Burnett, James

From: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: FW: SMD/2016/0608 - Land adjacent to 3 Bridgend, Leek

From: Massey, Steven
Sent: Thursday, November 17, 2016 12:45 PM
To: Johnston, Christopher
Cc: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: SMD/2016/0608 - Land adjacent to 3 Bridgend, Leek

Chris,

I have the following comments on this application:

The application form incorrectly states at Section 15 that there are no trees on site. Whilst there has evidently been some recent clearance of smaller trees and shrubs along (within) the eastern boundary of the site, there remains a large mature Beech tree, also at this boundary and in fact leaning onto and partially displacing the old stone boundary wall. There is no tree report accompanying the application.

The Root Protection Area (RPA) derived from British Standard 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations* would have a radius from the tree stem of approximately 10m, extending over half-way across the site and thus the proposed development would encroach significantly into the RPA and its construction would be very likely to cause substantial damage to the roots. Normally in the case of such a substantial and prominent tree this would lead to a firm objection to such a proposal.

However, in this case there are several issues relating to the Beech tree which must lead to the conclusion that it would not be appropriate to object to or refuse this application on the grounds of impact on and/or probable loss of this tree:

- The tree leans at a significant angle (apparently a long term growth pattern rather than recent significant movement) against onto and across the eastern boundary wall and over the adjacent public footpath.
- As a result, the crown of the tree is significantly unbalanced with respect to its stem base position.
- There is a large decaying cavity in the main stem, approximately 3.5m above ground level, together with signs of an longitudinal in-grown rib/crack above the cavity. These defects, in combination with the stem lean and imbalanced crown, pose an increased risk of stem failure. It is noted that the tree has recently had pruning operations carried out (to a good standard) and whilst these are likely to have been in conjunction with the removal of smaller trees and shrubs to "clear the way" prior to submission of the application, it also appears to be a justified approach to reduce crown weight in response to the weaknesses and imbalance noted above.
- There are signs of possible Phythopthora infection (or otherwise general stress symptom) shown by dark stem exudations, together with areas of dead/dying bark on the stem which may be a result of the exudations or may follow previous scale insect infestation. These patches of dead bark, together with on-going bark/outer stem wood damage arising from tree growth against the top of the boundary wall, will expose the underlying wood to decay.
- The crown branching pattern is poorly formed, with weak unions between main limbs and stem. Again, the recent crown lifting/thinning/reduction pruning has quite likely been carried out to reduce the likelihood of main union failures.

Whilst the tree is prominent and significant, and has clearly managed to grow to substantial maturity despite these long term/on-going issues, it is considered that due to these same issues this tree should not reasonably constitute an obstacle or constraint to proposed development. I therefore have no objection to this application on the grounds

of impact on or potential loss of the Beech tree. In the circumstances, it would serve no useful purpose to impose tree protection conditions in the event that planning permission is granted.

Steve Massey

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