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**Tree Preservation Order Reference: TPO/0004/2022**

To whomever it may concern,

I am writing with regards to the recent TPO notification we received relating to the above address.

The notification to implement a TPO came about after we submitted to have the tree removed as part of our planning application. Prior to commencing our planning application we carried out the necessary due diligence and asked the tree officers to attend the property and advise if the silver birch tree could be removed. We were advised that the tree was protected by a TPO so we should obtain a tree report to assess its condition to determine the next steps.

We duly followed the recommendations and arranged for a professional report by certified arboriculturists which ultimately classified the tree as "U category" and we were given the advice to fell the tree. Despite having paid for and received a professional report as per the tree officers recommendation, we were advised through the planning officer that it's findings were contrary to the tree officers opinion and therefore rejected.

We were informed throughout the process that the tree was already protected by a TPO, so we were completely taken aback when we received notification of the intention to apply a TPO. We have been misled regarding the tree classification for over 2 years and I am thoroughly disappointed by the treatment we have received. We have experienced incredibly poor communication from the tree officers and there has been no attempt to liaise with us or even make representation within the planning committee meetings to elaborate on why we are facing such resistance. We are more than willing to replace the tree to a more suitable location but given the lack of communication, this has not even been entertained as an option.

In response to the notification to apply a TPO, we would like to strongly object on the following grounds:

Amenity value has been cited as the main reason for applying a TPO. The tree is only visible to the homes within the private close (Barrens Close) which is a closed, private road and cannot be seen from the main street scene (White Rose Lane). The location of the tree is at the end of the close meaning it would be necessary to drive all the way in to the close in order to see it. As the road is a closed road AND a private road, it means that it is generally only frequented by its residents as

opposed to the general public. The people driving to the end of the road tend to be the residents, their visitors and delivery drivers and as a result, footfall to the road is very low.

There are many trees which provide amenity value to White Rose Lane but this is certainly not one of them. There are also several trees in and around Barrens Close, several of which are in our garden which contribute to the street scene and also provide amenity value to the residents of the close.

The tree has now been reviewed by two professional arboriculturists who both concur that the tree is of U category and has a life span of < than 10 years. This is due to the fact that the tree is a silver birch tree which has an average life span of 50-70 years. The fact that this tree also has structural damage to one of its main roots means this life span is further reduced.

Based on the fact that we were advised the tree was protected by a TPO implemented in the 1960s, this would indicate that the tree is towards the end of its nature life.

The tree is located 2.5m from the home which is in an elevated position and its foundations rest upon clay soil. The fact that the tree is in such close proximity to the home and drainage systems, as well as the evident damage to the paving, indicates that it is a threat to the building. Consequently this poses a danger to the occupants of the home who are both adults and small children as well as surrounding homes/vehicles which are in close proximity to the tree. Should the tree fall due to any adverse weather events, similar to those we experienced this winter, this could potentially cause significant damage.

Based on the Tree Evaluation Method for Preservation Orders, this tree would not meet the threshold for having a TPO applied.

1a) It could be argued that the tree is dead/dying or dangerous based on the fact that there is major damage to one of the main tree roots. This could significantly undermine the health of the tree and make it susceptible to decay and further damage. Given the height of the tree, should the tree become unstable this could potentially cause damage to buildings, cars and pedestrians. On a best case scenario, the condition of the tree could be deemed as "poor".

1b) Retention span has been objectively deemed to be less than 10 years by two arboriculturists. Naturally this will reduce its already natural short life span of 50-70 years.

1c) Though the tree is a large tree, it is only visible once inside the main close which is a closed private road which is not frequented by the general public or passing traffic. The tree is not visible from the main road White Rose Lane, therefore has limited impact on public visibility and contributing to the street scene.

1d) Other factors which influence the decision are the suitability to the location. The tree is in dangerously close proximity to the home which contribute to damaged paving, potentially undermining the homes foundation and interfering with the drainage systems.

Based on the above information, this would not qualify for expediency assessment and thus not suitable for a TPO.

There is no future amenity value of this tree given that it has a short life, is in poor condition and is causing damage to the home. Given the confounding factors stated above it would seem amenity is not a valid reason to apply a TPO.

I hope the above information is considered prior to formalising any TPO to the tree.

Having spoken to many professionals both formally and informally we have always had the same response of surprise and shock when informing them of the troubles we have faced due to the silver birch tree. It seems that the tree officers have become entrenched in their own point of view and are completely unable to accept or even entertain the objective evidence we have presented thus far.

We have understandably lost faith in the current team within Woking Borough Council given the lack of transparency and lack of effort to engage with us throughout the last 2 years. This process has cost us significant time, has had cost implications as well as significant emotional upset.

Based on the evidence presented above, a TPO would be wholly inappropriate. Should the need for further assessment arise, I would ask that an independent arboricultural officer outside of the council be instructed.

Regards,

Afsha Ahmed