

FORMAL OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED FELLING OF SILVER BIRCH (T1)

Planning Application: T/26/101903

Site: 30 Randall Road, Chandlers Ford SO53 5AL

Tree: Silver Birch (T1)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed felling of the Silver Birch identified as T1.

The proposal states that the tree is to be felled to ground level because of its alleged "poor physiological state", which is said to have been occurring over the last four years. It further states that there is "no reasonable reduction of the crown possible that would prolong the life of the tree as tree is unlikely to respond well to pruning", with a replacement Birch proposed.

I strongly object to the removal of what appears to be a healthy and established tree, particularly when **no arboricultural report or other professional evidence has been provided with the proposal to substantiate the claims being made about its condition.**

Lack of supporting arboricultural evidence

The statement that T1 is in a "poor physiological state" is not, by itself, sufficient justification for the irreversible removal of an established tree.

No detailed arboricultural report appears to have been provided demonstrating the tree's alleged decline, identifying a specific disease, structural defect or other condition, or explaining why the tree presents an unacceptable risk.

If the applicant considers the tree to be in such poor condition that felling is necessary, there should be clear professional evidence to support that conclusion.

I therefore ask the Council to require the applicant to provide an appropriately qualified arboricultural assessment addressing, at a minimum:

- The specific physiological condition or defect affecting T1.
- The evidence supporting the assertion that its condition has been declining for four years.
- Whether any disease, pest, drought stress or other environmental factor has been identified.
- The current structural condition and stability of the tree.
- Any actual or foreseeable safety risk posed by the tree.
- The estimated remaining useful life of the tree.
- Why reasonable remedial or management measures would not allow the tree to be retained.
- Why felling is considered necessary rather than monitoring and appropriate arboricultural management.

Without such evidence, it is difficult to see how the proposed felling can be regarded as properly justified.

Recent weather conditions should also be taken into account

The assessment of the tree's physiological condition should take account of the environmental conditions under which the tree has recently been observed.

The recent period of unusually hot and dry weather may cause temporary physiological stress in trees, including changes to foliage, canopy density and general appearance. Such conditions should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of permanent decline or an irreversible deterioration in the health of the tree.

The tree should therefore be assessed over an appropriate period and in the context of prevailing environmental conditions rather than relying upon its appearance during a period of significant heat and drought stress.

This is particularly relevant because **other Birch specimens along the same road are also showing similar characteristics.**

That observation raises an important question as to whether what is being attributed specifically to T1 may instead be associated with wider environmental conditions, soil conditions, drought stress or another factor affecting Birch trees in the locality.

It would therefore be inappropriate to conclude that T1 is individually suffering from an irreversible condition without first establishing why other nearby trees are exhibiting similar symptoms.

Alternatives to complete removal have not been adequately demonstrated

The application states that there is "no reasonable reduction of the crown possible" and that the tree is unlikely to respond well to pruning. At least give this a go before felling the tree please.

However, no evidence has been provided to demonstrate why this is the case.

If there are genuine concerns about the tree's condition, reasonable alternatives should be properly considered, including appropriate monitoring, selective pruning, removal of deadwood or other proportionate arboricultural management where professionally appropriate.

Felling should be a **last resort**, particularly where the evidence necessary to establish that the tree cannot reasonably be retained has not been provided.

The Council should not accept an unsupported assertion that the tree will not respond well to pruning as sufficient justification for its complete removal.

The loss of an established tree cannot be adequately compensated for by planting a small sapling

The proposal to "replant with another Birch" does not adequately compensate for the loss of T1.

An established tree provides an immediate contribution to the streetscape, local character, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, air quality, shade and visual amenity.

A newly planted sapling cannot provide anything approaching the same benefits for many years.

If, despite the above concerns, the Council ultimately considers that removal is justified, any replacement planting condition should be sufficiently robust to ensure that the replacement is a **well-established, suitably sized specimen**, rather than a small sapling that would be barely visible from the street and would take many years before making a meaningful contribution to the local environment and streetscape.

The replacement should also be of an appropriate species, size, quality and location, with suitable provision for its establishment and long-term survival.

The principle should be that the loss of an established tree is properly mitigated, rather than simply satisfying a requirement to put another tree in the ground.

Ecological and visual amenity

T1 is an existing established tree and therefore has an ecological and amenity value that has already developed over many years.

Its removal would result in an immediate loss of canopy, habitat and visual amenity. This loss cannot be regarded as equivalent to the future benefits of planting a young replacement tree.

The Council should therefore consider the existing tree's contribution to the character of the area and the wider streetscape, as well as its environmental and ecological value.

Request for independent assessment

Given the lack of supporting arboricultural evidence, I respectfully request that the Council does not determine the necessity of felling T1 solely on the basis of the assertions contained within the application.

If the applicant maintains that T1 is in an irreversible state of decline, I request that an appropriately qualified and **independent arboricultural assessment** is obtained or required before any decision is made to permit its removal.

Such an assessment should consider the tree in the context of the current weather conditions, the condition of other Birch trees along the road, and the possibility that the observed symptoms may have an environmental or seasonal explanation rather than representing irreversible decline of T1.

Conclusion

I strongly object to the proposed felling of Silver Birch T1.

At present, the application does not appear to provide sufficient professional evidence to demonstrate that this established tree is dangerous, irreversibly declining or incapable of being retained through reasonable arboricultural management.

The absence of an arboricultural report is particularly concerning given that felling is irreversible and the justification provided relies upon claims regarding the tree's physiological condition and its response to pruning.

I therefore respectfully request that the proposed felling be **refused** unless and until compelling, independently verifiable arboricultural evidence demonstrates that the tree cannot reasonably be retained.

If there are genuine concerns regarding its condition, I would support appropriate professional inspection, monitoring and proportionate management rather than immediate removal.

Should felling nevertheless be permitted, I request that a condition be imposed requiring the replacement tree to be a **substantial, well-grown and appropriately sized specimen**, rather than a small sapling, together with appropriate requirements for its establishment and long-term protection.

An established tree should not be removed simply because a replacement can technically be planted. The Council should require clear evidence that removal is necessary, proportionate and justified.

I respectfully ask the Council to **refuse permission for the felling of T1 and require its retention wherever reasonably possible.**

Kind Regards,

Stephen