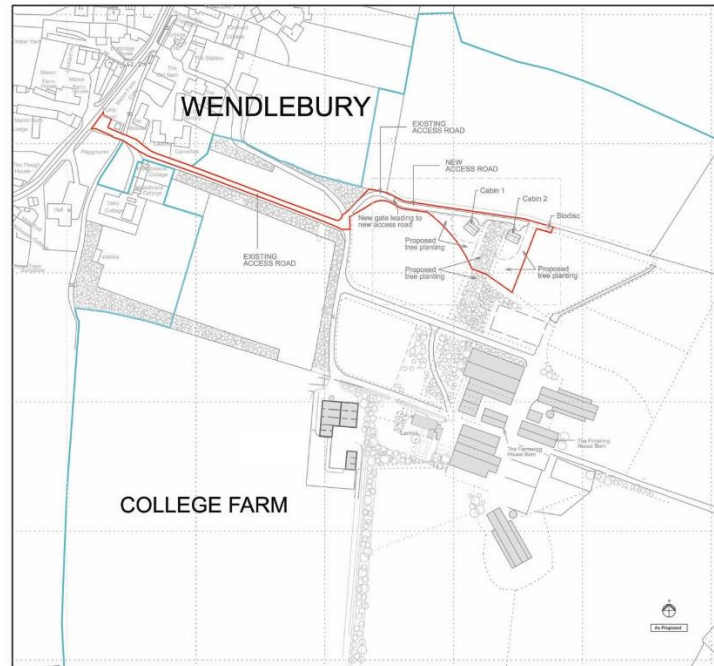


Construction and Siting of 2no. Self-catering Straw Bale Cabins

As holiday let buildings at
College Farm, Wendlebury

Bicester, OX25 2PR



For

Mr & Mrs T Howard

21/200

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Planned Approach Architects

The Farrowing House
College Farm, Wendlebury
Bicester, Oxfordshire OX25 2PR
07929 296003

10th October 2023

DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT for

2no. Self-catering Holiday Let Straw Bale Cabins

at

College Farm
Wendlebury
Bicester
OX25 2PR

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

Proposal: The construction and siting of 2no. Self-catering Holiday Let Straw Bale Cabins, associated Change of Use, and associated works including decking and a sewage treatment plant. (Amended details of 22/00032/F.)

