Report on TPO request for 41 Mill Rd, Lancing

My clients (Dr and Mrs Mortimer) asked me to prepare a planning application for some work to the holm oak trees in the front garden of their property.

The concern is based on the size the group of holm oaks has attained, the impact they are now having and the impact they may eventually have if no maintenance is carried out.

The group consists of six trees which form an almost continuous canopy. This is undoubtedly a significant visual amenity to the area. However, they have grown considerably since the TPO was first issued and cut out a considerable amount of light to the house. They also provide a home to a large number of pigeons which has caused some concern to my clients. A report by D Sankey Pest Control Services in February 2012 advised that the pigeon nuisance could only be fully prevented by removal and replacement of the trees.

A soil survey was carried out last year by Terratec Services Ltd, which raised some concern over the proximity of some of the trees to surrounding buildings and the possibility that they could lead to structural damage.

An arboricultural report prepared by Phillip J Ellis at the request of Adur District Council recommended the removal and replacement of four of the trees and a reduction in the height and spread of the two others.

On the basis of the conclusions of these surveys my clients made an initial application to the council in 2012 to remove and replace all of the trees. This was rejected. The Mortimers subsequently employed me to carry out work on non-TPO protected trees and asked if I could suggest a possible compromise to alleviate the increasing problems caused by the trees.

From a purely arboricultural perspective I would make the following points concerning the reasons for the proposed works.

The short muti-stemmed holm oak (T11, felling requested).This tree is close to the property, it has been poorly pollarded at some point and has developed into a very poor specimen. It is not visible from the road and, given the cluttered nature of the canopy (too many small branches and a loss of appropriate structure) and the way its position is dominated by healthier trees it is not likely to thrive.

The taller holm oak, closest to the front door of the property (T13, felling requested). The overall condition of the tree is not particularly bad. However, it has started to grow towards the property as it is trying to compete for light against the other trees. The position of this tree has led to the upper branches growing Westwards away from the trees along the frontage on Mill Rd. The canopy of this tree is hidden by the trees on the Mill Rd boundary.

From my client's point of view these two trees are closest to the house and cause a significant loss of light (as well as other concerns raised by the soil survey). Viewed from outside the property the profile of the group of trees would not be altered by their removal but there would be a large gain in light to the property and a significant reduction in any potential root-related problems. It would also reduce the availability of pigeon roosts nearest to the house.

My client has lived at the property for some 17 years and in that time has seen these trees grow significantly. The retention of the other holm oaks in the group, which would benefit from a small amount of thinning and height reduction, should retain and improve the visual amenity from outside the property whilst allowing a great deal more light to the front windows and the garden.

The proposal includes the planting of a replacement tree closer to the group, using something like Dawyck beech which would thrive under the retained group of trees whilst adding some variety and wildlife habitat.

Conclusion
The proposed felling would have no impact on the shape of the group of trees.

There would be a significant improvement to the light in the front garden and to the house while reducing any other nuisance value from the trees.

The proposed replacement tree would enrich the group in terms of variety and wildlife habitat.

The other proposed work is all maintenance work to keep the trees healthy and minimise potential nuisance to neighbours and highway users.