



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2025

Jonathan Fulcher DipArb FARborA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/TPO/X0360/10540

91 Reading Road, Woodley, Wokingham, RG5 3AE

- The appeal is made under regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 against a refusal to grant consent to undertake work to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
 - The appeal is made by Mr Vaughn Fisher against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: TF/TPO/1955/2024/250001, dated 2 January 2025, was refused by notice dated 17 March 2025.
 - The work proposed is the felling of two oak trees.
 - The relevant TPO is the Wokingham Borough Council (Parish of Woodley) Tree Preservation Order No. 1955/2024, which was confirmed on 20 August 2024.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the tree felling on the character and appearance of the area; and whether sufficient justification has been demonstrated for the proposed works.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal trees are two oaks standing close to the front road boundary, which is marked by a low brick wall of about 1metre in height topped with wrought iron railings and with brick pillars. One tree stands in the north corner of the front garden close to the boundary with 93 Reading Road and the other is on the northwest side of the drive access. The front boundary wall stops short of the trees and the boundary span where the tree trunks are is occupied with wrought iron panels from ground level, so that the whole of the trunks of the trees are visible from the ground up.

4. The trees appear to be in normal health and condition for their species, age and situation, with normal crown density and foliage cover. Their size and proximity to the road give them local prominence and this, together with their pleasant form, gives them significant local amenity. There are few trees of similar stature in the close vicinity, with occasional trees visible to the east and west further along Reading Road and occasional trees visible past dwellings to the south and north. I am satisfied that the appeal trees have substantial local amenity value. The removal therefore would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the locality.

Justification

5. Turning to the reasons for the proposed works, I saw that the whole of the front space between the front wall and the front north elevation of the dwelling was surfaced with pavements, and that there were places where the pavements were slightly displaced. This levels displacement seemed to be minor and not representing a significant problem for vehicular access or a trip hazard for pedestrians. That was the only direct evidence of damage to the appeal property and neighbouring properties that I have seen.
6. I have seen photographs of drain investigations, some showing some roots, and a letter from a drainage contractor about roots in drains. However, there is nothing before me to suggest that once the drains have been relined correctly that roots should not be an issue in the future. In the same way there is no evidence to suggest that roots were the initial cause of the damage. Thus, I am not satisfied that roots in drains is a matter of sufficient weight to warrant the felling of the appeal trees.
7. The letter from the drainage contractor suggests replacing the appeal trees with less impactful trees that do not have such large or aggressive root spread. I have seen no evidence to demonstrate that the appeal trees have large aggressive root spreads and that this is the cause of the drain problems. Without such evidence, or evidence of the rooting characteristics of alternative species I am not persuaded that replacing the trees is a reasonable solution.
8. In respect of leaves and residue, I accept that the trees may be the source of small amounts of minor debris including leaves and dead twigs, and that aphids may cause honeydew which may fall on vehicles. However, these issues are not uncommon and are a characteristic of most trees, and while they may be a maintenance inconvenience, they also go hand in hand within living in a leafy residential area characterised by a mature landscape.
9. Turning to the matter of the trees obscuring sight lines, as a matter of fact they do not stand between a vehicle exiting the property turning left (northwest) onto Reading Road and vehicles using Reading Road. For a vehicle exiting the property turning right (southeast) onto Reading Road the appeal trees stand

slightly behind the line of the front boundary wall, and it seems to me that the wall itself is more significant as a sightline issue than the appeal trees. In any event, the trees have been present for many years and I have not seen evidence of problems with visibility in the past. So, notwithstanding the comment in the tree survey provided in support of the application, I am not persuaded that the trees obscures sightlines to an extent that warrants felling. Overall, the matters put forward carry only minimal weight in justifying the tree removal.

10. With any application to carry out works to protected trees, a balancing exercise needs to be undertaken. The essential need for the works applied for must be weighed against the resultant loss to the amenity of the area. In this case, the proposed tree works would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and, in my judgement, insufficient justification has been demonstrated for the proposed works.

11. Thus, having considered all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jonathan Fulcher

INSPECTOR