

Leek Wootton Focus Group - Tree and hedgerow report 13 January 2023 v3



Photo above of plots 1 & 2 taken on the 17 August 2022 - the site stripped from a height of 4 - 6 foot down to 2 inches on the basis of "land management & health and safety"



Welcome to the Leek Wootton Focus Group Tree and Hedgerow report based on Cala Homes 2nd application W/22/1877

2022 has witnessed two separate planning applications for the Woodcote Estate, both flawed and designed to mislead the reader into thinking that the Ecological and Arboricultural Impact will be minimal.

We have spent weeks analysing the information within this report; surveying the site, taking photographs to finally be confronted by Cala in autumn, with threats of trespass, having our camera and data seized and their ongoing refusal to answer our correspondence.

It is vital at this stage that Cala's Planning Application is analysed, to accept it at face value will be disastrous for this site.



Photo above Leamington Road, Kenilworth to make way for 550 homes - 16 May 2022

On the 12 October 2022 we posted to all parties two separate articles complaining about the pattern of destruction of trees and hedgerows on Cala sites.

Wivelsfield Parish Council issued a 5 page letter which vehemently complained of the unilateral decision by Cala to fell trees, “demonstrating a total disregard for both the planning process and the community, riding roughshod over planning procedures”. They concluded that “Cala Homes needs to feel the consequences of its actions in its bottom line”.

“The residents of Wivelsfield Green should not, and will not, put up with what is fast becoming a catalogue of issues with this development”.

Chapel Lane Action Group Bagshot - ‘Cala Homes have submitted an application for 'Non- Material Amendments' to remove significantly more trees and hedges. The developer also appears to have already removed further trees and hedgerows not approved in the tree removal plan”.

Cala have downplayed the removal of trees on these sites in their Planning Application and during the course of the development they have unilaterally removed additional trees and hedgerows.

This mirrors the Cala tree report before us for the Woodcote Estate.

If planning is granted the projected course of events will undoubtedly result in the removal of further trees and hedgerows.

Let us consider the facts;

UK's old trees critical to climate change fight - Report Dec 2022

[Press link to report](#)

UK forests lock away twice as much planet-warming carbon as previously thought, a new study reveals.

The study using lasers and 3D scanning showed that old trees in particular were critical to fighting climate change. The research mapped almost 1,000 trees in Wytham Wood in Oxfordshire.

"We've found significantly more carbon stored here," said Dr Kim Calders, from Ghent University.

An accurate calculation of the amount of carbon trapped in UK woodland could help inform decisions about how to manage it - in addition to highlighting the cost to the environment of losing that woodland. Before 3D scanning techniques were available, weighing a tree would mean cutting it down.

The latest research, published in the journal Ecological Solutions and Evidence, produced laser-scanned maps of each tree and converted those into a model. That gave a measure of each tree's volume which the scientists used to calculate the amount of carbon captured in each tree's trunk and branches. It showed that a patch of UK forest weighs about twice as much as previous calculations suggested.

"When you know the density of the wood, you can convert volume into mass," explains Prof Mat Disney, from UCL. "About half of that mass will be carbon, half is water."

'Incalculable' value

As well as being important ecosystems, healthy forests remove planet-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Prof Disney says the new findings show that, for every square kilometre of woodland lost, "we potentially lose almost twice the carbon sink capacity we thought".

As Prof Robert MacKenzie from the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research pointed out, above ground forests are "an important, [but] temporary store of carbon that can help us get past the current climate emergency".

Prof Disney says this research has serious implications for our understanding of the benefits of protecting trees, in terms of climate change. **And the complex structure of mature trees in particular means they play a role that is very difficult to replace by simply planting more trees.**

"The value you have in large mature trees is almost incalculable, and so you should avoid losing that at any cost - regardless of how many trees you think about planting."

"Those large trees are incredibly important"

Why each tree is so important

We have veteran trees (200 - 300 years old) on the Woodcote estate. Saplings planted before the arrival of the Penny post, the birth of Queen Victoria and the birth of the first steam railway, now facing destruction.

Trees are the ultimate carbon capture and storage machines. Like great carbon sinks, woods and forests absorb atmospheric carbon and lock it up for centuries. They do this through photosynthesis.

The entire woodland ecosystem plays a huge role in locking up carbon, including the living wood, roots, leaves, deadwood, surrounding soils and its associated vegetation.

Based on this new report by year 50 a new native woodland can capture 600-800 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per hectare. By year 100, it can capture 800-1200 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per hectare.

1 hectare is the equivalent of 2.4 acres. Destroying established trees and replacing them with saplings is not the answer, trees do more than just capture carbon.

They also fight the cruel effects of a changing climate. They can help:

- Prevent flooding
- Reduce city temperature
- Reduce pollution
- Keep soil nutrient-rich

Carbon accumulation continues in woodland that's centuries old. Old-growth forests are actually carbon sinks, contrary to the long-standing view that they are carbon neutral.

Woodlands are our allies in the fight against a changing climate, yet just 13% of the UK's land area is covered by trees (compared with an EU average of 37%).

The bottom line is, we need more trees and we need to protect the ones we already have.

Lets plant another tree

When any tree is faced with destruction the simple answer is - “we will plant another”. And yes, here it is within the planning application before us;

Cala Planning statement; Clause 6.51 :-

This provides an opportunity to secure biodiversity net gain (BNG) through **additional planting** and habitat creation.

