

Tel: (0118) 974 6000
Email: development.control@wokingham.gov.uk
Date: 29 July 2025
My ref: TF/TPO/1953/2024/251317



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mr Charles Hunt
Wessex Woodland Management
Foxley Wood
Hungerford Park
Hungerford
Berkshire
RG17 0UT

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

Dear Mr Hunt,

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER: 1953/2024
APPLICATION NUMBER: 251317
LOCATION: LAND EAST OF MONTEREY, NORTH OF ROMAN RIDE, CROWTHORNE
WOKINGHAM RG45 6BU

I am writing to you regarding your application to carry out works to protected tree(s), which was received and validated on the 03 June 2025.

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 W1 of TPO 1953/2024:

Mixed Species:

- Selective thinning to remove 20% from poor form / unhealthy trees as per specifications in Woodland Management Plan; removal of invasive rhododendron and holly.

Reasons stated for works:

Further to an application being submitted by my client in 2024 we have taken the advice given by the council and have written a long-term woodland plan which details the need for woodland management within the property boundary. The plan is written to UKFS standards, which the Forestry Commission have seen a draft copy of, but it cannot be approved until the council has commented. Therefore, I ask for comment on the plan at this stage.

Reasons stated for refusal:

The proposed thinning of this protected woodland has been reviewed in the context of the current application and the previous refusal Ref: 233169, dated 16 February 2024. This is because the current application is not dissimilar to the earlier proposal and no substantive new evidence has been provided to address the reasons for refusal. In consequence, the Council's original concerns remain. For ease of reference a copy of the Decision Notice 233169 can be viewed on the Wokingham Borough Council website.

One of the key justifications cited for the proposed thinning is to improve air flow through the woodland, specifically as a preventative measure against *Dothistroma septosporum* (Red Band Needle Blight) affecting Scots Pine. However, this disease has not been formally identified within the woodland, and no supporting evidence, such as a plant health inspection report or pathology confirmation, has been submitted. Implementing broad thinning works without a confirmed diagnosis is premature and risks causing unnecessary disturbance to the woodland structure.

Furthermore, increasing air flow through general thinning is not an appropriate or proportionate method of disease control in this context. Management of *Dothistroma*, where confirmed, should follow specific guidance from Forest Research and involve targeted silvicultural measures. Indiscriminate thinning in a mixed or broadleaved woodland can have unintended consequences, including altering microclimatic conditions, reducing habitat stability, and negatively impacting biodiversity.

The application also includes proposals to remove *Rhododendron*, an invasive non-native species. This aspect of the proposal is supported in principle, as removal of this species can assist in restoring native woodland diversity. However, concern is raised regarding the intended use of glyphosate for regrowth control. Glyphosate use in sensitive woodland environments poses risks to non-target vegetation and soil health. Control should be undertaken using minimal, targeted applications or mechanical means, under appropriate ecological supervision.

Additionally, the proposed removal of native *Holly* (*Ilex aquifolium*) is not supported. While dense holly can in some cases limit regeneration, it is also an ecologically valuable species, providing shelter and winter food resources for birds and invertebrates. Its presence contributes to the structural and species diversity of the understorey. Blanket removal without a clear ecological rationale would be counterproductive to woodland biodiversity aims.

It is also worth noting that certain works to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order are exempt from the requirement to submit an application. This includes the removal of dead wood, dangerous branches and the felling of dead trees, provided that the works are genuinely in response to safety or structural integrity concerns. Where such work is carried out, the local planning authority should be notified in writing via a 5-day Notification as soon as practicable, and photographic evidence or an arboricultural report should be submitted to verify the condition of the tree(s) involved.

It is important to note that in the case of enforcement action by the Council where the landowner has carried out work and relies on an exemption in the Town and Country (Tree

Preservation)(England) Regulations (2012) then, because it is an exemption, the burden of proof rests with the landowner and those who caused, permitted or carried out the works. The Council strongly advises landowners to retain photographs and tree reports as evidence in such cases. It is also important to note that causing, permitting or carrying out unauthorised works to protected trees is a crime.

In the absence of a robust, evidence-led woodland management plan and with no clear arboricultural or ecological necessity for the proposed interventions, the works are not supported. The woodland continues to hold high ecological and amenity value, especially in the light of increasing development pressure in the surrounding area and the Forest and Rides Valued Landscape, and the integrity of the woodland should be preserved through sensitive, informed management only.

The application is therefore refused.

Any future applications submitted for the removal of Rhododendron and selective thinning of Holly and/or other species with additional evidence and justification for the works, will be duly considered on their merits.

Informative:

If you are aggrieved by the refusal of works or any of the conditions attached to your consent, you may appeal to The Planning Inspectorate (PINS). You can only submit a planning appeal online.

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 and Landscape Officer via email to: development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Chris Hannington
Trees and Landscape Team Manager

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