



HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land To The North and South of Mercer Road Warnham
DESCRIPTION:	Redevelopment of the site to provide 304 residential units, parking, a retail unit, public car park, public open space, attenuation basins and landscaping
REFERENCE:	DC/25/0151
RECOMMENDATION:	Holding Objection / Modification / Refusal
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION: The submitted Arboricultural Implications Report (AIR) is a fair assessment of the quality, condition and landscape importance of the tree stock within the sites boundaries and those located off site. However, concerns are raised with how development is proposed within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of certain trees of high landscape importance and merit.	

MAIN COMMENTS:

Initial observations.

I note that the AIR report highlights in para 1.3.2. that the trees recorded as part of the survey were last assessed on the 18th of November 2021. As such, it is likely that the DBH data and the extent of development shown within the RPA of retained trees, as advised in drawings No. SJA TPP 23536-043 (1of2) & SJA TPP 23536-043 (2of2) both dated Dec 2024 may not represent an accurate representation of the extent of the tree's RPAs due to the seasonal growth that will have occurred since the initial data was recorded. It is generally accepted that mature trees with full crowns such as the Limes and Horse chestnuts abutting Mercer Road, and within the stie would have a mean growth in girth of around one inch (2.5 cm) a year. Thus, the DBH data does not appear to be up to date; confirmation should be sought on the DBH and RPA information and if it has been based on the Nov 2021 survey data.

In total 224 individual trees, 15 groups of trees, 3 hedgerows, and 1 area of woodland have been recorded as growing within or immediately adjacent to the site.

3 individual trees have been recorded as category 'A' trees, these are all oaks - T59, T79 and T229. 105 categories 'B' trees have been recorded and 94 trees are assessed as category 'C' trees, and 22 trees have been recorded as category U trees, which have been deemed to be unsuitable for retention due to their poor physiological and structural condition; from my observations made on site, I do not have any concerns with the categorization of the trees.

Veteran trees and Ancient woodland observations.

2 veteran trees have been identified, both trees are oaks. These are T57 to the West of Pondtail farm, and the offsite T79 is located near the southeast corner of the site. Additionally, the northern boundary of the site is bordered by an area of designated ancient woodland, and two Oaks have been recorded as notable trees T91 and T97. Notable trees do not benefit from the same level of protection under the NPPF as Ancient and Veteran trees, however, given that they have the capacity to eventually become veteran trees their successful retention in the long term, is in my opinion, equally as important as the successful retention of the veteran trees at the site.

The area of Ancient Woodland (AW) to the north has been allocated an appropriate minimum buffer zone of at least 15 metres. Whereby, from the submitted information it is apparent that no part of the proposed development would encroach within the buffer or the Ancient Woodland, which is satisfactory, this is also the case for the Veteran trees at the site.

In addition, I would be in full support of the proposed erection of a formal barrier along the edge of the 15m AW buffer, in the form of post and rail chestnut fencing, supported by additional native planting; as is suggested in para 4.2.3. of the AIR. In this respect, it would be preferable if native defensive planting, such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Spindle, Common buckthorn and dog rose were used to help maintain the integrity of the buffer and this would help to prevent any future residents from straying from the development to the south into the ancient woodland post-development.

Tree losses observations

Para 5.1.2 of the AIR advises that 5 individual trees are proposed to be removed to facilitate the development proposals. However, within the same paragraph it only lists free trees for removal these being T27, T70 and T104. This also the same as the data provided within "Table 2: Trees to be removed"; confirmation should be sought on what two additional trees require removal.

4 groups of trees and a section of H3 (23.4%) required partial removal; these are G2 (32%), G4 (6.9%), G15 (2.2%) and G17 (11.6%).

It is always regrettable to lose trees of maturity, though in this case, I am not of the view that the specimens in question are of any particularly high level of interest. The younger trees are of course more readily replaceable, while the older trees are not.

Site layout observations.

The site layout as suggested in the Drawings No. SJA TPP 23536-043 (1of2) & SJA TPP 23536-043 (2of2) no: SJA TPP 23011-041f, implies that consideration has been given to the position of the proposed dwellings and more importantly their main garden areas are shown to be sited at an appropriate distance from the mature tree coverage within and around the periphery of the site. If permitted the new dwellings are unlikely to be affected by common tree-related issues with shade, and tree-related detritus; which is positive. Except for the main vehicle and pedestrian access points and footways, for the most part, the extent of direct development at the site is located outside of the RPA of retained trees, although concerns are raised with certain aspects of the scheme, please see RPA conflicts below.

