

John Guillebaud

Statement

Report for VOWH Planning Committee 21-04-21, Agenda item 9. Application P20/V3322/FUL (Hids Copse Road)

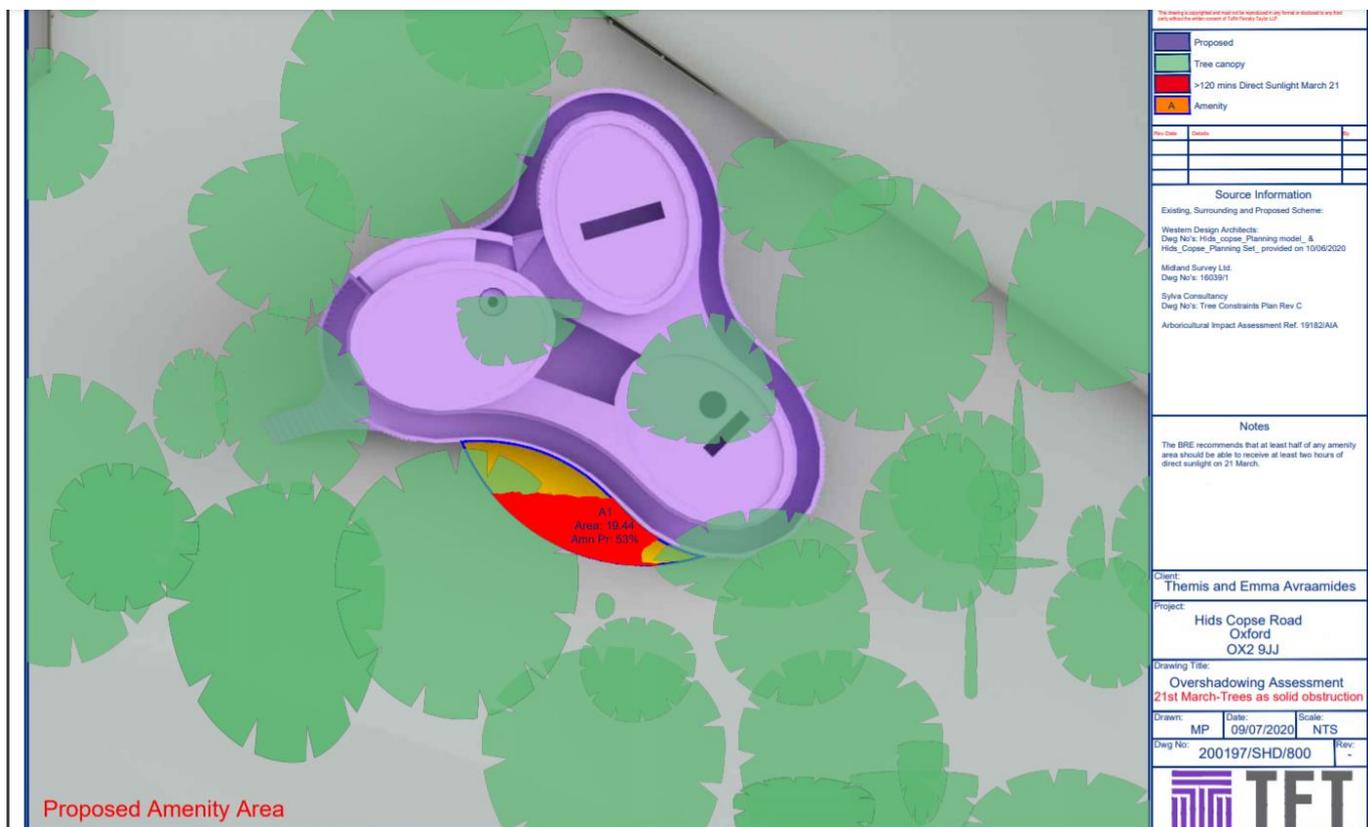
Residents object on grounds relating to woodland and wildlife conservation, and so concur with the recommendation of the Vale's Case Officer, based on reports of the Area Tree Officer and Countryside Officer, for refusal of planning permission [page 38/55 of the Agenda Document for the Planning Committee].

There is a longstanding group tree preservation order (TPO) on this attractive and now increasingly rare mature historic woodland habitat and indeed the same conservation issues were the basis for the failure of a planning application for the site in 2012, which failed again on Appeal in 2014. We do not understand the grounds on which it has been referred to the Vale Planning Committee; it is puzzling given the above recommendation of the Vale's own officers and also the number of Hids Copse Road residents who have made clear their opposition to the current application, ten in writing on the VOWH website, others verbally. The latest proposal for a 'Tree House', despite attempts to make its construction 'eco-friendly', is deceptive and moreover illusory in that respect over the longer term: since future occupiers would, very soon and as the Area Tree Officer points out, entirely foreseeably, find it impossible to live in house or garden without removing adjacent protected trees, due to intolerable overshadowing by the canopy.

In this context the Applicant's supporting document: [TFT Daylight Adequacy & Overshadowing Assessment](#) (click link), on view at the VOWH website, is **seriously misleading**.

They state: "The overshadowing results show that the 53% of the *proposed garden amenity area* [my italics] indicated on the proposed site plan and the attached drawing 200197/SHD/800 will receive at least 2 hours of direct sunlight on 21st March and will fully comply with BRE guidance."

It is only by inspecting that drawing below, from page 8/8 of their document, that the dimensions of the "proposed garden amenity area" are shown. It is adjacent to the house, coloured amber with red for the 53% direct sunlit area. This is but a **tiny fraction** (certainly less than 5 percent) of the actual tree-covered garden area that residents would frequent.



This curious definition of terms has then, regrettably, led to two very understandable misquotations at Agenda item 9, namely:

- at 5.9: “...53 % of the garden will receive at least 2 hours of sunshine on 21 March” and
- at 5.13: “... half of the garden will have at least minimum levels of light.”

Not so, this is only true of the minute “*proposed garden amenity area*” (53% of 5% of the plot) and nowhere near the whole garden area.

My concern about removal of protected trees is more than theoretical, or an opinion, being based also on the same applicant’s history relating to Sylvatica, a previous development in the lower part of the very same woodland area. The initial approval received was for a small four bedroomed house with preservation of the majority of the trees (in October 1993, P93/V0334/0). A larger house was later built and once it was occupied trees on the site were progressively removed or pollard-ed, unsurprisingly, to increase daylight access for both house and garden.

The Vale’s Countryside Officer has commented further (03/02/21):

Permitting a dwelling in an area of priority habitat will lead to increased intensification and urbanisation of an area previously uninhabited. This will result in loss of habitat, increased disturbance and light pollution all of which are harmful to the biodiversity of the site.

The relevance of that is heightened by recent evidence of wildlife availing themselves of the copse, including: deer (muntjac and roe), a badger, long-eared bats which are a protected and priority species, and numerous birds including tawny and screech owls, green and lesser spotted woodpeckers.

If it were approved, this would be a further example of ecological attrition in our area and incompatible with aspects of the proposed Cumnor Parish Neighbourhood Plan, for example see page 40:

...As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:....

B. maintain and enhance existing on-site biodiversity assets, and provide for wildlife needs on site, where practicable. As a committed environmentalist (see www.ecotimecapsule.com) and founder member since 1972 of the Woodland Trust, I would add that the very obvious “practicable” way to maintain these biodiversity assets and wildlife needs will be by supporting the Vale Officer’s recommendation to refuse planning permission.

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