Site: Part of College Farm, Wendlebury, Bicester, OX25 2PR

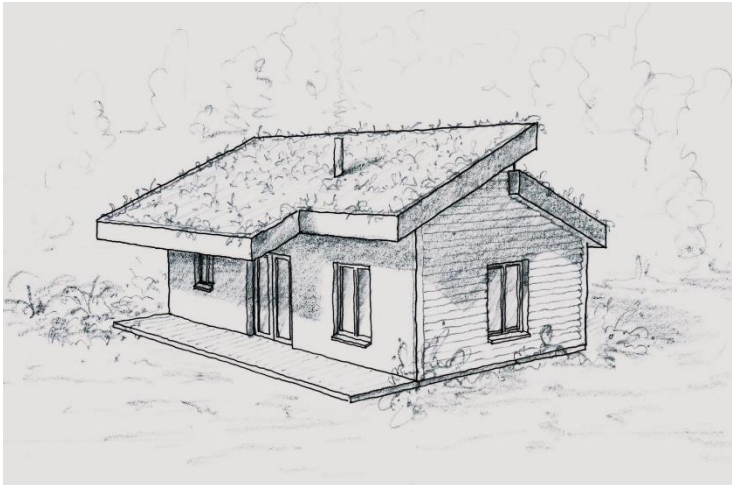


Figure 1. View (above) from the south west of both cabins

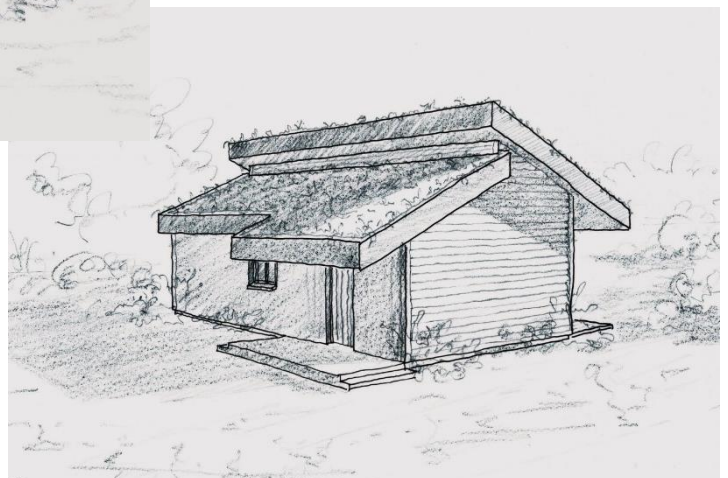


Figure 2. View (right) from the north east of both cabins

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Project Drawings:

- 21.200.01 Rev B Location and Site Plan As Existing
- 21.200.02 Rev B Block Plan, Floor Plans and Elevations, As Proposed
- 21.200.03 Rev C Landscaping Scheme

PROPOSED CHANGES to the approved 22/00032/F

The text of this Design and Access Statement is the same as that approved by 22/00032/F, with the exception of the wording relating to the proposed changes from the Mongolian Yurt typology to the straw bale green roof cabin. The scale, activity and environmentally 'light touch' character of the proposal are otherwise unchanged.

The drawings listed above have been revised to show the proposed changes.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Existing Use

Planning Permission 22/00032/F grants consent for the siting and construction of two timber framed, canvas clad yurts, of a traditional Mongolian design typology, along with the necessary change of use and access for the self catering holiday let accommodation.

Having spent some time in a yurt, the Applicant has decided that it will be very challenging to encourage bookings, and repeat bookings in particular, for the months during which the weather is likely to be inclement. Much of the target market for the lettings will be related to shopping visits to Bicester Village, for which the demand will be all year round, with some peak bookings expected during the run up to Christmas and the January sales, so the accommodation provided needs to be appropriate and appealing for those challenging months too. The revised proposal is to provide accommodation that still gives visitors an experience that differs from the generic and bland hotel typology, providing superior thermal comfort and interest, whilst still adopting an environmentally light touch with much of the material sourced from the surrounding farmland. Two straw bale cabins are proposed instead of the approved yurts, with an identical internal floor area provision. All other aspects of the proposal remain the same as the approved scheme, 22/00032/F.

This Design & Access Statement is essentially the same as the one submitted with and approved by 22/00032/F, the changes reflect the substitution of the yurts, as approved, for the straw bale cabins as now proposed. The main changes to the original D&A Statement, apart from changing 'yurt' to 'cabin' where appropriate, are to be found in sections 2 (detail, construction etc) and 3 (Conclusions), pages 8-10. The two appendices remain unchanged. The access to, the servicing of, the site remains unchanged from the approved 22/0032/F. The start of construction is imminent but has not yet commenced.

The site is currently an agricultural grazing paddock and scrub with a belt of semi-mature tree planting running through between the positions of the two proposed cabins. The site is accessed via an existing spur off the farm access drive, to be extended to reach the site.

1.2 Location

College Farm is located to the south east of the village of Wendlebury, the site is located approximately 100m to the north of the farm buildings and more than 250m from the village. The Grid Reference for the proposed straw bale cabins is SP563193 (E: 456328, N: 219341).

The two proposed cabins will be tucked into the corner of a paddock, positioned either side of a belt of existing semi-mature planting, where that planting line meets the hedge line, which is perpendicular to it. The site is out of sight from the village, shielded by distance, topography and mature trees. There are no footpaths or roads from which it is visible.

1.3 The Proposal

The two proposed self-catering cabins are discrete and sustainable buildings with a minimal carbon footprint and a light touch construction, despite being permanent. They create an opportunity for farm diversification and provide support for the local economy and village services.

