

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS

ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO: **DC/26/0165: 40 Pondfield Road Rudgwick.**

REPRESENTATION AND CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

Rudgwick Parish Council has not provided comments of support or objection for this to this proposal; their response/comments are as follows:

The application form states that if a tree is diseased, or there are fears that it might break or fall, the applicant is required to provide written arboricultural advice or other diagnostic information from an appropriate expert. There is little evidence of this in the application at present and further detail should be supplied to enable suitable consideration of the proposal.

Trees are of great importance to our local community and the applicant's suggestion to replant nearby, should permission to fell be granted, is welcome.

No additional representations have been received in respect of this application.

ASSESSMENT:

1. The tree that is the subject of this application is a mature oak situated within the rear garden of the applicants' property, 40 Pondfield Road. The tree is protected by Tree Preservation Order TPO/0895, served on 13/05/1997. It forms part of a historic field boundary line of trees that were retained during the late 1990s residential development of the area, approved under application RW/60/98 – Erection of 35 houses and garages, new estate road, highway improvements and public open space, Site: Churchmans Meadow, Pondfield Road, Rudgwick.

2. This application seeks consent for the felling of a single oak tree at the property. The justification provided by the applicant relates to concerns regarding visible cracking within the bark and progressive dieback within the upper crown.

3. The tree is approximately 15 metres in height and is located at the end of a line of oaks to the east of the rear of the applicant's property. Due to the trees position located at the northern end of the group, it has been subject to competitive pressures from an adjacent, more dominant oak. This has resulted in an altered growth habit and form, characterised by a pronounced crown bias towards the north-east and an overall asymmetrical canopy.

4. The wider group of trees continues to contribute positively to the character and visual amenity of the area. The subject tree can be glimpsed through a break in the property boundary and above the adjacent garage block. However, its individual contribution to the wider landscape is diminished due to its suppressed form and evident declining condition.

5. An inspection of the tree was undertaken from ground level. The crown was observed to contain a moderate to significant volume of deadwood distributed throughout, with clear evidence of dieback affecting the upper canopy. At the time of inspection, the adjacent oak was approaching bud burst with a high percentage of new growth developing, whereas the subject tree exhibited no comparable signs of seasonal development, indicating reduced vitality.

6. The main stem when viewed from the decking at the rear of the property and below it, displays multiple cankers (stem bleeds), together with evidence of insect activity in the form of exit holes. In several locations, the bark on the main stem exhibits cracking and detachment from the underlying heartwood. Percussive testing using a sounding mallet, undertaken from the adjacent decked area, identified repeated tonal variations along the stem, indicative of internal degradation. A modest-sized cavity is present on the northern aspect of the lower stem at ground level, with further sounding suggesting that associated decay extends vertically from the cavity to a height in excess of two metres.

7. At the base of the tree, two buttress roots on the northern side exhibit clear signs of decay. One of these buttresses returned a markedly hollow response when struck, indicating significant internal loss of structural integrity. In addition, rhizomorphs consistent with *Armillaria* species (honey fungus) were identified beneath detached bark plates, and symptoms consistent with Phytophthora infection were also observed.

8. From the observations made during the inspection, it is apparent that the tree is in a state of physiological and structural decline. The combination of crown dieback, reduced vigour, stem cankers, internal decay, and buttress root degradation indicates a progressive decline from which recovery is highly unlikely. The

presence of pathogenic fungal activity further supports the conclusion that the tree is undergoing a terminal decline process.

9. The tree is located approximately three metres from a rear conservatory attached to the host dwelling. Given the extent of decay identified within the lower stem and buttress roots, together with the presence of deadwood within the crown, the likelihood of structural failure is increased. The proximity of the tree to the built form of the dwelling elevates the potential consequences of such failure, resulting in an unacceptable level of risk within a residential setting.

10. Whilst the tree forms part of a wider landscape feature of retained boundary oaks, its individual amenity value is presently diminished by its poor condition and limited safe useful life expectancy (SULE). It's retention would not provide a sustainable long-term contribution to the amenity of the area and would necessitate ongoing and significant management interventions. Such interventions would further reduce the quality of the tree as a meaningful landscape feature capable of making a positive contribution to the character and amenity of this part of the village.

11. As such having regard to the evidence of extensive decay, fungal colonisation, declining vitality, and the proximity of the tree to residential structures, it is considered that the current condition of the tree justifies its removal. There are insufficient arboricultural or amenity grounds upon which to refuse this application; subject to a condition requiring replacement planting within the next available planting season. The replacement should comprise a suitable native broadleaf species of an appropriate nursery stock specification, to be planted within the curtilage of the property or at a nearby location.

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant consent subject to the conditions below.

CONDITIONS TO BE APPLIED:

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|--------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. TR2 | <i>Time limit, 2 years</i> |
| 2. TR7 | <i>Replacement tree (single tree)</i> |
| TINF1 | <i>Note to applicant.</i> |
| TINF2 | <i>Wildlife protection.</i> |

DELEGATED

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

Date.....16 Apr 2026.....