DELEGATED APPLICATIONS

ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO: **DC/26/1295: Timbers, Monkmead Lane, West Chiltington.**

REPRESENTATION AND CONSULTATION RESPONSES:
No representations have been received in respect of this application.

ASSESSMENT:
1. The trees subject to this application are located within the front and rear gardens of Timbers, Monkmead Lane, West Chiltington, and are protected by Tree Preservation Order TPO/1043. The application seeks consent to undertake works to T4 Oak and T7 Oak, both situated along the eastern boundary of the property.

2. Tree T4 Oak occupies a prominent roadside position adjoining Monkmead Lane and is readily visible within the street scene. Due to its size, form and visibility, it makes a significant contribution to the character and visual amenities of the locality and is considered to possess high public amenity value.

3. Tree T7 Oak is located within the rear garden. Although less publicly visible, it can be glimpsed from Monkmead Lane and contributes to the wider treed character of the area. Whilst its amenity value is lower than that of T4, it remains worthy of retention and sensitive management.

4. The applicant seeks consent for a 40% crown reduction to both trees using drop-crotch pruning techniques. It is stated that both trees lean towards the neighbouring property, Maple Lea, giving rise to concerns regarding potential damage due to their size and proximity. The neighbouring occupiers have also raised concerns regarding loss of light.

The proposed works comprise:

- T4 Oak: Reduce height from approximately 18m to 12m and reduce crown spread from approximately 9m to 6m.
- T7 Oak: Reduce height from approximately 15m to 11m and reduce crown spread from approximately 10m to 6m.

5. Whilst the concerns raised are acknowledged, no substantive arboricultural evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that either tree is structurally unsound, unsafe, or presents an elevated risk of failure. The presence of a natural lean, particularly in mature oak trees, does not in itself indicate structural instability, as such trees commonly adapt successfully to asymmetrical growth over extended periods.

6. No fungal fruiting bodies, basal defects or other indicators of significant decay were observed during the site inspection. Both trees appear in good physiological condition and have responded well to previous management. In particular, T4 exhibits notable geotropic correction, indicating successful adaptation to its lean through adaptive growth. It is likely that the lean developed, at least in part, in response to historic competition for light from a nearby pine tree. As the pine is now dead and the oak has established compensatory growth over many years, there is no evidence to suggest that the lean is progressive or indicative of a heightened risk of failure.

7. The proposed 40% crown reductions would constitute substantial interventions and would materially alter the size, form and appearance of both trees. In the case of T4, such works would significantly diminish the contribution this prominent roadside tree makes to local amenity. For both trees, a reduction of this magnitude exceeds what would normally be regarded as proportionate management of mature oak trees and would be likely to result in large pruning wounds, increased physiological stress and extensive epicormic regrowth.

8. It is accepted that some level of pruning may assist in managing the relationship between the trees and neighbouring properties. However, the extent of pruning proposed is considered excessive. A more modest and targeted reduction would address issues of perceived encroachment whilst retaining the trees' amenity value, structural integrity and long-term health.

9. With regard to T4, the principal issue relates to the eastern crown spread towards Maple Lea. Although the crown is not currently in direct contact with the dwelling, the available clearance is becoming limited. Selective reduction of those branches extending towards the neighbouring property would reduce end-weight, increase clearance and lessen perceptions of encroachment without materially affecting the overall form, character or amenity contribution of the tree.

10. In addition, the branch extending above the overhead power line to the south should be reduced by approximately 1 metre to establish and maintain an appropriate clearance from the utility apparatus. This would represent a proportionate response to the identified constraint whilst retaining the tree's visual prominence and landscape value.

11. In relation to T7, it is acknowledged that the eastern side of the crown directly overhangs the neighbouring property. However, given the tree's position on or immediately adjacent to the boundary, it would not be possible to eliminate this overhang entirely without undertaking excessive pruning that would be detrimental to the tree's form, health and long-term amenity value.

12. A more balanced and arboriculturally sustainable approach would be to reduce the eastern side of the crown by approximately 2.5 metres, thereby lessening the degree of overhang above the neighbouring property. The upper extent of the reduction should be feathered and blended into the retained crown to achieve a natural crown line. In conjunction with this, the remaining crown should be reduced laterally and in height by approximately 2 metres where suitable growth points exist.

13. The above specification would adequately address concerns regarding crown encroachment whilst maintaining the essential form, appearance and amenity value of the tree. The works can be achieved through reduction to suitable secondary growth points and should not result in large pruning wounds, excessive crown depletion or truncated branch ends.

14. Overall, the proposed 40% crown reductions are not considered justified and would result in an unacceptable loss of public amenity. A lesser degree of targeted pruning, focused on reducing end-weight and improving clearance from neighbouring property and utility infrastructure, would represent a more proportionate and sustainable management approach whilst safeguarding the long-term health, appearance and contribution of both trees.

RECOMMENDATION:
Grant consent subject to the conditions below.

CONDITIONS TO BE APPLIED:

1. TR2 *Time limit, 2 years*
2. TR3a *Treeworks limit (bespoke)*
   The tree work to which this consent relates shall be limited to:

   - T4 Oak: Reduce the low lateral branches extending over the parking area of Maple lea and those extending towards the adjacent property by pruning back to previous reduction points, removing up to approximately 1.0-1.5 metres of growth where required. In addition, reduce the southern lateral branch extending above the overhead power line by up to 1.0 metre to achieve an appropriate clearance from the utility apparatus. All pruning works shall be undertaken to suitable growth points and carried out so as to retain the tree's natural form, physiological condition and overall amenity value.

   - T7 Oak: reduce the eastern side of the crown by up to 2.5 metres and crown reduce the remainder of the crown laterally and in height by up to 2.0 metres, by trimming branches to suitable growth points, to achieve a well-balanced crown whilst maintaining the tree's natural form and overall amenity value. The upper extent of the eastern reduction shall be feathered into the retained crown to maintain a natural crown line.

   Reason: for the avoidance of doubt
3. TR4 *Surgery standards*

TINF1 *Note to applicant.*
TINF2 *Wildlife protection.*

DELEGATED

Authorising Officer sign……ANBU…….. ***Arboricultural Officer (Strategic Planning).***

Date……16 Oct 26…