Arboricultural Impact Assessment

Cotefield House
Oxford Road
Bodicote

Prepared by

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For

Asset Max Ltd

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report relates to proposals for the erection of five new dwellings at Cotefield house.

1.2 In February 2021 instructions were received from the project architects, Asset Max Ltd, to undertake a BS 5837:2012 compliant tree survey, to prepare a report of the findings and then to undertake an Arboricultural Impact assessment on the proposed development of the site.

1.3 This appraisal assesses the potential impact of the proposals in relation to trees and proposes possible mitigation measures. This AIA should be read in conjunction with the tree survey and the Arboricultural Impact Plan.

1.4 A desktop study of Cherwell district council records reveals the site is not within a Conservation Area. The site is not believed to be covered by any Tree Preservation Orders, but this is unconfirmed.

1.5 A soil assessment was undertaken using the Cranfield University Soilscapes website and revealed that the soils on the site are freely draining, slightly acid loamy soils.

1.6 An AIA is an iterative process and comments to the design team regarding trees have been made and incorporated into the final design. Where appropriate, reference is made in the text to show how potential impacts on trees have been mitigated by the design process.

2. Results of the Arboricultural Survey

2.1 The tree survey identified 20 individual trees, 5 groups of trees and 1 woodland, for a total of 26 arboricultural features.

2.2 Trees are assessed for quality as follows:

A: Trees of high quality with an estimated life expectancy of at least 40 years.

B: Trees of medium quality with an estimated life expectancy of at least 20 years.

C: Trees of low quality with an estimated life expectancy of at least 10 years or trees with a stem diameter below 15 cms.

U: Trees in such a condition that they cannot realistically be retained as living trees in the context of the current land use for longer than 10 years.

2.3 Of the trees surveyed the numbers of trees in each category are 15 Category B, 4 Category C, and 7 Category U. There were no Category A trees recorded.

2.4 The following table shows the breakdown by species of the individual trees surveyed.

Species	**Number**	**Percentage**
Beech	2	10
Horse Chestnut	2	10
Walnut	2	10
Sycamore	8	40
Cherry	1	5
Holly	1	5
Yew	4	20
Totals	**20**	**100%**

2.5 As can be seen from the table sycamore dominates at the site, also making up the vast majority of 3 of the 5 groups, and a high proportion of the wooded area. Other trees noted to a lesser degree within groups include Elder, Hawthorn and Holly.

3. Arboricultural Implications

Potential Impacts Due to the Current Design and Layout of the Building

3.1 The initial assessment for the proposed new building has been undertaken using drawings supplied by the architects, Asset Max Ltd. Plans used were SITE LOCATION AND BLOCK PLAN. It should be noted that a Topographic survey was not available, and so tree locations and all associated impacts discussed in this report are indicative, based on the arboriculturists judgement.

3.2 Only one arboricultural feature lies within the proposed new building footprint: G4 a group of numerous young sycamores. The group is made up of very densely spaced young trees, none of which are of significant size or quality. Only partial removal is required to facilitate the proposal, but it would be advisable to remove the entirety of the group.

3.3 T8 – a grade B sycamore, is located just to the southwest of the proposal. The edge of the RPA is just inside the red line boundary, and partially impacted by a small amount of indicative new hardsurfacing. While ideally this would be realigned to be outside of the RPA, a 'no-dig' solution is not considered proportionate in this case as the tree is not considered to be at any significant risk if the works proceed: it is a healthy specimen, the species as a whole is tolerant of disturbance, and there is sufficient alternate area available for root development, contiguous with the RPA.

Potential Impacts Due to the Current Design of the Access Roads, Paths, Car Parking and Landscape

3.4 The following sections examine the reasons for the proposed tree removals and then each area of the site where access, parking and landscape proposals would have had a potentially significant impact on trees proposed for retention and how these impacts have been ameliorated.

Tree Removals for Landscape Reasons or Poor Quality

3.5 There are 5 individual trees and two groups with a category U rating. These should ordinarily be removed irrespective of development proposals. It is noted however that G1 is partially on third party land and surrounds several of the higher quality trees.

Proposed access

3.6 A further 2 trees T11 and T13 conflict with the new access and will also have to be removed, both these trees consist of sucker regrowth from stumps, and are within those trees rated Category U.

Services

3.7 No details of new service or utility routes have been provided, but it is logical to assume they will be routed from the existing building. As such, there is ample scope to avoid RPAs and no negative impacts on any retained trees are anticipated.

Car Parking

3.8 There is an area of car parking adjacent G2 that is related to a previous planning permission. New car parking for this proposal will not affect any trees.

Tree Protection

3.9 Aside from the trees (T1-T6) alongside the existing access there is scope for all retained trees to have the entirety of their RPA enclosed within protective fencing. The existing access should provide sufficient ground protection for T1-6.

3.10 The location of the Tree Protection Fences and ground protection proposals could be detailed in full in an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) but will be as recommended and detailed in BS 5837:2012.

4. Issues for Consideration in an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS)

4.1 An AMS should be prepared prior to work commencing on site. The AMS would contain a detailed tree protection plan including the location and nature of the fences and the areas and details of ground protection. Detailed proposals would be included for any working that has to be undertaken within the RPA of any retained tree. Any possible use of cranes would be addressed with regard to positioning of the cranes and their swing paths in relation to the canopies of retained trees.

4.2 The AMS would also need to address how and where any potentially toxic liquids are stored and the nature of bunding to contain any spills. In addition if mortar or concrete are to be mixed on site then the area for undertaking these tasks will need to be carefully considered to ensure no harmful impact on retained trees. Where existing areas of hard surfaces are to be removed, the AMS would contain detailed proposals with regard to the removal of the existing surfaces and replacement with soil. Finally details of contractor parking, materials stores, the location of site offices and on site supervision of tree protection would also be addressed.

5. Summary

5.1 The location of the proposed development has been achieved with minimal impact on the trees. Trees to be removed are of extremely small size or extremely low quality, and there is ample scope to mitigate the impact of removals within the landscape proposals. Care will need to be taken to protect retained trees, predominantly via fencing.