

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Arboricultural Officer
TO: Planning Committee 7th November 2018
WARDS: NEW

**OBJECTION TO CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (TPO) NO. 16/2018**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A TPO has been served to protect a Wellingtonia at Selwyn College, Grange Road.
- 1.2 As an objection to the order has been received, the decision whether or not to confirm the order is brought before Committee.
- 1.3 Members are to decide whether to confirm Tree Preservation Order, with or without amendment, or not confirm the.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The tree preservation order is confirmed without amendment.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A section 211 Notice was received proposing the felling of a prominent Wellingtonia to ground level. The recommendation to fell the tree came from an arboricultural consultancy instructed by the College to carry out a tree condition survey. Following a site visit and an assessment of the tree condition survey reports submitted with the s.211 Notice, officers were not satisfied that the results of the surveys were conclusive and therefore justified the tree's removal. As the Council may not refuse permission for works detailed in a s.211 Notice a TPO was served to protect the tree.

4.0 POWER TO MAKE A TPO

- 4.1 If it appears to a local planning authority that it is expedient in the interests of amenity to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in their area, they may for that purpose make trees, groups of trees or woodlands the subject of TPO.

4.1.1 Expedience

If there is a risk of trees being cut down or pruned in ways which would have a significant impact on their contribution to amenity it may be expedient to serve a Tree Preservation Order. In some cases the Local Planning Authority may believe trees to be at risk generally from development pressure and therefore consider it expedient to protect trees without known, immediate threat. Where trees are clearly in good arboricultural management it may not be considered appropriate or necessary to serve a TPO.

4.1.2 Amenity

While amenity is not defined in the Town and Country Planning Act, government guidance advises that authorities develop ways of assessing the amenity value of trees in a structured and consistent way. Cambridge City Council Citywide Tree Strategy 2016 – 2026 sets out the criteria for assessing amenity in Policy P2 and considers visual, wider impact, atmospheric, climate change, biodiversity, historic/cultural and botanical benefits when assessing the amenity value of trees.

4.1.3 Suitability

The impact of trees on their local surroundings should also be assessed, taking into account how suitable they are to their particular setting, the presence of other trees in the vicinity and the significance of any detrimental impact trees may have on their immediate surroundings.

4.2 Suitability of this TPO

4.2.1 Expedience

The TPO is considered to be expedient because officers were not satisfied that the results of the tree condition surveys justified the tree's removal and that the removal would have a detrimental impact on amenity.

4.2.2 Amenity

Visual. The tree is located close to the college boundaries with Grange Road and West Road and is clearly visible from both.

Wider Impact. The tree contributes positively and significantly to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Climate Change. Larger and evergreen trees have a greater impact with regard to climate change adaptation.

4.2.3 Suitability

The tree is not conflicting with the reasonable use of the college, is not implicated in any direct or indirect damage and is not causing unreasonable shading or creating unreasonable maintenance requirements.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 A TPO must be served upon anyone who has an interest in land affected by the TPO.
- 5.2 Following such consultation an objection has been received to the TPO from Selwyn College.

6.0 CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The objection is made on the following grounds:
 - 6.1.1 The TPO is inappropriate on the grounds that the tree's structural integrity is compromised by evident defects as identified by independent experts.
 - 6.1.2 A Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) was carried out by Corsican Associates. At this time helical rib formations on the main stem were noted and it was thought these could potentially indicate internal cracking and or the degradation of woody tissue.
 - 6.1.3 Further assessments were carried out by Writtle Forest Consultancy using both Resistograph Drilling and Sonic Tomography. The results of these tests show severe structural defect between 2.5 and 4.5m. It was therefore recommended that the tree either be reduced in height and monitored or felled and replaced.
- 6.2 Officer's response to the objection.
 - 6.2.1 Officers are not satisfied by the conclusions set out in the resistograph drilling and sonic tomography reports and therefore are not able to confirm that the tree's structural integrity is sufficiently compromised to justify any remedial work and recommended that core samples be taken to confirm or otherwise the extent of any defects detected by the above analysis.
 - 6.2.2 Officers agree that external abnormalities can indicate internal defects and concluded that the bark formation indicated an historic defect but not one that appeared to be progressing into the newer and sound wood associated with new growth.
 - 6.2.3 Officers agree that the resistograph readings show anomalies consistent with an historic and localised defect and/or the typical growth of this species of tree but do not show that defects extend to a degree that would compromise the tree's structural integrity. Officers

were also concerned that as some of the drillings were angled across the direction of growth and not directly into the tree the depth measurements may not be accurate and that resistance could be distorted by drilling at an angle through growth rings. Similar to the results of the resistograph drilling, the results of the sonic tomography are also not conclusive. They do not fully confirm the results of the resistograph and could be explained by the species' growth habits and normal wood structure.

- 6.3 In conclusion, officers believe that the recommendation to the fell tree is not fully supported by the evidence and it has not proven that the tree's structural integrity is sufficient compromised to increase the risk of whole or part failure to a level that requires remedial action. Officers would expect conclusions to be confirmed or otherwise by taking core samples to enable actual assessment of wood structure and that the tree's value warrant's such a confirmation before it is condemned. Because the tree's removal was proposed in a s.211 Notice, the serving of TPO 16/2018 was expedient in the interests of amenity. The confirmation of the TPO will not stop works that are required in the interests of safety from being carried out but will require further and more conclusive evidence.

7.0. OPTIONS

7.1 Members may

- Confirm the Tree Preservation Order.
- Decide not to confirm the Tree Preservation Order.
- Confirm the Tree Preservation Order with modification

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Members are recommended to confirm City of Cambridge Tree Preservation Order 16/2018.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS

(a) Financial Implications	None
(b) Staffing Implications	None
(c) Equal Opportunities Implications	None
(d) Environmental Implications	None
(e) Community Safety	None

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

TWA 18/190/TTCA with supporting evidence

City of Cambridge Tree Preservation Order 16/2018.

Written objection to TPO 16/2018

To inspect these documents contact Joanna Davies on extension 8522

The author and contact officer for queries on the report is Joanna Davies on extension 8522

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