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9 March 2022

Your contact is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning

Dear Mr Butler

RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO TREES AT LEIGHTON PARK SCHOOL, SHINFIELD ROAD, READING - SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 27/07.

Thank you for your application of 13 January 2022 and supporting documentation, regarding the above.

Further to our site visit of 10 January 2022, I can confirm that the following proposed works, as detailed in your application, are approved subject to the conditions below:

- **Sycamore (T1 of application; G9 of TPO) - fell** due to decline and colonisation with *Ganoderma*
- **Copper beech (T2 of application; W7 of TPO) - fell** as the tree is in an advanced state of decline with suspected colonisation by *Phytophthora*
- **Turkey Oak (T3 of application; W3 of TPO) - fell** due to extensive decay at the base which is compromising the structural integrity.
Officer note: it is unfortunate that historic building up of ground levels around the base of the tree has likely resulted in this decay and hence the need to fell. Such activities should be avoided.
- **Oak (T4 of application; W7 of TPO) - Prune** back limbs extending South West over the emergency access road to suitable growth points such that pruning wounds are essentially located above the tarmac section of pedestrian footpath below, as indicatively shown in supporting photograph. This veteran Oak has several associated decay fungi. A large limb recently fell from this tree revealing dysfunctional tissue in the immediate area in proximity to a very large limb which extends over the emergency access road and busy footpath. The Western side of the tree canopy has been in decline for several years and has sparse foliage and a steady accumulation of dead wood.

- **Ash (T5 of application; W2 of TPO)** - fell due to a significant area of decay at approximately 3m to the South. This area has *Inonotus hispidus* (shaggy bracket) associated with it hence the structural integrity of the tree is in question.
- **Horse chestnut (T6 of application; W4 of TPO)** - fell due to significant decline and basal decay
- **Hornbeam (T7 of application; W4 of TPO)** - crown reduce to remove the stag headed portions of the canopy to leave a more compact framework for regeneration, as indicatively shown in the supporting photograph. This tree is in decline and the works are a positive alternative to felling in order to retain the tree in some form.
- **Red Oak (T8 of application; W4 of TPO)** - Prune back sections of the canopy overhanging the pavilion to suitable growth points such that a clearance of approximately 1m from the building line is achieved, as indicatively shown in the supporting photograph. The work is proposed to minimise tree debris on the newly renovated pavilion.
Officer note: concerns such as this are normally dealt with by selective branch reduction to provide clearance from a building vertically, i.e. branches are left overhanging roofs as horizontal clearance is often not appropriate for the tree. In this case, the degree of reduction is significant, however it is an overextended branch and the historic importance of the pavilion is appreciated, hence the work is accepted in this instance.
- **Oak (T9 of application; G2 of TPO)** - fell due to extensive dieback and likely *Phytophthora* infection.
Officer note: it is assumed that the impact on the adjacent trees in the group of removing this significant tree has been assessed.
- **Turkey Oak - (T10 of application; W5 of TPO)**- Reduce the (heavily leaning) stem by approximately 10m to reduce the weight, cut back to suitable growth points in this area and sensitively reduce remaining lateral limbs to shape remaining canopy, as indicatively shown on supporting photograph. The stem has a significant lean hence the reduction is required to prevent limb failure and associated impact on other stems.
- **Sycamore (T11 of application; W2 of TPO)** - fell due to colonisation of basal decay fungi *Kretzschmaria deusta* (brittle cinder).
- **Ash (T12 of application; W2 of TPO)** - fell due to significant dieback in the crown and several sites of brackets of decay fungi *Inonotus hispidus* (shaggy bracket) throughout the canopy.
- **Oak (T13 of application; W2 of TPO)** - fell as this tree has been observed as experiencing dieback within the crown for several years. Significant sections of the crown are now completely dead. A large live limb recently (June 2021) failed and fell from the canopy.
- **Hornbeam (T14 of application; W2 of TPO)** - fell due to extensive basal decay and evidence of Honey fungus
- **Oak (T15 of application; W1 of TPO)** - reduce/re-pollard back to crown break to manage regrowth
- **Horse chestnut (T16 of application; W1 of TPO)** - carry out a semi-pollard to the pollard knuckles. i.e. remove the larger, oldest stems but retain the sub-dominant stems. These sub-dominant stems will continue to contribute to the tree

and will become the next cycle of oldest stems, which may in turn be removed in the future at the next required semi-pollard visit, as part of an ongoing management strategy.

