

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2023/0105/EMT
Location: 15 Sherrardspark Road Welwyn Garden City AL8 7JW
Proposal: T1 1 x Oak to dismantle in sections to ground level.
 T2 1 x Oak to reduce by approximately 3m in height and 3m in width.
Officer: Ms M Hill

Recommendation: Granted

6/2023/0105/EMT

Context			
Site and Application description	15 Sherrardspark Road Welwyn Garden City AL8 7JW T1 1 x Oak to dismantle in sections to ground level. T2 1 x Oak to reduce by approximately 3m in height and 3m in width.		
Constraints	Estate Management Scheme, as defined within the Leasehold Reform Act 1967		
Relevant Estate Management history	<p>Application Number: 6/2023/0103/TC Decision: Decision Date:</p> <p>Proposal: T1 1 x Oak to dismantle in sections to ground level. T2 1 x Oak to reduce by approximately 3m in height and 3m in width, remove major deadwood consisting of branches greater than 30mm in diameter and 500mm in length.</p> <p>Application Number: N6/2008/2209/TE Decision: Decision Date: 30 December 2008</p> <p>Proposal: 25% CROWN REDUCTION TO OAK TREES (T1 & T2), 15% CROWN REDUCTION TO OAK TREES (T3 & T4)</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2016/0174/TPO Decision: Granted Decision Date: 23 May 2016</p> <p>Proposal: Removal of Oak tree - Conservation Area</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2016/0787/EM Decision: Granted Decision Date: 23 May 2016</p> <p>Proposal: Removal of Oak tree</p>		
Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support: 0	Object: 0	Other: 0

Summary of neighbour responses	None.
Consultees and responses	None.
Relevant Policies	Policy EM3 – Soft Landscaping
Main Issues	
Appropriateness of the works in relation to the tree(s)	<p>T2 oak is a mature tree standing in the rear garden of the property, close to the western boundary with 7 Densely Close. The tree appears to be in reasonable health and vitality is reasonable becoming fair.</p> <p>The structural condition is fair. There are small pockets of decay in old pruning wounds. The tree has been over lifted in bygone years. The tree has not been crown reduced on the apex before, only the sides, but heavily.</p> <p>A reduction of 3m off the tree's height is likely to take off a significant amount of tertiary growth and leave many substantial pruning wounds. The tree is unlikely to make abundant epicormic growth in the crown. This aspect of the work is concerning.</p> <p>The 3m reduction off the width is taken as diameter which would be back to approximately previous pruning points.</p> <p>The proposed tree work should be controlled through standard conditions of undertaking the tree work at a seasonally appropriate time with a maximum pruning wound diameter.</p> <p>T1 oak is a fully mature oak tree which predates the development of west side. The tree stands in the rear garden, close to the dwellings and garage.</p> <p>The tree has a historically heavily topped and lopped to a tight frame of primary branches, typically undertaken in the development of the Garden City, then subsequently contained to this or secondary pruning points. The current regrowth is 4 to 5 meters long. Some of the primary branches have a pocket of decay at the reduction point. This is not unusual for this species in this management regime and is not significant to the tree as a whole.</p> <p>Overall, the tree appears to be in reasonable health and vitality, with good bud cover throughout. A small amount of secondary deadwood is visible over the garage.</p> <p>The structural condition is fair. There is a point of vertical decay from ground level to 2.5m, hidden under retained bark on the north-eastern side. There are fungal fruiting bodies on either side of the stem. One at 1.5m on north-eastern side and one at ground level on the north-western side.</p> <p>There is a pocket of decay in the main stem at an estimated 18m. This has an unknown significance.</p> <p>There are D shaped emergence holes on the stem from the northern side of the stem through to the south, with varied density but not in significant numbers. These exit holes are an indication of Agrilus beetle. A large larva population can be a problem to the tree, as the larva bore through the wood. The number of exit holes indicates the extent of the beetle population. The limited number of exit holes in this tree indicates a limited, population of larvae.</p> <p>The reasons and justification given for felling the tree are: § historically harshly pruned leading to large decaying topping cuts with</p>

