

North Hertfordshire Council

Tree Officer comments

File Ref: 26/00103/FPH
Date: 02/02/2026
Planning Officer: Vicki Wood
Address: The Lodge Bungalow 56 High Street Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 6BL
Subject: Single storey rear and side extension, formation of parking and vehicular access via electric gates to the highway and boundary treatments, following demolition of existing rear and side extensions constructed in 1980/81.

1.0 Policy position: NPPF / Local Plan / Supplementary Planning Document

- 1.1** Paragraph 136 of the Achieving well-designed places chapter in the current Framework, addresses the integration of trees within new development. Draft NPPF Policy N3 (December 2025) proposes that trees in new development is included within the natural environment section to ensure consistency and alignment with wider environmental objectives.
- 1.2** North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Chapter 11 deals with the natural environment.

Policy NE2: Landscape Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that: a) Respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area and have regard to the guidelines identified for built development and landscape management; b) Do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the landscape character area in which the site is located, taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this; c) Are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features; and d) Have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping

2.0 Observations

Trees

2.1 The tree report submitted with the application appears to be a document in support of removing the two main trees I identified as being highly suitable for retention.

2.2 The recommendation provided in the submitted tree report is to remove the Holm Oak as *“the tree presents a high risk of structural failure”* for reasons of:

“a pronounced lean of approximately 25 degrees towards the adjacent road and pedestrian pathway. The base of the trunk is lifting the surrounding surface, indicating movement within the root plate. Ground conditions in this area are typically shallow soil over chalk, which provides limited anchorage for large mature trees.”

2.3 I inspected the tree and found it did lean, but this appears historic as the main crown has grown vertically for some considerable time, suggesting the lean occurred when the tree was much younger and therefore root plate stability would have been restored sometime ago. No evidence was present in the lower trunk to suggest the lean was subsiding or otherwise compromised with the tree at imminent risk of collapse. The lifting of the surrounding tarmac surface appeared to be down to incremental or reactive growth of the buttress and nearby structural roots and not due to root plate movement. The poor ground conditions for root anchorage is a perceived reason, with no evidence of the ground conditions immediately local to the tree's position provided. Oaks in general are known to root at depth when compared with other species.

2.4 The Yew tree was also condemned in the report for *“its poor structural form, declining vigour, and incompatibility with the future use and layout of the site.”* It was identified in the report as being in overall poor condition, with tight unions and with a build-up of organic material within the trunk unions potentially creating conditions favourable to decay.

2.5 Many trees will collect detritus in forks, but this does not guarantee decay is inevitable and no evidence of actual decay was provided. Tight unions can be seen as a point of significant structural weakness in some species however Yew is not one of these. Yew is highly resistant to decay with only a few fungal pathogens being capable of degrading its wood and even if circumstances are favourable, decay occurs at a very slow rate. I observed the overall vitality of the Yew to be good with no symptoms present in the crown to suggest it was less than in normal health for its species. It's

proximity is very close to the proposed extension and it is likely to be negatively impacted by its construction. The Yew's incompatibility with the future use of the site, as stated in the report, prompts for reconsideration of the proposed layout in order to retain this tree.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The submitted documents are not in accordance with BS5837:2012 and do not contain any information with regards to protecting retained trees on site as recommended in Preapp 25/02789/PREH, but to the contrary provides unsubstantiated support for the removal of two high amenity value trees in the Baldock Conservation Area that were identified as worthy of retention. I therefore object on the grounds that insufficient information has been provided and the proposed would see the loss of two high amenity value trees that would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding Baldock Conservation Area.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 I recommend the applicant take note of the advice in the Preapp and look to retain good quality trees on site. Any planning application for this site should include the submission to the council for approval of an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations and should demonstrate how retained trees are going to be afforded adequate protection during the construction of any development.

Reason: To prevent damage to or destruction of trees to be retained on the site in the interests of the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality, and to comply with Policy NE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

Francis Mabbett
Tree and Landscape Officer