# HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

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| **TO:** | Horsham District Council – Planning Dept |
| **LOCATION:** | Swaminarayan Manor Bonnetts Lane Ifield |
| **DESCRIPTION:** | Construction of a car park |
| **REFERENCE:** | DC/24/1437 |
| **RECOMMENDATION:** | Advice / Modification / Refusal |

**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:**

**The key considerations as to the suitability of the development proposal at the site concerning trees are with the location/retention of the new parking area in its current location, and what impact this has on the area of designated Ancient woodland to the north, and on the mature roadside oaks on the site's western boundary.**

**MAIN COMMENTS:**

Due north of the site is an area of designated Ancient Woodland (AW), referenced as Bonnets Copse on the 1874 Os maps of the area. Since AW now covers less than 3% of England's landmass, policies have arisen in recent years attempting both to stem the loss of such sites and indeed to protect them for future generations. Central to this consideration is the requirement to maintain a 15m buffer zone between new development and Ancient Woodlands to help avoid root damage to the woodland edge trees.

Due to the part retrospective nature of this application, currently, it is not possible to achieve a 15m buffer between the new car park and the AW to the north. Whereby, substantial landscaping works and land-level changes have already occurred within the AW buffer. In places along the western boundary, level changes of around 400mm to 500mm were visible. The works in this area have resulted in some root damage to one of the mature roadside Oaks, which is very prominent in the local Steet scene and is of high landscape value; the works that have taken place at the site are not compliant with the current industry standard **BS 5837 trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction (2012).**

The trees within the AW that are directly adjacent to the site are a mix of young Beech and Maple, and several mature hybrid Black poplars, with a Laurel understory. The trees in this area are mostly in poor condition, and it was apparent that some of the trees in the area had signs of historical storm damage and will need to be made safe regardless of the outcome of this application.

While it is acknowledged that the woodland edge trees are not in the best condition, it is clear that the action of levelling the area where the car park is proposed, coupled with the laying of the hardcore/MOT in preparation for the new tarmac surface will have had a detrimental impact on the boundary trees within the AW.

Paragraph 193,c) of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework(2024) advises that "**When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:" c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists".**

If an application had been received before the works at the site had begun, concerns would have been raised with the location of the car park, in the AW buffer, and with how the works have been completed. As such advice would have been given recommending that the location of the car park be amended location due to its proximity to the AW.

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| **ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:N/A** | |
| **NAME:** | Andy Bush Arboricultural Officer |
| **DEPARTMENT:** | Strategic Planning (Specialist team) |
| **DATE:** | 03/01/2025 |