
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 February 2023 16:44
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Application 6/2023/0001/TPO
Importance: High

Dear Mr Hare

I am the chairman of the Bell Lane Action Group (BLAG) which as a collective body represents and protects the interests of all the residents of Bell Lane, Bell Bar. I refer to the above application for the removal of 4 ash trees and I write to you on behalf all the householders in the lane to urge you to reject this proposal.

In considering this application, BLAG sought the professional opinion of an eminent arborist - see attachment - whose very comprehensive report concluded that:

1. The brief letter prepared by the applicant's arborist was inaccurate, unhelpful and unhelpful.
2. The trees inspected were in a contemporarily reasonable condition given their woodland context and the symptoms resembling those associated with ash dieback disease were inconclusive and did not constitute a reason for felling any of them.
3. These trees were of significant ecological benefit, particularly in promoting local biodiversity and therefore should not be felled.
4. The reduction works suggested to T2 and T4 were inappropriate and would if carried out degrade the local ecology significantly without reducing the likelihood of partial or complete tree failure significantly.

In paragraph 3.2.1, ref T1, our expert contradicts the applicant's contention and states that in his opinion T1 had not failed at the base, nor fallen, and was not laying across further trees. On the contrary, the tree was growing strongly eastwards and seemed to be self-supporting.

He further comments in 3.3.1, ref T2, that the proposed works were not contemporarily necessary.

In 3.4.1, ref T3, he saw no reason why that tree should be felled

In 3.5.1, ref T4, he found no structural instability which would necessitate what was being proposed.

Finally in 3.8 – He states that having inspected the four trees, he considered their condition to be acceptable within the context of their woodland environment

When reviewing this application, I would also ask you to refer to the Government guidelines on managing ash dieback in England, and I quote some relevant extracts from it:

"It is likely that the majority of our native ash trees will exhibit symptoms of ash dieback, but not all that do will die."

"Felling diseased ash requires a felling licence from the Forestry Commission, unless the trees are dead or pose a real and immediate danger. Restrictions such as tree preservation orders must also be respected". None of the trees in question fall in that category

"Some ash trees may have genetic tolerance to ash dieback, meaning they may survive and reproduce to create the next generation of ash trees. Therefore, it is important to retain ash trees where they stand out as being healthier than those around them and it is safe to do so. Retaining a proportion of dead, dying or felled trees will provide deadwood habitat and be beneficial for biodiversity."

I would also point you to "The Operation Note 46a – Managing Ash Trees affected by ash dieback" which continually refers to the preference to preserve the trees before contemplating the drastic action to remove them. The trees in question ARE NOT within falling distance (i.e. the total height of the tree) of a highway, service network, built infrastructure, or a space with frequent public use.

Further detailed advice is also given in "The National Tree Safety Group – Common Sense Risk Management of Trees" booklet, which I know is familiar to you. It says, amongst many other similar comments, *" a disproportionate response to the actual risks posed by trees leads to unnecessary intervention disproportionately responding to risk itself and runs the risk of diminishing the landscape and depriving the whole community of the enjoyment of trees and their wider benefits".*

I know that you are aware of the issues surrounding potential developments in the area and the desire of the applicant to develop the sites known as BrP1 in Bell Lane, and BrP12a, land North of Bradmore Way, Brookman's Park - the latter being prepared for appeal. Critical to that appeal is the appellant's need to use the track between BrP12 and Bell Lane as a temporary construction road. Those trees are in the way and their removal would greatly benefit that purpose. His arborist as much as says so in his description of "T3 Reasons for works" which forms part of his application. I would therefore suggest that this application is nothing but a cynical attempt to gain access to a pathway which is totally unsuitable for construction traffic. So, while I am aware that you need to assess this application on the amenity of the tree area, I would also urge you to consider the other implications of granting such a permission.

Yours sincerely

For and on behalf of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

68 Bell Lane Brookman's Park, Herts AL9 7AY



PS: I confirm that you can post this email and the attachment on the planning website