

# **WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**

Appeal No: APP/W0340/A/13/2208764

Application No: 13/00575/OUT

Description: Thames Heritage Boat Museum -  
Matters seeking approval: Access and Layout.

Location: Child Beale Wildlife Trust, Beale Park,  
Lower Basildon, Reading

Appellant: The Consuta Trust

### **STATEMENT OF CASE**

**ARTHUR CULLEN**  
**SENIOR TREE OFFICER**

## **WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**

Appeal No:	APP/W0340/A/13/2208764
Application No:	13/00575/OUT
Description:	Thames Heritage Boat Museum - Matters seeking approval: Access and Layout
Location:	Child Beale Wildlife Trust, Beale Park, Lower Basildon, Reading
Appellant:	The Consuta Trust

### **STATEMENT OF CASE**

**ARTHUR CULLEN**  
**SENIOR TREE OFFICER**

**Gary Lugg**  
Head of Planning and Countryside  
West Berkshire District Council

## **1. The Appeal Site and its Surroundings.**

- 1.1 The site itself is located to the east of the Beale Park Visitors parking area and ticket office, the site is bounded to the east by the river Thames, and the area in question contains a significant number of trees, as identified on plan U.06.06/02 dated Dec 2012 as indicative circles only.
- 1.2 This area is characterised by the river Thames and the various trees along the River bank, the appeal site contains a significant group of tree, which provide a significant boundary screen between the built environment of Beale Park visitor parking a/Ticket office and the natural environment of the river.
- 1.3 Generally, the mixed broadleaf in the surrounding area is visually appealing and the scale of landscaping in relation to the built environment is appropriate to the surroundings.

## **2. The Trees**

- 2.1 The appeal site contains a mixed tree species of varying sizes but mostly of an even age structure, which predominantly consisting of Willow, Ash Poplar, Hawthorn and, Birch with occasional Pine trees.
- 2.2 These trees are clearly visible from a public assessment when viewed from the surrounding roads or adjacent Thames footpath, and also as a landscape feature.

- 2.3 My assessment of the application is based on the impacts of the building and associated access on the existing trees and landscape by virtue of its scale, size and position.

### **3. Description of the Proposal**

- 3.1 The application identifies the proposal as Access and layout only and form part of an outline application.
- 3.2 The application was not supported by an Arboricultural Report although the trees are considered a material constraint to the development, as changes to the site will have an impact on the trees
- 3.3 The plans provided have identified the trees at the site as indicative circles only but provided no further information on the potential impact to trees which was determined during my site visit, using the information provided namely Block Plan U.06.06/04 dated Feb 2013 & plan U.06.06/02 dated Dec 2012.
- 3.4 The site contains a number of trees, several of which have been identified as indicative circles on plan U.06.06/02 dated Dec 2012, considering the trees are a material constraint and some will require removal as a direct result of the location of the building, it is unclear why they have not been fully considered as part of the proposed changes, as they are a material constraint to the redevelopment of the appeal site.
- 3.5 Some of the trees are of limited value, and could be removed to facilitate the development, but this would need to be covered in a tree survey and Arb implication assessment in accordance with BS5837:2012, which should also cover the impact to the trees to be retained, as the changes in soil levels, and

works within designated root protection area could have an impact on those trees if adequate space is not made available to ensure their safe retention during the construction phase.

**4. Comments relating to the Applicants Reasons for Appeal  
Existing Trees and Landscape Features**

- 4.1 Primary legislation requires that LPA's consider the value of trees and make provision for their preservation when considering planning applications. This is also reflected in the relevant policies of the development plan relating to landscape features (NPPF and Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2012) that requires significant landscape features to be retained with the proposals. All trees provide a baseline of advantages that include aesthetic, screening, shelter, cultural and biodiversity values, they also contribute to pollution reduction and storm water run off protection. Assessing trees utilising the above baseline criteria identifies a suitable structure for the assessment.
- 4.2 The trees at the site are therefore subject to the local plan policy CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2012.
- 4.3 Planning Policy Guidance refers to local planning authorities and developers thinking imaginatively about designs and layouts that make most effective use of the land without compromising the environment. The layout must therefore accommodate the proposals without causing demonstrable harm to the environment.
- 4.4 The trees have not formally been considered as part of the design process, all planning applications which may have an impact on trees, need to ensure that

they use the guidance contained within BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations as a baseline.

