

Application to Fell Sweet Chestnut T73 at 73 Lakewood Road

Summary

Following several years of monitoring, and after taking advice from a qualified arborist, we are reluctantly requesting permission to fell the protected sweet chestnut at 73 Lakewood Road. The tree is in poor and declining health and we wish to mitigate the risk of it falling and causing death or injury to people, or damage to property. The tree is located within falling distance of both the pedestrian footpath and road outside (Lakewood Road), as well as the bungalow and garage on site.

Background

For the last five years we have been monitoring the health of this tree, as it generally comes into bud later than the other surrounding mature trees and as the upper crown has shown decreased vigour in its growth. About four years ago there was significant dead wood in the tree, which we had removed. There is now a very large amount of further dead wood in the tree. A substantial amount of dead wood regularly falls from the tree, compared with the other mature trees in the garden. In Autumn 2020 we observed fungal growth on the bark at the base of the trunk. The same kind of fungal growth re-appeared in October 2021 all around the trunk of the tree.

Arboricultural Advice

We invited a qualified arborist, Jonathan Fulcher DipArb FARborA, of Alderwood Consulting, to examine the tree to advise us on the health of the specimen. Jonathan examined the tree on 20 Apr 2021.

Jonathan confirmed that the sweet chestnut is not in good health and advised that this situation will not improve. Jonathan advised that, given its poor and declining health, it is reasonable to make a planning application to request that the tree be felled. Jonathan mentioned the following key findings following his examination:

- Fungal growth at the base of the tree supports our concerns about the health of the tree, possibly indicating historical long-term damage to the roots.
- Between half and a third of the circumference at the base of the trunk has dead wood, loose bark or sounds hollow (when struck with a rubber hammer).
- Even though the tree had all dead wood removed four years ago, in his view there is now a significant amount of dead and decaying wood in the tree. About a third of the crown (by volume) now consists of dead wood.
- Jonathan was able to remove a significant amount of loose bark from around the base of the tree (with his bare hands), revealing decay underneath. See photograph (on next page) taken immediately after his examination on 20 Apr 2021. Jonathan advised that one should not be able to do this on a healthy tree.
- Jonathan advised that we should take fresh photographs of the tree once it comes into bud in the Spring following his inspection. The photograph taken on 23 Jun 2021 confirmed a further deterioration in vigour in Spring and an increase in the amount of dead wood in the tree.

Tree Replacement

If our application to fell the sweet chestnut tree is approved, we do not wish to replant with another specimen, for the following reasons.

Our plot is one of the smaller ones in the road, yet already has a significant number of large, mature, trees, limiting the space for a replacement. A planning condition on the new build already requires 4 new trees be planted, so this would add to that. Naturally, the existing trees take a significant amount of effort to manage, particularly when the leaves fall. While we are happy to look after the trees, we do have a profoundly and multiply disabled daughter, who has an incurable life limiting genetic condition. As a result she needs one to one care, 24 hours a day, which limits the time we have to look after the trees in our garden. Consequently we do not wish to replant with another tree if this application is approved.



Trunk of Sweet Chestnut following removal of loose bark and decay underneath on 20 Apr 2021



Sweet Chestnut Tree and fungal growth on 20 Oct 2021



Sweet Chestnut Tree on 23 Jun 2021 showing decreased vigour and an increased proportion of dead wood