- **Lime (T17 of application; T54 of TPO) - Reduce the canopy all round by approximately 30%.: 6-7 metres to suitable growth points, as indicatively shown on the supporting photograph, due to a weak fork between the main stems.**
- **Plane (T18 of application; T22 of TPO) - carry out a semi-pollard to the pollard knuckles i.e. remove the larger, oldest stems but retain the sub-dominant stems as indicatively shown on the supporting photograph.** These sub-dominant stems will continue to contribute to the tree and will become the next cycle of oldest stems, which may in turn be removed in the future at the next required semi-pollard visit, as part of an ongoing management strategy. **Retained leggy lateral branches to be reduced as required to maintain an acceptable canopy shape.**
- **Leyland cypress (T19 of application; T19 of TPO) - fell.** The tree is agreed to be unsuitable for its location due to its size and proximity to the house. It is not a species of particular merit and the removal will not impact amenity value locally due to the number of other trees in the vicinity.

Officer note: the nuisance issues are noted but have not formed a significant part of the decision.

As you will appreciate this application involves the felling of a significant number of large canopy trees - 11 in total. This represents a substantial canopy cover loss at a time where we are trying to increase canopy cover to meet our climate change mitigation targets and in line with the aims of our Tree Strategy. As such, a comprehensive replacement tree strategy is required - see condition 5 below.

It is a concern that the school has felled (with reason & approval) trees over recent years and the evidence of replacement planting has been vague and relied largely on general planting done by the school. However, from my visit I could see that planting in the woodland had not been successful and the replacement for failed T9 Oak was no longer in place - **a new replacement should be planted for this.** As such, I hope you will appreciate my concerns over the school's approach to its legal duty to replace trees but also, I would suggest, its duty as a large landowner to ensure that canopy cover is not denuded on its land. Trees are, after all, what gives the school its parkland character and makes it an attractive campus.

Added to the above, there is also evidence of a historic lack of care in the depositing of arisings/waste material in close proximity to trees to the detriment of their health - see T3 Oak above as an example. Continuing of activities known to be harmful to protected trees which results in their decline could be taken as 'wilful destruction' under legislation and may leave the school open to enforcement action. A review of such activities is therefore strongly recommended.

I am aware from our site meeting that an additional Lime (with Kretzschmaria) close to T17/T54 (above) is to be felled and would encourage the school to plant a replacement tree to assist with the aims of our Tree Strategy to increase canopy cover in the Borough.

Conditions

1. Five days' notice in writing shall be given to the Council prior to undertaking the approved works.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority is given sufficient notice of the works to enable the effective monitoring of tree work within the Borough.

2. All tree surgery shall be in accordance with BS 3998: (2010) Tree Work - Recommendations, unless approved works fall outside this guidance.

Reason: To ensure that all works are carried out in an acceptable arboricultural manner

3. The approved canopy reduction/pollarding to application T4 Oak, T7 Hornbeam, T10 Turkey oak, T15 Oak, T16 Horse chestnut, T17 Lime and T18 Plane shall only be undertaken in mid-late Summer (July - September) when the tree's energy reserves are at their height or during the Winter months of December - January during the period of dormancy, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Taking into account the tree's phenological cycle and in order to avoid any unnecessary detriment to the tree as a result of the pruning work.

