

Mr A Burgess
4 Linden Close
Waltham Chase
SOUTHAMPTON SO32 2TZ

15th December 2022

Your ref: **Planning Application /F/22/94046**

Our Ref: **22113-Let1-151222-JB**

Dear Mr Burgess

Re: Tree issues at 49 Bishopstoke Road, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh SO50 6BF

I write with observations and clarifications on the comments by the Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) arboriculturist on the trees at the above location forwarded by EBC in an email dated 12th December.

Our primary concern sits with the comments by the EBC arboriculturist relating to T13, which are not aligned to our assessment. This could be because the arboriculturist was not able to properly see the cause of our concern during the site visit because it is at height and obscured from most angles, and so it could have easily been missed in poor light, or if it had not been viewed from the correct angle. Indeed, the light was good during our visit in July, which provided an opportunity to see the full scale of the fungal infection on the trunk of this tree, and allowed us to take multiple photographs as evidence of the severe decay in its trunk, and the severe structural problems in some of the other trees.

In that context, relating to tree T13, I provide the photographic evidence that we collected on site as Figures 1 and 2 below, showing the cause of our concern relating to the safety of the tree. These images show a large cluster of multiple *Ganoderma* sp fungal brackets on the trunk of T13, which we assess are indications of severe decay and structural instability. This is because our observations shown in the photographs clearly show a large (>30 cm across) active new bracket on the lower side of the cluster, evidenced by its white underside, confirming that it is alive and growing, but also multiple older inactive brackets above it, with some smaller active brackets growing out of those. These old brackets prove that the decay has been present for many years, and the observation that the newest lower bracket is larger than all the others is clear evidence that the decay is progressing and severe. Indeed, when one understands that these brackets are grown from wood digested from within the trunk, then it becomes obvious that there must be extensive and severe decay inside the trunk at this point.

Our assessment of the size of the brackets and the obvious extent of the internal decay is that it cannot be anything other than a severe and deteriorating hazard, creating a reasonably foreseeable risk of harm to the adjacent residential property. As such, it is a high risk because of the adjacent residential use, and clearly falls within the dangerous exception set out in the legislation. Furthermore, this is not a marginal situation where there can be any doubt about the extent of the defect, the existing evidence is compelling and makes it obvious, and it would be both unnecessary, and grossly disproportionate to require further investigation to prove what is obvious. In that context, our advice

is that the remedial work that we propose is both reasonable, and proportionate, and is enough to allow the tree to be retained into the future because it has such a lot of internal crown foliage. Furthermore, our view is that it can be carried out on the ground that it is an exception to the legislation without further recourse to the LPA. However, we would prefer to move forward constructively and in agreement with EBC, which is why we set out our proposed management as part of the planning submission.



Figure 1: View of the multiple *Ganoderma* sp fungal brackets on the trunk of T13, showing the newest, largest, and most active bracket with the white underside on the lower side of the cluster (yellow arrow), and the older browner decaying brackets on the upper side of the cluster (white arrow).



Figure 2: More distant view of the multiple *Ganoderma* sp fungal brackets on the trunk of T13 (yellow circle) and the current relationship with the adjacent residential use.

In the context of the severity of the decay, we have advised a significant crown reduction, based on the tree having a lot of internal crown foliage, which would provide it with the ability to survive into the longer term, and avoid removing it now. Of course, this is not an ideal solution, but it is a recognised, essential, and viable alternative to premature removal, and becomes necessary to all trees

as they mature and develop structural defects. This is normal tree management, necessary because responsibly managing risk is always more important than preserving amenity at the expense of safety.

One of the obvious consequences of significantly reducing the crown size is that the volume of roots needed to support the tree is also reduced. This means that the nominal root protection area set out as a starting point in BS 5837 can be reasonably reduced, which is what has been applied to our assessment of the planning proposal.

We also identify severe defects in several of the other trees in this row, and provide an example in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3: An example of other severe defects in the trees within this broad group, that prevents them being retained without significant management works.



As we set out in our report and schedule, there are multiple defects in all these trees, which are so severe that there can be no realistic expectation that they can be retained providing their current visual amenity, and still meet responsible safety management requirements. Indeed, as Figure 3 shows, there is no need to be a tree expert or to pay for sophisticated investigations to appreciate the severity of these defects, it is obvious. Of course, it is unfortunate that such a visually important row of trees is going to have reduced amenity, but the reality is that keeping them as they are and subjecting the adjacent occupants and users of the river to excessive risk is just not acceptable for the duty holders who bear the responsibility for safety. These trees are going to have to be managed, and this planning submission is an opportunity for EBC to agree to responsible works, and secure appropriate replacements for the existing trees once they are gone.

I feel that this sets out our position clearly in response to the comments from EBC, but we will be happy to provide further information and clarification, if that will assist.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Barrell **BSc FArborA DipArb CBiol FICFor FRICS**