Root Protection Area Conflicts Observations.

Para 5.3.1 of the BS States, **"The default position should be that structures (see 3.10) are located outside the RPAs of trees to be retained. However, where there is an overriding justification for construction within the RPA, technical solutions might be available that prevent damage to the tree(s). - 3.10 structure manufactured object, such as a building, carriageway, path, wall, service run, and built or excavated earthwork. i.e. a new footway.**

Para 7.4.2 of the BS States 7.4.2 Design recommendations - 7.4.2.3 states that - New permanent hard surfacing should not exceed 20% of any existing unsurfaced ground within the RPA.

There are several instances where development is proposed within the RPA of retained trees. As referenced above, The default position of BS 5837: 2012 is that development within the RPAs of trees identified for retention should be avoided, however, in circumstances where the necessity for construction operations to occur within RPAs inevitably arise, and as the BS advises, it needs to be considered whether these can be justified by reference to appropriate methodology and/or protective measures designed to prevent or minimise any resultant adverse effects being caused.

It is noted that the RPA incursions do appear to be within acceptable limits, (below 20%) and alternative construction methods such as no dig above-ground build with porous surfacing have been proposed for the majority of the RPA incursions. However, there are instances where the "technical solutions" proposed to address RPA incursions are to cut the roots under Arb supervision; I would not consider this to be a suitable technical

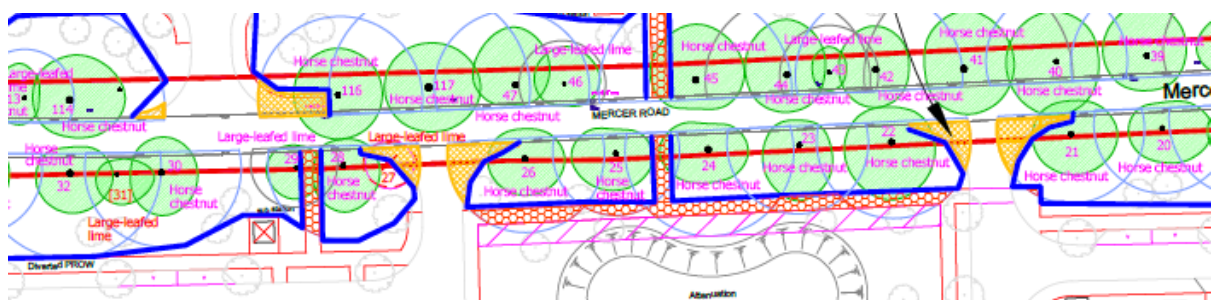
solution to ensure the satisfactory and long-term retention of the affected trees, which due to their roadside location are of high landscape value. It is acknowledged that the areas where root severance is proposed relate to the access points into the site, which would likely need to be built to an adoptable standard to satisfy the requirements of the local Highway's Authority. The overriding justification provided for this method of construction within the RPA is advised at Para 2.4 of the AIR.

"no alternative routes are possible, and the overriding justification is based on the wider benefit of the scheme and the fact that the proposed access arrangements have the least arboricultural harm possible. Any potential adverse impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated as set out below."

While it is accepted that the site needs to be accessed, however, in my opinion, given the green field nature of the site coupled with the likely harm to the affected trees as a result of the extent of the root severance within their RPAs; even if kept to less than 20% of the total RPA and maintained at a depth of no more than 400mm. I would not consider that this reason appropriately justifies how the works for the new access in the RPAs are proposed. As the harm to the impacted trees could be lessened by way of selected tree removal, modification or omission of the access points into the site.

For example, where the new accesses into the southern part of the site pass through the Lime and Horse Chestnut Avenue on Mercers Road. Trees T22, and T26, both Horse chestnuts could be removed and replaced with instant impact extra heavy standard-size trees of the same species to allow for the access to be moved further away from T26, and T21 and reduce the overall impact and likely harm as a result of the root severance proposed to trees T21 and T28.

