

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

04 June 2018

Wiltshire Council Landscape &
Arboricultural Officer (Central)
Landscape & Arboricultural Officer
Wiltshire Council Central

Officer's Name: Matthew Perks
Officer's Title: Senior Planning Officer
Direct Line: 01225 770207

Application No: 18/04656/FUL
Conversion of former school principal building to 5 No. dwellings, and associated external works; the erection of 16 No. dwellings; conversion and alteration of the Wool Store Building to form a communal garage/store and vehicular access; and comprehensive landscaping
Courtfield House, Polebarn Road, Trowbridge, BA14 7EG
385975 Northings: 157832
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Please note the particulars in connection with the above planning application are available to view on the planning website <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment.htm>

I would welcome any comments that you have about this particular application by **06 July 2018**. If I do not receive your observations and comments by this date I will assume you have none. If you require an extension of time please contact the Planning Officer above who will do their best to accommodate this.

Recommendations:

<input type="checkbox"/>	No Comment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Object (for reasons set out below)
<input type="checkbox"/>	No objections

Matters Considered:

The above application has been submitted by Ashford Homes Ltd to carry out the conversion of the historic building known as Courtfield House. Within the curtilage of the Grade 2 Listed building is an historic orchard containing Apple, Pear, Medlar and Quince that are intrinsic to the previous formal gardens of the dwelling and overall character of the area.

The orchard is situated to the north of the property and contains a selection of fruit trees ranging from 30 – approximately 75+ years old. Verification would need to be undertaken by an appropriate expert to confirm the age range of the existing trees.

It is thought that some of the Apple species are only found in the county of Wiltshire however, this is yet to be confirmed.

The trees within the orchard offer considerable wildlife benefits and many of the trees display features suitable for Bats. There is a presence of rare Bechstein bats known to frequent the area. Courtfield House is a known bat roost.

It could also be justified in stating that many of the trees are showing signs of veteranisation which includes cracks in the bark, historical limb failure, trunk cavities and partial dieback of branches as well as hollowing of some main stems.

All these features coexist with potential roost features (PRF) suitable for bats to use as foraging points and overnight roosting.

As the orchard was considered to be under threat from development, the LPA took the decision to place the orchard under Tree Preservation Order 2018/00019/GRP.

The arboricultural statement submitted by Silverback Consultancy contains a survey of all the trees within the curtilage of Courtfield House and also trees outside of the boundary which belong to Trowbridge Town Council. The LPA consider the categorisation of the orchard trees to be unfair and suggest they may have been down graded to 'C' for the benefit of development.

Section 4.5.6- 4.5.8 of BS 5837-2012 suggest trees that may have some defects are not necessarily at risk if remedial measures can be put in place to secure their longevity, ie, pruning to alleviate potential limb failure. Trees that could or may benefit from remedial works may be up graded where their life expectancy could be extended.

The Arboricultural statement has assessed all the trees in accordance with British Standard BS 5837-2012 Design, Demolition and Construction which, for most proposed development sites would be entirely satisfactory so as to inform the LPA of what condition the trees are in, their realistic longevity or constraints they may pose for development so that design changes could be implemented during the application process.

However, when viewing the extent of the orchard, its maturity, cohesive nature and ecological value to the wider environment, one should have considered an alternative method of assessment in regards to the aforementioned criteria or assessed separately from BS 5837-2012.

With the release of the new up dated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) section 175c clearly states the following in respect of trees and development,

'Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a compensation strategy exists'

As the orchard trees are considered to be irreplaceable habitats, it appears that no compensation strategy exists for this proposed development. By removing all of the trees from the orchard for the erection of 10 dwellings and 14 parking spaces in this area with associated soft and hard landscaping, the revised plan submitted by BBA Architects, project 4107, drawing 020 Rev M, indicate only 6 small standard trees to be planted within a small open space as mitigation for the loss of 19 significant orchard trees. One has to ask whether this is in any way an acceptable strategy considering the ecological benefits the existing orchard provides and will continue to provide in the future.

This application does not, in anyway, consider the wildlife benefits the orchard provides and does not provide any suitable mitigation if it were to be removed.

Conditions:

Conditions to follow when IT issues have been resolved

Informatives:

Insert name of person completing this response David Wyatt Tree Officer