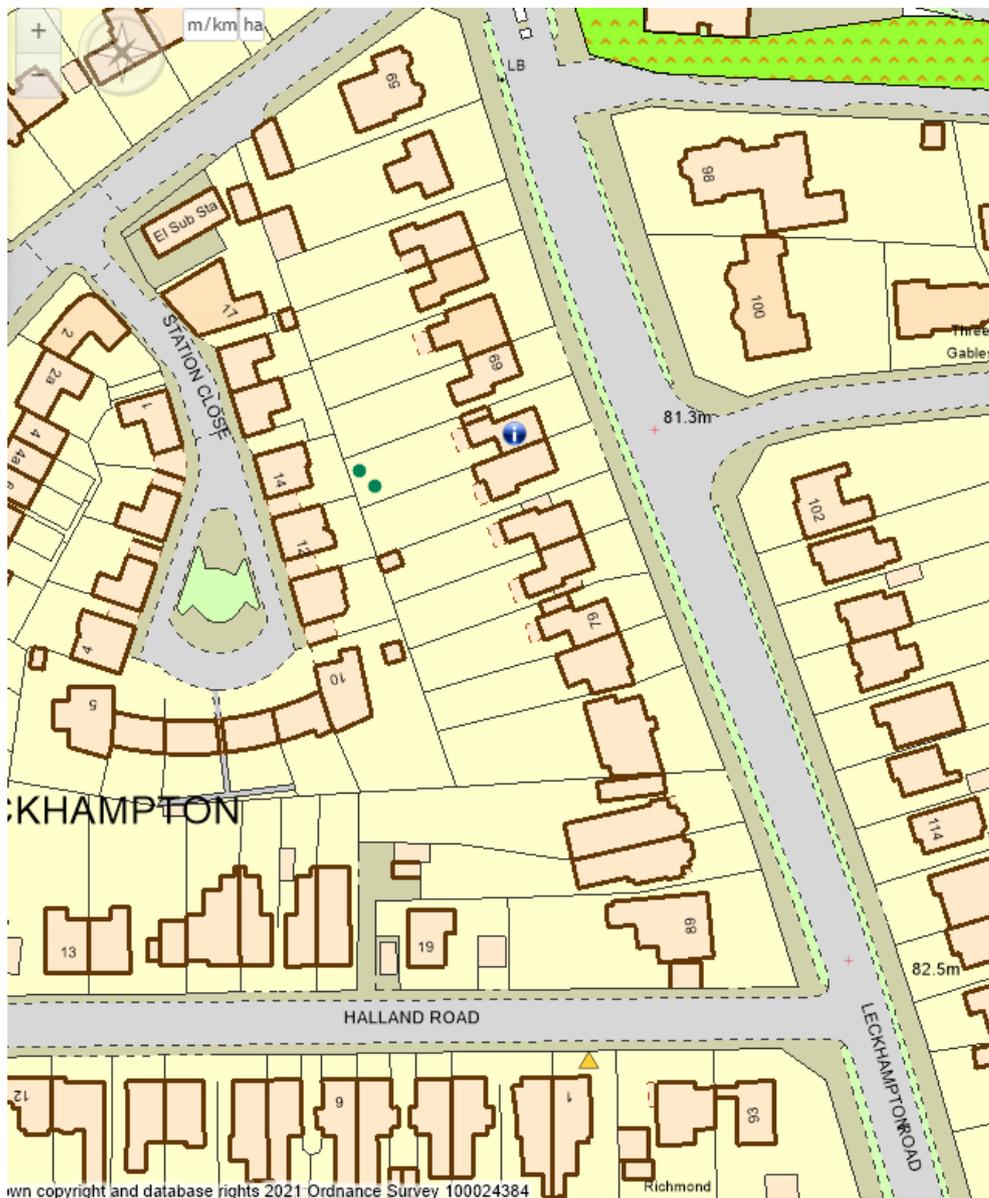


Officer Report

APPLICATION NO: 22/00044/CACN	OFFICER: Mr Sam Reader
DATE REGISTERED: 11th January 2022	DATE OF EXPIRY: 22nd February 2022
DATE VALIDATED: 11th January 2022	DATE OF SITE VISIT: Several
WARD: Leckhampton	PARISH: Leckhampton With Warden Hill
APPLICANT: Mrs Lucy Knibbs	
AGENT:	
LOCATION: 71 Leckhampton Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire	
PROPOSAL: Two stone pine trees to rear of property - fell to ground level	

RECOMMENDATION: No objections

Green dots denote approximate location of tree stems, not crown spread:



1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Proposal to remove two pine trees from the rear garden of 71 Leckhampton Road. Rear garden is approx. 22m long and 9m wide. One tree is closer to the rear garden wall and overhangs the rear neighbours' back garden (12 and 14 Station Close).

2. CONSTRAINTS AND RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Constraints:

Conservation Area

Relevant Planning History:

07/00569/FUL 13th June 2007 PER

Erection of railings at front of property and retrospective planning for erection of 2 pillars.

