

DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
24/00105/WTTPO	Bob Melling	25 th March 2024

Address: Land To The Rear Of 19 The Green, Rochdale, OL11 3NU

Proposal: Application to fell one Sycamore Tree subject to Tree Preservation Order No. 088

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	N/A	Site notice expired?	N/A
	Neighbour letters expired?	N/A	Press Notice expired?	N/A

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N
	Neighbour comments received?	N

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	N/A

RECOMMENDATION	GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: RC

DATE: 30.4.2024

SITE

The application relates to a mature Sycamore located within a small area of mixed broadleaved woodland to the south of no. 19 The Green in Rochdale.

PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks consent for the felling of a Sycamore due to signs of decay and structural weakness.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – December 2023

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

G7- Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

16/01146/WTTPO The felling of six trees and various works to three trees located within Tree Preservation Order TPO 088 (the works propose the removal of overhanging branches along the northern boundary of the site).

Grant subject to conditions

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Tree Officer

The tree is a mature Sycamore in a small area of mature mixed broadleaved woodland. The tree is close to the rear garden of number 19 The Green and is within the target range of the residential property were the tree to fail, although I would not agree that it is '*leaning dangerously towards the property*' as is stated in the application. Former dense Ivy cover had been removed from the tree and the tree has been pruned in the past, including by removing epicormic growth on the main stem which has resumed, and by limited crown reductions. The tree is rather poorly shaped. Removal of the Ivy has itself caused some bark damage.

The tree is at the boundary of the woodland and is not highly visible as an individual tree except from the adjacent properties along The Green, although it is mature and does form an integral part of the overall woodland canopy. I would not consider it to be highly prominent tree in the landscape with significant heritage or biodiversity value. The woodland is reasonably diverse and exhibits signs of regeneration, including by planting.

There were some signs of bark loss, limb die-back and branch failure, although healthier branches were budding. Residents report branch loss, and there were signs of this branch fall within the woodland.

I have considered pruning the tree, but there is rather limited crown to reduce further; pollarding would be possible, but this would be a significant operation and would leave the tree further misshapen, with limited probability of success.

The bark loss and die back is systemic (not confined to individual branches), such that I would not consider that trying to remove affected limbs and/or allowing the tree to try to compartmentalise would be very successful; these pruning measures would also leave the tree further misshapen.

On balance I would recommend that the removal of the tree could be approved, in the interests of woodland management and to mitigate possible risks to property.

I would further advise –

- ② Replacement planting must be carried out. I would recommend replanting with x 2 Oak.
- ② Felled timber should be left within the woodland as a biodiversity resource.
- ② Works must be carried out by suitably qualified and insured arborists.

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with Council policy on neighbour notification for this type of application, no letters of notification were sent to neighbouring properties.

ANALYSIS

In considering applications for works to protected trees, Government advice in paragraph 90 of the NPPG states:

“When considering an application the authority is advised to:

- ② *assess the amenity value of the tree or woodland and the likely impact of the proposal on the amenity of the area;*
- ② *consider, in the light of this assessment, whether or not the proposal is justified, having regard to the reasons and additional information put forward in support of it;*
- ② *consider whether any loss or damage is likely to arise if consent is refused or granted subject to conditions;*
- ② *consider whether any requirements apply in regard to protected species;*
- ② *consider other material considerations, including development plan policies where relevant; and*
- ② *ensure that appropriate expertise informs its decision.”*

In considering whether there has to be an arboricultural need for proposed works to a TPO, paragraph 91 of the NPPG states:

“In general terms, it follows that the higher the amenity value of the tree or woodland and the greater any negative impact of proposed works on amenity, the stronger the reasons needed before consent is granted. However, if the amenity value is lower and the impact is likely to be negligible, it may be appropriate to grant consent even if the authority believes there is no particular arboricultural need for the work.”

With regard to the above, the main considerations in respect of this application are whether the proposal for works to the tree is justified in light of the assessment of the amenity value of the tree and whether the reasons for works are of sufficient standing to warrant the granting of consent.

To assess the acceptability of the proposal against the above considerations, the Council's Tree Officer has been consulted. On balance, the Tree Officer has considered the works to be justified in the interests of woodland management and to mitigate possible risks to property.

The Tree Officer has considered alternative options, such as pruning and pollarding, however it is considered that such measures would leave the tree further misshapen, with limited probability of success.

Whilst the tree is not highly visible as an individual tree, it does form an integral part of the overall woodland canopy. Therefore, to compensate for the loss of the Sycamore it is recommended that replacement trees are planted. It is considered appropriate to apply the standard requirement for a 2:1 replacement ratio. The Tree Officer has advised that replanting with Oak would be appropriate.

The Tree Officer has also advised that the felled timber should be left within the woodland as a biodiversity resource.

Subject to the suggested conditions, the application proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with the guidance contained within the NPPG noted above, and the application is recommended for approval.

GMEU standing advice on tree works and protected species will be attached to the decision notice and therefore the obligations in respect of protected species will have been met.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Subject to Four Standard Conditions and the following additional condition:

5. Within the next planting season after the felling of the tree hereby approved, two replacement trees, preferably Oak, shall be planted within the land adjacent to 19 The Green. If any of the replacement trees are removed, die, become severely damaged or seriously diseased within five years of planting, they shall be replaced by a tree of similar maturity size and species.

Reason: To mitigate for the loss of the existing tree and to protect the visual amenity of the area.

Notes for Applicant:

For the avoidance of doubt, this Decision Notice relates to the following drawings / document(s):-

- Tree Photographs
- Tree Location Plan
- Planning Application Form Dated 01/02/2024

Report Author Bob Melling