

PLANNING COMMITTEE –

**CONFIRMATION OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER REF. TPO/0009/2017 – LAND AT ST JOHNS  
PRIMARY SCHOOL, VICTORIA ROAD, KNAPHILL, SURREY, GU21 2AS**

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to recommend to the Committee that a Tree Preservation Order be confirmed following the receipt of one letter of objection to the making of the Order. The Tree Preservation Order protects a mature Sweet Chestnut tree of approximately 18m in height at St Johns Primary School, Victoria Road, Knaphill, Surrey, GU21 2AS

**Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to:

**RESOLVE that** Tree Preservation Order ref. TPO/0009/2017 be confirmed without modification

<b>This Committee has authority to determine the above recommendations.</b>
---

**Background Papers:**

Plan from Tree Preservation Order showing location of tree

Letters of objection from the Head Teacher, Ms Sarah May

**Reporting Officer:**

Chris Dale  
Ext. (74) 3435, E Mail [chris.dale@woking.gov.uk](mailto:chris.dale@woking.gov.uk)

**Contact Officer:**

Dave Frye, Arboricultural Officer  
Ext. (74) 3749, E Mail [dave.frye@woking.gov.uk](mailto:dave.frye@woking.gov.uk)

## **Introduction**

- 1.1 A Tree Preservation Order was made on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to protect a single Sweet Chestnut tree of approximately 18m in height at St Johns Primary School, Victoria Road, Knaphill, Surrey, GU21 2AS (ref. TPO/0009/2017) (Appendix 3).
- 1.2 The plan from the Tree Preservation Order showing the location of the tree is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 One objection was received to the making of the Tree Preservation Order. This objection is attached at Appendix 2.
- 1.4 Notwithstanding the objections received to the making of the Tree Preservation Order, the recommendation is that it be confirmed without modification.

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 Further to the Council becoming aware that the school wished to remove the tree, a Tree Preservation Order (the subject of this report) was made to protect the tree on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The tree was protected because it is a substantial mature specimen of high landscape significance.
- 2.2 The tree has been in place since the school was created and is regularly inspected by a tree inspector at Babcock 4S who look after the vast majority of trees in schools in Surrey.
- 2.3 The arboricultural manager at Babcock 4S, Julian Abraham, has expressed his support in favour of the TPO (Appendix 4)

## **3.0 Letter of objection**

- 3.1 One letter of objection was received by the Council from the School Head Teacher of the tree, Ms Sarah May dated 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2017, objecting to the making of the Order on the following grounds.
  - The tree affects the quality of the provision that the school can offer its children given the tree's location within the outdoor nursery area
  - The tree limits the range of activities that the school can offer the children given the tree's location within the outdoor nursery area, for example the use of bikes and trikes
  - The cleaning of the chestnuts which fall from the tree which in turn results in the closure of the area around the tree to ensure the health and safety of the children
  - Similarly with the leaves that fall on the ground, these cause a slip hazard if left on the ground
  - Bird droppings cause an impact on the provision for the children within the play area.
  - The tree is not visually significant within the landscape and it is not a local landmark.
  - The tree negatively impacts on the effectiveness of the nursery – which is itself a public amenity.
  - Any positive impact the tree has to the locality is outweighed by the negative impact it has on the learning experiences of the children.

- 3.2 The Tree Officer's response to the objections received is as follows:
- 3.3 The concerns surrounding the falling chestnuts and falling leaves is a seasonal issue that can be resolved by establishing an appropriate cleaning regime. Although the removal of the tree in question would reduce the amount of leaf fall in the area, the proximity of adjacent trees would mean that the problem would not be eradicated as such this is not justification for the removal of this tree.
- 3.4 Although bird droppings are a year round problem the concerns from this can be abated through an appropriate cleaning regime. However, if this is not possible then there are devices which can be used to dissuade birds from nesting or sitting in trees. Similarly, although the removal of the tree in question would reduce the amount of bird droppings in the area, the proximity of adjacent trees would mean that the problem would not be eradicated as such this is not justification form the removal of this tree.
- 3.5 For generations before and for generations after, this tree has and will provide a valuable educational resource. This tree is approximately 100 years old and based on similar trees of the same species could last for another 200 years plus. Within the local area, there are only a few other trees of similar significance. The opportunities that a tree of this age has, with regards to education, especially given the current climate surrounding sustainability and environmental protection, are exceptionally high and therefore enhances the educational value of the school thus improving the effectiveness of the school as a public amenity.
- 3.6 Throughout the objection there was reference questioning the public amenity of the tree. Given its location within the school and its proximity to the local highway, the tree's public amenity value is high and it significantly adds to the sylvan character of the area.
- 3.7 Consideration should also be taken for the tree's veteran status. A veteran is a tree that is of high amenity value, is of ecological importance and is of relative great age. The Forestry Commission identify that "Britain has more veteran trees than most countries in Europe, and their conservation is of international interest"

#### **4.0 Implications**

##### Financial

- 4.1 None

##### Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.2 None

##### Environmental/Sustainability

- 4.3 The mature Sweet Chestnut tree that has been protected is likely to continue making a significant contribution to the character and amenities of the locality for many years to come. Removal would have a detrimental impact on public amenity.

#### **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Given the rarity of a tree of this age, its high public amenity value and its educational values, protection of the tree is considered appropriate and it is recommended that the Tree Preservation Order be confirmed without modification.

REPORT ENDS