1.4 Tourism in Oxfordshire and Cherwell

1.4.1 ECO04 Cherwell Tourism Development Study

In 2008 Cherwell District Council commissioned the ECO04 Cherwell Tourism Development Study, and although this study is now considerably out of date, much of its content is still relevant nearly 15 years later.

Much of the Cherwell District was seen as a 'passing through' destination, albeit with a number of key high profile attractions, ie Blenheim Palace, Silverstone, Oxford, the Cotswolds and of course Bicester Village. Back in 2008, Blenheim Palace had approximately 375,000 visitors per year, compared with Bicester Village attracting approximately ten times that figure at 3.6 million per year. The majority of visitors to both are 'daycation' tourists and shoppers, mainly local or UK based, but with a large proportion of international visitors too. A growing proportion of the visitors are now staying overnight as the new hotels springing up around Bicester are serving this need that is evolving. Self-catering accommodation for such tourists is limited. The market is potentially very large. To encourage even a very small proportion of those visitors from 'daycation' to a 2,3 or 4 night stay will inevitably result in significant economic benefits within the District.

1.4.2 The Experiencing Oxfordshire Partnership

The Experiencing Oxfordshire Partnership commissioned a report on the state of Oxfordshire's tourism economy immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It concluded that the prospects for growth were very good, up 9% year on year, taking the value of the Oxfordshire visitor economy to £2.5 billion per year. There was a slight decline in the day visitor sector but with a significant increase in the 'overnight' visitor sector. This had a knock on effect on the related employment, also increasing by 9% over the County. Although these figures are for 'Oxfordshire', over 25% of the tourism/visitor spend was in the north Oxfordshire districts.

The tourism sector is still struggling with the impacts of COVID, but clearly the eventual recovery from the pandemic will provide great opportunity for quality 'staycations' within the area for both the tourism and business sectors.

1.5 Planning Policies

1.5.1 *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

Para 84. Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

Clearly two new 'well designed buildings' are proposed. These structures are intentionally of a simple geometry, and with the rustic straw bale and clay render aesthetic and a green roof, they will provide accommodation that will delight and also provide a low carbon footprint destination. The proposed cabins will be permanent structures, the construction details are set out below in Section 2.4. The cabins will be arguably more in keeping with the locality, and more discrete than Mongolian yurts.

b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
The cabins will provide a valuable source of rural business diversification and employment.

c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside;

The cabin structures are low profile and discrete. Their siting will be carefully placed within the corners abutting existing semi-mature tree planting, bolstered by additional new planting, see the Landscaping Scheme in Appendix 1.

d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

The site is within walking distance of the bus stop, the village pub and the church. It is 2.5miles by road from Bicester Village and the train station. It is 10miles to Blenheim Palace and less than 10miles to the centre of Oxford.

Para 85. *Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).*

Clearly a proportion of the guests will travel by car, as well as by public transport, so an EV charging point will be provided plus the opportunity to hire an EV to encourage a more prolonged stay to enable the broader district to be explored. Electrically assisted bicycles will also be available for local exploration.

1.5.2 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031

Policy SLE 1 Employment Development

New employment proposals within rural areas on non-allocated sites will be supported if they meet the following criteria:

i) They will be outside of the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

The site is outside the Green Belt.

ii) Sufficient justification is provided to demonstrate why the development should be located in the rural area on a non-allocated site.

The proposed use is appropriate for a rural location.

iii) They will be designed to very high standards using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and respect the character of villages and the surroundings.

(Addressed in the response, above, to NPPF Para 84.)

iv) They will be small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of a village or surrounding environment.

The proposal is for two very modest buildings, each have a floor area of 37sqm, each cabin to accommodate 2 guests.

v) The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance).

The proposal is discretely positioned within the rural area to the south east of the village, rendered invisible from the public realm by virtue of location, topography and existing trees.

vi) The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by private car.

The location is a short walk from a bus stop on the edge of the village, and just 2.5miles from the train station in Bicester. An EV charging point will be available, as well as the option to hire an EV on site, and the use of electrically assisted bicycles.

vii) There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites in the rural areas.

