

20th November 2020

Dear Members,

Pines of Lower Pennington Lane Threatened with Destruction by SS6 Landowner

We have been alerted to an application to New Forest District Council to **fell a huge number of mature trees**, 17 in total, supposedly on health and safety grounds within this important group of trees on the western edge of SS6 to Lower Pennington Lane - an area shown to be protected in the recently adopted Local Plan which allocates the site for at least 100 homes. The application has been put in by the planning agents for Belco who own the two fields closest to Lower Pennington Lane and who have promoted the site for housing development in partnership with the Smith family and the owners of Northfield Nursery via their site promoter, Cicero Estates.

We think this is a very thinly disguised attempt to achieve a visibility sightline 'by the back door'. By felling trees they will make it easier for them to justify removing the earth bank which gives the lane its distinctive sunken character along this stretch. This would then open up the options for widening, straightening and urbanising Lower Pennington Lane at this point and allow them to create a new two way vehicular access onto Lower Pennington Lane into the housing estate.

This is exactly the kind of environmentally damaging development of the lanes we have fought all along which would destroy mature trees and verges and irrevocably damage the character of the lanes. **Both the District Council and the site promoters have consistently assured us this would not happen.** The policy in the adopted plan clearly shows this area of trees to be retained and protected and they are also identified as a 'Landmark Pine Group' in the NFDC Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Document.

If the landowners want to change the access arrangements to this site, then they should do so openly and honestly by putting in a planning application and not in this, frankly, underhand way.

What's changed in three years?

Only three years ago (shortly after a Tree Preservation Order was put on the landmark pine group) an application, supported by a detailed tree survey of the same trees from the same tree consultant, was submitted by the same landowner. It was to fell just two trees and prune three others on the grounds of health and safety. Permission was granted on condition of replanting but the landowner and their agents did **absolutely nothing despite their purported concerns about health and safety.** Now, all of a sudden, there is apparently a health and safety argument to fell 17 trees, some of which were considered to have a life expectancy of at least ten years in 2017. How can such different conclusions be drawn in such a short timeframe? Unsurprisingly, there is no mention whatsoever of the housing development or the sightline - which is clearly taped on the ground. We will be urging New Forest District Council to see what the real agenda is behind this application and reject it accordingly.

PALLS is taking professional advice and will be responding robustly to the application on behalf of our members. You can access the details and the previous permission via <https://www.newforest.gov.uk/trees>, the tree works application reference is TPO/20/0627. **We are in no way opposed to proper management of the trees which in our view has been lacking for decades** and would support an application for a properly phased management and re-planting proposal as some of the trees are definitely in need of care and attention.

With thanks as ever for your support. If you can, please spread the word about what is happening and do lobby your district and town councillors and ask them to stand up for the lanes and support PALLS in their efforts to protect them. Contact details for your District Councillor can be found via [this link](#).