Cala Planning statement Clause 6.77c :-

The Phase 1 habitat survey has established that the site includes Priority Habitat ‘wood pasture and parkland’ with grassland fields contained within, along with existing woodland and hard standing. The proposals incorporate the partial retention of the woodland, **albeit some tree losses will be necessary** in order to provide the proposed development on the allocated site. Accordingly, it is proposed that the losses be compensated in part through enhancement of the retained habitats in combination with provision of offsetting measures provided within the off-site woodland area.

LWFG - The simple answer is, time is not on our side. We do not have 50 - 100 years to clawback the carbon lost by the destruction of a single tree.

Lets lease other woods

Cala assisted by the PCC agreed as late as the 25 February 2022 to the leasing of the woodland behind Waller Close to achieve a Biodiversity net gain off-site rather than achieving a Biodiversity net gain on site, in plots 1,2 & 3.

With relation to the leasing of the woodland to Cala we would ask you to consider the following;

- How will the destruction of 71 trees and 10 hedgerows be compensated.
- The habitat will not be enhanced.
- The enforcement of the felling of trees (TPO status) has not been upheld for over 70 years (see LWFG letter to the PCC 31 March 2022 and the 12 May 2022).
- After 40 years of ownership, by the Warwick County Council, and a further 30 years of ownership by the Warwickshire Police there is still no woodland management plan. (Contrary to Forestry Commission guidelines)
- Who will supervise and regulate the actions of Cala in their management of the woodland?
- With the completion of the housing development, what penalties would be imposed if Cala breached their contract to effectively manage the woodland?
- Currently there is no draft leasing agreement tabled. Cala have only an option.
- Any leasing agreement would be totally unworkable.
- Finally, the local community have walked through these Woodlands for over 100 years. It is clearly demonstrated that it is currently and always has been a facility enjoyed by the whole community.

Even under strict planning conditions, Cala have demonstrated on other sites that they cannot be trusted.

The impact of the Cala development on the estate will be devastating and cannot be underestimated.

The illustrative plan layout on the right is the only drawing showing the proposed development.

It is an artists impression, the greenery is to give the impression that a large portion of the trees will remain. 50% of these trees do not or will not exist.

On the following pages, we have taken screenshots of Cala's drawings enlarged and sharpened them in order for you to view the subtle changes.

Our comments are in red

The houses have been drawn in yellow, making it extremely difficult to make out where the houses are positioned.

The trees marked on drawing 710 rev C which is the first drawing on page 6 are incorrect in both the location and numbers.

There are 41 trees along the boundary fence, running parallel with Woodcote Lane. Cala show less than 20.

New 2.5 m deep foul and water supply trenches along the entire length of Woodcote Drive have not been shown. These will have disastrous consequences to the root balls of the trees.



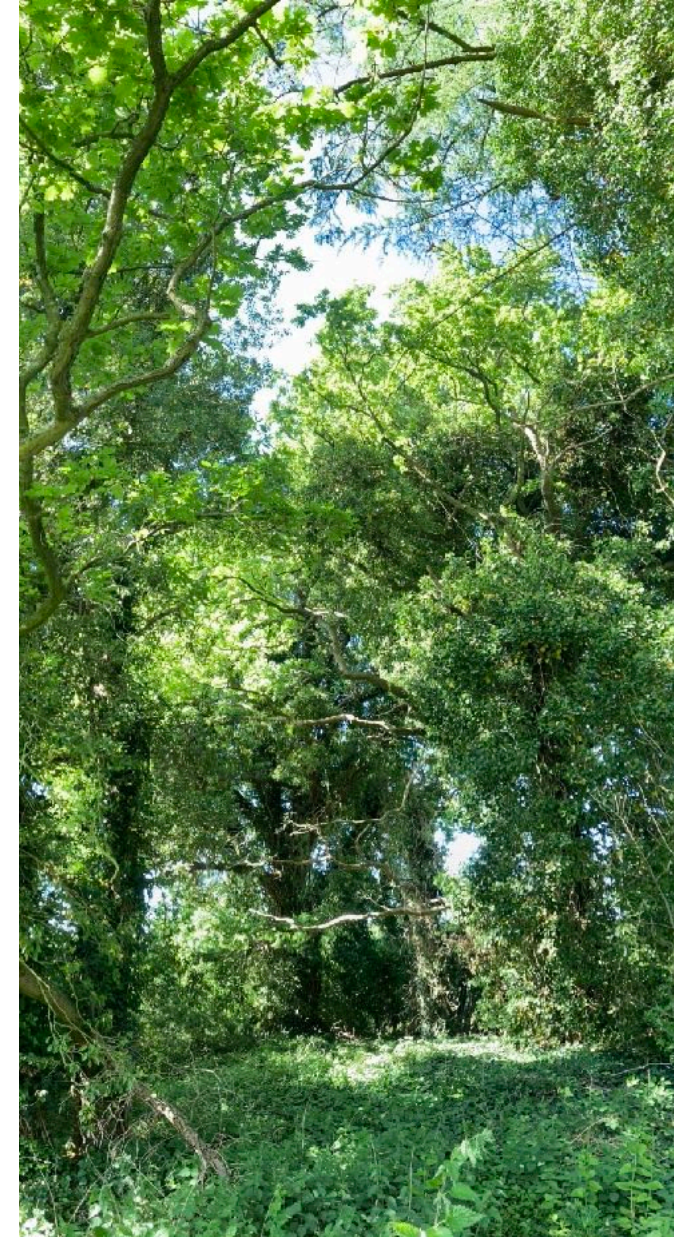


The photo above has been taken from position 'A'

The existing trees are far from being insignificant their heights range from 20 feet to over 50 feet.



