

APPENDIX 3 - Report by Gavin Onions - November 2018

This oak tree, located within the Horsehay and Spring Village Conservation Area, is a prominent feature in the neighbourhood and is of significant positive amenity value

The bungalow in which the objectors live was granted planning consent to be built on the 25th of September 1986. Therefore, given the diameter of the oak tree's trunks, it is my belief that the tree was an existing feature of the site prior to its development at that time. This is a case where the property has been developed and acquired in full knowledge of the presence of this established oak tree.

Although the tree is growing in the rear garden of the property, it has not been pruned for many years and has now grown some distance above it. Consequently, it is clearly visible from the public right of way, which passes to the front of the address and runs around Horsehay Pool up to the Dawley Road.

I do not agree with the objectors' estimation of the trees height and width. In any event, even if this were the case, it could be attended to via remedial tree surgery which would retain the tree in the landscape, whilst maintaining it to an acceptable height. Appropriate surgery would also allay fears of branch failure, as branches could be shortened via the pruning process.

The life expectancy of an English Oak, can be anything upwards of 1000 years plus. If maintained in the street scene, this tree could stand to contribute to the amenity of the area for many years to come.

We have no records on file showing that an application has ever been made to prune or maintain the tree. If the TPO is confirmed, the tree will be protected for the benefit of the public and the amenity of the area but the owners will also be able to apply to have it pruned which would, as I have said, address some of their concerns.

With regard to the owners' fears regarding their septic tank, I have not seen it or looked inside it. However, given that it was installed with the Oak tree in situ and as septic tanks are sealed units, there would have to be a crack in either the pipes or the tank for the trees roots to "see" this a source of water & nutrients. Therefore, I do not consider that the roots would damage a properly functioning septic tank. If there was a flaw in the septic tank system and root damage had occurred, it is a relatively easy operation to abate the issue of root ingress into a system, should this be the case. A root cutter would be required and then the pipe would need relining. But, there would need to be a fault in the system for the roots to first ingress into.

The owners have not provided evidence of any root damage to the septic tank

In these circumstances, I am of the firm opinion that this is a healthy tree which adds much to the amenity of the area and is visible from a nearby public Right of Way. I do not consider that the points raised by the objectors are reasons not to confirm the TPO. The objectors concerns about potential damage to the septic tank have not been substantiated. The Owners have not attempted to address any of their concerns by undertaking appropriate pruning/tree surgery. Confirming the TPO enables the owners to apply to do works to the tree and thus provide opportunity to see how proper management deals with their concerns.