

Planning Officer: Miss Z Toppin

Planning Application Ref: **AW/328/20/T**

Location: **7 Follett Close, Aldwick, PO21 4XH**

Description of works: **4no. silver birch trees (T95, T96, T97 & T98) - reduce height to approx. 20-25m and Crown lift to 4m**

Reasons given: To reduce shading of garden and give clear and safe walk through

Comments on Application:

4x silver birch / *Betula pendula* Height: 15-20m Radial spread: 0-5m Age class: Mature

- Outwardly and from distance all four trees appear to be in a fine physiological state and stable. They form a substantial group canopy which is visually impressive when viewed from within the garden and surrounding properties. Upper crown profile can be seen from publicly accessible land.
- T97 is the northernmost birch, approximately 16m height with a uniform and unmodified crown. It displays all the mature characteristics of the species and is a fine specimen tree. T96 is also a single-stemmed tree with fine form and slightly apart from the group although less so than T97.
- T95 and T98 are similarly unmodified and important constituents of the group although they are of lesser form and markedly inferior.
- Although a large garden which comfortably accommodates these trees; ground conditions are influenced by heavy shading and damp conditions seem to prevail. It seems reasonable to permit a degree of pruning to improve those conditions although must be focused on selected trees rather than applied to the entire group, if we are to preserve visual amenity as the Tree Preservation Order intended.
- The removal of dead branches is an exception and does not require permission.
- The extent of height reduction proposed is not possible to interpret given the disparity with my own estimation of existing top-height.

Conclusions:

- These trees (in particular T97) require careful management that respect their age and vulnerability to environmental changes and disease progression.
- Height reduction proposals cannot be properly interpreted from the measurements provided. That said, I would be comfortable with some reduction pruning on T95 & T98 and I make suggestions for a revision of the work proposal below.
- The removal of low branches to achieve 4m clearance above ground level is not justified on arboricultural grounds and exceeds that which is recommended in the British Standard (BS3998:2010) Tree work – Recommendations. Lesser works would be suitable, and I make suggestions for a revision of the work proposal below.

Recommendation:

- As it stands, I recommend **REFUSAL** for this application
- **I would like the applicant to be invited to agree to a revised proposal for lesser works** (such as described below) as part of the current application so as not to incur further delay. Such work would go some way to addressing their concerns whilst preventing a diminution of the higher value trees landscape and public amenity value:

T95, T96, T97 & T98

- Crown lift (removal/reduction of low branches) to achieve no more than 3metres overhead clearance on all aspects.

T95 & T98 only

- Reduce top-height only to leave a minimum of 12metres above ground level.

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- If the applicant is prepared to re-submit in line with this advice, then I would be able to recommend APPROVAL subject to the following condition:

Condition to Be Applied to Approved Work: -

- Part a) Where whole branches are to be removed and final cuts made close to the trunk or branch union they are to be made as shown in Figure 2 of BS3998:2010
- Part b) Where branches are to be shortened back the final cuts are to be made at the correct angle shown in BS3998:2010 and adjacent to a live bud or lateral.

Reasons: In the interests of the trees continued health and vitality and to accord with current industry guidelines and sound arboricultural practice.

- *See also the standard pruning guidance notes issued with the consent letter*

Advisory:

- Birch trees have a poor tolerance of hard pruning and are prone to bleed heavily from wounds. Their long-term vitality is best respected when significant pruning work such as proposed, is undertaken during either the summer (June to August) or mid-winter (late-December to early-February) periods. The work should only be undertaken during these periods.

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team

Figure 2 Positions of final cuts

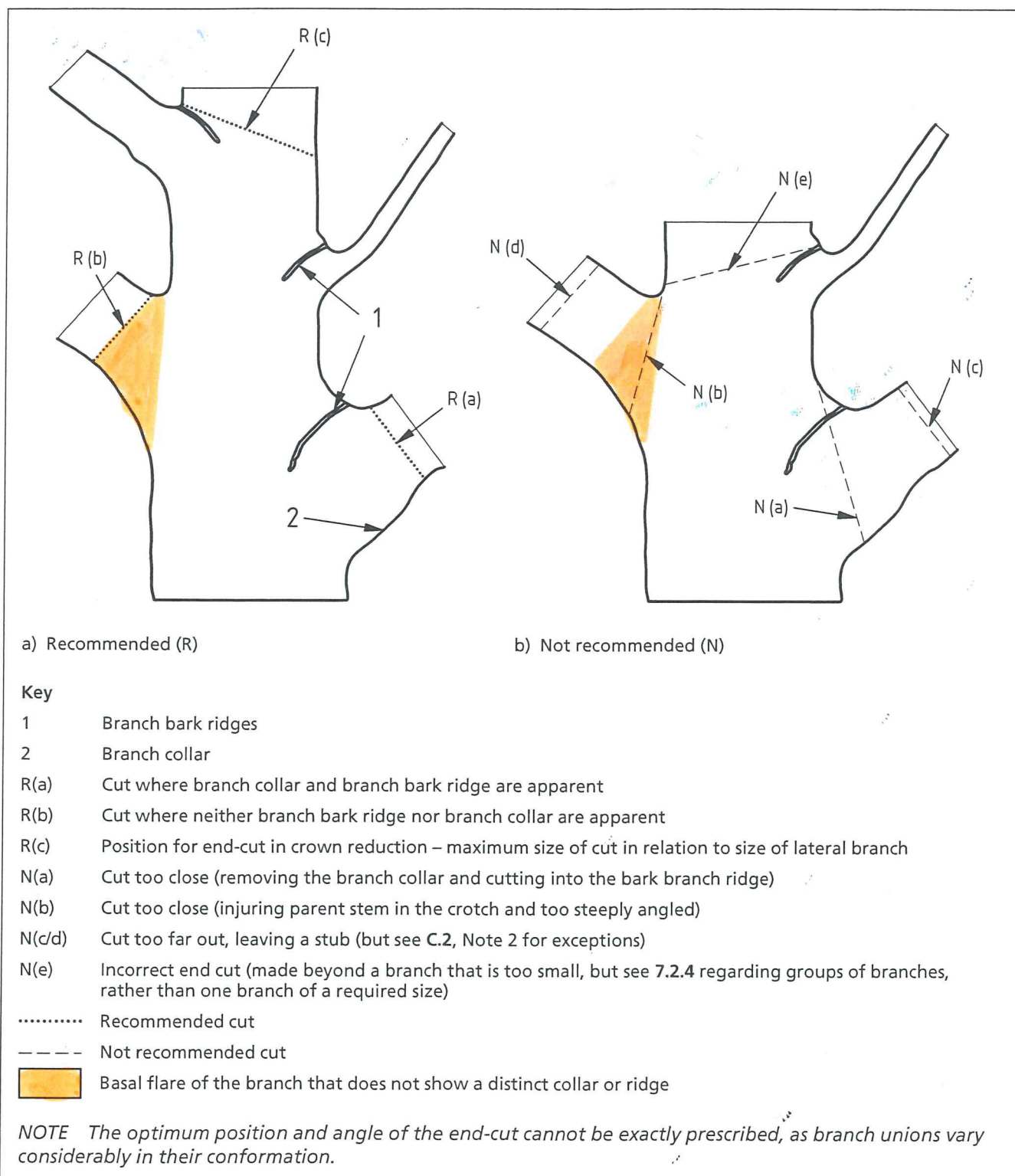


Figure 3 Crown lifting

