

Application numbers 14/222 and 14/223 – Felling Oak Trees at Hollybank Lane

The proposals involve for the felling of 2 oaks that are subject to TPO's at the above address.

The following questions / queries have arisen following my assessment of the information presented:

Of the 4 boreholes carried out as site investigation 2 show depths of the existing building foundation. It is unclear if the foundation at BH1 is a strip or raft foundation, but if it is a strip then its depth of 0.475m below ground does not meet any published guidance for foundations in clay sub soils. Therefore even if all trees were removed from the zone of influence there is still a significant risk of movement based on the foundation depths involved. The information provided does not appear to have given this any consideration. Removing the trees may help reduce the risk but it cannot be guaranteed as a solution to stop any present or future movement. It is suggested that a structural engineer needs to give greater consideration to this matter and it may be that a scheme of underpinning is required to protect the building. The foundation to the rear is 0.825m (BH2) deep and therefore again is unlikely to be adequate irrespective of the presence of trees.

The report also presents some monitoring of the movement but this appears to have been carried out over a very short period of time (1st site visit December 2013, 2nd 27th January) and therefore it is not possible to tell if the cracking that has occurred is progressive or not.

Also the arboriculturalist's report also recommends that ground heave assessment is carried out but this doesn't appear to have been done.

Conclusion

It is recommended that a structural engineer is commissioned by the applicant to give advice on the geotechnical report, provide expert interpretation of the results and to recommend if the proposals are the most suitable to resolve the problem. At this stage, based on the evidence provided it is not possible to confirm if removing the tree is the correct long term solution.

Robin Seamer MRICS

Building Control Team Leader