



Horsham
District
Council

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land to the South of Furners Lane, Henfield
DESCRIPTION:	Erection of 29 dwellings with associated landscaping, open space, parking and creation of new vehicular access
REFERENCE:	DC-24-1538
RECOMMENDATION:	Advice

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

The design and layout does not strictly comply with the minimum buffer zone recommendations for veteran trees present on the site. Some amendments to access location and landscape design are therefore recommended.

MAIN COMMENTS:

In respect of additional information - Barrell arboricultural briefing note (Barrell ref: 22054-Briefing-DC).

The briefing note is a useful document in further detailing how the shape and size of the indicated construction exclusion zone (CEZ) on the Western/Southern side of the two veteran oak trees has been calculated and plotted in the submission.

The current relevant design standard – BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations is clear that in considering the constraints posed by mature tree rooting on potential new development, where pre-existing site conditions or other factors indicate that rooting has occurred asymmetrically, a polygon of equivalent area should be produced. Modifications to the shape of the Root Protection Area (RPA) should reflect a soundly based arboricultural assessment of likely root distribution.

In my view the project arboriculturist has not strayed in principle from this methodology and has also taken account of the NPPF guidance for development near veteran trees. Following a sensitive trial excavation at circa 20m from the tree stem of T1 (some unidentified tree roots were present within it) he has concluded that providing an appropriate allowance of viable rooting area is provided further South, the reduction in the Western extent of RPA to enable his clients preferred access solution will not foreseeably have a significant impact on the future health of the veteran tree.

The current BS5837 document does not specifically recommend a larger minimum RPA for ancient and veteran trees. However, it does recognise that particular care is needed regarding their retention when they are proposed to become enclosed within new development and that adequate space should be allowed for their long-term physical retention and future maintenance.

IMO, this is part of the reason why the NPPF guidance is so clear on recommended minimum buffer zones that enlarge the RPA of the tree.

I would not expect any rooting at 20m+ from the tree stems (where trial excavation was undertaken) to be of a large diameter in size. However, the fine roots of these trees extend a long way from the trees, beyond the minimum recommended RPA's for the trees and potentially beyond the extended RPA provided by the minimum recommended Veteran Tree buffer. This is partly the purpose of the buffer, in recognising that old trees of recognised irreplaceable habitat value are susceptible to changes to their rooting environment. Their root spread will include fibrous rooting attachment to Mychorizal fungi at the tips which will potentially extend across the entire minimum buffer zone and beyond. The greater the area of undisturbed rooting environment for the trees the better.

The BS5837 document is under review and draft considerations indicate that a revised document will foreseeably be produced in 2025 that does include a change in this respect which would more closely align current acceptance of the importance of retaining and conserving veteran and ancient trees in the landscape.

The two trees form a recognised irreplaceable habitat/landscape asset as referred to within the updated NPPF (December 2024). The NPPF guidance is clear that the mitigation hierarchy should be employed in this respect when considering all new development. The first tenet of the hierarchy is to avoid potential impacts on veteran trees by redesigning the schemes taking account of the recognised constraints.

The guidance is clear that buffer zones can and should be used to protect veteran trees. Existing site circumstances will of course vary, the depth of buffer zone considered appropriate should reflect this. Where the surrounding area is less densely wooded and/or close to residential areas (as in this instance) it is recognised that a larger buffer zone is more likely to be needed. In any event, the minimum recommended buffer for a veteran tree is 15 times the stem diameter. This is a measurement that is taken radially from the tree stem. In this instance that minimum recommended buffer measurement is 24.75m for the Northern tree (Ref: VT1).

In addition, the guidance clarifies that a buffer zone should consist of semi-natural habitats such as woodland or a mix of scrub or grassland. New development proposals should include creating or establishing habitat with local and appropriate native species in the buffer zone.

The project arboriculturist is of the view that disturbing the current landscape setting, removing some existing hardstanding and undertaking some mulching around the base of the trees will be a net improvement to the rooting environment of the trees that will on balance be in accordance with the guidance that accompanies the NPPF statement.

In my view, if an appropriate site specific Arboricultural Method Statement is produced and latterly complied with, to sensitively undertake the proposed rooting environment changes around the tree stems and that is combined with a landscape change for the remainder of the buffer zone that accords with the NPPF guidance in this respect, the

trees would not foreseeably suffer directly from the development beyond the loss of all rooting and rooting viability at and beyond the alignment of the proposed new access road.

The proposed new vehicle access point is partially within the minimum recommended buffer for the veteran tree nearest to Furners Lane.

If viable, all new development should be located outside of the minimum recommended buffer or root protection area (RPA) in this respect. I recommend that the new vehicle access point be revised to respect this constraint.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

If minded to recommend approval of either the current or a similar revised layout, I recommend conditions for control of services installation, implementation of tree protection measures and for an AMS to deal with the heads of terms highlighted in the submitted AIA.

Standard conditions 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9

NAME:	ANDY CLOUT – ASST. ARBORICULTURAL OFFICER
DEPARTMENT:	STRATEGIC PLANNING - SPECIALISTS
DATE:	07/01/25