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Date: 24 December 2025
My ref: TF/TPO/1928/2023/252391



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Bramley House
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Nottingham
United Kingdom
NG10 3SX

Place and Growth
Development Management Team
P.O. Box 157
Shute End, Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WR

Tel: (0118) 974 6000

Dear Sir/Madame,

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER: 1928/2023

APPLICATION NUMBER: 252391

**SITE ADDRESS: LAND TO NORTH OF WEST WOOD, LOWER WOKINGHAM ROAD,
CROWTHRONE, RG45 6BY**

I am writing to you regarding your application to carry out works to a tree located on land north of West Wood, Lower Wokingham Road, Crowthorne which was received on 03 October 2025 and validated on 31 October 2025.

I can confirm Wokingham Borough Council **consents with conditions**, 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 1928/2023:

T3, Oak (of the MWA Arboricultural Report)

- Remove (fell) to near ground level.

Reasons stated for works:

Clay shrinkage subsidence damage at West Wood, Lower Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire, RG45 6BY

The following documentation was submitted with the application:

- JCA Ltd Arboricultural Report - Ref: 19331/AJB
- Subsidence Monitoring – Level Monitoring Report – 19/09/2025
- Drainage Repair Company Report - 17/02/2025
- 360Globalnet Engineers Report – 14/10/2022

Officer comments:

The Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the Oak tree proposed for removal has been demonstrated, on the balance of probability, to be the cause of the alleged subsidence damage to the adjoining property.

The engineering evidence submitted does not identify a specific tree as causative, and the arboricultural evidence does not provide robust, tree-specific confirmation of root influence. In the context of the surrounding protected woodland, the evidence fails to distinguish the Oak's influence from that of other nearby trees.

The arboricultural report relied upon is dated November 2022 and is the same report previously submitted in support of the 2024 application, which was refused. It has not been updated to reflect subsequent monitoring data or current site conditions. The report itself confirms that key soil parameters were unavailable at the time of assessment and acknowledges that Plasticity Index (PI), Plastic Limit (PL), Liquid Limit (LL) and Moisture Content (MC) are fundamental in determining whether clay shrinkage has occurred. As such, the report is considered incomplete and is afforded limited weight.

Where plasticity data has subsequently been referenced, it indicates medium plasticity clay, rather than highly shrinkable clay typically associated with severe tree-related subsidence. The Local Planning Authority is therefore not satisfied that the soil conditions justify removal of a protected Oak tree on subsidence grounds.

The available soil data indicates:

- Liquid Limit values in the range of approximately 38–46%, consistent with medium plasticity clay.
- Plastic Limit values around 26–27%, typical of moderate plasticity soils.
- Plasticity Index values generally between 11–18, representing moderate, not high, shrink–swell potential.
- Moisture Content values around 11–15%, below the Plastic Limit, indicating a shrunken state; however, this alone does not demonstrate tree-related desiccation.
- Modified Plasticity Index values around 11–12, classifying the clay as low to medium volume change potential.

The Local Planning Authority notes that seasonal drying, drainage patterns, historical ground disturbance and long-term climatic conditions can all result in reduced soil moisture content without direct causation by tree water uptake.

The damage is classified as BRE Digest 251 Category 2 - Slight. The scale and nature of the damage would not justify the loss of a protected Oak tree within a Woodland TPO.

Level monitoring indicates minor, fluctuating movement consistent with seasonal ground conditions rather than indicating progressive subsidence attributable to a specific tree.

The submitted root identification evidence does not identify any live *Quercus* roots at foundation depth. One sample was too thin and immature for identification, while the other was identified as a dead pine root. This evidence does not establish a causal link between the protected Oak and the alleged subsidence. In the absence of identified live oak roots interacting with the foundations, removal cannot be justified on subsidence grounds.

Furthermore, the application does not adequately assess reasonable alternatives to tree removal, including crown management, root management, or engineering solutions such as

continued monitoring, root barriers, or underpinning. Tree removal has therefore not been demonstrated to be a last resort in relation to the alleged structural damage.

For the reasons set out above, the Local Planning Authority concludes that the subsidence claim is not substantiated and does not justify the removal of a protected Oak tree.

Notwithstanding the above, following a site inspection, the Local Planning Authority has identified separate arboricultural considerations that justify consent for removal.

The Oak tree is of poor asymmetric form and is heavily weighted toward the adjacent residential property. The tree is early-mature, and its current growth habit is unbalanced, with a pronounced lean and crown mass extending predominantly over the dwelling and garden area.

Given the tree's form and position, it is anticipated that continued growth will exacerbate the imbalance and increase management pressures. The Council considers that this would likely result in repeated future applications for pruning works in order to manage overhang and perceived risk, leading to incremental degradation of the tree's form, health and amenity value.

In this specific instance, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that removal represents a proportionate and pragmatic management solution, and that the long-term arboricultural outcome would be preferable to ongoing intervention in an already compromised specimen.

The Oak forms part of a protected woodland, and its removal will result in some localised harm to the character and integrity of the woodland. However, in this case, that harm is considered acceptable given the individual tree's poor form, limited future contribution, and the presence of surrounding woodland trees that will ensure continuity of woodland cover.

Consent is therefore granted for the removal of Oak tree T3, not on the basis of alleged subsidence, but on the basis of arboricultural form, structural imbalance, and long-term management considerations identified during the site visit.

Any future applications relating to tree works within the woodland will be considered on their individual merits. The Council reminds applicants that clear, unambiguous and up-to-date evidence is required in support of any works to protected trees.

The consent is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The above works must be completed before **24 December 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'.

Reasons for conditions 1-2...

1. To ensure that our records remain accurate.
2. To ensure that tree removal and associated operations are carried out in a manner that minimises avoidable damage and accords with recognised best practice.

Informative:

If you are aggrieved by this decision (refusal) you may appeal to The Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Because of coronavirus (COVID-19), you currently can 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 may be required.

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

Yours sincerely,



Chris Hannington
Trees and Landscape Team Manager

cc. Applicant – Mr and Mrs Powers, West Wood, Lower Wokingham Road, Crowthorne,
RG45 6BY

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