

Planning Officer: Amber Willard

Planning Application Ref: R/278/17/T

Location: 8 Elm Farm Cottages, Old Manor Road, Rustington

Description of works: Crown reduction to 1No. Apple tree and 1No. Pear tree by 1m. Crown reduction to 1No. Apple tree by 1m with all branches cut back to smaller branches no less than 1/3 the size and crown lift by 2m of branches under 3cm diameter.

Reasons Given: To ensure they remain healthy and productive trees.

Comments on Application:

REAR GARDEN

Domesticated apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>	Height: 3.25m	Ave. Spread: 1.5m	Age class: Early-mature
Pear	<i>Pyrus sp.</i>	Height: 5m	Ave. Spread: 2m	Age class: Early-mature

COMMUNAL GARDEN

Domesticated apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>	Height: 6m	Ave. Spread: 3m	Age class: Mature
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- Rear garden trees are of relatively low amenity value, being of small stature and only visible from neighbouring cul-de-sac and private rear gardens with some difficulty. Work proposed will only partially achieve the aims stated in the arboricultural statement (reasons given).
- Communal garden apple tree is a focal point for residents and provides some welcome aged-character within the context of recent development of the surrounding built environment. It has received substantive pruning in the past, primarily the removal of low limbs and branches – consequently the bulk of its foliage bearing crown exists at height. Work proposed will only partially achieve the aims stated in the arboricultural statement (reasons given).

Conclusions:

- The aforementioned rear garden trees are of limited value in the context of their surroundings and local established tree cover. While the work proposed is not an ideal outcome for them I see no reason to object to what is well-intentioned management that will not incur a notable loss of amenity.
- The applicant and arboriculturist have put forward a reasonable if not entirely ideal proposal for the management of these trees, however, some guidance on 'fruit tree management' will hopefully inform their decision making and assist with achieving their stated aims. This is especially relevant with regard to the mature communal garden tree.

Advisory:

- **Advice on pruning of apple and pear trees** (source: Royal Horticultural Society)

When to prune? - Prune your apple or pear tree in winter, when the leaves are off the tree

Five tips to pruning apples and pears

1. How much do I prune off?

Aim to take between 10-20% of the overall canopy off in any one winter. Work around the tree evenly and keep an eye on your pruning pile - if it's looking a little big, STOP - you can always go back next year and do some more.

A little word of warning: The more you prune, the stronger the regrowth (if the tree is healthy). If you have pruned too hard, your tree is likely to produce vigorous upright branches called watershoots. This isn't ideal as they crowd the crown. Watershoots growing in a convenient place – e.g. filling a gap – can be pruned by about third to encourage branching. Otherwise, remove watershoots from their point of origin.

2. What am I trying to achieve?

Your aim is to take out a bit of old wood each winter, to stimulate new. But the majority of the fruiting wood should be quite young - one to four years old, which is the wood that fruits best. Also aim to create an open centre to your tree. This allows more light into the canopy to ripen the shoots and fruit. Improved air movement discourages diseases.

3. Avoid a 'hair cut'

Try to stagger your pruning cuts throughout the canopy. That way, the regrowth too will be even. If you only prune the top branches, this is where all the new growth will shoot up from, giving you a thicket of young, non-fruiting shoots that you'll just end up pruning off every year in exasperation. This will also reduce fruiting of tip and partial tip-bearing such as 'Bramley' and 'Discovery' as most of the fruiting wood will be removed.

Think of it as a thinning out process, selectively removing or shortening a branch here and there as you move around the tree. Focus on areas where the growth seems more crowded.

4. Avoid very big and very little pruning cuts

Even with very old trees, resist the temptation to prune off large limbs. These are at risk of decay. As a general rule, think twice before cutting into branches that are more than 10-12cm (4-5in) in diameter. If you must prune that branch, trace it away from the tree to see if there is a narrower section, perhaps where it forks and prune there instead. Avoid leaving a stub.

Equally, this is not about fiddly pruning. Most of your pruning cuts will be to branches that are between 1-5cm (½-2in). A fully pruned tree might only need 10-20 pruning cuts in total.

5. Should I use a pruning paint?

No, there is no need to use a pruning paint for cuts on apple or pear trees. However, these are sometimes used on plums, cherries and other members of the Prunus family as these are particularly susceptible to disease through pruning cuts.

Recommendations:

- I recommend **CONSENT** is granted for this application subject to the following conditions:

Conditions To Be Applied to All 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.

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

Mark Warwick

Tree Officer / Parks and Greenspace Team

Figure 2 Positions of final cuts

