

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Francis Mabbett.....

**APPLICATION
REFERENCE**

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF
DEVELOPMENT**

APPLICATION SITE

26/01903/TPO

Douglas Fir - Up to a 5m reduction

11 Convent Close

Hitchin

Hertfordshire

SG5 1QN

Submitted Plan Nos

Location plan

1.0 Policies

2.0 **Site History**

21/03238/TPO - Douglas Fir - Fell to ground level - Refused

3.0 **Representations**

None received.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

Douglas Fir (applicant's plan) is located in the rear garden of the property on the north-east boundary adjacent to Verulam Road. The site is not within a Conservation Area, but the tree is protected by T5 of TPO/061.

4.2 **Proposal & Reason**

Up to a 5m Reduction to a Douglas Fir Tree, these works are to prevent any possible damage that could be caused by the tree growing too large for its location near a public road.

4.3 **Key Issues**

The key issue for consideration is whether the reason provided justifies proposed works and the appropriateness of these given that the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

- 4.3.1 Douglas Fir is one of two adjacent Douglas Firs of similar size and age in the same rear garden location. TPO/061 identifies only one Douglas Fir in this location and the TPO plan appears to align with the most northerly tree, therefore only this tree will be considered as the subject of this application. The tree appears healthy with no obvious outward signs of significant structural faults or defects. Some deadwood is present throughout the crown, (the removal of deadwood is exempt from The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012). Its form is slightly asymmetrical due to the shading caused by the proximity of the adjacent Douglas Fir on its southerly aspect. The tree's crown does not significantly overhang the road, but its lowest branch hangs low over the footpath/pavement and a crown lift to 2.5m would be advisable. The tree does not appear to have previously been reduced.
- 4.3.2 Reduction works can have significant impact on both the health and amenity of the tree. It can result in major alterations to the function of physiological processes in a tree by interfering with the hormonal balance and interrupting the flow of water and nutrients between foliage and roots. It exposes large cut surfaces that opens cells in the cambium and wood to the atmosphere. This leads to drying of the wood surface leading to alterations in the moisture and gas regime in the tissues and making conditions suitable for micro-organism ingress and pathogen colonisation.
- 4.3.3 The reason provided for the proposed works appears to be based on a general assumption that the tree is likely to cause damage as it increases in size in its location close to a road, with no indication of what damage it may cause or is currently causing. A reduction by 5m will remove the apical portion of the tree leaving a large wound exposed and open to the negative effects noted above. It may check upward growth for a short period and would marginally

slow, but not stop, the expansion of the main stem briefly. As most conifers do not sprout from old (bare) wood the growth post reduction would be from green shoots concentrated at the end of remaining side branches, which would extend outwards and then upwards to reestablish apical dominance and hormone balance resulting in an unnatural form. This growth in conifer tends to encourage broader crowns which may prove counterproductive in preventing the tree from growing too large for its location. The Arboricultural Association's Guide to Tree Pruning advice for Firs is to "*Avoid any pruning if possible.*" The proposed reduction would be detrimental to the visual appearance of the tree, leaving its form permanently disfigured and it would not be reasonable to allow these works for general fears of what may happen as the tree increases in size.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The proposed works to the TPO tree is not supported by any evidence regarding structural condition or details of foreseeable damage to justify the works are necessary. The works are considered to be detrimental to the health and aesthetic appearance of the tree and it is considered reasonable to refuse the application.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None applicable

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 None applicable

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:-

1. No detailed justification has been submitted in support of the application. Thus, in the absence of any compelling evidence being produced for the reduction of the tree in terms of its health, condition or relationship to the surrounding buildings there is insufficient justification for consent to be granted. The reduction would be detrimental to the health and aesthetic appearance of a TPO tree of special amenity value.

Signed <i>S. LoAsby.</i> Saffron Loasby Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 17 September 2026	