

## Policy SA29 – Land behind St Stephen’s Church, Hamsland, Horsted Keynes

Second statement from: Paul Fairweather, [REDACTED]

### Matter - Guidance Note 3.3 (vi) (vii) & (xi)

**My statement submits that development of this site will have impact upon neighbouring occupiers and upon its sustainability, the quality of the landscape and ecology and the AONB assessment.**

My statement does refer to the documentation of Planning Application DM/20/4692 but solely in order to better illustrate the situation and to demonstrate the limitations of the site. This statement has two Appendices, A and B.

**Situation:** My home is situated immediately next to SA29 along the first part of its western border.

This site is unusual in that there exists only one possible access that leads at right angles off Hamsland and continues south-easterly for 35+ meters along a narrow strip of land between my property and that of the Church of St Stephen tapering from 7 to 6.5 meters wide before opening out to the building area of the site. Within the site ownership and growing along the whole length of this land on our mutual boundary is a line of 8 mature trees, the closest to the highway being an oak. The trees all blend with each other and are some 15+ metres high, several with multiple trunks.

### Submission Part 1

#### **The requirements of BS 5837: 2012 show that protection for the tree’s roots is not possible**

It has been acknowledged by Planning Application DM/20/4692 that constructing a road along this land for access to the building area of the site will have to consider the root-plates of these trees, and drawings have been produced that appear to offer them protection. However, these do not comply with the BS 5837: 2012 formula for determining the necessary root plate protection area by measuring a tree’s diameter. For the mature 70cm oak this is an 8+ meter radius from its trunk and as the access strip is only 7 meters wide at that point, no construction can be undertaken within it and certainly not beginning within centimetres of its trunk, which would be essential in order to obtain the width essential for a roadway. Logic dictates that since the building of a roadway has been classed as construction, the exclusion of this from the root protection areas means that one cannot be built.

Several of the other trees lining this access strip of land are of similar or even greater diameter, so each also has a root protection area that occupies the entire width of the land available. On any type of roadway constructed along this strip of land it will be necessary to provide a drainage gully on at least one side, further restricting the available width for traffic and increasing the depth of the construction. Construction of a so-called suspended roadway across multiple protection areas to attempt to reduce damage to the roots would have the inevitable result of raising the surface and still cause a degree of compaction whilst still permanently denying the trees the accustomed amount of rainfall and vital access to the air to which they are accustomed.

As well as the applicant’s failure to recognise the requirements of BS 5837: 2012, further doubt has to be cast upon the veracity of their tree survey (**Appendix B – Detail of Tree Survey from Planning Application DM/20/4692**) since having drawn in the mature oak, it identifies all the other trees as Beech. This is incorrect because these are Hornbeams.

### **Submission Part 2**

#### **The provision of main services to the site will cause significant damage to the trees' roots**

In addition to the above, in order to develop this site main services would need to be provided. Since this 7-meter wide, 35-meter long strip of land is the sole access, in order to bring these from the highway significant trenching would have to cross the root plate protection areas of all eight trees. Whatever the depth of this trench it would cut through the roots of all the tree contrary to the provisions of BS 5837: 2012 and therefore stress and damage cannot be avoided.

### **Submission Part 3**

#### **AONB rating requires the retention of these trees in order to adequately screen the site.**

Preserving these mature trees is crucial because it is these very trees that have been identified as providing the screening that is essential if the site is to be regarded as viable within an AONB. Clearly it is vital to discover the extent of the tree's root runs and on my referring these concerns to the Developer in January, their response was to commission a team to carry out what they described to me as 'further tree survey work'. This took the form of digging a series of long but narrow slit-trenches well over a metre deep approximately only a metre from the bole of each one of these trees. No attempt was made to investigate on the opposite side of the access strip of land with a view to ascertaining the extent of the roots. Fearing that digging extensively at the base of each tree could be causing them damage, I consulted a retired Borough Council Tree Officer who was horrified on hearing of this work and could offer no explanation that could call for it to be carried out. I therefore twice queried the purpose of this work with the Developer, but their total failure to give any explanation or reason for it is suspicious, fueling doubts about the suitability of this site. **(Appendix A – 5 x photos illustrate extent of the trees' canopy, their screening effect, the limited width available for road access and the trenching work carried out by a potential developer).**

Note: Horsted Keynes Parish Council's decision to place a holding objection on the Planning Application took account of this issue. Having expressed concern over the preservation of the tree's Root Plate Areas it also stated reservations over the ability to provide adequate vehicular access along such a limited land width. Subsequent to lodging this holding objection, Horsted Keynes Parish Council re-examined the situation and voted to withdraw its support for this site from the draft SADP.

