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Report

Report subject: Tree Preservation Order (no. 405) at Rollestone Manor Farm, Shrewton, Wilts, SP3 4HG

Report to: Northern Area Committee

Date: 1/9/08

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Purpose of Report:

This item is before Members to consider a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) at Rollestone Manor Farm, Shrewton. Objections have been received so the Committee must decide whether or not to confirm the order and make it permanent.

Background:

Tree Preservation Order 405, was enacted on the 17th June 2008 following concerns raised by local residents about tree works being carried out near the junction of Rollestone Road and the A360.

A large Horse Chestnut tree was in the process of being dismantled and it was unclear how many other trees in the vicinity were under threat so an area TPO was enacted to protect the line of trees on the south side of the A360, adjacent to the road frontage of Rollestone Manor Farm.

Objections:

Three letters have been received which oppose the application of a TPO. The following points have been raised:

- The trees included within the order are mainly poor quality Horse Chestnuts and the order may hinder necessary maintenance work.
- Horse Chestnuts are prone to sudden limb drop when under stress
- The Horse Chestnut immediately adjacent to the junction seriously obscures visibility for vehicles attempting to exit Rollestone Road.
- The poor visibility is a greater problem to tractors and lorries that regularly visit the farm and grain store.
- The speed limit on the A360 is 60 mph, which makes the junction even more dangerous.
- A representative from Highways department has allegedly stated the tree immediately adjacent is a concern because it severely limits visibility.

Comments on objection:

The Tree Preservation Order was made at short notice, in order to prevent mature trees being felled unnecessarily. Due to the need for urgency, the trees were not assessed individually and an area order

was put in place. This protects all trees within the specified area. Subsequent inspection has not revealed any significant defects so all the trees warrant protection to ensure the existing avenue is retained.

Many species of tree can suffer sudden limb loss if they are under stress. It is therefore important that trees are maintained in a healthy environment to minimise the risk.

The Horse Chestnut adjacent to the corner of the A360 and Rolleston Road does reduce visibility at the junction, but the benefits of retaining the tree need to be weighed up against the problems it causes. The TPO gives the Committee the opportunity to consider this matter.

It is accepted that tractors and other slow moving vehicles will experience more difficulty because of the limited visibility.

A change to the speed limit on the A360 could improve safety and other alternatives, such as a mirror opposite the junction would help to assist with visibility.

Assessment:

Since this preservation order was made it has become apparent that the main threat is to the tree adjacent to the junction of Rolleston Road and the A360. This report therefore focuses on that one tree but the other trees included within the area order do form part of an Avenue which is an important feature on the approach to Shrewton from the east.

The tree is a mature Horse Chestnut, which is approximately 150 years of age. It is of good form and appears to be in excellent condition with no obvious major defects. Horse Chestnuts can live in excess of 300 years so the tree still has a considerable life expectancy.

Trees of this stature are important because they are not easily replaced. Mature trees provide an invaluable habitat for insects and other wildlife.

Conclusion:

There are no good arboricultural reasons to justify the loss of the Horse Chestnut. The tree is healthy and significantly adds to the character of the area.

The threat to the tree is caused by the fact it obstructs the view of the highway for traffic exiting Rolleston Road onto the A360. There is no question about the limited visibility splay at this junction but in defence of the tree it should be noted that it has stood in this position for many years and there does not appear to be a history of accidents in the area. The tree is an excellent mature example of its species and it is felt that other alternatives such as mirrors could be considered before such a magnificent tree is removed for convenience.

Options for consideration:

Members should consider the application and decide on one of the following options:

- a) Confirm the order – so that all the trees specified within the area are protected.
- b) Not confirm the order – with the effect that none of the trees will be protected.

Recommendations:

The Arboricultural Officer recommends that the order should be confirmed to ensure the trees are protected.

Wards Affected: Till Valley and Wylve