

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS

ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO: DC/26/0777: Land to the North of 14 White Horse Road, Horsham.

REPRESENTATION AND CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

North Horsham Parish Council has stated no objection to this proposal, subject to the considerations of the HDC Arboricultural Officer.

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

ASSESSMENT:

1. The trees that are the subject of this application are two mature Silver Birch trees, situated within an area of public open space under the ownership of North Horsham Parish Council, to the north of the residential properties on White Horse Road, Horsham. The trees are protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) No. 0036, which was served on 06/02/1973.

2. Due to their close proximity and wide-spreading multi-stemmed forms, the trees in question have the appearance of a single specimen. Both trees retain a number of low-hanging secondary branches. They are fully foliated, with no evident significant deadwood, and appear to be in generally good physiological condition.

3. Given their location within an area of public open space, the trees are readily visible from numerous vantage points in the surrounding area. As such, they are considered to provide a very high level of public amenity value, making a significant contribution to the landscape character and visual amenity of the locality.

4. The proposed works comprise a crown reduction of up to 3 metres throughout both trees due to concerns relating to a stem associated with Tree T1, which exhibits a visible split at its base. When assessed using a sounding mallet, the area surrounding the visible crack did not produce any significant change in tonal response that would typically indicate extensive internal dysfunction or decay. Whilst a degree of included bark was noted within the union, it is acknowledged that the principal stem arising from the area of the visible crack could reasonably be reduced to a greater extent than the remainder of the crown in order to alleviate end-weight loading and reduce the likelihood of future stem failure.

5. It is therefore considered that targeted reduction works to this individual stem could be undertaken in isolation, without the need to implement the more extensive 3 metre crown reduction proposed for the remainder of the trees. Such an approach would represent a more proportionate response to the identified defect whilst retaining the tree's overall form, amenity value, and long-term physiological condition.

6. Based on their current form and structure, the trees do not appear to have been subject to any substantial pruning works in the past. Silver birch is widely recognised as having only moderate to poor compartmentalisation characteristics when compared with many other broadleaved tree species. Large pruning wounds can therefore remain exposed for extended periods, with woundwood development and occlusion often progressing slowly. This increases the potential for sapwood dysfunction and the ingress of decay organisms, particularly where extensive crown reduction necessitates the removal of larger-diameter branches.

7. As a pioneer species, birch is naturally adapted to rapid growth and a relatively short life expectancy rather than the effective long-term sealing of substantial pruning wounds. For this reason, birch is generally considered a poor candidate for heavy crown reduction works, as the species does not typically respond well to substantial pruning. The proposed 3-metre reduction appears excessive for both trees given the reasons provided and is likely to result in large pruning wounds, increased physiological stress, and a reduction in the trees' long-term vitality. Consequently, introducing a significant reduction regime at this stage of the trees' life cycle would represent a substantial intervention and is likely to adversely affect both their natural appearance and their long-term contribution to the setting.

8. Therefore, having regard to the trees' high public amenity value and the species' recognised intolerance of heavy pruning, it is considered that the proposed works are excessive. A more proportionate approach should be to undertake a crown reduction of no more than 1.5 metre throughout the canopy, thereby avoiding the creation of unnecessarily large pruning wounds and preserving the trees' natural form and long-term health.

9. To address the identified defect, a greater reduction could be focused on the principal stem arising from the area of the crack. Reducing this stem by approximately 2.5 metres and sympathetically blending the pruning into the remainder of the crown, would help alleviate end-weight loading and reduce the likelihood of future failure without the need for more extensive works elsewhere within the canopy.

10. It is also noted that the trees would benefit from modest crown lifting owing to their low-spreading form and encroachment over the adjacent parking area. Selective removal of smaller secondary branches would be sufficient to provide a clearance of approximately 2.5 metres above the grassed area and 3 metres above the parking and vehicular access areas, thereby improving site usability whilst minimising the physiological impact on the 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:

- Crown reduce both trees all-round by trimming branches back to appropriate growth points by no more than 1.5 metres.
- Reduce the height of the stem on the southern side of tree, with the crack at its base, by trimming the stem back to an appropriate growth point approximately 2.5 metres while sympathetically blending into the remainder of the crown.
- Crown lift both trees by removing, small diameter secondary branches to a height of 2.5m over the grass area adjacent to the trees and 3m where the trees overhang the adjacent parking area.

3. TR4 *Surgery standards*

TINF1 *Note to applicant.*

TINF2 *Wildlife protection.*

DELEGATED

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

Date.....17 Jul 26.....