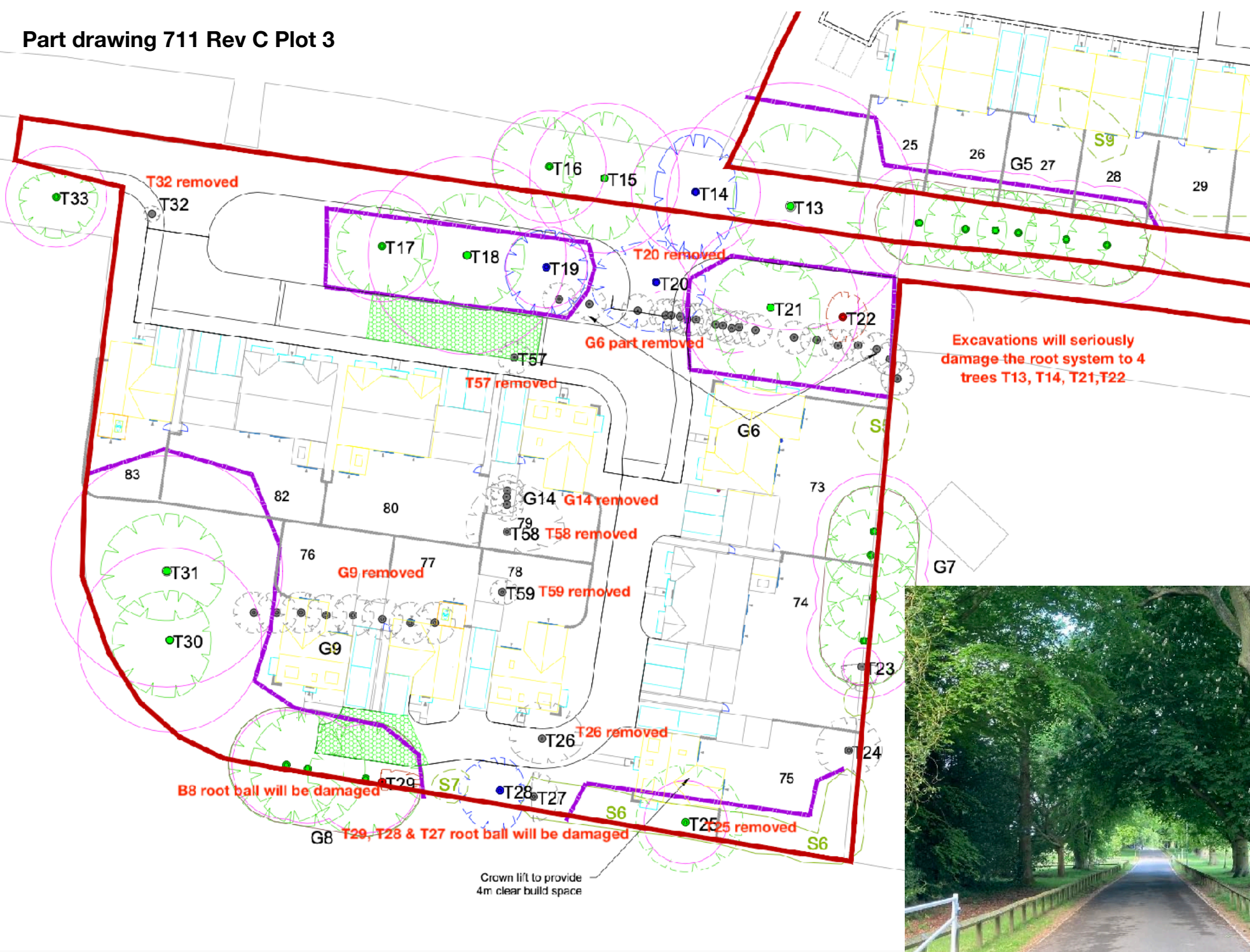
The photo above has been taken from position 'B'



The photo above has been taken from position 'C'