The proposal seeks to provide an alternative experience to that provided by the branded hotels and is unlikely to compete with them, as it is anticipated that it will appeal to a separate and an evolving clientele.

Policy SLE 3 Support for Tourism Growth

The Council will support proposals for new or improved tourist facilities in sustainable locations, where they accord with other policies in the plan, to increase overnight stays and visitor numbers within the District.

The site is within walking distance of the bus stop, the village pub and the church. It is 2.5miles by road from Bicester Village and the train station. It is 10miles to Blenheim Palace and less than 10miles to the centre of Oxford.

In order to explore the wider district, guests will be able to use public transport, and in addition, they will be offered the hire of an EV, either a car or a power assisted bicycle.

Policy ESD 3 Sustainable Construction

All new residential development will be expected to incorporate sustainable design and construction technology to achieve zero carbon development through a combination of fabric energy efficiency, carbon compliance and allowable solutions in line with Government policy.

The cabins will be constructed using local materials wherever possible, for example, straw grown on the farm, clay render from the farm, insulation using sheep's wool grown on the farm and the green roof plants will be propagated on the farm, as set out below in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

Policy ESD 13 Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.

Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

i) Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside

The low profile geometry of the cabins is such that any visual intrusion would be minimal, and completely eliminated by the proposed tree planting. The green roofs will be a feature of the cabins providing a blending of the structure into the surrounding landscaping and existing trees.

ii) Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography

No topographical or landscape features are affected by the proposal.

iii) Be inconsistent with local character Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity

The tranquillity of the area would remain unaffected.

iv) Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or

The setting of the village would remain unaffected.

v) Harm the historic value of the landscape.

There is no impact to the landscape, no listed buildings or scheduled monuments are nearby.

2.0 The Proposal in Detail

2.1 Density

The buildings are intended to be very low density. Excluding the access drive, the combined site area for both cabins is approximately 2500sqm, of which 520sqm is existing semi-mature tree planting, and nearly 1000sqm of new planting.

2.2 Scale

Each cabin is of a rectangular geometry, accommodating the kitchen, living and sleeping areas in an open plan arrangement, and incorporating a separate shower room. Each cabin has an internal footprint of 37sqm, matching the previously approved yurt scheme, 22/00032/F. The intention is that each cabin will accommodate two guests.

2.3 Appearance

The design of the cabins can be seen in plan and in elevation on drawing 21.200.02 Rev B. The cabin has internal footprint dimensions of 9.1m x 4.1m, matching the internal footprint of the approved yurt scheme. The external dimensions will be increased to allow for the 450mm thick straw bale wall structure. The apex of the main structure will be just over 4.8m from ground level.

The outer face of the straw bales will consist of a lime and clay mix render, which will be a yellow ochre colour (RAL 1001), which will be a colour match for the approved yurt scheme. The clay will be sourced from the site, where the foundation piles are excavated. The straw bales will be from home grown cropping.

Figure 3. Clay-lime render, textured finish in yellow ochre (RAL 1001)



The rendered straw bale walls remain vulnerable to water ingress so the roof structure needs to over sail the wall to provide added protection. This oversailing is utilised to accommodate a veranda to the south west and a covered porch area to the north east. The relatively exposed gables will have horizontal oak boarding as a rain screen to protect the walls. The oak boards will be allowed to self colour and silver over time.



Figure 4. Self coloured horizontal oak boarding – example shows the silvering after 24months.

The green roof itself will be a mix of local grasses and wild flowers, with some sedum in the mix. The sedum will be propagated and grown on the farm.



Figure 5. An example of the green roof installation.

2.4 The Construction

The cabins will be constructed using a timber structural frame in filled with straw bales. The frame will bear on a series of small concrete piles/pads, 750x750mm. The sole plate to the walls will sit on a ground beam that spans from pad to pad, so minimising any excavation and ground disturbance.

The straw bales will be set on their edges, which further improves their thermal performance, they will be rendered externally and internally with a clay-lime mix in 3coats, typically up to 40mm thick.

