

Minutes

Leader's Q&A session

Held at: Zoom - to be streamed live to Youtube.

Date: Wednesday, 27 January 2021

2. Questions from Councillors

7. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy (in Councillor Wimble's absence, Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council gave the response to this question)

Homes being built on the old Wyevale garden centre site in Folkestone have been built too close to trees along the site boundary with Castle Hill Avenue and Shorncliffe road. This has led to an application from the developer to remove or cut these trees back, including the loss of an imposing Corsican pine. This was entirely foreseeable. So why was permission given for this development to be built so close to the trees, which are protected by a tree protection order, despite advice at the time, and against the wishes of local residents?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

The development was granted some time ago and unfortunately did not suitably consider the future living conditions of residents alongside their relationship with the existing trees.

The current Chief Planning Officer agrees that this outcome was foreseeable and has raised the issue with his team to ensure that future applications consider whether the proximity of development to protected trees will result in pressure for their removal.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

It would be helpful to understand practically how this would be put in place.

ANSWER:

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I will ask the Chief Planning Officer to do a briefing note for you.

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ANSWER:

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The Chief Planning Officer has provided the following further response:

It is standard practice for Planning Officers to consult with the Council's arboricultural officer where proposed development may impact on protected trees or any trees that of wider visual amenity benefits.

Planning Officers seek to ensure that in such circumstances, applications are accompanied by a Tree Impact plan as part of an Arboricultural Assessment. Such reports should grade the tree in terms of health, define its canopy size and root protection area, as well as assessing the remaining lifespan of the tree.

The report is then assessed by planning officers and by the arboricultural officer. The assessment considers direct impact on tree(s) and also the overall siting of the development. That assessment includes whether the

proximity of the trees to new development would place future likely pressure for severe pruning or removal is made at this point. Officers at this point need to consider the desirability of retaining the tree or seeking its replacement.

Notwithstanding recent successful defence in two appeals in such circumstances, Planning Officers have had refresher training in light of the Leaders Q&A.