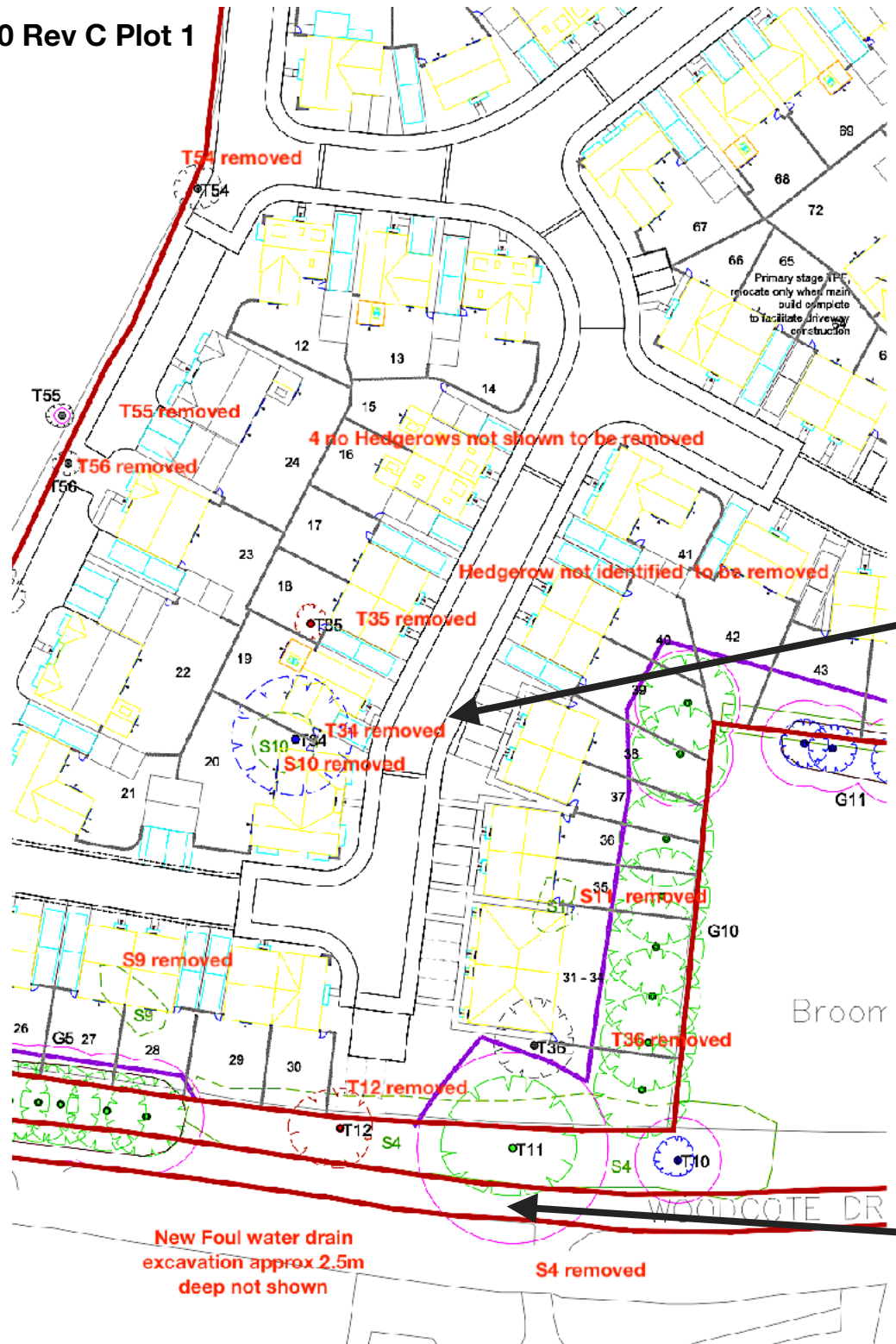
Trees missed off the Cala plan on the previous page. Cala show in the trunks of these trees less than 5 m from the proposed houses

Part drawing 711 Rev C Plot 3



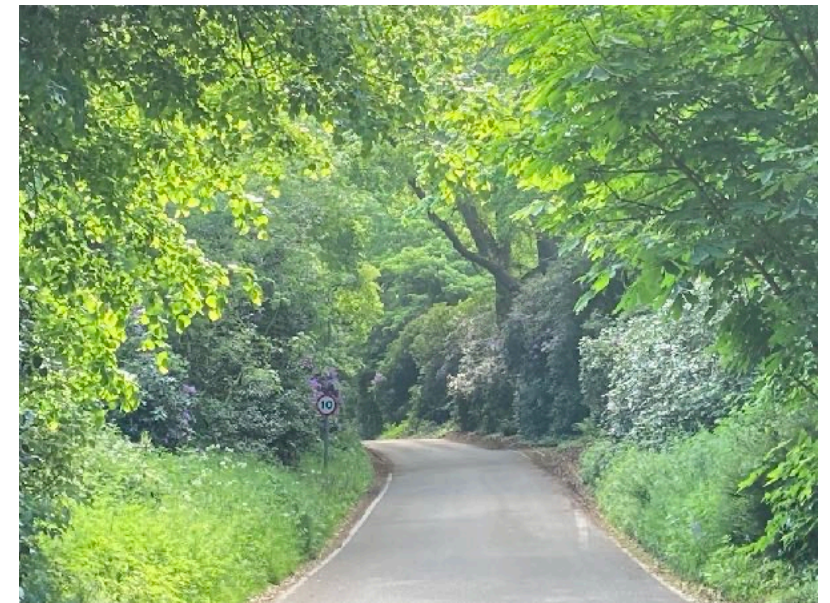
Woodcote Drive leading to Plot 3

Part drawing 710 Rev C Plot 1



T34 This veteran oak 260 years old is scheduled for destruction - Plot 1

In ancient woodland, oak holds almost twice the amount of carbon as any other tree species.



Woodcote Drive - A canopy of 200 years old trees endangered



The view across Plots 1 & 2



80 foot Trees on the North west corner of Broome House 10 m away from the proposed houses

The TREE
Status
FOR INFO
Job Ref
JSL4100
RPS Drawing No
712
rpsgroup.co.uk

LWFG - report on RPS's tree report



**POLICE HQ,
LEEK WOOTTON**

Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment



JSL4106_770
Tree Survey and
Arboricultural Impact
Assessment
-
09 March 2022

rpsgroup.com

The RPS report issued as part of Cala's planning application W/22/1877 is the same report issued by RPS for Cala's 1st Application.

It has not been amended and does not reflect the amended plan / current application. The only amendment are the plan layouts

The report states:-

"8.2 - The proposed development will required the removal of 16 individual trees, the full removal of 5 tree groups, partial removal of 1 tree group and 7 hedges. Additionally, 4 trees were considered unsuitable for retention and therefore require removal". **LWFG - this is an incorrect statement Clause 8.2 above leads you to believe at first glance that 26 trees will be removed and 7 hedges. This is reinforced by clause 8.6 where Cala state "the proposed scheme has minimal arboricultural impact"**.