The roof structure will consist of timber purlins with rafters over, between which the home grown sheep wool insulation will sit. A ply deck over this, which will carry the waterproof membrane, over which the soil build up will sit. The plants will be home grown/propagated sedum plants, inserted as plugs, along with a wild flower mix.

The joinery will be timber, faced externally in aluminium (RAL 7016), and expressed internally as self coloured, oiled timber.

The cabins will be predominantly heated by log burners using on-farm sustainably produced wood. Electricity will be provided to the cabins although its use will be discouraged (except for the EV charging points). Foul sewage will be treated with a small biodisc on the edge of the site.

2.5 Access and Parking

Access will be via the existing farm drive, which branches off to a field access, and surfaced with MoT Type 1 limestone. This access drive will be extended along the edge of the field to the site of the cabins. The new length of access will also be surfaced in MoT Type 1 limestone, grass will be allowed to grow over the centre line. Each cabin will have its own parking and turning area as indicated on the site plan.

Each cabin will be aimed at accommodating two guests, so it is appropriate to assume that two cars could be involved on site at any one time, although in practice public transport may provide the majority of the transport needs.

2.6 Environmental Issues

A small area of grassland will need to become access track, but no trees or hedges will be affected by the proposal. A hedge runs parallel with the proposed access route, but this is on the north side of the existing ditch, and the ditch is already fenced from the site. It isn't proposed to provide additional protection to the hedge. The existing belt of planting that runs north-south between the two cabin positions will be protected using heras fencing as indicated on the landscaping drawing and the Scheme in Appendix 1.

The net gain of 850 new trees will be a substantial net gain to both biodiversity and the landscape.

2.7 Flood Risk

The site is in Zone 1, so there is no flood risk to the area, nor is there any likelihood that it would impact adversely on the surrounding area.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 The proposal is for two straw bale structures to provide self-catering accommodation, which would typically require planning permission for the structures and the associated change of use. To be clear, the proposed structures are intended to be permanent.

3.2 The change of use is already established by the existing consent for two yurts (22/00032/F), the scale and activity of the development is identical, as are the anticipated vehicle movements, siting, access and landscaping. As with 22/00032/F there is no impact on any neighbouring amenity.

3.3 The proposal will provide local rural employment, and economic benefit to the local economy.

3.4 The location is sustainable for a small scale project of this nature, it will make use of local public transport facilities, and further project specific enhancements have been outlined.

3.5 The scheme has been assessed against the relevant local and national planning policies, and it has been shown to be compliant and positive, not least by the approval of 22/00032/F.

3.6 It is respectfully requested that the District Council look favourably upon the Proposal and grant planning permission for this revised scheme.

Planned Approach Architects October 2023

4.0 APPENDIX 1 Landscaping Scheme (as approved by 22/00032/F)

Site: College Farm, Wendlebury, Bicester OX25 2PR

Proposal: Erection of 2no. straw bale cabins (permanent self-catering holiday let buildings).

1.0 The Site

College Farm is located to the southeast of the village of Wendlebury, the site is located approximately 100m to the north of the farm buildings and more than 250m from the village. The two proposed cabins will be tucked into the corner of a paddock, positioned either side of a belt of existing semi-mature planting, where that planting line meets the hedge line. The site is out of sight from the village, shielded by distance, topography and mature trees. There are no footpaths from which it will be visible.

