

PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

4 FEBRUARY 2004

CONFIRMATION OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

(Contact Officer : Michael Edwards (Tel 01962 848102)

RECENT REFERENCES

PDC379 – Confirmation of Tree Preservation Orders – 8 January 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

To consider the circumstances regarding the confirmation of Tree Preservation Order 1812 which was reported for confirmation at the previous meeting of the Committee held on 8 January 2004.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Members reconsider the earlier decision and either :-
 - (a) Ratify the decision to confirm or
 - (b) Uphold the objection and revoke the Order.

PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE4 February 2004CONFIRMATION OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDERSREPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICESDETAIL:

1. TPO 1812. Pilgrims School, 3 The Close, Winchester.
2. This item was brought to the last Planning Development Control Committee, where the item was discussed in some length. It was agreed to confirm the order. However, due to a clerical error, an invitation to the objector was not sent out although it had earlier been agreed that the objector would be notified.
3. The objector (Mr Clay) is the Bursar of the School and has requested that the item be heard again. Given the sensitivity of the issue it has been agreed to bring the item before the Committee again for reconsideration.
4. An emergency TPO was made and served on 22nd August 2003, to protect a large Beech tree from notification to be felled in a Conservation Area.
5. There have been objections on the grounds that:
 - There have been growing concerns concerning the safety of this tree.
 - It is felt that the tree now represents a hazard to the children who sleep in the dormitories close by and the pupils and teachers passing under the tree very regularly
 - A visual tree assessment has been carried out, which indicates that the tree has a few faults and as there can be no absolute guarantee of safety of trees it should be removed or reduced all over by 30%.
6. OFFICER COMMENTS
7. There is no conflict over the significance of the tree in amenity terms, it is very prominent and contributes a great deal of character to The Close.
8. The City Council have employed the services of Mr Bill Kowalczyk Associates Tree Consultancy. His report is attached.
9. The conclusions would indicate that "the tree is reasonably healthy and in fairly good condition for its age and size" and that "no evidence was observed to indicate any imminent risk of collapse".

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:1 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

Looking after the built and natural environment is a key objective.

2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None at the present stage although if the Order is confirmed and at a later date an Application for Consent to Fell is refused there could then be resource implications.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Relevant Tree Preservation Order files, objection dated 22 September 2003 from The Bursar of Pilgrims School and report of Bill Kowalczyk Associates dated 28 October 2003.

APPENDICES: R

Report of Bill Kowalczyk Associates dated 28 October 2003

Appendix to report PDC386

Re: Hazard Tree Assessment; Beech Tree at Pilgrims School, The Close, Winchester

- 01 **Client:** Winchester City Council, Avalon House, Chesil Street, Winchester
- 02 **Site:** Pilgrims School, 3 The Close, Winchester
- 03 **Brief:** To carry out a preliminary visual assessment of one Beech tree close to the south boundary wall and consider its condition and future potential specifically in relation to health and safety of the tree with regard to the serving of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and its juxtaposition to adjacent buildings, movement of staff, pupils and visitors to the school and make recommendations for future management as appropriate.
- 03 **Limitations:** The survey of the site and vegetation was of a preliminary nature carried out from ground level and with the aid of climbing access to height of about 10m, but further detailed investigations were not made. No soil or root samples were taken, and no geotechnical, engineering, structural or other monitoring reports have been supplied. The conclusions are based upon my own observations and qualifications and experience in Arboriculture (see Appendix I).
- 04 **Date of inspection:** 20th October 2003
- 05 **Conditions:** Bright, clear, sunny with light southwesterly breeze.
- 06 **Persons Present:** Bill Kowalczyk, Mark Merritt
- 07 **Site History:** Pilgrims School is a private Prep School in existence for many hundreds of years and set within the environs of the Cathedral Close, Winchester. The southern edge of the site is bounded by the remnants of the old city walls and other long-established buildings.
- 08 I have not been notified of any evidence of movement of any of the adjacent walls, buildings, paved surfaces or other permanent structures.
- 09 No information on soil properties has been provided although local knowledge and anecdotal reports would suggest that original levels have been infilled over many years and that there is a reasonably deep and fertile loam above a deeper solid chalk and flint sub-base.
- 10 Close to the S boundary and the SE corner of the existing refectory there is a solitary mature Beech tree situated within a slightly raised bed adjacent to frequently used pathways and which is the subject of this report.
- 11 **Discussion/Observations:** The Beech tree is a large mature specimen estimated to be between 100 and 150 years old. It is about 25m in height but would appear to have been topped on occasions in the past and has developed a multi-stemmed habit above previous pruning points at about 5-6m. The tree now has a wide spreading habit developing from many ascending stems and some large lateral branches extending over adjacent walkways and play areas.

