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Report type: **Aboricultural Implication Assessment**

Client: **Options Group Ltd**

Site address: **Needlewood
Keresforth Hill Road
Birchwood
Barnsley**

Reference No: **AIA/SW/JULY2008(S1)**

Date of report: **26 July 2008
Amended 13 October 2008**

1. CLIENT

1.1

Options Group Ltd, C/O Townsend Planning Consultants, 10 Rishworth Street, Wakefield WF1 3BY.

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

2.1

A report is needed to give detailed arboricultural advice on trees that are considered to be of significance to the proposed development at Needlewood, Keresforth Hill Road, Barnsley. I am requested to make specific recommendations on the influence of development proposals, arboricultural work and methods of tree protection. Only trees considered relevant have been included in the report. However it should be noted the additional wooded areas of the site would in time become subject of future woodland management proposals. The nature and scale of such proposals are likely to require the prior agreement of the Forestry Commission and will in any event be dependant on the preferred use and management of the grounds.

2.2

Accompanying this report is a tree survey schedule at Section 5, a Tree Constraints Plan at appendix 1 and Tree Protection Plan at appendix 2.

3. SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

3.1

This vacant property which until recently was within Local Authority ownership is set within a roughly triangular plot on a south facing slope. The abundant tree cover present gives the impression of woodland effectively masking the presence of Needlewood when viewed from the public highway. Elsewhere neglected lawned areas surround the building with a collection of fruit trees to the rear of the property.

3.3

The area surrounding the site is open in character. Tree cover within this area is reasonable in terms of tree numbers and species mix, being defined by prevailing land uses. Such tree cover is weighted towards the mature age range.

3.4

Due to previous site management it would be considered the majority of open soils will be free draining and reasonably fertile.

3.5

For additional background to the site and its surroundings please refer to the Design and Access Statement submitted by Townsend Planning Consultants.

4. STATUS OF TREES.

4.1

It is understood that none of the sites tree cover is the subject to Tree Preservation Order or Conservation Area controls. In the case of trees that are subject of planning application procedures it is essential the Local Authority's advice is sought and where necessary consent obtained before undertaking any tree removal or pruning operations. Similarly any wider woodland management operations that involve the removal of a licensable volume of tree material should first be agreed with the Forestry Commission.

5. SURVEY DETAILS, CONDITIONS, METHODS AND BASIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1

The survey details were prepared in accordance with BS5837-2005; Guide for Trees in Relation to Construction and provide an assessment as to the condition of each tree and desirability for retention within the development context. This visual tree inspection was carried out on 15 July 2008. In order to aid identification of trees on site the trees have been individually tagged with no nail plastic sequentially numbered tags, though no tags are affixed to tree numbers 1324i, 1366i and 1366ii. The details of the report should be self-explanatory, however it may help to explain the following;

Unless otherwise stated all measurements are taken in metres (m).

Stem diameter - is measured or estimated in millimeters at 1.5m above ground level.
Age of tree - is expressed as young (y), semi mature (sm), middle aged (em), mature (m), and over mature (om) and veteran (v).

Estimated remaining contribution – relates to a trees useful life expectancy.

BS 5837 category grading – is a methodology for evaluating existing tree stock and is summarized as follows;

R = Removal necessary for arboricultural management reasons and/or having a value that would be lost within 10 years in the current context

A = Trees of high quality

B = Trees of moderate quality

C = Trees of low quality

1 = Trees with arboricultural values

2 = Trees with mainly landscape values

3 = Trees with mainly cultural values

RPA (radii) -. Is the normal minimum distance specified in BS5837 table 2 in which to position protective fencing. This in turn defines the "Construction Exclusion Zone".

Preliminary management recommendations – Where tree removal is recommended solely to facilitate the proposed development a statement is made to this effect.

6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1

The findings of the tree survey schedule at section 5 indicate that of the 86 No. trees surveyed 11No. merit a moderate quality (B2) category, 43No. a low (C2) category and 41No. a remove (R) category. In terms of the proposed development it is possible to retain the vast majority of trees surveyed. Of the 21No. trees that stand within or tight to the footprint of the proposed development 11No. are graded (C2) and 10No. are graded (R) respectively. Of these trees such is their condition they are unlikely to remain viable other than in the short term. Accordingly these trees could quite reasonably be recommended for removal irrespective of the development proposal.

6.2

The survey findings also indicate that many of the retained trees are in need of management. This mainly comprises of routine crown lifting and crown cleaning exercises.