"8.6 - From an arboreal respected, subject to the satisfactory implementation of the recommendations contained within the report, it is considered that the proposed scheme has minimal arboricultural impacts." **LWFG - this is an incorrect statement. Our report is in stark contrast. Our findings detail the destruction of 71 trees and 10 hedgerows**

We wish to draw to your attention the Tree Constraints Plan drawing 700 revision, rev A, that shows the trees and hedgerows in plots 1 & 2 surveyed in June 2022.

RPS notes on the drawings state "Large areas have not been surveyed within the paddock field area, due to poor/overgrown, ground conditions.

This comment is indeed correct. The areas have not been surveyed by Cala.

Members from the Focus Group (aged between 65 and 75) did trespass and survey this area. We trampled through the undergrowth around numerous hedgerows the size of basketball pitches 4 - 6 foot in height taking measurements of trees, photographs and recording wildlife.

Two months after the area was surveyed by RPS the Focus Group wrote to Cala on the 16 August 2022 and the 6 September 2022, (copies attached), expressing our deep concern that the area had been decimated by Cala on the 15 August 2022, reducing the undergrowth from a height of 4 to 6 feet down to 2 inches over 70% of the site. Their reply dated 22 September is attached to this report.

LWFG - report on RPS's tree report.....contd

- There is no detailed tree survey with this application.
- The RPS drawings are inaccurate: trees missed off and/or in the wrong location.
- 2.5 m deep trenches for services have been missed off the drawings. Trenches extend through the root ball of many trees along Woodcote Drive and will cause significant damage.
- T34 This veteran oak 260 years old the most notable tree on the whole estate has been incorrectly measured.
- In our initial tree report issued on the 29 May regarding Cala's first application we outlined serious shortcomings regarding RBS's survey and report. None of our findings have been taken into consideration.
- The LWFG volunteers have surveyed Plots 1,2 & 3. Our last survey was completed on the 25 May 2022. Based on Cala's latest Application W/22/1877 we have modified our report to reflect the new layout. See our data report on the right.
- **Our findings are shocking and demand a full investigation into Cala's claims.**
- **There is no rationale behind the removal of 71 trees and 10 hedgerows other than obtaining the maximum number of houses within each plot.**

Drgn no	Tree	No	Hedgerows	No	Comments
	The Paddock Plot 1				
Drawing 712 rev C	T46	1	S15	1	See page 10 of the LWFG Tree report
	T53	1			
	T54	1	S17	1	
Drawing 710 rev C	The Paddock Plot 1				See page 9 of the LWFG Tree report
	T56	1	4 Hedgerows		
	T35	1	S11	1	
	T34	1	S4	1	
	T12	1	Hedge	1	West of Broome House
	T36	1	Hedge	1	North of Broome House
	T12	1	S10	1	
			S9	1	
Drawing 711 rev C	The Tennis court Plot 3				See page 8 of the LWFG Tree report
	G9	10			
	G6 - 50%	10			
	T29	3			
	T28	1			
	T27	1			
	T26	1			
	T25	1			
	T57	1			
	T58	1			
	T59	1			
	T20	1			
	T32	1			
	G14	1			
Drawing 710 rev C	To the right and to the rear of Broome House Plot 2				See page 6 of the LWFG Tree report
		28	S13	1	
	T2	1		1	East of Broome House
		?			Trees next to parking bays
Total	Trees	71	Hedgerows	10	

Summary of Tree Report 13 January - David Tudway

Cala Homes submitted a revised application to WDC on 28 November 2022 to build 83 homes on the 3.8 hectare site which they have purchased in the grounds of the Warwickshire Police Headquarters at Leek Wootton.

The proposed site, which has a habitat designation of Woodpasture and Parkland, borders Woodcote Drive and Woodcote Lane and is familiar to many of the residents of Leek Wootton. It contains a large number of mature trees which are mostly along the margins of these roads. They are mostly oaks but there is a variety of other tree species. Most of the trees are in good condition, many approaching 200 years old, some older. The oldest tree, estimated to be 260 years old, is a veteran oak which stands alone in the paddock. This one of those due to be felled.

Cala's tree survey and assessment seriously underestimates the total of large trees on the site. It admits 'some tree losses will be necessary' and quantifies losses at 16 individual trees plus 5 'tree groups', that is collections of trees which have not been counted individually, with partial removal of a sixth group. A detailed study by the LWFG estimates the total loss at 71 mature trees and 10 hedgerows which would ruin this area of semi-natural mixed habitat. There is a real fear that the actual number of trees lost might greatly exceed even this figure without strict scrutiny and enforcement of felling activity at the time of construction.

The proposed development is for high density housing which allows little room for large mature trees; that is why so many will go. Even so, the surviving trees will crowd closely around the new houses.

The recommended minimum distance between a new house build and a large oak tree is 16m but under the existing proposal 16 houses will be 12-15m of the nearest tree and a further 15 houses will be 5-10m from the nearest tree!

In all, 31 out of a total of 83 houses will be located closer than the recommended minimum building distance from an existing large tree. Cala themselves admit that in at least six instances construction will extend within the 'root protection area' of trees. This will damage their roots and may weaken the tree. And in Cala's Tree Survey and Arboricultural Assessment there is a clause saying that tree canopies may be 'reduced' where considered necessary at the time.

