

Planning Officer: Amber Willard

Planning Application Ref: AW/68/18/T

Location: Ashlyn, 19 Craigweil Manor, Aldwick

Description of works: Removal of 3No. Holm Oak trees

Reasons Given: Infected by Honey Fungus and have outgrown their location

Comments on Application:

Holm oak x3 *Quercus ilex.* Average Height: Approx. 9m Average Spread: 2m Age: Early-mature

- These trees are close planted and relate as a group in the landscape. Being of similar age and stature there is a uniform shared crown profile and root system.
- They have limited visibility from The Drive (for traffic accessing/exiting the estate) and neighbouring properties.
- There is a history of regular crown reduction work to keep them 'contained' within such a confined space. Typically these are trees with high growth potential.
- T2 is clearly in a poor physiological state and may be at risk of structural failure at its root-plate or stem base, despite its relatively sheltered position and should be removed.
- The applicant has submitted a report from PDK Architecture and Surveying, dated March 2018, which states that these trees are responsible for structural damage to the building and paved areas. It further states honey fungus has colonised T2 and that it follows adjacent trees are now susceptible to infection and subsequent demise/failure.
- The applicant has proposed to treat the soil to eliminate traces of *Armillaria* and plant shrubs as replacement for the loss of three substantial trees.

Conclusions:

- These trees are a feature in the local landscape but require (and will continue to do so) regular pruning to keep them at dimensions appropriate for their location. Although one of the trees is in a poor state and unlikely to recover, the remaining two appear to be in adequately sound and healthy condition at this time.
- It has not been demonstrated that these trees are a contributory factor in the structural damage events nor has a plan of remedial action been provided; a requirement if works are to be given consent for those reasons.
- The tree removals proposed in the application would result in an observable loss of visual amenity.
- The particular species of fungus apparent in the photograph could be a species of honey fungus (*Armillaria* sp.), but unfortunately this has not been confirmed. It is unfortunate the toadstools were removed, as this will do little to arrest the progress of decay and may have aided positive identification. Whatever it is, the apparent healthy condition of neighbouring trees suggests it may be acting in an opportunistic way to exploit an already declining/stressed tree. That said, it is hard to see how the removal of T2 and even a precautionary treatment of persistent stump and root material (a potential food source for the fungus) can be achieved whilst securing the long-term vitality and health of its neighbours T1 and T3.
- The ongoing maintenance requirement for these trees which involves the frequent undertaking of stress-imposing pruning work, undesirable form and the elevated risk of root/stem disease – permit me to support the removal of this tree group.
- Their proximity to a high boundary wall of conservation value and built structures discourages me from conditioning a replacement tree of potential stature and proven resistance to the type of decay fungi suspected. An appropriate

scheme of large shrub planting and/or the planting of a specimen tree elsewhere in the garden to compensate for the proposed loss of high-tree canopy are encouraged.

Recommendations:

- I recommend **CONSENT** for this application.

Mark Warwick

Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team