

Planning Officer: Lynnyrd Wolfe

Planning Application Ref: M/91/19/T

Location: Streathleigh, 9 Ilex Way, Middleton on Sea, Bognor Regis, PO22 6PQ

Description of works: Crown reduction by approx. 4m and crown thin by 30% to 1no. *Acer* tree

Reasons Given: Concerns that tree is overgrown and becoming a nuisance

Comments on Application:

Silver maple / <i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Approx. height: 14m	Average spread: 7m	Age class: Mature
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- This is a relatively large tree of apparent good health and with an attractive crown profile. It is highly visible from numerous properties and to users of the public highway (footway and carriageway), as such it has public amenity value.
- There are a few locations on the main stem where recent bleeding has occurred; an ongoing concern but not obviously significant at this time.
- Historic pruning has involved major crown reduction work, evident from the abrupt change in stem taper around 6m height and across the limb framework. It appears to have responded with vigour, typical for a healthy example of its type and is now beyond the ideal timeframe for restoring height and spread to those dimensions.
- Repeat operations of the type (but not necessarily the extent) now being asked for by the applicant will be necessary throughout the remaining life-span of this tree, to achieve a reasonable degree of structural integrity appropriate for its location.

Conclusions:

- This tree requires careful management that respects its age and vulnerability to environmental changes and disease progression.
- The applicant proposes a potential 4metre *Crown reduction* of top height and lateral spread. If the full extent of meterage is applied on all aspects this would exceed the recommendations in British Standard 3998:2010 – Tree Work and would be likely to result in harm to the health and vitality of the tree with large pruning wounds being formed as well as undermining its visual amenity value and impact in the landscape.
- *Crown thinning* work has not been justified on arboricultural grounds. Such work rarely provides a benefit to the tree and often only a short-term increase in light levels. Furthermore, combining the two operations (and especially to the extent proposed) could drastically alter tree dynamics and natural defences against wind pressure. The sudden exposure of central crown areas to such winds can result in significant damage.
- Silver-leafed maples are prone to bleeding from pruning wounds, so the careful timing of significant pruning work is critical to their ongoing health and vitality.

Recommendations:

- As it stands, I recommend **REFUSAL** for this application.

Advisory:

- I would like to see the applicant submit a revised work specification such as detailed below, which would seem to address their concerns whilst preventing a diminution of the tree's landscape and public amenity value:

- Crown reduction by maximum of 2metres, leaving a minimum height of 11m and minimum spread of 5m on all aspects.

- Reduce or remove branches as necessary to achieve a maximum of 2m clearance from neighbour's garage, 1.5m from street lighting column/head.

- Crown lift (reduction or removal of low branches) to achieve a maximum of 5.5m overhead clearance above carriageway (road) and 3m on all other aspects.

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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 conditions:

Conditions to Be Applied to Approved Works: -

- 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
- 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.
- The long-term vitality of this tree is best respected when significant pruning work such as the *crown reduction* element of these proposals, is undertaken during either the summer (June to August) or mid-winter (late-December to early-February) periods. The work must only be undertaken during these periods.

Reasons: In the interests of the tree's 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

Mark Warwick
Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team