

Application 18/00729 Proposed works to trees in Parchment Conservation Area

While Havant Borough Tree Wardens have no comments regarding the majority of works proposed, we do have serious doubts about the proposals regarding three impressive Black Alder trees, T4, T10, and T14:

T10 is a fine example of a notable/Veteran tree tree, coppiced some decades ago and showing natural growth responses to wounding in the past (a twin trunk and epicormic growth).

It has a *Girth* of 4.70m at ground level, and a *Diameter* of 1.49m. Consequently it may be regarded as a 'Veteran tree'. It has been entered as such on the **Ancient Tree Inventory**, and its management should take this status into account:

Many veteran trees and the fragile habitats they support are under threat from inappropriate management, often resulting from changes in the use of surrounding land. However, there has also been considerable loss of veteran tree habitat due to ill-informed safety management. The conservation and continuity of old trees in the landscape depends on better informed management, which takes into account their intrinsic values as well as the legal implications of ownership. (*Introduction: Veteran Trees, A Guide to Risk And Responsibility*, Ancient Tree Forum, 2013)

Not only does this fine tree contribute to the visual amenity of The Parchment, but it has clear importance in relation to the Setting of the Conservation Area and its historic links to Havant's trade based around the many springs west of the cross roads, in particular the Grade II Homewell Parchment Works.

Trees form an integral part of the built and natural environment, making a valuable contribution to the character of an area. This is especially true of long-lived trees that have spanned centuries, providing continuity and understanding of history within local communities. In this case, the alder trees, (often found along rivers and damp areas), are living reminders of the mineral-rich springs that made Havant prosperous.

To crown raise to 8m seems excessive: not only will this damage the visual amenity of the tree T10, but it also runs the risk of removing more of the crown and leaf area that the tree needs to sustain itself.

This is particularly relevant given its adaptation to a housing development, and position in a hard surfaced area that makes little concession to its ideal Root Protection Area and aeration.



Alder T10 has already had excessive Crown Lifting to 50% of its trunk length.

We suggest that removal of only a small amount of epicormic growth from the lowest quarter of the trunk is sufficient.

T4 has a *Girth* of 2.28m at breast height, *Diameter* 72.5mm – this is just short of the 0.74 diameter that would class this Maiden tree as 'Truly Ancient' and as such has been entered onto the Ancient Tree Inventory.

The proposed Crown Raise on the Northern Sector to give a ground clearance of 5.5m can be seen as necessary to clear the highway.

However, this should be kept to the minimum to achieve public safety, and should not include the

removal of any large branches without assessment of the tree's capacity to survive, and avoiding flush cuts that injure the branch bark ridge which can lead to decay (NB Alder has low sapwood resistance to disease).

Its clear visual amenity at the entrance to The Parchment, and historical/cultural value must be protected.

T14 is the smallest of the three, but still has a *Girth* of 2.04m at breast height, and a *Diameter* of 0.65m.

This makes it Valuable (in visual and biodiversity terms), and well on the way to meeting the criteria for "Ancient" status. This tree has also been entered on the Ancient Tree Inventory. In addition, it holds a visually pleasing position as a focus point against the wall adjacent to 14 The Parchment. It is a well shaped Maiden, and the proposed crown reduction of 3.5m seems excessive.

While we can see a need for small amount of crown lifting may be necessary to give access and we understand the formative pruning of laterals by 1.5m, the purpose of any further work must be explained.

In any case, crown reduction and crown lifting should not usually be carried out at the same time as it leads to an excessive amount of wounding and leaf loss

We urge that these three trees be given Individual Tree Management Plans (ITMP) to specify, over the life of each tree, and to successive managers:

1. The number of pruning operations,
2. Amounts, (N.B. Specifications for a percentage reduction are imprecise and unsatisfactory without reference to height and spread.)
3. Location of material to be removed at each stage
4. Reasons for works
5. What is envisaged long-term?
6. And the timescale for works.
7. In addition to the tree work, sympathetic site management should be incorporated to enhance the trees growing conditions.

(Ref: Chap 7, *Veteran Trees, A Guide to Risk And Responsibility*. Ancient Tree Forum, 2013).

Conclusion

All these important mature trees have resisted or tolerated changes (e.g. soil disturbance altered drainage and urban development). Unless there is clear risk to people and/or property, it is important to prevent further avoidable harm and actions to the trees that result in life-shortening biomechanical failure.

The Parchment estate was designed around these pre-existing trees in order to provide visual amenity and to enhance the historic features in the Conservation Area.

Yours sincerely


Co-ordinator Havant Borough Tree Wardens