Arboricultural Consultation Response

Application No: **25/00132/HHFUL & 25/00133/LBC**	**Location:** Holme Cottage, Huntingdon Road, Wyton
Case Officer: AM	**Proposals:** Large extension to rear of property

Observations:

An application has been submitted to construct a large extension to the rear of the property detailed above. It is located within the Conservation Area and there are Tree Preservation Orders in place on some of the trees on site due to the prominent position of the property.

At the rear of the property is a very large mature Horsechestnut tree, although not currently protected with TPO, it is worthy of one and should be retained during any development. I have been asked to provide additional comments on the application.







The tree is one of the most prominent visual features in the village. It can be seen from all directions, and will have been a significant contributor to the Arboricultural Landscape for many decades.



Tree Classification

The tree should be classified as A or Veteran. The definition of a Veteran tree under the BNG Law is –

A veteran tree may not be very old, but it has significant decay features, such as branch death and hollowing. These features contribute to its exceptional biodiversity, cultural and heritage value.

All ancient trees are veteran trees, but not all veteran trees are ancient. The age at which a tree becomes ancient or veteran will vary by species because each species ages at a different rate.

Veteran Trees – A Guide to Good Practise defines a Veteran Tree as –

2.1.1 Characteristic features found on veteran trees Listed below are characteristic features of veteran trees (see also Figure 3).The more the tree has, the stronger the indication that it is a veteran:

- *Girth large for the tree species concerned*
- *Major trunk cavities or progressive hollowing*
- *Naturally forming water pools*
- *Decay holes*
- *Physical damage to trunk*
- *Bark loss*
- *Large quantity of dead wood in the canopy*
- *Sap runs*
- *Crevices in the bark, under branches or on the root plate sheltered from direct rainfall*
- *Fungal fruiting bodies (e.g. from heart rotting species)*
- *High number of interdependent wildlife species*
- *Epiphytic plants*
- *An ‘old’look*
- *High aesthetic interest*

The Horsechestnut tree in question displays each of the above highlighted features and so would be classified as a Veteran tree under BNG, the NPPF and all supporting legislation.



Veteran Features

From NPPF regarding Veteran Trees –

Making decisions

When making planning decisions, you should consider:

- *conserving and enhancing biodiversity*
- *avoiding and reducing the level of impact of the proposed development on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees*

You should refuse planning permission if development will result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees unless both of the following applies:

- *there are wholly exceptional reasons*
- *there's a suitable compensation strategy in place (this must not be a part of considerations of wholly exceptional reasons) - see paragraphs 33 and 34 of the planning practice guidance on compensation guidance*

You should make decisions in line with paragraph 180 (c) of the NPPF.

Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable. Therefore, you should not consider proposed compensation measures as part of your assessment of the merits of the development proposal.

Assess the effects of development

When making decisions on planning applications, you should assess the direct and indirect effects of development on:

- *ancient woodland*
- *ancient trees and veteran trees*

You should consider both the construction and operational effects of the proposed development.

For ancient or veteran trees (including those on the woodland boundary), the buffer zone should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5 metres from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter. This will create a minimum root protection area.

Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, the proposal is likely to need a larger buffer zone

This calculation therefore requires a Root Protection Area and Buffer Zone creating. At 15 times the diameter of the stem (measured at 1.5m), this would preclude any construction near the rear of the property as it would reach 25 metres from the stem.

It is likely that root development would not be extensive under the existing property, so the Root Protection Area should be amended to reflect this, extending it further into the garden and across the rear of the building.



It is also noted that excavations have already occurred within the Root Protection Area in order to lay the base for what appears to be a hot tub. This would have severed an extensive number of roots within the critical rooting zone of the tree, and is likely to cause physiological decline of some degree. It is proximal enough to the tree to potentially affect its short term stability too.

The excavations within the root protection area would mean that the area affected could not be included within the calculations for the RPA. No area beyond this point of damage could be included in the calculations either. This extends the remaining root protection area even further, in order to compensate for the loss.

The Arboricultural Method Statement tries to make some provision to prevent damage to the trees rooting environment, however it should be remembered that RPA is minimum assumed volume of soil viable to

maintain the tree. It is noted that young and vigorous trees can cope with some disturbance to their rooting environment, but that old and veteran trees require more careful treatment, as disturbance is likely to lead to decline.

Incursions into the RPA should be avoided unless absolutely essential, and repeated incursions should be avoided at all costs.

We have not received any suitable methods for the completing process without severely damaging the tree and its rooting environment. As such, I cannot support the application.

Comments

Recommend refusal as the application takes no account of the large mature tree located in close proximity to the rear of the house. It would not be possible for the construction to take place without compromising the health and integrity of the tree.

Recommend application of a Tree Preservation Order to the tree in order to prevent on going and construction associated damage.

Recommendation: Refuse

Signed: NS	**Date: 18/03/2025**