expires 19 10 09

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: ADC/0350/09 Recommendation - Permit

Site: **Southwick Community Centre 24 Southwick Street Southwick Brighton**

Proposal: **Crown lift 2 no. Ash, Horse Chestnut and Sycamore and fell Elder and Sycamore (6 weeks prior notice of works to trees in Conservation Area) on grass verge to rear of Community Centre fronting Glebe Close**

The Application

A section 211 notification has been submitted, giving six weeks prior notice of the intention to crown lift four trees (2 no. Ash, one Horse Chestnut and one Sycamore) and fell two trees (one Elder and one Sycamore) on a grassed verge to the rear of Southwick Community Centre, at the west end of Glebe Close.

The main front section of the Community Building is grade II listed and fronts onto Southwick Street, whilst the rest of the buildings are not specifically listed they do have an impact on its setting. The buildings to the east of the main community centre are 'The Barn' theatre and to its north a flexible community room and actors changing facility. These buildings make up the boundary with the grassed verge to the east.

The six trees are located in two separate areas. The larger of the two Ash, and Sycamore, and the Horse Chestnut are located to the south of the rear vehicular access to the Community Centre, and the other Ash, Sycamore and Elder to the north of the access, with the Sycamore and Elder being directly adjacent to the Barn Theatre building.

To the east within the central island of Glebe Close are a number of very mature trees which make up Tree Preservation Order 4/76(SW). The TPO is made up of three groups of trees and two individual Elm trees. Group 1 is located between No's 15 & 14 on the far eastern side of Glebe Close, as is the first of the two individual Elm trees (T1); Group 2 & 3 occupy the main central island of the close. The final Elm was originally located on the grass verge to the west of the central island but it appears to have been removed some time in the past.

Consultations and Representations

Adur District Council: The Parks Officer states that the trees vary in age from 3 – 40+ years old. With the Elder (3-5yrs) and smaller Sycamore (10yrs) being the youngest. He states that the two trees requested to be felled are of

no consequence in terms of the affect on the appearance of the area, whilst the other four trees (to be crown lifted) are more important. He recommends that the works be permitted.

Third Parties: There has been one letter of objection to the proposals. The owner of 18 Glebe Close feels that the trees should already be covered by such a preservation order, and if not, then they most definitely should be. They feel there is no way the trees can possibly be allowed to be destroyed, as they are mature, beautiful trees, in a healthy condition and must be protected.

The applicant (West Sussex County Council) has responded to the objection by stating that both the Elder and Sycamore are 'self-sown' and growing up the wall of the building. They are not aware of any damage to date, but damage to the building is probable at some point in the future, and felling at this stage will prevent this from happening. Due to their proximity to the building they are inappropriate for their location and do not have the potential to become mature specimens.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AB23
Design Bulletin No.1 'Trees and Landscaping' (ADC 1996)
'Tree Preservation Orders: A Guide to the Law and Good Practice' (DETR 2000)

Planning Assessment

Policies

Local Plan policy AB23 states that Tree Preservation Orders will be made to safeguard existing trees in the District where their loss would have an adverse effect on the existing and future environment and its enjoyment by the public.

Affect of loss of trees on conservation area.
The trees are clearly grouped in two separate areas of the grassed verge, with the three more mature specimens being the Ash (40+ years), Horse Chestnut (30 years) and Sycamore (40+ years) located to the south of the rear access to the Community Centre. These three trees are proposed to be crown lifted by up to 4m with the removal of dead wood. The Ash is proposed to be thinned so it would not be so close to the existing buildings.

The Ash and Horse Chestnut are large trees with their lower limbs being as low as 0.5m from the ground in some cases. The Elm tree has its lower limbs at a higher level, approximately 1.8m from ground level. The proposed works would increase the height of these lower limbs and ensure that they would be

out of the way of members of the public who use the footpath or who walk on the grass verge. The removal of deadwood would clearly improve the safety of passers bye or anyone using the bench located under the Elm tree.

The three trees located to the north of the rear access (No's T4, T5 & T6) are less mature. They are the Sycamore (10 years), Elder (3-5 years) and the second Ash (15 – 20 years). The proposed work would consist of a similar crown lifting procedure as to 4m for the Ash tree, again raising the low lying limbs out of the way of passers by.

The two trees to be removed are located closest to the Barn Theatre. The Sycamore is growing directly adjacent to the east flank wall and the Elder approximately 1m away. It is not considered that the Elder is worthy of retention, given that it is a multi-stemmed tree likely to have been self seeded, and its appearance is not particularly attractive in comparison to the adjacent larger specimens.

The loss of the Sycamore (T4) is more of a concern given the overall height and the contribution that it does have to this part of the grass verge. The tree itself is again multi-stemmed and the Parks Officer feels that attempts have been made in the past to remove the tree however it has re-grown in its current form.

The proximity of the Sycamore to the wall of the Barn Theatre is also a consideration. The wall is a flint structure of some height, and contributes to the appearance of the Community Building and surrounding conservation area. Should the tree be allowed to continue to grow in its current location damage to the building is likely.

In conclusion it is considered that the Elder (T5) and smaller Sycamore (T4) trees are inappropriate for their location, and that as a result they are not worthy of a TPO, and that the proposed works to fell them should be permitted.

Recommendation

Permit works and do not make TPO.

Case Office [redacted] PB 2/10
Date: 02/02/09

Planning Services Manager:
Date:

Development Control Committee Chairman:
Date: