

Planning Officer: Mr F Gardner
Planning Application Ref: FP/68/20/T
Location: 33 Westmorland Drive, Felpham, PO22 8NA
Description of works: Fell 1no. oak tree
Reason given: Health and Safety (unstable from base)

Comments on Application:

Pedunculate oak / *Quercus robur* Approx. height: 9m Average spread: 4m Age class: Mature

- From a distance this tree appears to be in a fine physiological state. It has recently been the subject of extensive crown reduction pruning (April 2020), a reasonable and permitted response to the recent discovery of voids around the stem base, some evidence of associated decay and a pronounced lean so heavily weighted towards neighbouring residential property.
- It is a long-established tree, a major constituent of the native tree line growing along old field boundary, that is of significant landscape and amenity value - sadly captured between residential dwellings by recent development and so imposing over gardens.
- An application to fell such a valuable tree requires special consideration and despite being well-intentioned (risk management) should demand a high-level evidential test before gaining a recommendation for approval.
- During my own ground-level, non-invasive assessment of the tree, I observed no obvious sign of active, significant wood-decay fungi or recent ground disturbance to suggest a compromised root-plate. The surrounding reaction wood, ratio of apparently sound wood to open cavities in the main stem and healthy appearance of buttress roots *suggest* this tree is structurally sound at this time and does not present an unacceptable level of risk for its location. The significant lean of this tree is more likely to have arisen from the historic presence of a co-dominant stem or close companion tree; the loss of which has resulted in large decaying stem/buttress root fragments which observed for the first time understandably raise concern and warrant detailed assessment.
- Although the tree is likely to be structurally sound at this time, there is a potentially harmful disease affecting the bark on the underside of the main stem. Large areas are 'blown' and will eventually detach, with evidence of stem bleeding (black crust) between dead bark ribs. Anecdotal evidence suggests there may have been some upper crown decline on this same aspect, consistent with damaged vascular tissue.

Conclusions:

- Despite the necessary recent pruning to reduce its dimensions and thus reduce loadbearing on an imperfect stem/root-plate, this tree can continue to provide a visual amenity to the surrounding area and significant ecological and environmental value. This while being subject to repeat crown reduction work ideally on a 5-7year cycle and subject to the extent of growth since the last operation.
- The tree work proposed in the application has not been justified on arboricultural grounds. The tree is a significant feature in the local landscape and appears to be in adequately sound and healthy condition. The tree work proposed in the application would result in undue detriment to the local landscape and visual amenities of the locality.

Recommendations:

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

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team