

Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Email: development.control@wokingham.gov.uk
Date: 14 March 2025
My ref: TF/TPO/1811/2021/382/1988/1465/2013/250071



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mrs Rebecca Watts
R Watts & Sons Ltd
Unit 3
Abbeyholm
Nashdom Lane
Burnham
SL1 8NJ

Place and Growth
Development Management Team
P.O. Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WR
Tel: (0118) 974 6000

Dear Mrs Watts,

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER: 1811/2021/382/1988/1465/2013

APPLICATION NUMBER: 250071

SITE ADDRESS: LAND PARCEL AT 479775 167294 BLAGROVE LANE, WOKINGHAM, RG41 4AX

I am writing to you regarding your application to carry out works to protected tree(s), which was received and validated on the 15 January 2025. Please accept my apologies for the delay in determining this application.

I can confirm Wokingham Borough Council **refuses consent**, to the following work being carried out to tree(s) included in the above-mentioned Tree Preservation Orders (TPO):

Proposed tree works to A5 and Single 6 of TPO 1811/2021 & 382/1988

T1 Ash (A5 on TPO 1811/2021) - Fell

T4 Ash (T6 on TPO 382/1988) - Fell

Reasons stated for works:

T1 Ash (A5 on TPO) - *Remnants of fungus Inonotus hispidus on main stem, displaying symptoms of Chalara Ash Dieback*

T4 Ash (T6 on TPO) - *Displaying symptoms of Chalara Ash Dieback*

Officer comments:

When looking to undertake works to a protected tree it is the responsibility of the applicant to supply adequate proof with the TPO application, in the form of 'written arboricultural advice or other diagnostic information from an appropriate expert.' To date, no conclusive arboricultural

information has been submitted to demonstrate that the subject Ash trees are dangerous or diseased or that the proposed work is in the interests of health and safety.

Experience in continental Europe, which is now being seen replicated in the UK, indicates that Ash Dieback can kill young and coppiced ash trees quite quickly. However, older trees can resist it for some time until prolonged exposure, or another pest or pathogen, such as Armillaria (Honey Fungus), attacking them in their weakened state eventually causes them to succumb. There is no known cure.

Current management guidelines from Forest Research (Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree related research) confirmed that a landowner is not legally required to take any particular action if you own infected ash trees unless your country forestry or plant health authority serves you with a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) requiring action. This is unlikely.

With the exceptions of felling for public safety or timber production, Forest Research recommend a general presumption against felling living ash trees, whether infected or not. This is because there is good evidence that a small proportion will be able to tolerate an Ash Dieback infection. There is also the possibility that a proportion of ash trees can become diseased but then recover to good health. These trees would be valuable for research.

The Council therefore supports the retention of Ash trees, particularly in lower occupancy areas where it is safe and reasonable to do so unless their condition is so undermined that recovery is not considered viable or without the structure of the tree being severely impaired as a result.

Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 which commits us to playing as full a role as possible in reducing our carbon footprint to be net carbon zero by 2030. The Borough Council aims to increase the levels of carbon sequestration through greening the environment. The preservation and enhancement of tree canopy cover in the Borough will play an important role in this.

The Council's Arboricultural representative at his site visit was unable to access the base of the subject Ash trees. However, significant or advanced symptoms of Ash Dieback were not apparent on the trees and to date, no conclusive information has been submitted to demonstrate that the trees are structurally undermined at this time.

On balance the reasons and information submitted with the application are not sufficient justification for the proposed removal of the two Ash trees. However, if there are concerns over a tree's structural integrity the Council would welcome a further Tree Work Application supported by appropriate levels of arboricultural evidence i.e. full VTA, aerial inspection, photographs of all bio-mechanical defects/decay fungus and results of any internal decay detection investigations of the lower main stem and/or scaffold branches (i.e. Sonic Tomograph and/or Resistograph Drill) to justify the proposed works.

Due to the reasons stated above the proposed removal of the two subject Ash trees has been refused.

However, I can confirm that Wokingham Borough Council **consents, with conditions**, to the following lesser works being carried out to the tree(s) included in the aforementioned Tree Preservation Order (TPO):

Approved Tree Work to Single 28 of TPO 1465/2013:

T6 Oak (T28 on TPO 1465/2013) - Reduce crown by reducing branches by a maximum approximately 4m

Reasons stated for works:

*Tree with spreading habit and 10 degree lean towards east, fungus *Fistulina hepatica* at base southeast, lesions on main stem*

The consent is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The above works must be completed before **14 March 2027** and in the event of the works not being completed by that date, further consent will be required.
2. Work must be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 – 2010 'Tree work - Recommendations'. Ensuring all branches are taken back to a suitable growth point.
3. Climbing spikes shall not be used whilst undertaking any form of works on living trees, except on trees to be felled.

Reasons for conditions 1-3.....

1. To ensure that our records remain accurate.
2. To ensure the health, safety and visual amenity of the tree(s) and ensure works are undertaken in accordance with recognised arboricultural good practice.
3. Spikes can cause extensive long-term damage to trees.

Informative:

If you are aggrieved by any of the conditions attached to your consent, you may appeal to The Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Because of coronavirus (COVID-19), you can currently only make a planning appeal online. You cannot currently apply by post.

For more information go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-preservation-order-appeal-form>

Telephone: 0303 444 5570 or e-mail it to: treeandhedgeappeals@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Your appeal should be received within one month of receipt of this decision or any such longer period as the Planning Inspectorate may allow.

You are advised that this letter is in respect of the **Tree Preservation Order only** and it does not imply that consent would be forthcoming from the owner of the tree(s) or any such other persons from whom consent would be required.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact the Tree Officer via email to:
development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Hannington". The script is cursive and fluid.

Chris Hannington
Trees and Landscape Team Manager

cc. Applicant: Mr K Clarke, The Balgrove Farm Partnership, C/O Simmons & Sons, 32 Bell Street,
Henley On Thames, RG9 2BH

Please note that your attention is drawn to the following information:

Bird Nesting Season and Presence of Bat Roosts

In accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000), consideration must be given to the timing and type of tree work operations, to avoid causing disturbance to any nesting birds or bat roosts that may be present within the tree(s).

The Act makes it an offence (subject to exceptions) to intentionally kill, injure, or take, possess, or trade in any wild animal listed, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places.

It is advised that all non-urgent major tree work and hedge cutting operations are undertaken at a time to avoid disturbing nesting birds during the breeding season (to which the bird nesting season is considered to be from March to July). Where bats are suspected to be present, it is recommended that advice first be sought from a licenced bat specialist and if appropriate, the relevant licence(s) be obtained before any major tree work or hedge cutting commences.

Further information can be found at the following:

DEFRA (Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs)
Tel: 08459 33 55 77 or by email at helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.defra.gov.uk/

Natural England
Tel: 0845 600 3078 or by email at enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk
Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk

Bat Conservation Trust
Tel: 0845 1300 228 or by email at enquiries@bats.org.uk
Website: www.bats.org.uk

Forestry Act 1967 and Felling Licences

If it proposed to fell a tree or trees greater than 5 cubic metres or sell more than 2 cubic metres of timber in any calendar quarter, a Felling Licence from the Forestry Authority may be required.

Please note that Felling Licences are not required to remove trees from domestic (residential) gardens. Where you are the landowner of large pieces of land with numerous trees, clarification from the Forestry Commission may be required as to whether a Felling licence is needed.

For more information on Felling Licences, please speak to the Woodland Officer at the Forestry Commission on 01296 696543

Further Information can be found on the Forestry Commission Website:
www.forestry.gov.uk