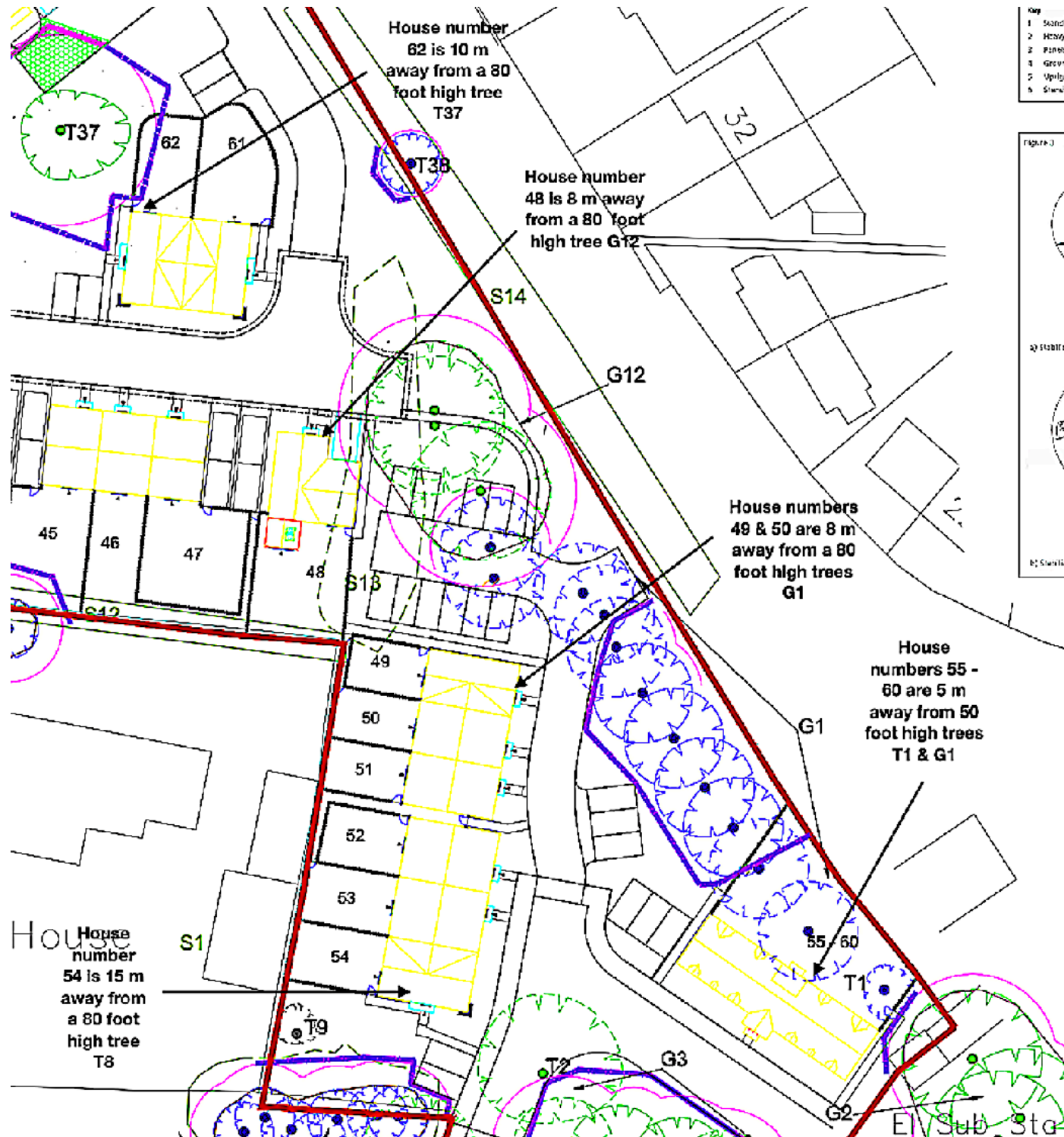
It is feared there will be very extensive damage to tree root systems where necessary drains and services are laid underground. At present we have no layout plans of these services but it is known that there will be a new foul water drain along Woodcote Drive. The excavation for this must compromise many of the fine trees which at present grow along both its sides.

