

Officer Report

Case Reference: OTH/2026/0816
Location: 6 BILSON SQUARE, MILNROW, ROCHDALE, OL16 3NY
Proposal: Application for works to one Sycamore tree (T1) subject to Tree Preservation Order No.21 to crown lift to achieve approximately 4.5 metres ground clearance, through the selective removal or reduction of appropriate lower branches and reduce the upper and lateral crown on the 6 Bilson Square side only by approximately 2–3 metres, pruning back to suitable secondary growth points whilst retaining a balanced and natural crown form.
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE

The application relates to a Sycamore to the rear of No. 6 Bilson Square. The tree is covered by Tree Preservation Order 21 which was sealed in 1977.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought to crown lift the tree to provide 4.5m clearance and to reduce the upper and lateral crown extending towards 6 Bilson Square by approximately 2–3 metres.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Local Guidance

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy

G7- Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

Legislation

The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: N/A

Press Notice: N/A

Neighbour notification letters: In accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, no letters of notification were sent for this application.

ASSESSMENT

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:

- assess the amenity value of the tree or woodland and the likely impact of the proposal on the amenity of the area;*
- 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;*
- consider whether any loss or damage is likely to arise if consent is refused or granted subject to conditions;*
- consider whether any requirements apply in regard to protected species;*
- consider other material considerations, including development plan policies where relevant; and*
- ensure that appropriate expertise informs its decision.”*

In considering whether there has to be an arboricultural need for proposed works to a tree covered by way of 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.'*

To assess the acceptability of the proposal against the above considerations, the Council's Tree Officer has been consulted, however no response has been received at the time of writing this report.

Notwithstanding, the application is supported by an arboricultural report which explains that the proposed works are required to provide improved clearance between the tree canopy and the neighbouring residential property at 6 Bilson Square whilst retaining the tree as a viable long-term landscape feature. The report confirms that the works comprise the crown lifting of the mature sycamore tree to achieve approximately 4.5 metres of ground clearance through the selective removal or reduction of appropriate lower branches, together with a selective reduction of the upper and lateral crown extending towards 6 Bilson Square by approximately 2-3 metres. The pruning works are to be undertaken in accordance with BS3998:2010 and current arboricultural best practice.

The report concludes that the proposed works are limited in extent and would not adversely affect the long-term health, vitality or structural integrity of the tree. The crown lifting and selective reduction have been deliberately limited to the minimum necessary to provide improved clearance from the neighbouring property whilst maintaining an appropriate and balanced crown structure, retaining the tree's natural form, health and amenity value. Furthermore, the works are not intended to significantly reduce the overall size of the tree or materially diminish its contribution to the character, appearance and visual amenity of the Conservation Area. The proposed works are therefore considered reasonable, proportionate and representative of appropriate arboricultural management.

Subject to the standard conditions, the proposed works are considered to accord with the guidance contained within the NPPG and would preserve the contribution that the tree makes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Accordingly, no objection is raised and the application is recommended for approval. The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) standing advice relating to tree works and protected species will be attached to the decision notice, ensuring that the relevant obligations in respect of protected species are met.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (2)

- 1 The consent hereby granted is valid for a period of two years from the date of this decision.
- 2 All tree works must comply with British Standard 3998 (2010 – British Standard for Tree Work) and the relevant industry codes for safe practice produced by the Forestry & Arboriculture Safety & Training Council (FASTCo).

For the avoidance of doubt, this decision relates to the following documents:

- Application Form
- Tree Report (Special Branch Tree Surgery; 8 September 2026)