

For the DMC Meeting 10th December 2020 re. Felling of trees at Southleigh Park House

This application to consider the felling of trees (TPO 1068) around this Grade II listed house does not appear to be following the staged approach to decision making required in matters relating to a listed building and its historic setting. There is no valid argument that can be made for examining the viability of trees for felling when they are such an important and critical part of the historic setting of the designated property.

Decisions cannot be made in isolation without reference to the original intentions of the landscape design to be a critical part of the environment of the house: views of the house within its immediate landscape and views from the house of its grounds complement each other.

There are very few period houses of this size and quality that have their original landscaping of trees, nor such a fine collection of specimen trees. Monkey Puzzle, Giant Redwoods, and Irish Yew are typical of the quality of mid-Victorian planting chosen to enhance a fine new building.

A listed building needs to be maintained and appreciated in just the same way as the trees framing it. One needs to be aware of conservation and tree management that is aimed at the longevity of both the built and natural assets.

Tree felling, particularly trees of this standard, should be seen off for what it is, i.e. a Trojan Horse for an as yet unspecified development of one sort or another.

I would advise that, before any further discussion takes place about the role of these trees in the setting of the house, you become familiar with Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (2nd edition), "The Setting of Heritage Assets", Historic England 2017.

This guidance is fully aligned with the NPPF, and will help the LPA explore alternative and more sensitive solutions of the building its setting and the current and future residents of the Borough. Specifically ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm to historic and aesthetic assets.

Thomas Griffin