- 12 When inspected the tree was in full leaf. The foliage was observed to be of a good colour, size and density not indicating any obvious evidence of decline or slow growth. On the main stem some evidence of the presence of the Felted Beech Scale insect (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) was noted, but this appears to be only a light infestation and of no special significance at this time.
- 13 The tree is situated within a raised bed on ground slightly above the level of the adjacent tarmac paths. Many roots are readily visible at or above the surrounding surface level. There is some evidence of previous injuries to surface roots where they have been cut or deformed adjacent to steps and walls etc. and some superficial damage has been caused by roots being walked over.
- 14 Where the tree has previously been topped there are now a number of competing stems, some of which have produced tight fork unions with included or ingrown bark features. There are also signs of many previous pruning wounds. Some have now become occluded with new wound wood, but others were seen to still be 'open' exhibiting the presence of decay.
- 15 The tree was climbed to aid closer observation of the stem/branch unions and old pruning wounds. Water-filled pockets were discovered between some stems and some large pruning wounds showed extensive decay of old columns of wood tissue.
- 16 No obvious evidence of incipient or spreading decay was observed and seams between stems with tight forks did not exhibit any obvious signs of the development of cracks or splits. Some fairly minor deadwood was observed within the crown, but no bark necrosis, general decline or other obvious major defects, were noted.
- 17 The tree appears generally to be of a reasonable form and condition and is a visually significant specimen.
- 18 **Conclusions:** From the visual evidence available it is my professional opinion that this tree is reasonably healthy and in fairly good condition for its age and size. It is a large, visually dominant tree and as such I am of the view that it provides important public visual amenity from a number of different viewpoints.
- 19 The tree's size, spreading habit, juxtaposition to buildings and high frequency of pedestrian activity in the immediate area is such that from time to time there will inevitably be some pressures to cut back or remove the tree.
- 20 In light of these points it is my professional opinion that the serving of a TPO is entirely appropriate in this instance.
- 21 Nevertheless, all trees have the potential to decline or suffer storm damage and become hazardous to some extent. Previous management of this tree has caused the development of multiple stem attachments, some with tight fork unions. Such features may be, or may become, potentially weak points with a risk of failure, although no evidence was observed to indicate any imminent risk of collapse.
- 22 In view of the trees' situation, the frequent use of areas beneath the tree canopy and the potential to cause damage or injury, the risk of branch/stem breakage is not currently acceptable. I am of the view that a reduction of this risk is now advisable.

- 23 It is my recommendation that the end weight of all major stems and branches be reduced by shortening the length of such limbs by 3-4m. The result of such pruning will be a somewhat smaller tree, both in volume and crown density. Such a reduction of the branch length will have a fundamental impact on reducing the 'lever-arm' effect and the mechanical loading on any potential weak points lower in the crown. It will also significantly reduce the wind-resistance currently presented by the full crown of this tree.
- 24 Overall crown reductions of this nature are not usually recommended for Beech trees as they have a limited ability to regenerate new shoots from old wood. However, this tree has a full crown with foliage bearing twigs and branches emanating from fairly low on stems and branches. Any pruning would have to be carried out sensitively and by fully competent operatives. As such I am of the view that this specimen will withstand such pruning and continue to thrive without any significant impairment of its form or loss of visual amenity.
- 25 Trees are growing organisms and conditions change. As a consequence further inspections, risk assessment and management of the tree will also be required. It is possible that the tree will not respond favourably and may enter a spiral of decline. This may become apparent over a number of seasons and appropriate remedial action will then be required, which could include removal.
- 26 However, it is my belief that this specimen, having good vitality, is more likely to continue in reasonably good health for many more years. I advise six-monthly inspections to assess the on-going condition of the tree to determine the need for further works, which will become inevitable with further growth. Future pruning should be of a fairly routine nature but will also be required on a regular basis.

Bill Kowalczyk Dip.Arb(RFS), F.Arbor.A

Date: 28th October 2003

Sketch plan indicating position of tree – Scale 1:500

