

Dear Development Management Team,

For the attention of the Tree and Landscape Officer.

Thank you for your comments regarding the proposed development at 56 High Street, Baldock.

We have reviewed the feasibility of retaining 1T (*Taxus baccata* [yew]), now protected by TPO/00227 (2026), within the context of the current scheme. While its retention has been fully explored during the design process, our assessment concludes that this is not realistically achievable without resulting in significant arboricultural harm and materially constraining the viability of the proposed development.

The scheme has been developed in accordance with the principles of BS5837:2012, with a clear emphasis on retaining existing trees wherever feasible. This is evidenced by the retention of 2T–4T and the incorporation of specialist mitigation measures, including no-dig hard-surfacing solutions and targeted rooting-environment enhancement works, as set out in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

In contrast, 1T presents a unique and overriding constraint within the site layout. To facilitate its retention, a substantial unilateral crown reduction of approximately 4 metres on the southern aspect would be required to provide acceptable clearance from the proposed extension. In arboricultural terms, this degree of asymmetric pruning would be excessive and would not represent good practice under the principles of BS3998:2010. The resulting crown form would be heavily imbalanced and visually poor, while also increasing the likelihood of physiological stress, reduced vitality, and future management pressures.

The impacts upon the rooting environment are similarly significant. The footprint of the proposed extension would result in an approximate 13% incursion into the calculated RPA (circa 35 m²), while the total hard surfacing, including the driveway within the northern periphery of the RPA and the areas surrounding the dwelling, are 13.2% (circa 36 m²), increasing the cumulative RPA incursion to approximately over 26%. As illustrated in the accompanying image, the blue hatching denotes the proposed driveway incursion; the required southern crown reduction is indicated in red; the extension is shown in purple; and the additional hard surfacing around the dwelling is marked with orange hatching.

Whilst BS5837:2012 does not define universal or prescriptive thresholds for all categories of RPA incursion, as acceptability is inherently site- and impact-specific, it is acknowledged that certain incursions can be successfully mitigated through specialist design and construction approaches. In this case, however, the cumulative above- and below-ground impacts associated with retaining 1T are such that its long-term retention would likely be unsustainable and would materially constrain the functionality of the proposed development.

It is also important to recognise that extensive efforts have already been undertaken to minimise arboricultural impacts across the wider site. The current proposal successfully retains the more prominent tree cover associated with 2T–4T through recognised engineering and arboricultural solutions, demonstrating that tree retention has been prioritised throughout the design evolution process. In this context, the proposed removal of 1T should be viewed as an isolated and unavoidable constraint arising from the site's physical limitations, rather than a failure to adequately consider tree retention.

We have also reviewed whether meaningful redesign opportunities exist to facilitate the retention of 1T. However, given the constrained nature of the plot, the relationship with retained trees, access requirements, and the need to maintain a functional and policy-compliant layout, there appears to be very limited scope for further amendment without undermining the overall scheme.

The applicant has also raised practical concerns about the yew's proximity to the dwelling and domestic areas. As you will be aware, *Taxus* species contain highly toxic compounds within the foliage, bark, and seeds, with toxicity persisting even after pruning arisings have dried. Whilst this is not presented as a primary justification for removal, it is acknowledged that the long-term occupation and use of the site would inevitably increase routine interaction with the tree and associated maintenance requirements. As such, this factor contributes to the wider site management considerations associated with retention.

Overall, the scheme is considered to demonstrate a balanced and proportionate arboricultural approach. Significant trees across the site are being retained and protected through appropriate mitigation measures, while the removal of 1T is considered justified due to the combined arboricultural and site design constraints identified above.

Should the Local Planning Authority require it, a replacement planting strategy can be secured by condition to ensure continued long-term contribution to local amenity and landscape character.

We trust the above clarifies our position, but we would be happy to discuss the matter further if helpful.

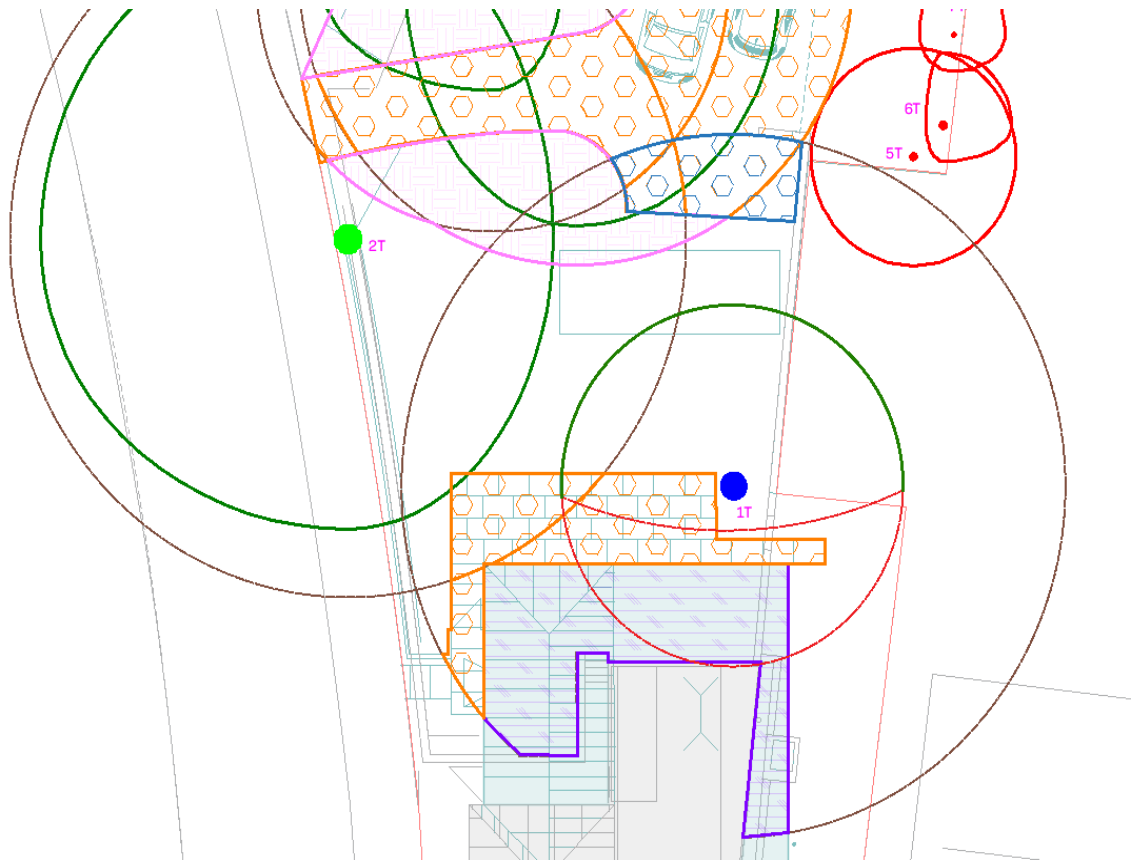
Yours sincerely,

Dean Meadows

Technical Manager of Arboriculture

Arbtech Consulting Limited

[see image overleaf]



Based on the current proposal, in a scenario where 1T is retained.

Teal shading denotes the proposed extension footprint; grey denotes existing site features; blue hatching denotes the proposed driveway incursion relating to 1T; the required southern crown reduction is indicated in red; the extension is shown in purple; pink denotes areas for soil amelioration; and the additional hard surfacing around the dwelling and the incursion to 2T-4T are marked with orange hatching.