- multiple growth points with poor attachments,
- § the lower trunk has a multitude of 'D' shaped exit holes, symptomatic of the oak buprestid beetle,
- § the lower trunk a large area of hollow bark,
- § exudations are apparent in a number of locations,
- § with all of the above in mind acute oak decline could be a contributory factor, and
- § between multiple buttresses of the oak was an unidentifiable fungus, thought to be *Grifola frondosa*. Often seen on mature Oaks at the buttress level which is known to lead to simultaneous white rot and structural failure.

The tree is typical of those oak which were retained through the development of the Garden City and pruning and tree management in the 1920's. The issues this creates can often be mitigated through pruning techniques and management. This is not a reason to fell the tree.

There are D shaped exit holes in the stem, a sign of *Agilus* beetle. The presence of the beetle does not always mean the tree will decline and fail or that the stem will fail.

There is an area of decay in the stem. The extent of this decay is unknown, no further investigation beyond tapping has been undertaken. Oak is a species suitable for pruning to mitigate amounts of decay in the stem. The amount and type of pruning can be informed by the extent of the decay.

Acute oak decline is present in the Borough. Forest Research has found about 40% of affected trees can recover from AOD. The presence of the disease is not a direct indicator that a tree needs to be felled – it is an assessment of the tree as a whole which should inform the management prescription.

It is not unusual for fungal fruiting bodies to be present on mature oak, especially when a town has been built around it with urban infrastructure in a short distance. At the time of the site visit the fungal fruiting body had degraded down to a small amount of white mush. The application photographs of the fungus are not much clearer, and the applicant did not have any photographs or observations about the look of the fungus when it was present. The agent has suggested it is potentially *Grifola frondosa*. If it were, the presence alone of this fungus does not immediately mean the tree must be felled - it is an assessment of the tree as a whole which should inform the management prescription. *Grifola frondosa* can affect the health of the tree as well as the structural condition. The health of this tree is not symptomatic of advancing *Grifola frondosa*. *Grifola frondosa* can lead to structural failure if the infection is in advanced stages.

Overall, the health of the tree is reasonable, considering the trees age, history and current environment. Small amounts of deadwood can be removed, and branches crown reduced back to mitigate small pockets of decay at pruning points.

Sounding the stem base indicates a large area and column of decay. This could be mitigated through reduction beyond previous points in selected areas of the crown. This would also assist with the stem cavity seen high in the stem. However, the tree is in proximity of dwellings and other urban infrastructure and is not owned by a responsible organisation. Given this, it is not

	unreasonable to fell the tree. A replacement tree of a similar stature is required.
Conclusion	
The work request is appropriate and would not result in the loss of landscaping that would harm the character and amenities of the area.	

Conditions:

1. The works hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with the British Standard 3998:2010 (Tree Work) and by an appropriately qualified person.

REASON: To ensure that any works undertaken comply with arboricultural best practice.

2. The works hereby permitted to oak T2 must only be carried out during winter (November to February, inclusive) or high summer (July to August inclusive) and at no other time.

REASON: To maintain the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy EM3 of the Estate Management Scheme.

3. The pruning points to oak T2 shall be to suitable fork/branch unions and create a pruning wound no larger than 100mm in diameter.

REASON: To ensure that any works undertaken comply with arboricultural best practice and minimise the impact on the tree's health and amenity.

4. One oak, lime or tulip tree with minimum girth/circumference of 12-14cm shall be planted within the rear garden of the property in the next available planting season (October - February) following felling, in accordance with the British Standard 8545:2014 (Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations) following the works hereby approved.

REASON: A replacement tree is required given the current amenity value of the tree in accordance with the requirements of Policy EM3 of the Estate Management Scheme.

DRAWING NUMBERS

5. The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
		Tree Sketch	16 January 2023
		Location Plan	16 January 2023

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

Determined By:

Mr Oliver Waring
19 May 2023