David Tudway 10 January 2023

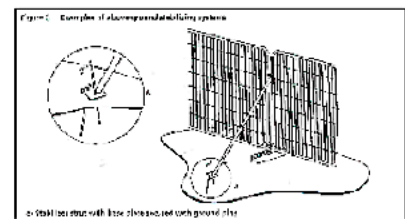
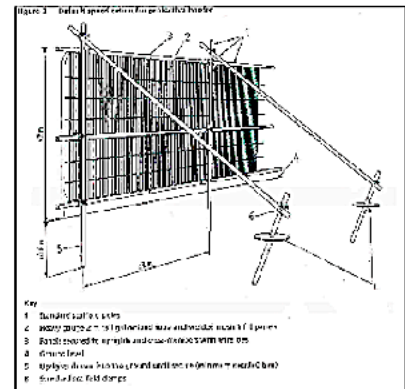
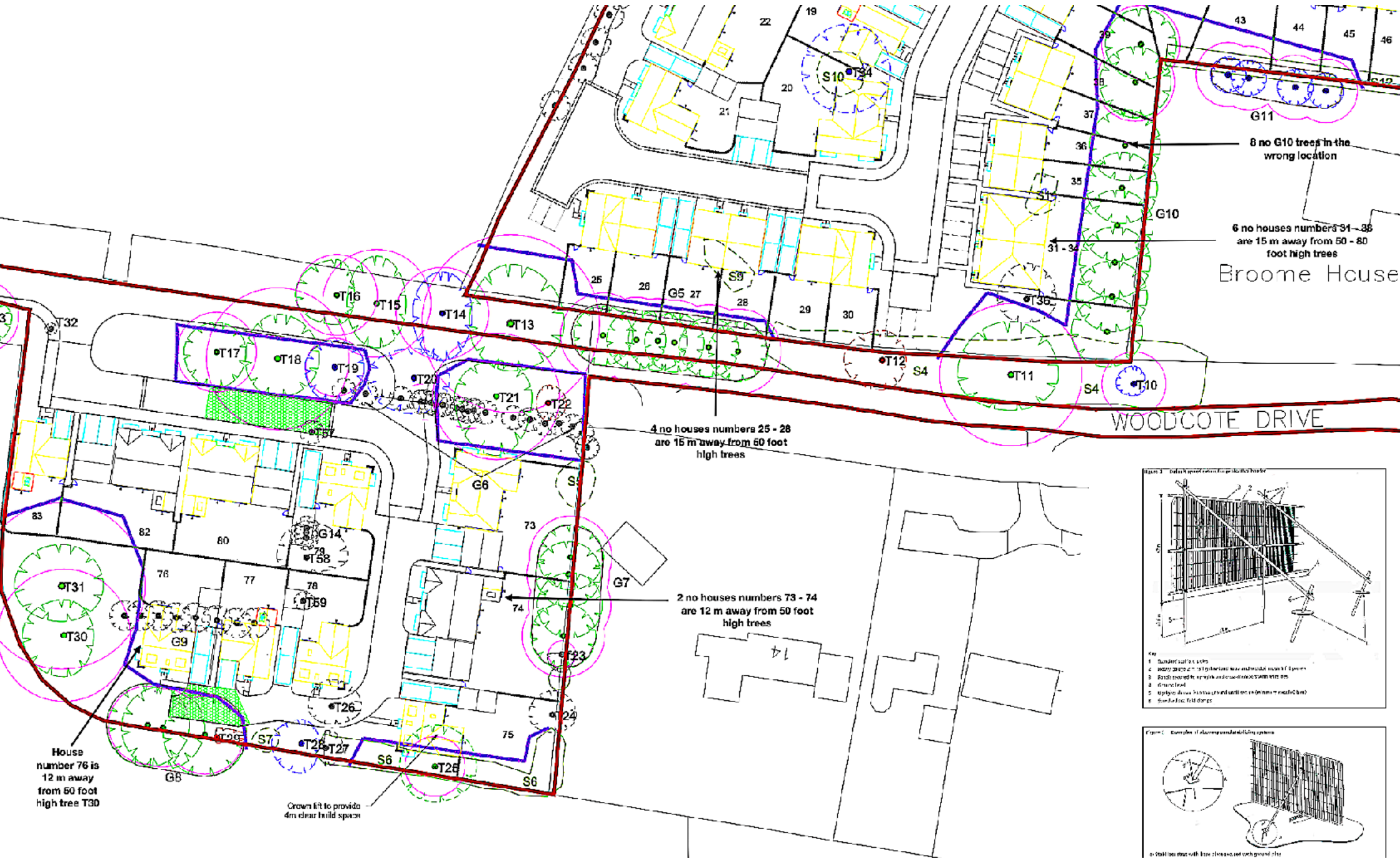


T34 This veteran oak 260 years old planted around 1760 is scheduled for destruction - Plot 1. In ancient woodland, oak holds almost twice the amount of carbon as any other tree species.

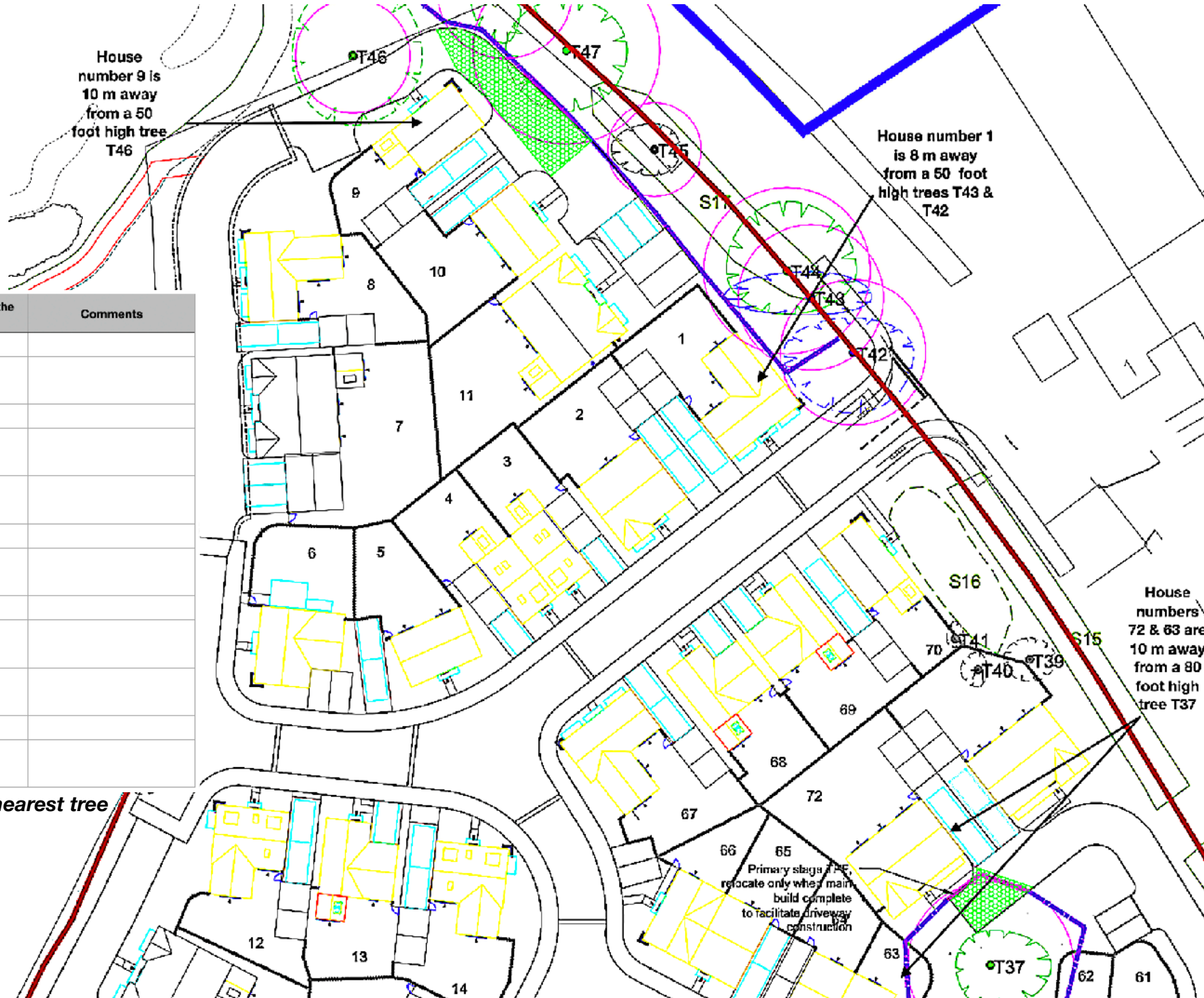
LWFG - the distance between a retained trees & a proposed houses - marked up plan drawing 710 Rev C Plot 2



