

Forest Heath District Council

**DEVELOPMENT
CONTROL COMMITTEE**

1 JULY 2015

DEV/FH/15/025

Report of the Head of Planning and Growth

**PLANNING APPLICATION DC/15/0749/TPO (TREE PRESERVATION ORDER) -
ASPAL CLOSE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE, ST JOHNS STREET, BECK ROW**

Synopsis:

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and associated matters.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

CONTACT OFFICER

Case Officer: Matthew Gee
Tel. No: 01638 719792

Committee Report

Date

Registered: 23/04/2015

Expiry Date: 18/06/2015

Case

Officer:

Matthew Gee

Recommendation:

Approve with Conditions

Parish:

Beck Row

Ward:

Eriswell and the Rows

Proposal:

TPO/1963/048 - Tree Preservation Order - Works to 27 Oak (Quercus robur) trees

Site:

Planning Application DC/15/0749/TPO – Aspal Close Local Nature Reserve, St Johns Street, Beck Row

Applicant:

Mr Matt Vernon, Forest Heath District Council

Background:

This application is referred to the Development Control Committee because it has been submitted by Forest Heath District Council.

Proposal:

1. Permission is sought for works to 27 Oak (Quercus robur) trees. The works involve crown lifts to 15 trees, Lateral reductions to 6, Limb work to 4, 1 reduction in height leaving as dead wood, and 1 pole.
2. The works form part of a 50 year management plan produced for each ancient tree on the site based on specialised veteran tree management practices. Works are primarily for stabilising the trees at risk of limb failure and promoting positive responses in vitality.

Application Supporting Material:

3. Information submitted with the application as follows:
 - TPO Plan
 - Schedule of Works
 - Ancient Pollard Management Plan Aspal Close LNR 2011

Site Details:

4. Aspal Close Local Nature Reserve is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, located on the western edge of the Breckland area. The site was purchased in 1982 by the District Council as a public open space and is

well used locally. Historical records for the site date back some 800 years. The site covers approximately 19 hectares and is a wood pasture with 183 oak pollards.

Planning History:

5. F/2011/0666/TPO - Tree 289 - reduce upper crown by 2m, Tree 299 - reduce eastern pollard and southern part of crown by 2m and northern part by 1.5m, Tree 301 – reduce extended lateral limb over path by 4m and westerly upright limb by 1.5m. Remove minor trees or shrubs and pollard various young Oaks around dominant specimens in zones 1-6 – Approved by committee with conditions.
6. F/2012/0712/TPO - Veteran Oak Trees: Tree 323 - Reduce upper crown by 1.5m. Tree 234 - Reduce southerly limb by 15%. Reduce crown of Oak tree to NW of tree 241 by 30%. Tree 106 - Reduce limb growing into tree 773 by 3m. Tree 141 - Reduce crown to south and east by 2m. Tree 210 - Reduce upper crown by 2m. Tree 213 - Reduce whole upper crown by 2.5m and same for horizontal limbs. Remove Oak tree to NE of tree 242. Tree 289 - Reduce upper crown by 2m – Approved by committee with conditions.

Consultations:

7. None consulted.

Representations:

8. Parish Council: Support the application
9. 4 Pine Ridge, Beck Row: Letter of Objection –
 - Only one site notification around the site
 - Issues with management plan, believes it isn't doing the younger trees or the rest of the close any good. Also believes that there has been a reduction in wildlife and plants on the site
10. Tree Officer: In the context of the most recent survey and stated management objectives the proposals are not unreasonable and are generally supported.

Policy: The following have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

11. Forest Heath Core Strategy (2010):
 - Policy CS3 Landscape Character and the Historic Environment

Other Planning Policy:

12. National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Officer Comment:

13. The site in question has a wide range of magnificent trees, many of which could be more than 500 years old. The majority of the ancient oaks have previously been subject to sensitive pollarding which has allowed the trunk to grow while removing weight from the upper limbs, leading to a long life-span based on a reduced risk of failure in the trunk.
14. Management of veteran trees is a specialist field of arboriculture which has been developed mainly at Hatfield Forest. There are many differences in working with old trees in comparison with younger trees. The site at Aspal Close contains a concentration of veteran oak trees significant in the Suffolk context. The importance of the site is reflected in the need for a 50 year management plan which is aimed at the long term sustainable management of the trees and the site. Early work on old veteran pollards at Hatfield Forest found that re-pollarding ancient trees which had not been pollarded for many years often led to loss after a number of years. In contrast leaving trees without any intervention can lead to catastrophic failure of large parts of the tree. Techniques have been developed therefore that aim at small amounts of work that focus on small and progressive steps or cyclical management that these ancient trees can tolerate without the collapse or demise of the tree.
15. The proposal to undertake the works is supported. The techniques promoted have been developed specifically for veteran oak trees and are aimed at encouraging new growth in the trees without allowing the tree to grow to a point where branches become extended and heavy and at risk of failure. The proposed works to the 27 trees seek to continue with the success management of the site over the past few years, and are in accordance with the recommendations set out in the associated Tree Management Plan. The trees for which the proposed works relate are spread throughout the site and have been identified as being of a suitable health and vitality to cope with small scale reduction without causing a significantly adverse impact on the long-term health of the trees. The proposed works are to further those that were undertaken in accordance with F/2011/0666/TPO & F/2012/0712/TPO, both of which were approved.
16. The works are to be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations in *Ancient Pollard Management Plan Aspal Close LNR (2011)*. This details works phased over the previous and coming years to reduce shock to the trees from sudden fluctuations in conditions.

Conclusion:

17. In conclusion, the principle and detail of the proposed works is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with relevant development plan policies.

Recommendation:

18. It is recommended that the works proposed to the protected trees be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The works which are the subject of this consent shall be carried out within two years
2. The authorised works shall be carried out to the latest arboricultural standards and in line with the Pro Natura 'Ancient Pollard Management Plan' (2011).

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online:

<https://planning.westsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=NB2Y2H2PDLQH00>

Alternatively, hard copies are also available to view at Planning, Planning and Regulatory Services, Forest Heath District Council, District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, Suffolk IP28 7EY