



ARBORICULTURAL PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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Horsham District Council
Albery House
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15th May 2026

SJA ltr 26206-01a

FAO Mr Clout,

Ref. DC/26/0158 Nash Manor, Nutbourne: Arboricultural consultee response

1. I have been instructed by The Hunter Group (the Applicant) to undertake a review of the arboricultural information submitted with the above mentioned planning application and to provide a response to the consultee comments made by the Tree Officer, Mr Andy Clout, on the 18th March 2026.
2. Being new to the case, having been instructed to respond to the comments post submission, I have taken time to familiarise myself with the application and relevant supporting documents. I have also been to site, inspected the trees and the land under the control of the Applicant, as well as publicised video links for the Applicant's intentions for the site¹.
3. In response to Mr Clout's consideration of the ash tree no. 5 to be of sufficient age and condition to be of veteran status, I undertook a site visit on the 7th May 2026 to verify this consideration. I was instructed to do this based on my experience with veteran trees, having obtained the VETcert qualification at consulting level in 2024. The ash is a mature coppiced specimen that exhibits several features consistent with it being a veteran. This includes a coppiced stool so decayed as to be almost absent; hollow structural roots holding water; only two remaining stems, both with significant decay and hollowing and a third stem derived from an advanced epicormic shoot; evidence of historic fire

¹ <https://thehuntergroup.squarespace.com/nash-manor>

damage; hollowing extending up into the stems to a height of at least 4m; major and minor deadwood and cavities in the upper canopy.

4. The tree's canopy has recently been reduced in size to remove deadwood and reduce the risk of failure. It is not clear if the deadwood was as a result of ash dieback disease or senescence related to age but more likely the former. The crown management has led to the development of a small crown mostly comprised of epicormic growth, but what is present appears in good physiological condition with no signs of dieback (which is to be expected considering how recently it was pruned).

5. My assessment concludes that the specimen is indeed a veteran and should be treated as such.

6. The NPPF identifies veteran trees as irreplaceable habitats, for which deterioration or loss should be wholly exceptional. In accordance with Government Guidance on Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran Trees (the 'Standing Advice'), development proposals should avoid direct and indirect impacts upon veteran trees and their root protection areas. The Standing Advice recommends that buffer zones should be applied to veteran trees, that should be treated as root protection areas (RPAs) and that these should be a minimum of 15 times the tree's trunk diameter, or 5m beyond the canopy edge, whichever is greater, unless a robust arboricultural justification demonstrates that a lesser offset would avoid harm.

7. In this, I do not agree with Mr Clout's comment that the buffer zone must be at least 15m, that is not what the Standing Advice stipulates and in this instance I see no reason why the greater protection of a 15m wide buffer zone is necessary, as set out below.

8. As identified above, the tree comprises three stems arising from a coppice stool. In accordance with the multi-stem methodology for calculating RPAs set out within BS5837, a combined trunk diameter should be calculated using the following formula:

$$d = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2 + c^2}$$

The measured stem diameters were recorded as 680mm, 465mm and 245mm. Therefore, using this formula the combined trunk diameter is 860mm, which results in a veteran tree buffer zone radius of 12.9m. Considering the presence of existing barns; existing hard surfacing; the fact the tree is growing on a level approximately 1.25m higher than the site level with soil being retained by a concrete wall; and the presence of a meadow beyond the tree to the east and north; I consider the size of the buffer zone calculated to be entirely appropriate for the protection of the tree.

9. A review of the application plans prepared by Lloyd Harden (in particular: Proposed Site Plan 002) showed that the proposed dwelling was located 7.9m from the trunk of the ash and within the

veteran tree buffer zone. It should be noted that the proposed dwelling was entirely within the footprint of the existing barn, so the potential for adverse impacts from construction was very low. It should also be noted that the site already benefits from Class Q permitted development for the conversion of the existing barn into a pair of semi-detached dwellings within the footprint of the barn and within the tree's buffer zone.

10. Nevertheless, as there is scope for the proposed dwelling to be located further from the tree and outside the veteran tree buffer zone, the application team has explored that option rather than seeking to rebut the comments. This sits at the top end of the mitigation hierarchy by 'avoiding' harm, rather than seeking to 'mitigate' or 'compensate'.

11. The proposed location for the dwelling has been shifted 4.5m to the west, to increase the distance between it and the tree to 13m. This is illustrated on the revised tree protection plan prepared by SJAtrees and appended to this note (ref: SJA TPP 26206-041). The TPP illustrates where supervised demolition of the existing barn and associated hard surfacing is required, hatched purple on the plan. The removal of existing compacted hardstanding and redundant foundations within the buffer zone presents an opportunity for long-term enhancement of soil function, gaseous exchange, moisture infiltration and mycorrhizal activity. It is anticipated that further detail on the methodology for this can be provided in response to a suitably worded planning condition.

12. In addition, the revised proposals have removed a rectilinear area, larger than the portion of the buffer zone that extends into the site, from what would be private amenity space and allowed for it to be fenced off and planted as a wildflower meadow. This is hatched brown on the TPP. This too could be secured by a suitably worded planning condition requiring a veteran tree management plan.

13. The introduction of the wildflower meadow instead of private amenity space is in accordance with the Applicant's ongoing aspirations for the site. That being a shift from intensive agriculture to rewilding of the land, as set out in The Hunter Group's video on Nash Manor, link provided in footnote 1 on page 1 of this report. This aspiration is 'ongoing' because the Applicant has already had control over the land for three years and initiated several initiatives already. Three hundred trees and 650m of native hedgerow have already been planted, including a new orchard to the north-east of the application site; the introduction of Exmoor ponies and a rare native cattle breed to manage vegetation but fencing off hedgerows to promote their natural regeneration. A visit to the site (the Applicant would be delighted to welcome you and show you around) would enlighten you on these strategies and intentions.

14. There are future plans for a kitchen garden and further enhancement of the grasslands, hedgerows and trees. However, funding for these improvements needs to be unlocked through the

approval of planning permission. The identification of a veteran tree on his land has only served to encourage the Applicant's intentions rather than it being seen as a hinderance.

15. To conclude, I agree with the Tree Officer that the ash no. 5 is a veteran specimen. As a result, a veteran buffer zone has been applied in accordance with current standing advice along with a revised site plan to mitigate potential adverse impacts to the specimen, and to provide an enhancement to quality of the buffer zone to promote the longevity of the veteran.

16. In conclusion, I concur with Mr Clout's consideration of the ash tree no. 5 as a veteran specimen and that it should be treated as irreplaceable habitat. The revised layout has responded positively to this constraint by shifting any proposed development outside the tree's buffer zone; enhancing the portion of the buffer zone currently occupied by barns and hard surfacing; and managing the buffer zone as wildflower meadow instead of private amenity space. This is illustrated in a new TPP appended to this report and can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions.

17. Subject to implementation of the tree protection measures illustrated on the TPP; a veteran tree management plan; and ongoing sympathetic land management, the proposals would not result in the loss or deterioration of the veteran tree. In fact, it would allow for the retention protection and enhancement of the tree and will result in an improvement to its buffer zone as well as unlocking further rewilding initiatives for the site and land in the Applicant's control

Yours sincerely,

Frank Spooner

Frank Spooner: Senior Consultant and Operations Director
SJAtrees