This would also be the case for the access into the northern section of the site where T116, Horse chestnut could be removed and then replaced. While it is acknowledged that the Lime and Horse chestnut avenue is an important landscape feature that makes a significant and positive contribution to the character and amenities of the area, and although it is regrettable to lose mature trees to development, I am not of the view that the removal of 3 trees from the avenue would give rise to an unacceptable loss of amenity to the area. The reasoning behind this is that the bulk of the avenue would be retained and over time as the replacement trees grow into maturity this harm would be lessened. In addition, this action would lessen the development impacts on trees T21, T28 and T114, and reduce the need for any significant root severance with their RPAs.

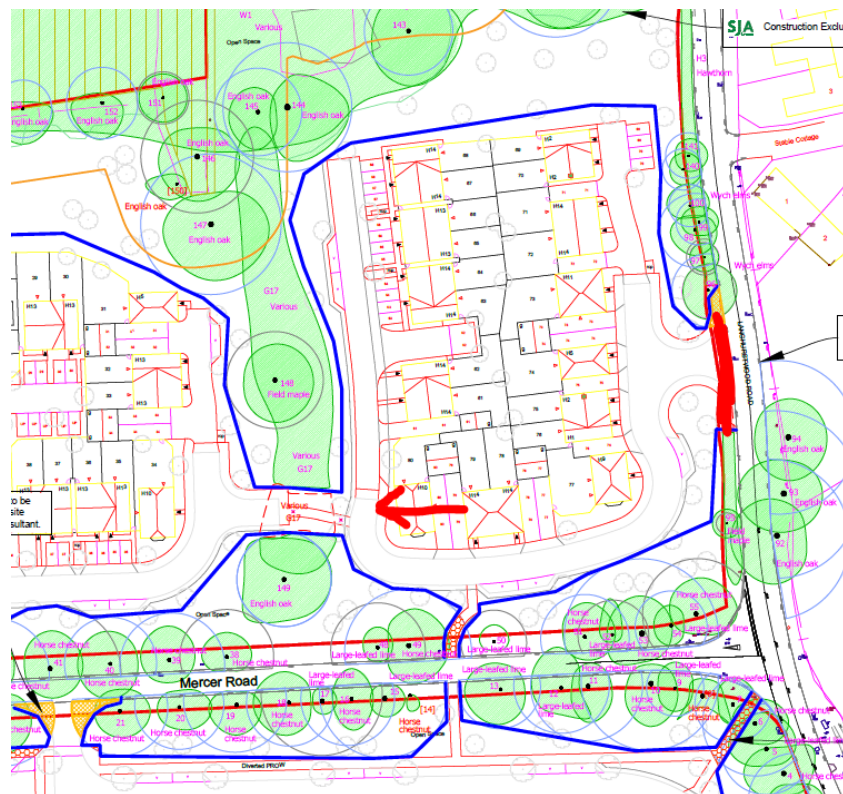


Where the northeast section of the site is proposed to be accessed from the east on Langhurst Wood Road there are RPA issues. In this area, the new access point encroaches on the RPA of the Wych elm T96 by 12.7%. As with the other access points the "*technical solution*" proposed to address the incursion into the RPA is to cut the roots; this doesn't satisfactorily meet with requirements of the BS and will likely result in substantial harm to the tree.

Following its arrival in the 1970s, Dutch elm disease has decimated the elm population in the UK. Therefore, where trees such as Wych elm (the only species of elm that is native to Britain) are found in their natural countryside setting it is vitally important that they are appropriately preserved; not only for their high habitat value due to the large variety of insects they support, but also for their historical, cultural and landscape value.

T96 forms part of a line of Wych elms, that abut Langhurst Wood Road. Due to their roadside location, the trees are readily visible when viewed from within the public domain. This line of trees makes a significant contribution to the amenity value of the area, to which T96 makes a valuable contribution. Amendments could be made to reduce the impact on T96 as a result of the proposed development. Whereby, consideration could be given to move the proposed accesses further to the south, outside of the RPA of T96 or omit this access completely and make use of the western access into this part of the site.

