

Planning Officer: Amber Willard

Planning Application Ref: BR/273/17/T

Location: 4 Pinewood Gardens, Bognor Regis

Description of works: Fell 1No. Liquidambar tree

Reasons Given: Roots have damaged two areas of driveway and boundary wall. Concerned about future liability for damage to neighbouring property.

Comments on Application:

Sweet Gum *Liquidambar styraciflua* Height: 9m Average Spread: 4m Age: early mature

- Significant ornamental tree with moderate growth potential. This tree appears to have good vitality and certainly displays good form.
- Limited view from the main road at this time but a focal point for surrounding properties and local residents.
- Structurally important roots are prominent in the surrounding grass area, which suggest it is growing on largely made-up ground (construction spoil).
- No other significant trees or large shrubs in the immediate locality, although historic records reveal a mature birch tree in the rear garden (up until c2008).
- The E boundary garden wall has a deep stepped vertical crack from near ground level course to the top, both along pointing and through bricks. The crack is notably wider at the top (5-7mm) and so indicative of a heave event.

Conclusions:

- This tree has significant amenity value and its retention is highly desirable.
- I am not satisfied that the two areas of driveway damage are exclusively attributable to tree root activity. The pattern of cracking and settlement are not strongly indicative of tree root expansion. I suspect there are climatic/drainage/structural factors involved.
- All three areas of damage have not been properly investigated by a competent engineer/surveyor to determine the probable cause of deterioration and we would need to see a report which evidences those results before being able to consider an application to fell this tree.

Recommendations:

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

Advisory:

- If the applicant remains concerned about possible further deterioration of their brick boundary wall, then I advise a narrow (<300mm) exploratory excavation be attempted parallel to the wall, to a depth sufficient to determine both the extent and condition of the footings. Problematic root material (<25mm diameter) associated with the damage event could be removed at that time.
- A new application would be necessary, so we have the opportunity to ensure the tree and soil structure are protected during such work. Ideally we would need to have details of the quantity, diameter (mm) and location of tree roots within the excavation run proposed for cutting. I could be available to supervise the root pruning soon after the excavation (hand digging only) is complete.

Mark Warwick

Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team