6.3

With regard to potential for tree and shrub planting an opportunity presents itself in the form of the planning application to provide additional plant material in selected locations where existing material is to be removed. In this regard space is available in which to plant several larger growing tree species. The prescribed planting will clearly help vary the age and species of tree present, providing for continuity of tree cover, to the benefit of nature conservation and visual amenity. The cumulative effect of desirable planting will mitigate for the loss of defective trees, whilst enhancing the future character of the area. It is understood details of the proposed landscaping treatment are to accompany the planning application.

7.0 ARBORICULTURAL METHOD STATEMENT DETAILING TREE PROTECTION PRIOR TO AND DURING CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

7.1

In order to ensure retained trees are protected from unnecessary damage or disturbance, protective fencing should be erected prior to commencement of any demolition or construction operations. The final column of the tree survey schedule at section 5 indicates the Root Protection Area (RPA radii) for all trees. However as will be discussed in paragraph 7.2-7.5 various trees are already crossed by a compacted drive. For these trees it is proposed to erect protective fencing at the edge of the existing/proposed hard standing in order to safeguard the verge beyond. All protection will be created using a robust barrier that should fully meet the requirements of BS: 5837, Section 9.2.2, namely a framework of vertical and horizontal tubular scaffold poles which should be braced sufficiently to receive weld mesh which should itself be securely fixed with wire or scaffold clamps. The fencing should be sufficiently strong to withstand impacts likely to be caused during building operations. Extracts from BS5837 can be supplied for reference purposes if required. All weather signs should also be affixed to the fencing at regular intervals stating; "CONSTRUCTION EXCLUSION ZONE KEEP OUT." Once erected the protective fencing shall not be crossed, removed or otherwise altered. No persons or materials must be allowed into the exclusion zones.

7.2

Other than a minor incursion into the root protection area of RPA radii for tree numbers 1323, 1383 and 1385 it is possible to achieve a RPA radii in excess of that required for all other trees recommended for retention. This is demonstrated on the accompanying tree protection plan at appendix 2.

7.3

The necessary encroachment associated with the RPA of the Horse Chestnut 1323, Blue Atlas Cedar 1383 and Ash 1385 is well within the 20% offset distance discussed in BS5837 and in the case of 1383 adding only slightly to work previously undertaken by the Local Authority. As such the necessary encroachment is likely to be of such a minor nature as to be unlikely to impact on the vitality of these trees. Furthermore any minor impact that might occur in respect of 1383 will be adequately offset by the desirable crown reduction work.

7.4

With regard to the incursion into the root protection area of Yew trees 1327 and 1328 the prescribed RPA's for these trees is already crossed by a compacted vehicular access/parking area.

7.5

Therefore with regard to trees 1323, 1327, 1328, 1383 and 1385 protective fencing is shown to be provided to the edge of the driveway in order to safeguard the non-compacted ground beyond.

7.6

Services into or out of the site should be routed outside of the RPA radii of all retained trees. Should this not always be possible there are specialist techniques that can be used so as to minimise or prevent damage, and these are detailed in BS5837 and NJUG Guidelines, though these should not be implemented without first agreeing such with the Local Planning Authority.

7.7

More generally care should also be taken to ensure that oil, bitumen, cement or other material likely to be injurious to a tree is not be stacked or discharged within 5m of the tree protection fence line. Cement mixing should not be carried out within a similar distance. It is recommended that the area shown for car parking spaces 1-6 be used as a site compound.

7.8

The developer should make the contractor (arborist) aware of the need to check for both overhead and underground services before commencing work and to obtain any necessary clearances. When instructing a contractor to undertake any tree work, it is essential to provide the arborist with details of any restrictions (i.e. a Tree Preservation Order, Conservation Area status, or relevant planning conditions) that may influence the recommendations contained in this report.

7.9

Provided satisfactory tree protection is provided development need not compromise the health of retained trees.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1

From the foregoing tree survey findings, comments and observations, it will be seen that various trees identified are in an unacceptable condition and will require attention irrespective of the development proposal. Equally important however the proposal provides an opportunity to carry out a scheme of arboricultural management that will serve to sustain a viable treescape.

8.2

The protection of trees and their subsequent health and future potential is totally dependent upon all persons operating within the site. Communications are vitally important to ensure that all parties understand the reason for tree protection and its continued existence. Providing all necessary tree protection works are undertaken, then retained trees and development alike will satisfactorily coexist.

8.3

It is hoped that this report and recommendations provides all necessary information. However should there be any queries or should clarification of any points be required, please contact myself.

Stephen Waterson

13 October 2008