

362 Chessington Road, West Ewell, Surrey KT19 9EG

Application to carry out tree work on a protected tree - Felling of Oak T26 of Tree Preservation Order No. 317 located in the front garden.

Ward:	West Ewell Ward;
Head of Service/Contact:	Ruth Ormella, Head of Planning

1 Plans and Representations

- 1.1 The Council now holds this information electronically. Please click on the following link to access the plans and representations relating to this application via the Council's website, which is provided by way of background information to the report. Please note that the link is current at the time of publication, and will not be updated.

Link:

2 Summary

- 2.1 This report is for the Committee to consider whether to agree tree works to a tree protected by a tree preservation order.
- 2.2 The reason why this item is being referred to the Planning Committee for a decision is that the applicant and tree owner is a Borough Councillor.
- 2.3 On 26/07/2018 an application was received from Advance Tree Services Ltd for the felling of an Oak tree in the front garden of 362 Chessington Road as it is deemed that the Oak was a poor quality specimen and in a state of decline.
- 2.4 The Council's Tree Officer has appraised the proposal in regard to the reason given for the proposal its impact on biodiversity and the amenity of the area.
- 2.5 Officers conclude that the Oak is no longer a tree of attractive amenity because of its crown dieback and unbalanced form. It is unlikely that the tree can be improved by tree surgery and therefore it is considered prudent to remove the tree and replant a new tree in this front garden location.

3 Site description

- 3.1 362 Chessington Road is a detached, property built in 1967 which fronts onto Chessington Road. Chessington Road is a B classified road (B284) and is a busy thorough-fare between Chessington and Ewell. In the 1990s the section that passes Horton Park Golf Club was duelled and a new roundabout built just south of the property at the junction with Hook Road. Historically, Chessington Road was a country lane with rural qualities as it passed through farmland with tree lined hedgerows. Many of the Oaks from the former hedges still survive today and can be found in the central reservation and in some of the front gardens. These feature trees give a direct link to a more rural past. The Oak which is the subject of this application is estimated to be about 100 years old. It predates the property but is not as old or large as some of the more notable Oak trees that stand adjacent to Chessington Road which are likely to be older than 150 years old.
- 3.2 Almost the entire frontage to 362 is laid to hardstanding therefore the Oak is the only notable tree feature in the garden. Adjoining front gardens are also extensively covered in hard standing. The closest larger protected Oak trees are located in the front gardens of No 376 and 352A Chessington Road. No. 364 has a number of mature trees but these are located in the rear garden. On the central reservation opposite the address there are two mature Oaks in close proximity.
- 3.3 The subject Oak stands very close to the front boundary of the property. It is 70cm from the front 900mm tall boundary wall, 11m from the garage and 16m from the front of the house. The Oak has attained a height of 12.5m. The crown radius at each of the cardinal points of the compass measures as follows: North 1m, East 5m, South 6.3m and West 3.9m. Stem diameter at 1.5m above ground level measures 850mm

4 Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal is to fell the Oak tree to near ground level. The reason given for the tree work are brief but state it is because of decay in the top of the crown and in the base of the main stem.
- 4.2 The Councils Tree Officer could not find any sign of active decay in the base of the stem but certainly agrees there is advanced decay and dysfunction of the leading stem.

5 Comments from third parties

- 5.1 This application did not require any neighbour notification.
- 5.2 The tree work proposal has been online under the weekly lists of applications received. No objection to the proposal has been received.

6 Relevant planning history

Application number	Decision date	Application detail	Decision
	20/07/1999	Felling of 2 Oak trees & 1 Leaf Maple.	Refused
	21/08/2001	Surgery to 2 Oak trees and 1 Leaf Maple	Refused
	09/06/2003	Surgery to Oak	Permitted

7 Planning Policy

Core Strategy 2007

CS1 and CS6
CS3
CS5

Sustainability in development
Enhancing biodiversity
Conserving and enhancing the built environment