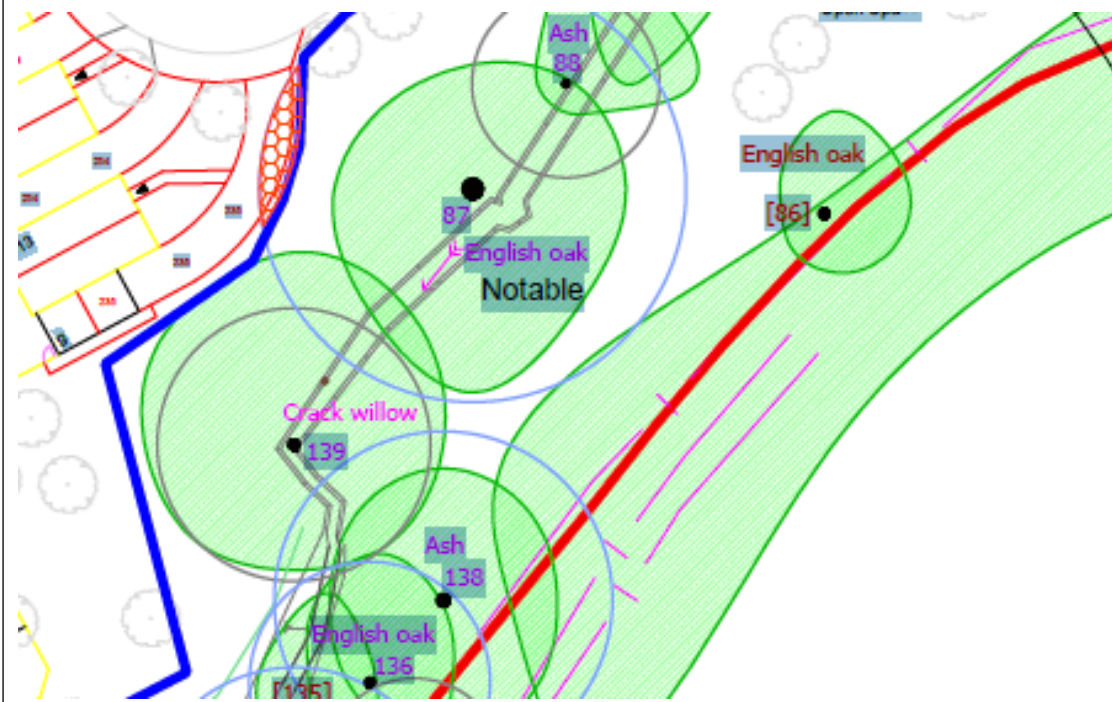
If a solution cannot be found for the access arrangements into this part of the site. I would recommend that the scheme be refused on the grounds of harm to trees of significant historical, cultural, habitat, and landscape value, and due to the proposed construction method, and location of the new access not satisfactorily meeting the minimum requirements of the current industry standard BS 5837 .



Another observation with RPA issues is how the RPA of the notable oak T87 has been plotted using the standard circle. The BS states in para 4.6.2 –

4.6.2 The RPA for each tree should initially be plotted as a circle centred on the base of the stem. Where pre-existing site conditions or other factors indicate that rooting has occurred asymmetrically, a polygon of equivalent area should be produced. Modifications to the shape of the RPA should reflect a soundly based arboricultural assessment of likely root distribution.

Due to T87's location, long-standing relationship with the stream to the south and its form, please see images below, it would suggest that the bulk of its roots would be located to the north and further into the site than is currently shown. Whereby, at its base, the southern stream side of the tree, the buttress root flare is relatively flat, and it appears to extend more laterally, consistent with a tree that has grown up next to a ditch or stream. While on the northern side buttress roots clearly extend to the north into the site, suggesting that the stream would have partly acted as a barrier to any significant root development in the area to the south. While it is likely that some root development will have taken place to the south, I would be of the view that the bulk of the tree's key rooting area would be located to the north of the stream. As such, the true extent of the development proposed within the RPA of T87 has not been demonstrated as part of the submission, and I would recommend that the RPA of this tree be amended to take into account the stream's impact on root development. In addition, given the tree's age and habitat value and likely future veteran status, the driveway for the unit to the north should be moved outside of the RPA completely to meet the minimum requirements of the Bs, as it would not be appropriate to allow any form of development, regardless of the construction method within the RPA of this important tree of high habitat and landscape value, on a green field development when there are clearly options to create a more harmonious relationship between the development and this tree.





ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: None at this stage

NAME:	Andy Bush Arboricultural Officer
DEPARTMENT:	Strategic Planning (Specialist Team)
DATE:	23/04/25