Application Number & Location:-22- TREE CONSULTATION

Proposal: Erection of a three storey building with basement to provide a 61 bedroom care home and associated accommodation, parking,

Date: 06/03/2023

Terminology:

Tree preservation order (TPO), root protection radius (RPR), root protection area (RPA), tree protection fencing (TPF), ground protection (GP), construction exclusion zone (CEZ), arboricultural impact assessment (AIA), tree constraints plan (TCP), arboricultural method statement (AMS), tree protection plan (TPP). National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG). British Standard 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations (BS5837:2012). Cellular Confinement System (CCS).

Documents :

AIA from David Archer Associates dated 2022

Drainage strategy from Herrington Consulting dated 27th February 2023

Proposed site plan DWA Architects ref: P70139 07

It should be noted that an unfulfilled tree condition remains undischarged on the property for 2 replacement trees, these have not been planted and will form a constraint to the development when planted, the replacement of these trees is an enforceable condition.

The proposal is for a care home and basement with associated car parking

The character of the area is defined as 'Historic routes' including vegetation of hedgerows and mature trees, which help to provide a softening element to properties, the trees and hedges provide a strong green element and character.

The current garden/open space behind the main frontage is laid to soft ground with a number of trees either offsite (SCC Trees) or within the Site which are protected under a TPO.

The Beech in the NE corner is a tree of significant size and provides a very high level of amenity, it is in total keeping with the area, it is a significant constraint to the site, as is the remaining trees within the adoptable highway outside of the site with two Oaks on the NW corner. These trees have been reduced poorly but the trees are alive and so remain a constraint.

There is an access road to the property on the side of 61, although not adopted highway it is likely to be built to near the same standards and as such will be a barrier to root development and so the RPA of the Beech T7 has not been adequately offset to account for the likely site constraints, the footway and ditch to the north of the site will act in the same way, the more likely root pattern will be for the vast majority of both large and small roots will be located within the site itself.

5.3.1 BS 5837. States that the default position should be that any new structures (including surfacing) should be located outside the minimum root protection area of trees to be retained. Due allowance and space should also be given for the future growth and maintenance of existing trees. If structures (including hard surfacing) are proposed within the root protection area of retained trees it will require an overriding justification. (5.3.1 of BS5837). The project arboriculturist will also need to demonstrate that the trees can remain viable, the area lost to encroachment can be compensated for elsewhere contiguous with the root protection area (RPA) and mitigation measures to improve the soil environment of the tree can be implemented.

Considering the location of trees and the proposed site layout it will not be possible to provide compensation elsewhere contiguous within the RPA's and provide mitigation measures to improve the soil environment for this tree. The project arboriculturalist hasn't demonstrated the trees can remain viable or that there is overriding justification for the development within the minimum RPA.

The British standard goes on to say at 7.4.2.3 that New permanent hard surfacing should not exceed 20% of any existing unsurfaced ground within the RPA & 7.5.3 (5837) Where a slab for a minor structure (e.g. shed base) is to be formed within the RPA, it should bear on existing ground level, and should not exceed an area greater than 20% of the existing unsurfaced ground.

Even without the offset as referenced, the intrusion into the RPA of T7 as currently shown in the AIA is approximately 33%. Significant greater than the 20% referenced, although the car parking is not considered a light structure. Further to this once the offset is appropriately offset the incursion will be much greater. The default position however remains in that all development remains outside of the minimum RPA unless there is an overriding justification for the deviation.

The proposed driveway/parking area at the front of the site would not be considered a light structure and although its recognised that a cellular system is proposed this would not overcome the likely harm that would impact on the tree and significantly reduce the available soft ground in which the tree currently exploits. Reducing the area of soft ground reduces the ability to absorb water and nutrients and carry out effective gaseous exchange.

The position of the Oaks Ref: T1, 2 and 3, my comments on the likely intrusion of these is as above and is unacceptable, although some offsetting has been made for these trees from existing site constraints but there is still a considerable incursion into the RPA for these trees. There is also a ditch outside of the site further constraining the trees, the proposal would effectively lock these trees into a very small strip of land without enough space for the trees to remain viable, the position of the footway outside of the site would constrain these trees further.

Drainage, services and utilities.

Looking at the proposed drainage drawings recently provided, it appears that a water main is proposed at the entrance of the site through or in near proximity to the Oaks at the front, it is not clear if this is a proposed connection or the existing, no further information has been provided as to how this would be installed, however, all utilities and services should be located outside of the RPA of retained trees, there appears to be significant services proposed close to these trees and is considered unacceptable. A number of drains and manholes etc are shown within the RPA of T7,

5.3.2 of BS:5837 - The cumulative effects of incursions into the RPA, e.g. from excavation for utility apparatus, are damaging and should be avoided. Where there is evidence that a tree has been previously subjected to damage by construction activity, this should be taken into account when considering the acceptability of further activity within the RPA.

Basement

The basement of the development is reflective of the built form but not the development footprint which will likely be much greater to provide the working space needed to form the retaining walls for a basement, any future proposal should include the working space as well, its likely that this will incur further into the RPA of onsite trees.

Landscaping

Overall post development there would be very little green space available for landscaping which would enhance the frontage of the property and effectively screen the development from the road, a scheme of this size should include a significant number of trees and provide the requisite amount of soil volume to ensure that they can succeed in future years and not be contained by hard landscaping, An indicative site layout has proposed planting along the front boundary, these proposed trees at the front are considered insufficient and the outstanding conditional requirement from a previous tree work application would effectively mean that only three trees were being planted as part of the development and mostly under the existing canopies of retained or offsite trees which is unacceptable. The shape and size of the dwelling means that there would be little to no remaining space would exist for future planting without foreseeable issues over the height and spread of the trees in future years.

NPPF

The potential loss of these trees would be against the aims of the NPPF in that development should be sympathetic to the local character and history as well as effective layout and landscaping and that trees are retained in proposed developments not just in the short term but for the life of the whole development, the current proposal would not achieve this.

Recommendation

Overall the proposal for the development of this site is likely to lead to the loss of the mature vegetation on site which helps to form the character of the area as well as provide a significant level of amenity, the development within the RPA of protected trees is considered unacceptable.

The proposed layout would in all likelihood lead to the loss of these principal landscape features either in the short term or over a short number of years post development of the site and any loss or deterioration of these would harm the amenity and character of the area, the proposal does not conform to the current British standard and is contrary to the aims and objectives of Policy DM9 and the NPPF and as such I cannot support a scheme as shown.

Alastair Barnes
Arboricultural Officer
Alastair.Barnes@Surreyheath.gov.uk