TREE PRESERVATION ORDER APPLICATION

Supporting Arboricultural Statement and Justification for Proposed Works

Site Address: 7 Farman Close, Woodley, Reading, RG5 4XF

Applicant: Operational Tree Management Wokingham Borough Council

Tree Preservation Order: Tree Preservation Order No. 170/1980

Tree Reference: Group G4

WBC Tree ID: 6002

Corresponding Subsidence Reference

The trees identified as TG1 within the subsidence investigation reports correspond to Group G4 of Tree Preservation Order No. 170/1980.

---

1. Proposed Works

G4 - Tree Preservation Order No. 170/1980

Crown reduce the four Oak trees within Group G4 (tree ID 6002) by up to 2.5 metres in height and up to 2.0 metres in lateral spread, reducing the average crown dimensions from approximately 14 metres in height and 9 metres crown spread to a finished crown profile of approximately 11.5-12 metres in height and 6.5-7 metres crown spread.

The Ash tree forming part of Group G4 (tree ID 6002) is excluded from the proposed works.

Works shall be undertaken through suitable growth point reduction pruning to achieve a balanced and natural crown form in accordance with BS3998:2010 Tree Work - Recommendations.

Deadwood exceeding 25mm diameter may be removed where encountered during the course of the crown reduction works.

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn't require to be sent via secure methods.

2. Purpose of the Application

This application seeks consent to undertake proportionate crown reduction works to the Oak trees within Group G4 of Tree Preservation Order No. 170/1980 as a subsidence mitigation measure.

The proposal has been developed following review of the available arboricultural, geotechnical, root identification and level monitoring evidence relating to a subsidence claim affecting 7 Farman Close, Woodley. The objective is to reduce transpiration demand and associated soil moisture abstraction whilst retaining the protected trees and the significant amenity benefits they provide.

---

3. Description of Protected Trees

Group G4 (tree ID: 6002) comprises four mature Oak trees and one Ash tree situated on Council-owned land adjacent to 7 Farman Close.

The trees form an established landscape feature that contributes significantly to the visual amenity, character and environmental value of the locality. The trees are considered suitable for long-term retention and continue to provide substantial public benefit through their contribution to the landscape, biodiversity and local treescape.

The Oak trees currently have average dimensions of approximately:

- Height: 14 metres
- Crown spread: 9 metres

The proposed works relate solely to the Oak specimens within Group G4 (Tree Id 6002).

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn’t require to be sent via secure methods.

4. Technical Background

A subsidence investigation has been undertaken in relation to movement affecting 7 Farman Close.

The evidence reviewed includes:

- Site investigation findings;
- Geotechnical analysis;
- Root identification testing;
- Arboricultural assessment; and
- Level monitoring data.

The investigation identified:

- Shrinkable clay soils beneath the property;
- Foundations located at approximately 1.3m to 1.4m depth;
- Oak roots beneath the foundations;
- Seasonal movement consistent with shrink-swell clay behaviour; and
- Increased downward movement recorded during the 2026 growing season.
- The level monitoring data demonstrates movement patterns consistent with seasonal moisture depletion within shrinkable clay soils. Oak roots attributable to trees within Group G4 (Tree ID 6002) were identified beneath the foundations, providing a credible mechanism by which the protected trees may be contributing to moisture abstraction beneath the affected structure.

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn't require to be sent via secure methods.

5. Arboricultural Assessment

Having reviewed the available evidence, Wokingham Borough Council accepts that the Oak trees within Group G4 (Tree ID 6002) may be contributing to seasonal moisture depletion within the underlying clay soils and therefore may represent a contributing factor to the movement affecting the property.

The combination of:

- Mature Oak trees located within influencing distance of the dwelling;
- Confirmed Oak roots beneath the foundations;
- Shrinkable clay subsoils; and
- Recorded seasonal movement patterns

provides a technically credible basis for considering arboricultural mitigation measures.

However, the Council does not consider that the evidence currently demonstrates that removal of the protected trees is necessary or proportionate.

Whilst the reports establish a plausible relationship between the trees and the observed movement, they do not demonstrate that tree removal represents the only effective mitigation measure available.

---

6. Justification for Proposed Works

The proposed crown reduction seeks to achieve an appropriate balance between the mitigation of potential vegetation-related subsidence and the retention of protected trees.

The proposed works are intended to:

- Reduce leaf area and transpiration demand;
- Reduce seasonal soil moisture abstraction;
- Provide a measurable response to the available subsidence evidence;
- Retain the protected trees;
- Preserve public amenity value;
- Maintain landscape character and environmental benefits; and
- Avoid unnecessary loss of protected trees.

The proposed reduction from approximately 14 metres in height to 11.5-12 metres and from approximately 9 metres crown spread to approximately 6.5-7 metres crown spread is considered sufficient to achieve a meaningful reduction in canopy demand whilst maintaining the health, condition and long-term contribution of the trees to the landscape.

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn’t require to be sent via secure methods.

The Council considers the proposed works to represent the least harmful arboricultural intervention capable of addressing the concerns identified through the subsidence investigation.

---

7. Consideration of Alternative Options

No Intervention

The option of undertaking no works has been considered.

Given the available root identification, soil analysis and movement monitoring evidence, the Council considers that some form of mitigation is justified.

Tree Removal

Removal of the protected trees has also been considered.

However, tree removal would result in the permanent loss of protected trees of recognised public amenity value and is not considered justified by the evidence available at this stage.

The Council does not consider that the investigations demonstrate that removal is necessary, nor that lesser interventions would be ineffective.

Crown Reduction

The proposed crown reduction represents a proportionate and evidence-based response that seeks to reduce moisture demand whilst retaining the protected trees and preserving their public benefits.

---

8. Long-Term Management Strategy

The proposed works form the first stage of a phased and sustainable mitigation strategy.

Following completion of the proposed crown reduction, any available monitoring information should be reviewed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Should future evidence demonstrate continuing movement attributable to vegetation-related moisture demand, the Council would review any further evidence submitted and consider whether additional management measures are justified.

This approach accords with the principles of sustainable tree retention and proportionate intervention that underpin the management of protected trees.

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn’t require to be sent via secure methods.

9. Conclusion

Having reviewed the available arboricultural, geotechnical, root identification and monitoring evidence, Wokingham Borough Council considers there is sufficient justification to undertake proportionate crown reduction works to the Oak trees within Group G4 of Tree Preservation Order No. 170/1980 as a subsidence mitigation measure.

The proposed works seek to reduce transpiration demand and associated soil moisture abstraction whilst retaining the protected trees and preserving the substantial public amenity, landscape and environmental benefits they provide.

The proposed reduction of up to 2.5 metres in height and up to 2.0 metres in lateral spread is considered reasonable, balanced and proportionate to the evidence currently available and represents the least harmful arboricultural intervention presently justified.

Accordingly, consent is sought to undertake the proposed crown reduction works to the Oak trees within Group G4 of Tree Preservation Order No. 170/1980.

Prepared by

Michael Pearce
Team Leader - Operational Tree Management
Wokingham Borough Council

Tree Preservation Order: 170/1980
Tree Reference: G4

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn’t require to be sent via secure methods.