21314 Proposed Extension to Biddulph Town Hall for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

Tree Report

10/00061/ BREG3 2 FEB 2010 - SM

The tree has been inspected and assessed with respect to a potential extension to the eastern side of the Town Hall building.

The tree, a Common Beech, is a semi-mature to early-mature tree, situated in a very narrow grassed strip along the eastern edge of the Town Hall car park, below a retaining wall to John Street. Approximate position is shown on the attached plan. Stem diameter is 300mm at 1.5m above ground level, and the overall height is approximately 10m.

Physiologically, the Beech appears to be in good condition, with no evidence of disease or decay noted and full bud coverage present throughout the crown.

Structurally, the Beech has a complex, multi-stemmed crown structure which has led to the presence of several crossing and rubbing or fused main scaffold limbs. There is a street light column within 3m of the tree's stem, and the crown on the north-east side of the tree encroaches onto the light.

The tree has some local visual significance, but not so much due to its own form as to the fact that there are very few trees in either the public or private domain visible in views along John Street.

Irrespective of development, the tree will shortly require remedial pruning work if retained in order to:

1. Address encroachment onto the street light. This would entail the removal or truncation of at least 2 of the scaffold limbs, forming the north-eastern side of the crown. Such removal would begin to create a visually unbalanced tree, reducing its already limited amenity value.

2. Remove crossing/rubbing/fused limbs which if otherwise left would form points of potential failure. Such pruning would of necessity remove further sections of the crown and again exacerbate the poor structural form and detract from amenity.

In view of the limited rooting zone and the need for remedial pruning work as described above which would degrade the already poor structural form of the tree, it is considered that under a BS 5837:2005 cascade assessment for tree quality, this Beech tree would be assigned to Category C (low quality and value) with a maximum useful contribution lifespan of between 10 and 20 years. BS 5837 (Trees in Relation to Construction Recommendations) advises that Category C trees should not normally be retained where they would impose a significant constraint on development.

The proposed extension to the Town Hall would directly require the removal of the Beech, as its stem position would be within the proposed extension footprint. Given the BS 5837 assessment, it is considered that it would not be appropriate for this tree to constrain such development.