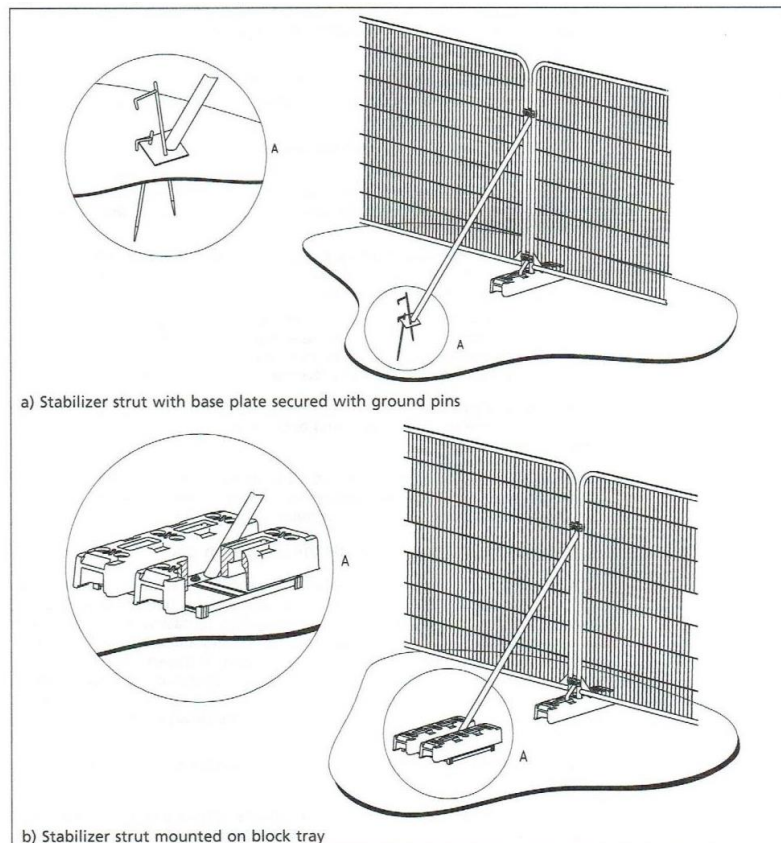
2.0 The Soil

The soils on site are described by Cranfield University Soils and Agrifood Institute 'Soilscapes' map as 'slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils'. The soil is not compacted and no soil remediation other than that recommended for planting pits (see paragraph 11) is required.

3.0 Current Vegetation Cover

The ground cover is grass, there is no other vegetation located in the immediate construction area. There is a belt of mixed broadleaved trees (which were planted around 20 years ago) located between the proposed buildings. The main stems of these trees are approximately 7m from the edge of the new buildings and will be protected during construction with fencing as recommended in British Standard 5837: 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations [BS5837] paragraph 6 figure 3 (see below).

The location for the fencing is shown on the Landscaping Plan (Appendix 1).



4.0 Proposed New Tree and Shrub Planting

In order to provide a degree of seclusion to the west, two areas of trees will be planted, one (300sqm) to the south west of Cabin No.1, and one (680sqm) to the south and east of Cabin No.2. These will be planted predominantly with bare rooted transplants which will establish rapidly. They will be planted 1m apart at irregular spacing in groups of 7, 9 or 15.

Interspersed within the planting area, at approximately regular spacing, will be 21 heavy standard trees which, although much slower to establish will give some immediate height to the plantation.

5.0 Tree Stock & Nursery Specification

The trees and shrubs for the main body of the plantation will be 45 – 60cm 1+1 or 1 u 1 bare rooted transplants.

Tree numbers and species:

Area 1: There will be 250 trees Area 1,

Area 2: 600 trees in Area 2.

They will consist of:

45% Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) – a total of 385 trees, (111 in Area 1, 274 in Area 2)

45% Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) – a total of 385 trees, and

10% Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) – a total of 85 trees, (25 in Area 1, 60 in Area 2)

The 21 standard trees will be root-balled heavy standards of a minimum 10 - 12cm girth. These specimens must be as those classified in BS8545:2014 Trees from nursery to independence in the landscape. Recommendations.

They will consist of:

- 6 English Oak (*Quercus robur*),
- 2 Common Hornbeam (*Carpinus betula*),
- 1 Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*),
- 3 Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*),
- 2 Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*),
- 3 Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and
- 4 Field Maple (*Acer campestre*).

A suitably qualified and experienced Arboriculturalist should select all trees and shrubs from an HTA-certified nursery. All transplants must be supplied in accordance with Horticultural Trade Association's National plant Specification.

6.0 Timing of Planting

Tree planting should be undertaken in the 2023/24 planting season between 1st November and 31st March, or the first planting season after the construction of the buildings.