4. Climbing spikes shall not be used whilst undertaking any form of works on living trees, except on trees to be felled.

Reason: Spikes can cause extensive long-term damage

5. Following the felling of the 11 trees authorised by this consent, a replacement tree of a minimum 10-12cm girth and 3m in height shall be planted for each tree felled (totalling 11) within the grounds of Leighton Park School, with each replacement being as close as practically possible to the tree felled and each being planted during the planting season (Nov-March) following or at the time of the felling of that tree, whichever is soonest. The species shall be agreed in advance with the Local Planning Authority through submission of a replacement planting strategy document.

Planting should be carried out in accordance with clause 10 (Planting) of BS 8545:2014 'Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations'

Should the replacement tree be removed, die or become severely damaged or seriously diseased, all within 5 years of planting, it shall be replaced by a tree of a similar size and species to that originally planted. Modifications to the requirements of this condition must be agreed in writing with Reading Borough Council Natural Environment Team.

PLEASE NOTE: The requirement to replant is the responsibility of the tree owner even if the application was submitted by another person.

Reason: To retain the present visual amenity value of the area and ensure continuity of tree coverage.

Informatives

1. You are advised that, in accordance with Part 4, 17 (4) of The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012, this decision is valid for one

pruning operation (as per the approved specifications) to be undertaken within two years from the date of this notice, after which the consent lapses and a new application will be required.

2. Removal of dead or dangerous wood: This does not require the formal consent of the Council. However written notice must be given 5 working days in advance of removing dead wood. Where a branch is deemed to be 'dangerous', i.e. where works are 'urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm', you are required to give notice to the Council 'as soon as practicable after the works become necessary'.

3. Disturbance of wildlife: It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to disturb roosting bats or nesting birds. It is advisable to consult your tree surgeon/consultant to agree an acceptable time for carrying out any work. Wildlife and habitat controls are administered by Natural England who can be contacted on 0300 030 6000

4. It is best to avoid works in the period immediately before or during bud burst and leaf fall to minimise the effect on the long-term health of the tree

5. Tree work consents on land not owned by the applicant: It is strongly recommended that the owner of the tree be advised of any proposed works. The owner's permission must be sought if the tree works involve work past the boundary line. This consent does not in any way imply that this Council has informed the owner of sought permission or will condone the use of consents to force any landowner to grant such permission.

6. Removal of any dead or dangerous protected tree: This does not require the formal consent of the Council. However you are required to give 5 days notice of the work where it is not an emergency, to allow the Council to agree that the proposed works are exempt from requiring consent. The exception is where works are 'urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm', in which case you are required to give notice to the Council 'as soon as practicable after the works become necessary'.

Once felling of a dead or dangerous tree has been carried out, the owner has a duty under Section 201(b) of the Town & Country Planning Act to replant another tree of an appropriate size and species in the same place as soon as they reasonable can. This replacement tree will be covered by the existing Tree Preservation Order. The new tree would be subject to the same requirements for a tree works application if you intend to carry out works upon it in the future.

7. Crown lifting of trees over the footpath and carriageway: If the clearance of vegetation overhanging the highway only involves the removal of branches to give a ground clearance to the statutory heights of 2.7m over the footpath and 5.5m over the road, this does not require formal consent from the Council. You are advised, however, to give notice to the Council of these intended works in order that they can be agreed.

8. Trees not considered to be protected by the current Tree preservation order: Work can be carried out to this tree without the formal consent from this Council.

If you wish to appeal against any of the conditions attached to this consent, please contact the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of receipt of this letter to obtain the relevant forms. You cannot currently apply by post.

For more information go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-preservation-order-appeal-form>

Telephone: 0303 444 5570 or e-mail it to:

treeandhedgeappeals@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

If you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hanson

Sarah Hanson
Natural Environment Officer

C.c. Keith Eldridge, Bursar, Leighton Park School
Tom Sheldon, Leighton Park School

