**Comments on submitted Arboricultural impact assessment, tree condition survey and landscape design proposal.**

The Arboricultural impact assessment and tree condition survey for the Heyford park village centre development at camp road, upper Heyford has been submitted for comments due by the 21st June 2018.

* Accordance with BS5837

The arboricultral impact assessment and tree condition survey demonstrates compliance with BS5837 (2012)

* Tree categorisation

Site visit conducted on: 14/06/2018 I agree with the categorisation of trees to BS5837 (2012) and offer the following comments on the submitted plan.

1 - Trees proposed for retention

The trees categorised as to be retained on the attached plans in my opinion are correctly categorised, and are worthy of being retained. Correct care will be required in order to allow these trees to continue affording amenity to the new development. (See 1.2 retained tree assessment) I am however confident in precautions outlined in the report detailing the level of care to be afforded to retained trees.

RPAs – report details that RPAs will be installed as per BS5837 (2012) recommendations on trees to be retained. – The trees are of a good amenity and hold relevance to the building being retained, due to proposed removals adjacent, north of camp road the trees proposed for retention are of great importance.

RPA fencing demonstrated in appendix 3 is in accordance with BS5837 – details of working practice near or within RPAs is clearly outlined.

1.2 - Retained tree assessment

The plan does not suggest any potential conflict between retained trees south of building 103. The RPAs highlighted do not fall within the lines of building 103, as this building is to be retained along with the trees I support the decision to retain these as part of the new landscape.

The plan does not detail proposed overhead or underground utilities to connect with building 103, Or Block A/B. Upon site visit an overhead utility cable (since collapsed) appears to have run from the highway, to the south east corner of building 103, this would have ran through the canopies of trees proposed for retention. If new utilities are to pass through the retained trees there is potential for ongoing issues that could potentially compromise the form of the trees. Therefore an outline of any overhead/underground utilities within the boundaries of this application site boundary is required, so to assure continued amenity offered by the trees. Utility companies hold the statutory right to prune back from utilities so potential damage from pruning could occur if poorly placed.

Due to the removal of a large group of trees to the east of retained group, the wind profile has potential to be changed at this location. This should be considered if the soils saturation/construction has potential to be adjusted by installation of hard surfaces around retained trees, and appropriate management of retained trees will need to be implemented as part of the initial care/management plan. Several trees will require Arboricultural management to work with the new landscape; therefore an initial management plan for retained trees will also be required.

2 - Trees proposed for removal

Trees categorised, and listed to be removed are not significant Arboricultural specimens however do afford amenity to the location, I agree with the categorisation of these trees and the Arboricultural assessment given by Ruskins however offer the following comments.

2.2 Amenity loss of trees to be removed

Tree condition survey/Arboricultural report by requirement details the trees to provide Arboricultural information to allow an informed decision to be made. This inherently removes consideration for amenity of trees and focuses on individual Arboricultural merit.

Trees to be removed in order to facilitate the construction of Block B/A north is expected to temporarily reduce amenity to passers-by on, and adjacent to camp road. I am in agreement that the trees amenity is formed due to their collective presence, and would not offer equal amenity if they were to be thinned/selectively and/or retained as individual trees. The trees have grown as a group, and thus their amenity and structural condition reflect that. Attempts to retain singular trees from this group would be flawed, due to defects present on the trees that would be amplified if the wind profile was to change. Equally the canopies of several trees are typical to phototropic, competitive growth of woodland trees and thus support a very tall, thin canopy that offers little amenity as a singular tree. As detailed in the Arboricultural report some trees are hosting fungal pathogens, and structural defects that would require removal regardless of development. To conclude I agree with the tree condition surveys assessment of the trees Arboricultural merit, the trees are unsuitable to be retained given the new proposed environment and therefore I support the decision to remove these trees providing an appropriate level of mitigation is implemented (See 2.3 Mitigation comments) The amenity offered by the group of trees is notable, and offer benefits including, but not limited to

* Wildlife benefits
* Visual amenity
* Environmental/climatic mitigation – especially next to a main arterial road to the development
* Cooling – an area with increasing hard surfacing would benefit from mature trees for cooling

Therefore an appropriate level of mitigation within the boundaries of this site application will need to be demonstrated before official agreement to remove these trees can be granted

2.3 Mitigation

The trees removed north of camp road will result in a loss of amenity and green infrastructure. Therefore it is essential that a comprehensive replacement tree plan is constructed so to mitigate the removed trees.

In order to establish a planting plan appropriate for the level of mitigation required following proposed removal of trees north of camp road a monetary value must first be attributed to the trees proposed for removal. By using the “Helliwell” system a monetary value could be attributed to the trees, this should then equate to the value of the replanting to be completed within the confines of this applications boundaries. It would be strongly advised to consider larger, instant impact trees as well as underground planting cells/trenches to promote their establishment.

2.4 Planting plan

The landscape design proposal was submitted in addition to the Arboricultural impact assessment, and mentioned within. The plan clearly details species to be planted to BS3936 and locations as agreed with the Cherwell district council Arboricultural officer at the time, to which I have no objections. However In order to effectively mitigate the proposed removals the size of these replacement trees will need to be detailed.

As detailed in 2.3 mitigation, larger instant impact trees should be considered for this location. Combined with appropriate management of soil, and planting conditions. The use of underground cell structures, or potentially trenches will need to be considered in order to allow larger planted trees to establish. Information on planted trees size, planting pit/trench, soil structure and underground cell structure, additionally anchoring of trees (underground/above ground) and initial management plan is required. As mentioned in 1.2 retained tree assessment, details on overhead and underground utilities will also be required so to highlight any potential conflicts with planted trees that could compromise their ability to establish, which would subsequently then fail to mitigate the removed trees.