7.0 Planting & Young Tree Protection

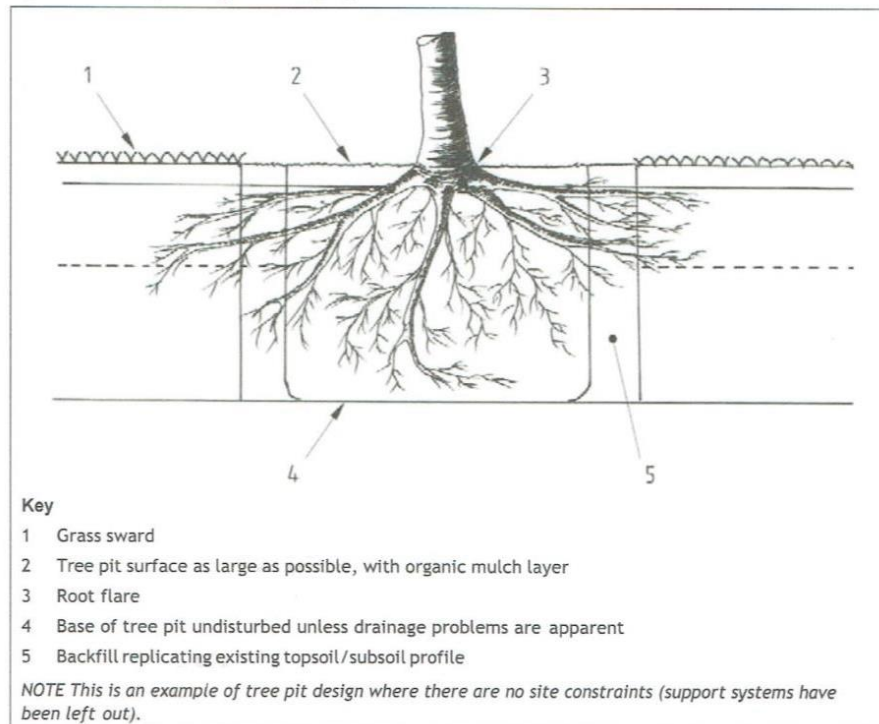
Delivery and backfilling of all plant material to be in accordance with BS4428/JCLI/CPSE Code of Practice for handling and Establishing Landscape Plants, Parts I, II and III. Trees should be planted no deeper than the nursery mark and soil 'firmed' to ensure satisfactory interaction between the roots and the soil.

All tree roots are to be covered and protected until they are planted.

Transplants will be notch planted after removing a turf (where necessary) from the ground.

The standard trees will be planted in a planting pit as specified in BS8545:2014 Trees from nursery to independence in the landscape. Recommendations (see diagram below).

Figure F.1 Tree pit design: Planting in grass



Where it is necessary to import new soil to planting pits, the subsoil must comply with BS 8601:2013: Specification for subsoil and requirements for use (imported subsoil to be laid on site's existing subsoil profiles) and the topsoil with BS 3882:2015 Specification for topsoil – General Purpose Grade. All topsoiled areas will be cleared of rocks and rubble larger than 50 mm diameter and any other debris that may interfere with the establishment of plants. The soil in tree pits should be to the depth and volume specified in BS8545:2014.

The trees will be supported by 2 x 1.8m high "fencing" stakes positioned to each side of the tree and driven at least 50cm into the ground for support. A rubber tie will then be used to secure the tree to the stake. This system will be in place for the first 3 – 5 growing seasons. A 75mm layer of organic mulch will be positioned at the base of each of these trees in order to suppress weeds and assist with moisture retention. The planting pit should be as specified in BS8545:2014 Trees from nursery to independence in the landscape.

Trees will be watered to field capacity immediately after planting. All trees will be checked annually for the first 5 years, and any failed trees will be replaced.

All trees will be protected with biodegradable rabbit spirals.

Where it is necessary to protect building foundations or services, a root barrier (such as Reroot 1000) will be used.

8.0 Aftercare & Watering

The new standard trees will require watering to field capacity during dry periods. This should be done either early in the morning or late evening to allow the trees to gain full benefit. The timing and frequency of this will be dependent on weather. It is realized that watering is not practical for transplants.

