

Appeal No: APP/TPO/E0345/8541
Planning Ref: 210201/TPO
Site: 11 Ridge Hall Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7EP
Proposal: Fell one Lime tree in the front garden
Decision level: Delegated
Method: Written Representation
Decision: Appeal Dismissed
Date Determined: 10 May 2022
Inspector: Ian Monger BSc (Hons) MArborA

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Ridge Hall Close properties were developed in the '60s or '70s and a number of trees were retained during the development, the Lime subject to the appeal being one of these. The mature Lime tree is a prominent feature, visible from within much of Ridge Hall Close and can be observed from a number of vantage points both in the locality and along the Thames Promenade to the south as part of the overall tree coverage.
- 1.2 In February 2020, an application to fell the Lime tree was received, with numerous reasons cited: branch drop within the last 12 months; concern about potential harm from the tree as a result of wind exposure; other pruning options not being feasible to address the risk; high target area if failure occurred; the roots causing damage to the drains and driveway; natural nuisance issues (leaf drop & honeydew); inability to install solar panels as they would be blocked by the tree; minimal loss of amenity value from felling of the tree due to other tree coverage; positive benefit to the applicant from felling; tree being too large for its location; trees causes constant stress, worry and anxiety; higher insurance premiums as a result of the tree. The application was supported by various reports and photographs relating to the reasons.
- 1.3 The agent confirmed that there were no arboricultural reasons for the felling, i.e. there were no concerns about the condition of the tree.
- 1.4 Officers carefully considered all the reasons put forward and the documents submitted as supporting evidence for felling and responded to each point in detail. When considering applications to fell, the reasons put forward to support the felling should outweigh the amenity value lost as a result of felling, i.e. on balance felling should be justified. The tree in this case is of very high amenity value and none of the reasons put forward in support of its felling were considered to justify the loss of amenity that would result if the tree were felled.
- 1.5 As arboricultural reasons were not provided in support for felling and the other reasons provided were addressed by the officers, felling was not considered reasonable and was refused on 14th April 2021.

2 SUMMARY OF DECISION

- 2.1 The Inspector considered the main issues to be the effect of the proposed removal of the tree on the character and appearance of the area; and whether sufficient justification has been demonstrated for the proposed felling.
- 2.2 The Inspector addressed all the reasons carefully and agreed that the proposed removal of the tree would result in considerable harm to the character and appearance of the area and insufficient justification has been demonstrated for the proposed felling. The Inspector concluded that:

To sum up, the Council has set out detailed reasons as to why the justification to remove the appeal tree was insufficient because, in the normal course of events, there is a strong

presumption against removal of a mature, protected tree. With any application to remove a protected tree, 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 removal of the tree would result in considerable harm to the character and appearance of the area and, in my judgement, insufficient justification has been demonstrated for the proposed works.

Accordingly, for the reasons set out above and having considered all matters raised, I conclude that the removal of the tree would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and the appeal should be dismissed.

The appeal was therefore dismissed.

Assistant Director Planning, Transport & Public Protection Services Comment:

This appeal decision is welcome given that the comments made by the Planning Inspector upheld the amenity value assessment by Officers and that insufficient reasons for felling had been provided. The decision is particularly welcome given the Council's climate emergency declaration and the need to retain trees for their contribution to climate change mitigation and in accordance with policy EN14 and the aims of our adopted Tree Strategy.

Case officer: Sarah Hanson

