

From: campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk [mailto:campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk]
Sent: 18 January 2018 10:27
To: Planning Enquiries
Cc: campaigning@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Subject: Woodland Trust comments on application P174745/O

Dear Mr Close,

Please find attached the Woodland Trust's comments on planning application P174745/O.

We hope you find our comments to be of use to you. Please don't hesitate to get in contact with the Trust if you have any questions or concerns regarding the comments we have provided.

Best regards,
Jack

Jack Taylor
Campaigner - Ancient Woodland

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Stand up for trees

The Woodland Trust is a charity registered in England (No. 294344) and in Scotland (No. SC038885).

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Registered in England No. 1982873.

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Herefordshire Council
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18th January 2018

Dear Mr Close,

Planning application: P174745/O

Proposal: Outline planning permission with all matters reserved (save access) for the erection of up to 185 residential dwellings (use class C3) with associated parking, access roads, public open space, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage, and associated works. | Land South of Leadon Way, Ledbury, Herefordshire

As the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, the Woodland Trust aims to protect native woods, tree and their wildlife for the future. Through the restoration and improvement of woodland biodiversity and increasing awareness and understanding of important woodland, these aims can be achieved. We own and manage over 1,000 sites covering around 24,000 hectares (59,000 acres) and have 500,000 members and supporters.

Ancient and veteran trees are a vital and treasured part of our natural and cultural landscape. Ancient and centuries old veteran trees in the UK represent a resource of great international significance. Veteran trees are the ancient trees of the future. It has been estimated that the UK may be home to around 80% of Europe's ancient trees. They harbour a unique array of wildlife and echo the lives of past generations of people in ways that no other part of our natural world is able.

The Trust is concerned about the impact of this application on a veteran oak tree (grid ref: SO711366). We are concerned that, in its current state, the development could result in the veteran tree being subject to potential harm and eventual removal.

National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118 states that "planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of **aged or veteran trees** found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss."

We understand that the proposed tree will be retained and afforded a buffer zone free from development in line with Natural England's recently updated Standing Advice. However we have concerns about the siting of the tree within/next to an area that will be used as a Local

Area of Play (LAP) and will presumably be heavily pedestrianised by local residents. Veteran trees are susceptible to change caused by construction/development and recreational development such as this could result in increased trampling and soil compaction of the tree's root systems. When coupled with their propensity to shed branches/limbs, veteran trees can often be seen as health and safety hazards to the public. While the scheme is not particularly concerning in its nature, the inclusion of this veteran oak within a designated play area gives rise to concern for its future retention and longevity.

Guidance in Lonsdale 'Ancient and other Veteran Trees: Further Guidance on Management' (2013) states in paragraph 3.5.2.1 "...avoid creating new or increased targets: as happens for example following the construction of facilities (e.g. car parks or buildings) which will bring people or property into a high risk zone. Not only does this create targets, it also harms trees and therefore makes them more hazardous".

While we're pleased to see the use of Natural England's latest guidance, we have a few recommendations for measures that can be implemented to protect the tree and prevent overzealous management reducing the value of the tree or resulting in its eventual loss. We suggest that fencing is incorporated around the tree and that grass is left long to discourage play under its canopy. Gated access could still be allowed but signage/interpretation boards could be implemented to highlight the importance of the tree, the value of veteran trees to British wildlife, and explain that fencing is in place to protect the tree.

Conclusion

This veteran oak is an important landscape feature as well as having important ecological value. The applicants have clearly sought to protect the tree and afford it a suitable buffer, however we do have concerns about the tree's long-term retention. We believe further measures should be considered to protect the tree and ensure its long-term retention

We hope that our comments are taken into consideration and that the above protective measures are considered as part of the proposal, particularly the implementation of fencing around the tree. Please do not hesitate to get in contact with the Trust if you wish to discuss the comments we have provided any further.

Yours sincerely

Brian Jones

Campaigning Team
(Woods Under Threat Detector Volunteer*)

*Woods Under Threat Detector Volunteers are a volunteer network which is managed by the Woodland Trust; please contact the Trust's campaigning team if you wish to discuss the contents of this letter or Woods Under Threat Detectors.