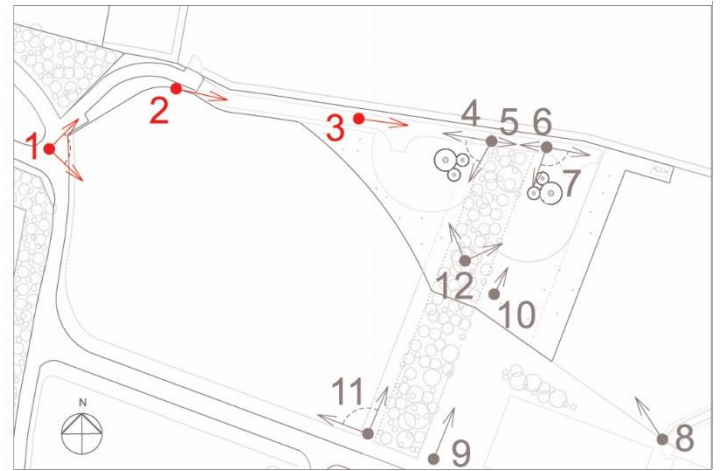
The trees will be kept free from weed and grass competition by ensuring the mulch is replenished regularly and hand weeding where necessary.

Stakes on standard trees are to be monitored and adjusted to allow the tree to grow freely and will only be removed when no longer required.

Formative Pruning should occur on the standard trees within the first 5 years.

4.2 APPENDIX 2 Site Photographs (as 22/00032/F)

Views 1, 2 & 3



View 1 Looking East

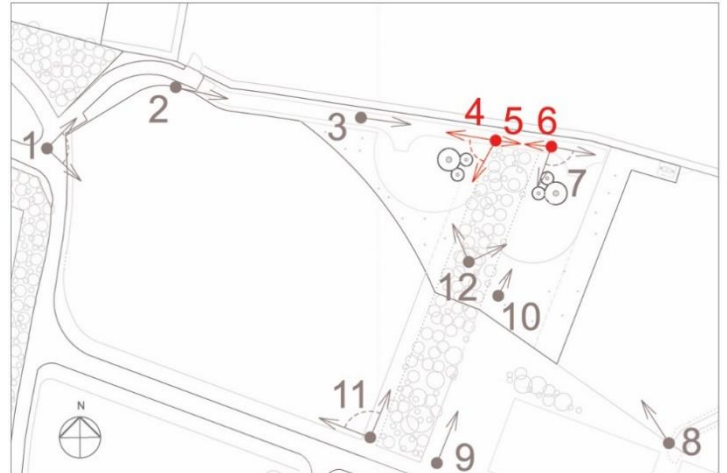


View 2 Looking East

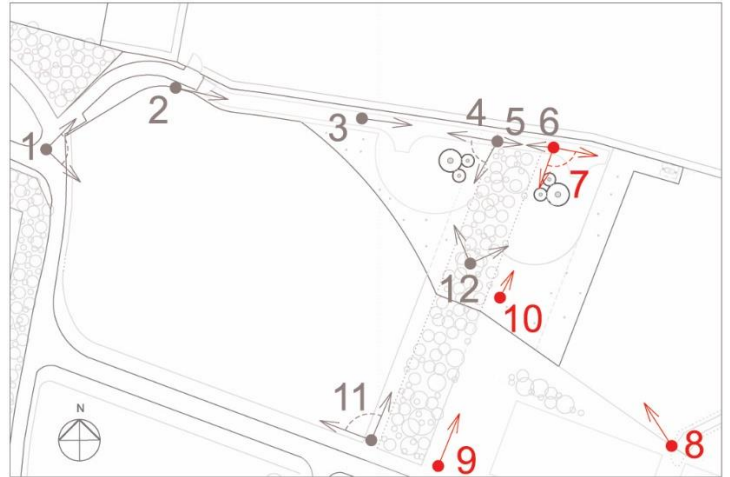


View 3 Looking East

Views 4, 5 & 6



Views 7, 8, 9 & 10



View 8
Looking North West



Views 11 & 12