- 4.5 The BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations, covers The design and construction process and tree care, as part of figure 1 in which a site which contains a number of trees like this should be determined, parts A-D cover the feasibility and planning, which in brief covers the Topographical Survey, tree survey, tree categorization tree constraints and root protection areas, the plans being provided to determine the application (U.06.06/04 dated Feb 2013 & plan U.06.06/02 dated Dec 2012) are not based on a tree survey or tree impacts and therefore any impact to the trees will be determined after the site layout has been agreed, therefore the impact to the trees was not to inform the layout but to identify the number of trees to be removed to facilitate the changes.
- 4.6 The proposed development therefore does not adequately consider the retention of the trees as part of the development. It is however apparent that if the trees are not considered carefully when designing the layout, considerable harm will occur to the trees and the layout must therefore consider the assessment of the trees at the site.
- 4.7 As well as assessing the amenity value of the trees as they stand, a range of other factors will need to be considered, including:
- (i) The size and position of the trees as envisaged after the development, taking into account future growth. The proximity of trees to buildings is an important consideration because:

- (ii) Of the potential damage that a tree may cause to buildings, particularly on clay soils, unless precautions are taken in the design of foundations, and physical damage through direct pressure by the future growth of the trees is avoid.
- (iii) Whether effective provision can be made to secure the trees' protection during development operations. Sufficient space will be needed to enable the development to be carried out, for example for access, scaffolding, site huts, plant and machinery and the storage of materials.
- (iv) Whether the trees can withstand the proposed changes in site conditions. They may, for example, be more liable to wind throw or wind snap if nearby trees are removed. These matters are likely to require the guidance of a competent Arboricultural person.

5 **Additional Tree information, Tree report by Arbtech Consulting Limited.**

- 5.1 The tree reports provided has undertaken a tree survey in accordance with BS5837:2012 and provided a tree constraints plan, but not determined the impact to the trees, and is a good start when assessing the potential impact to trees and would be considered as stage B as part of Figure 1 of the BS5837:2012 guidance.
- 5.2 The tree survey has been undertaken in accordance with BS5837:2012 and I would agree with most of the condition of the trees and the grades provided, but would question some of the grades awarded to the trees, the Grade C2 applied

to Group 1, when no tree species have been identified along with no major defects is unclear, Table 1 of the BS5837: 2012 guidance has grade C as trees of low quality, but the survey doesn't clarify why they are of low quality, and the Grade should be B2 as they would appear to be trees of Moderate quality, and they are trees present in numbers, usually growing as groups or woodlands, so meet the B2 Grade.

- 5.3 There are a number of other trees which have been classed as C1, with no real justification of the grade as the tree survey only specifies Low quality tree, this includes T2, T3, T4, T19, T24, T25, and T30, so the consistency of the grading in relation to the condition of the trees is unclear.
- 5.4 As the tree report is only a tree survey with a constraints plan, it is still unclear on the number of trees which will be affected by the proposed new building and associated works, which would be next stage of the BS5837: 2012 figure 1 which covers the conceptual design (Part C), and design development Part (D), which clearly haven't be done, therefore even with this additional information the potential impact to the trees is still not clear.
- 5.5 The Appellants appeal statement makes reference in Part 13 to the removal of 7 category B trees and 8 category C trees for the building location itself, does this include group 1?, which might contain a further 15 trees, and nothing is mentioned about any associated works, so this doesn't appear to clarify the impact any further, and it also indicates that more trees would be planted to compensate for the losses.



- 5.6 The Appellants appeal statement also mentions in part 3 that the majority of the trees covered in the tree survey are over 10m tall , and with the building being only 7m, the building will be completely screened from all views around the lake, it is not clear if this is after the removal of the 15 trees, which will clearly open up view of the building, which may also include the removal of G1, and as a number of trees identified on the constraints plan to the north of the new building aren't covered in the tree survey, how can the visual impact be assessed.

## 6 Conclusions

- 6.1 It is apparent that the proposals will involve the direct loss of trees, the application as submitted to the council didn't adequately considered the potential impact to the trees, which are considered important, highly visible from outside of the site, and very much part of the landscape character of the area and should be retained as part of the proposed redevelopment of the site.
- 6.2 The trees at the site are a major constraint to the redevelopment, and should be considered at the design stage when working out the constraints for the site, with adequate provision provided for the retention of trees, and suitable mitigation measure provided to replace trees.
- 6.3 These objections cannot be overcome by the attachment of conditions as the impact is not clear and no condition can overcome the deficiency, therefore the refusal is entirely justified, and the appeal should be dismissed.
- 6.4 In the event of the appeal being allowed the tree conditions contained within the planning statement should be attached, to ensure the trees are retained and protected.

West Berkshire District Council Representation  
Planning Appeal  
Thames Heritage Boat Museum - Matters seeking approval: Access and Layout