LWFG - the distance between a retained trees & a proposed houses - marked up plan drawing 711 Rev C Plot 3



LWFG - the distances between a retained trees & a proposed houses - marked up plan drawing 712 rev C Plot 1



Drgn no	House Number	Distance from the nearest tree	Comments
The Paddock Plot 1 by the lake			
Drawing 712 rev C	9	10m	
	1	8m	
	72	10m	
Drawing 711 rev C	63	10m	
	The Tennis court Plot 3		
	31 - 38	15m	
Drawing 710 rev C	25 - 28	15m	
	73 - 74	12m	
	76	12m	
	Plots 1 & Plot 2		
	54	15m	
Drawing 710 rev C	55 - 60	5m	
	49 - 50	8m	
	48	8m	
	62	10m	
	71	5m	
Total Trees	31		

LWFG - House distance to the nearest tree

LWFG - the distance between a retained tree & a proposed house

This is an excellent read the Leeds Residential Design Aid, last updated Feb 2021. The recommended distances from residential buildings to trees varies depending on the species of tree, the aspect and type of building etc. but simplified to essentials;

If you look at page 6 and page 11 of the attached link the recommended minimum distance to build a house from a large oak tree is 16 m. It should be also be noted that oak trees have a high water demand this will certainly affect building foundations in times of drought.

https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Guideline_distances_from_development_to_trees.pdf

The subsidence claims advisory bureau (see link) recommends a minimum distance of 18 m

<https://subsidencebureau.com/trees-distances/>

Summary

The data shown within the report on the previous page is illustrated on each of the three Cala plans. This shows that;

16 houses are between 12 - 15m of the nearest tree

And a further 15 houses are between 5 -10m of the nearest tree

31 houses out of a total of 83 houses are located closer than the recommended minimum distance. to build a house to an existing large tree.

This equates to 37% of the site.

Comments lodged on the Planning Portal by the Warwick County Council Landscape Team.

Ms S Harrison Planning objection 3 May 2022 states:-

“The Planning Statement for this proposal states that the scheme is "landscape and heritage-led", however I can see little evidence of this in the plans submitted.

The 2013 'Landscape Sensitivity and Ecological & Geological Study' states that development would be acceptable "providing the strong boundary vegetation and TPO trees are retained and unaffected." This does not seem to have been taken into account with the number of trees that are earmarked for removal.

The proposals do not accord with policies DS22, BE1 and NE4 of the Local Plan and I therefore object to this application as it stands”

Ms S Harrison Planning objection 23 December 2022 states:-

Following my comments of 19th December, and the subsequent submission of the Tree Protection and Removal Plans, I have some additional comments:

The site is covered by a blanket TPO, which indicates that the trees on the site have significant amenity benefits to the local area. This is backed up by the LVIA, which states that the value of the vegetation within the site is taken as high, as well as high susceptibility to change.

I do not believe the current proposals are truly landscape-led and they contravene policy NE4 of the Local plan.

We are all connected.

On the 29 May the Focus Group issued a report - Woodcote, a Heritage Estate where we looked back at the early black and white photographs of the Estate and witnessed the passing of time.

The Grade 2 listed House with its curtilage buildings sitting amongst planting that commenced in 1855, creating the Terrace Hill Wood, Long Meadow Spinney, and the Lunch woodland.

Nearly 200 years later, veteran trees and hedgerows now provide an irreplaceable habitat for our wildlife. An oasis, a wonderland on our doorstep

We must all walk the trails with our children and grandchildren, and identify the trees, know their names. Ok T34 isn't a good name, but for now it will do. Unless we act our trees and our lakes will disappear.

Planning by stealth is the enemy. Brick boxes will replace centuries of trees and wildlife. This once green and pleasant land will not magically reappear, it will be lost forever.

Our lives will be poorer because we are all connected.



“We can now destroy or we can cherish, the choice is ours.”

- David Attenborough