DELEGATED APPLICATIONS

ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO: **DC/26/1281: 54 The Fieldings Southwater.**

REPRESENTATION AND CONSULTATION RESPONSES:
South water Parish Council has stated the following to this proposal:

Refer to HDC Officer for final decision. The Parish Council note that the tree contains a number of dead branches, some of which overhang Mill Straight, and consider these may require attention. The Parish Council suggest that a 25% crown reduction may address the deadwood present, whilst deferring to the Local Planning Authority's Arboricultural Officer regarding whether felling would be a more appropriate course of action.

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

ASSESSMENT:
1. The tree subject to this application is a mature Oak (*Quercus robur*) protected by Tree Preservation Order ref TPO/0252 the tree is T7 of the order. The tree is situated within the rear garden of the applicant's property. The tree occupies a prominent position adjacent to Mill Straight and is highly visible from the public highway, contributing to the character of the local street scene.

2. Consent is sought to fell the tree on the grounds of advanced and irreversible physiological decline.

3. The tree was inspected from ground level and found to be in significant decline. The crown exhibits extensive dieback, widespread branch mortality and substantial deadwood throughout the canopy. Live foliated growth is limited to approximately 20-25% of the crown, with the remainder comprising dead or dysfunctional branch structure. The level of canopy loss significantly exceeds that expected from normal age-related retrenchment and indicates a marked reduction in vitality. No fungal fruiting bodies were observed at the time of inspection.

4. The loss of live crown area has substantially reduced the tree's photosynthetic capacity and ability to maintain adequate energy reserves. Whilst the precise cause of decline has not been established, the extent of dieback, poor vitality and lack of meaningful regenerative growth indicate severe physiological dysfunction and a poor prognosis. There is little evidence to suggest that the tree is capable of recovering an acceptable crown structure or sustaining a reasonable future life expectancy. The decline is therefore considered irreversible.

5. The comments of Southwater Parish Council have been carefully considered. Whilst the Parish Council suggest that a 25% crown reduction may address the deadwood present within the canopy, the findings of the site inspection do not support the conclusion that the tree is generally in good health. The observed condition reflects a substantial physiological decline rather than the presence of isolated dead branches within an otherwise healthy canopy.

6**.** A crown reduction would not address the underlying condition of the tree and would principally involve the removal of a proportion of the remaining live crown. Given that only approximately 20-25% of the canopy remains foliated, such works would likely increase physiological stress and offer little prospect of materially extending the tree's useful life expectancy. Whilst the removal of deadwood may provide a short-term reduction in risk, it would not improve the tree's vitality or alter its long-term prognosis.

7. The tree remains highly visible from the adjoining highway and therefore retains a degree of public amenity value by virtue of its size and location. However, amenity is derived not solely from visibility, but also from condition, vitality and longevity. In this instance, the severe loss of canopy cover, extensive deadwood and fragmented crown structure have significantly diminished the tree's visual contribution to its setting and its wider landscape value.

8. Having regard to the retention of only approximately 20-25% live foliated canopy, the extensive dieback throughout the crown and the absence of meaningful regenerative growth, the tree is considered to be in advanced and irreversible decline with a severely limited future life expectancy. Whilst the loss of a protected and prominent tree is regrettable, its current and future amenity value has been substantially diminished by its condition. On balance, the proposed felling is considered justified, subject to replacement planting to secure the long-term continuation of tree cover and public amenity within the locality.

RECOMMENDATION:
Grant consent subject to the conditions below.

CONDITIONS TO BE APPLIED:
1. TR2 *Time limit, 2 years*
2. TR7 *Replacement (single tree)*
TINF1 *Note to applicant.*
TINF2 *Wildlife protection.*

DELEGATED

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

Date…….21 Oct 18……