8 Planning considerations

Amenity and Biodiversity Considerations

- 8.1 Having a prominent location right on the property boundary at the point where Chessington Road arcs on the approach to the roundabout, the Oak is definitely a noticeable tree feature of the street scene. The Oak is apparent as both an individual but also as part of the wider tree-scape composition of the area. It would be a tree of high public amenity if it had better aesthetic virtues.
- 8.2 In its current state of decline Officers feel that the tree cannot be regarded as a specimen of beauty. Unfortunately over the years the tree has lost almost the entire branch structure on the north east side of the tree. In addition the tree has lost most of the central leader and is left with a decaying stub of 3m where there was once a functioning crown.
- 8.3 Officers can only speculate as to the cause of the extensive dieback which has eroded at least a third of the crown over the last couple of decades. Dieback of this magnitude is normally linked with root decay but in this case no basal decay is observed. The extensive hard surfacing around the tree may have created an unconducive root environment but it is noted the drive was designed to incorporate more permeable block paving on both garden sides next to the tree. Driveway herbicide leaching into the root zone can also lead to this kind of dieback but again there is no evidence of this.

- 8.4 Whatever has caused the decline it was first observed by the Council Tree Officer over a decade ago and has continued.
- 8.5 Removal of the existing dead and decayed wood, which is required for safety, will leave the tree looking further disfigured and create additional pruning wounds. The crown is severely unbalanced with all the remaining live lateral branches concentrated on just the south side of the tree. In time (if this area of the crown survives) the imbalance will continue to intensify. Branches will etiolate towards the light and this may lead to the risk of branch fracture over the highway.
- 8.6 Such a cycle of dieback and canopy unbalance is unsustainable.
- 8.7 The Oak may help to support wildlife but in this position it can only be in a very modest way.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 8.8 The proposed works to the tree will not result in the creation of new floorspace. The proposal is not liable for a charge under our Community Infrastructure Levy.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Council's Tree Officer has appraised the condition of the tree and agrees the tree is in an overall poor condition. Although the base appears sound with no apparent signs of basal decay pathogens, the tree has clearly suffered acute dieback in the past and is now disfigured and unattractive.
- 9.2 Retention of the tree is no longer considered sustainable. The position of the protected Oak tree is a prominent one. Despite all the hard surfacing there is a landscape strip on the north east boundary therefore to provide continuity of landscape amenity it is recommended that a replacement tree is planted.
- 9.3 There has been subsidence damage in the area in the past as a consequence the palette of trees to select for planting is limited. Trees specified for replacement have a low capacity for soil drying and are more drought tolerant.

10 Recommendation

- 10.1 Officer consider that the justification for felling are valid and the decision recommendation is to approve the felling subject to planting a replacement tree.

Conditions:

- (1) **All tree works shall be carried out to British Standard 3998 and as specified in the application details.**

Reason: To ensure that the tree receives the appropriate treatment and that the tree work is of a satisfactory standard to protect amenity in accordance with Policies CS1 and CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM5 and DM9 of the Development Management Policies 2015.

- (2) A replacement tree shall be planted in the front garden within 2m from the Oak to be felled during the dormant period (November-March) before 31/03/2019. The tree shall be 1 metre in height and selected from one of the following species:

Acer campestre – Field Maple

Carpinus betulus – Hornbeam

Koelreuteria paniculata – Pride of India

Sophora japonica – Pagoda tree

If any tree(s) planted in accordance with this condition are removed, die or in the opinion of the local planning authority become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of five years after planting, they shall be replaced in the next available planting season with a new tree(s) of the same size, species and number, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To maintain continuity of the tree resource for amenity in accordance with Policies CS1 and CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM5 and DM9 of the Development Management Policies 2015.

Informatives:

- (1) The applicant should inform the Council's Tree Officer (Tel. 01372 732000) at least three working days in advance of the intention to commence the works which have been agreed.
- (2) Please ensure the tree work contractors that work on this tree/s are advised this is an area of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) activity and therefore they should check the guidance on the Forestry Commission Website www.forestry.gov.uk/opm about the need to report suspected sightings and comply with the good practice guide for handling Oak material in areas affected by OPM.