### **Conclusion**

#### **The screening provided by mature and healthy trees prevent any development of this site**

**If they remain the site is satisfactorily screened, but cannot be accessed.**

**If they are removed to enable access, the site does not meet screening criteria.**

It would appear that given that (a) the protection areas of the trees extend across the only available access to the site, (b) that these trees are essential to screen the site, (c) the entire available width of the access is essential to construct a road, (d) trenching work for main services will have to cross their root plate areas, and (e) work already carried out could have severed the roots at the base of each one, it is clear that **before this site can be developed, it will be essential to completely remove them. There is no alternative.**

In addition, should their removal be permitted and the screening of the site removed, the whole length of my property will be exposed to being directly overlooked by occupiers of houses that could be built less than 10 metres away from my bungalow.

**I therefore submit that development of this site will have impact upon neighbouring occupiers and upon its sustainability, the quality and nature of the landscape and ecology and the AONB assessment.**

**Therefore, the site must be regarded as un-deliverable.**

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## Appendix A

**(i) – Canopy extent over the access strip with the oak in the foreground. Scaring from the trenching work can be seen close to the trees.**



**(ii) – Canopy extent over access strip showing the limited width for an access road.**





**(iii) – Screening effect provided by part of the line of trees and my bungalow beyond.**



**(iv) – Screening effect provided by part of the line of trees and my bungalow beyond.**

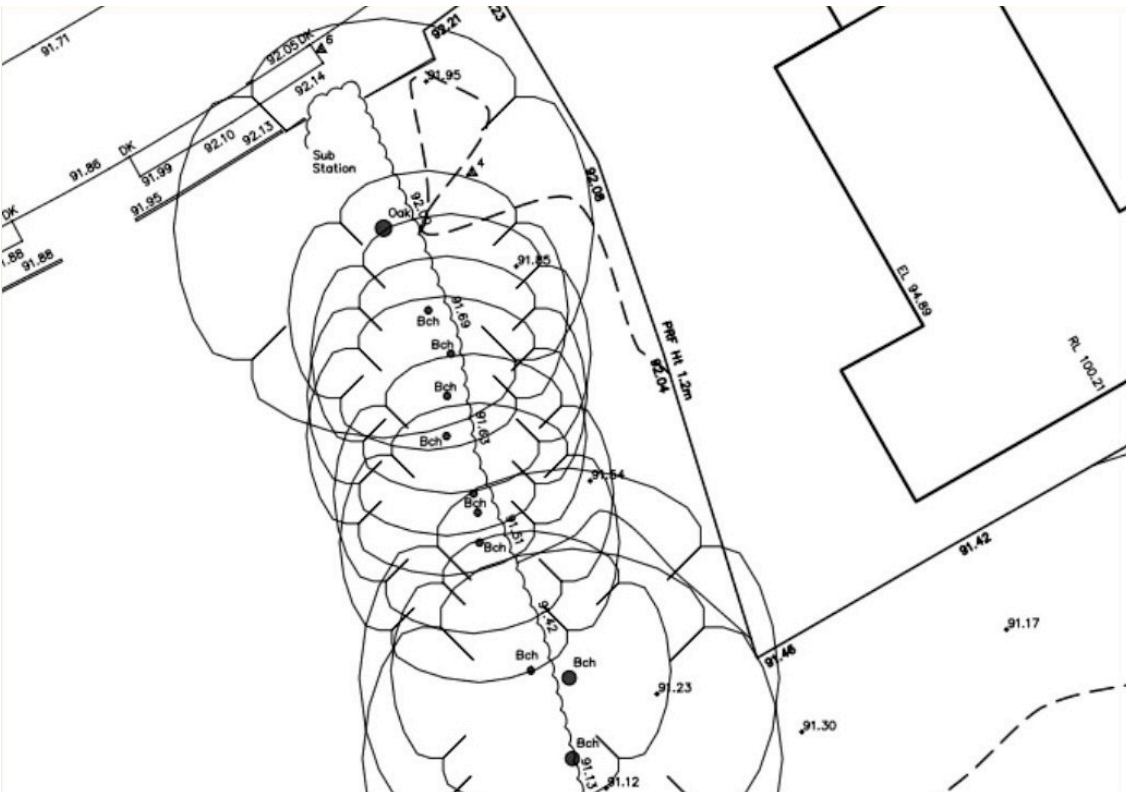




**(v) Evidence of the trenching against the boles of the trees**



**Appendix B – Tree Survey from Planning Application DM/20/4692**



**ENDS/...**