

Hi Justin,

I have read through the tree and case officer comments and these are my initial thoughts, which we would be happy to discuss in more detail should a meeting opportunity be presented:

I am assuming that the scrub within the area to be developed is considered to be of limited value so what we are talking about is the removal of 7 no. oak trees to make way for a commercial development offering significant employment and economic investment benefits.

I think we can all agree that these trees have some intrinsic value, more from an ecological point of view than a visual amenity value as they cannot be readily seen from a public place; indeed, the whole site is not presently publicly accessible. I believe the Tree Officer accepts this. Given that there is no permitted public access to the trees then there is no real likelihood of there being any if the status quo remains. In addition, the scrub is not likely to be cleared unless the land is developed so the trees will never be on public view and will remain more or less hidden.

As far as I understand it, this development cannot go ahead without the removal of these trees and as such the need for the development outweighs the initial loss of any amenity value that these trees currently have. Even if a development were to be designed around these trees this would reduce their ecological value as it would create islands around the trees that would break up the connection to the other green areas plus put development pressure on them.

In the grand scheme of things the loss of these trees would not, in my opinion, adversely affect public amenity to the area, provided that they are adequately replaced within a scheme of planting as we have suggested; this would include a landscape scheme to include large feature specimens in order to mitigate the loss.

I am of the professional opinion that the TPO system should not be used to block development; TPO's can be used to control things prior to a decision and any tree protected by one should be carefully considered. I understand that the overall scheme has, since its inception, significantly reduced in scale to accommodate and retain the best areas of species rich habitats along with the heritage assets associated with the former ROF installation. I believe that the applicants advisory tea has collectively proven that the trees have been carefully considered and that their retention is not achievable within the parameters of any viable scheme to bring forward this brownfield site for development.

In reality, the removal of the scrub would be more of a visual change than the removal of the 7 no. oaks. Looking at the planning records, there is no evidence for them having been subject of the TPO, other than to impede/frustrate the implementation of the 2001 permission. They would have visual amenity if they could be readily seen from a public place, but they don't and so the TPO itself is flawed.

The statement saying that all category A and B trees should be retained is highly questionable. This seems to be derived from the Authority taking on board a process from the British Standard to use as their policy. This is flawed because it doesn't take into consideration other issues. For example, you could have 6 trees on the boundary of a plot all category A or B and one tree within the centre of the plot categorised as A or B. Therefore, under this guidance they would not normally allow development. Also, the categorisation for development is different than what should be taken into account when making a TPO. All sites are different so in my view the policy is a starting point and other factors should be taken into account.

The impact on T16 & T17 is extremely minor and has been addressed by specifying special construction for surfacing.

Kind regards

Pete

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