20/00987/CACN 14th July 2020 NOOBJ

Pine Trees T1 and T2 - crown lift to 3m over decking and shorten some longer branches by 1 meter and crown thin/clean by 20%

21/00782/FUL 28th May 2021 PER

Lower ground floor rear extension

3. POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Local Plan Policy GI2: Protection and Replacement of Trees: The Borough Council will resist the unnecessary felling of trees on private land and will make Tree Preservation Orders in appropriate cases.

Local Plan Policy GI3: Trees and Development: Development which would cause permanent damage to trees of high value will not be permitted.

Note 1: 'High value' means a sound and healthy tree with at least ten years of safe and useful life remaining, which makes a significant contribution to the character or appearance of a site or locality.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Ward Councillors

17th January 2022 - I am opposed to the removal of these healthy and attractive trees which contribute colour, vibrancy and bio-diversity to the locality. I am sure they are enjoyed and valued by many in the immediate area as well as being a haven for insects, birds and other wildlife.

At a time when the world is experiencing a Climate Emergency and Cheltenham has committed to become a net zero carbon council and borough by 2030 the retention of mature trees is critical. It is all very well planting thousands of saplings but these will take many years to create any effective tree canopy and to make any real bio-diversity contribution. The removal of healthy and mature trees must therefore be resisted in all but the most serious of cases where for example they are dangerous or diseased.

5. PUBLICITY AND REPRESENTATIONS

Number of letters sent	13
Total comments received	2

Number of objections	0
Number of supporting	2
General comment	0

- 5.1 Two site notices were erected – one on Leckhampton Road, one on Station Drive. One comment in support was received from a neighbour on Leckhampton Road, one from a local resident on Station Close.

The comment from 15 Station Close is in support of the application as they stand to gain more light and an unobstructed view to the south east if the trees are removed.

The letter of representation from 69 Leckhampton Road is in support for the following reasons (summarised):

- Concerns over eventual height and spread of trees
- Resident does not enjoy or value their presence
- Resident suggests species is inappropriate for the site and alternative species may be more suitable
- Concerns of the risk to the Victorian rear wall (between 71 Leckhampton Road and 12 / 14 Station Close) and the main sewer / drain for Leckhampton Road which runs parallel to the wall through the gardens behind Station Close

5.2 Comments Received

69 Leckhampton Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL53 0BS

Comments: 1st February 2022

Letter available to view in documents tab.

15 Station Close Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL53 0AB

Comments: 24th January 2022

Dear Mr Reader

I would like to offer support to the planning application to fell two stone pine trees to the ground at 71 Leckhampton Road.

We live in one of the properties behind 71 and the removal of the tree would result in more light in our garden and an unobstructed view.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

With kind regards

6. OFFICER COMMENTS

6.1 Determining Issues

This Conservation Area Notification of Intent to Fell two pine trees in the rear garden of 71 Leckhampton Road has been received. Cllr Paul Baker wished to bring the application before committee on the grounds of loss of amenity and wildlife value. The applicant is an employee of Cheltenham Borough Homes, so for the sake of transparency it was also deemed appropriate to bring the decision to Committee Members for determination.

6.2 The site and its context

Both trees are situated at the end of the rear garden of 71 Leckhampton Road. Currently the trees are roughly 6-7m tall with an approximate overall crown spread of 10m combined. Both trees are stone pine (also called umbrella pine due to their upswept form). They are an evergreen species, native to the Mediterranean and much used for shade and amenity value in towns and coastal regions (they are also the source of pine nuts). They occasionally shed heavy, fist-sized cones. Both of these trees are approximately 20 years old and therefore far from their mature height and spread which could be twice their current size in UK conditions. Reducing the size of the crown of these trees is a limited management method given that only green growth can be removed – it would be difficult to retain their original, pleasing visual amenity should height and spread reduction be undertaken. We estimate that these trees are growing 15cm annually. Should these trees be removed, the retained silver birch, of approximate equal height, will become more apparent. However, this tree has grown in the shade of the pines and its growth and form has been suppressed resulting in a somewhat drawn-up appearance.

6.3 Design and layout

The trees currently have a natural and pleasing aspect but will grow out of proportion to the garden over time, probably within ten to twenty years. The shade cast, as well as tree debris, will increase as the trees continue to grow. Whilst only part of the crown of one tree is visible (with difficulty) from Leckhampton Road itself, they add to the arboricultural fabric of this part of the conservation area. The current deteriorating state of the decking in the garden of 71 Leckhampton Road is contributed to by the shade and debris drop (including bird droppings) from the trees.

6.4 Impact on neighbouring property

Properties to the north and west will be most affected by the shade cast by these trees, and 12 and 14 Station Close no doubt receive the most debris from them (needles, cones etc). It's not easy to predict future structural damage to boundary walls and infrastructure.

6.5 Access and highway issues

N/A

6.6 Sustainability

The trees have good form, and if left could likely grow to be fine handsome trees. They of course have the benefits of providing wildlife habitat and carbon storage, as well as contributing to the green infrastructure of the area (temperature reduction etc). This species of tree has less wildlife value than many native species (doesn't attract pollinating insects etc).

The trees probably have around 5-10 years useful life expectancy before one or both grow too large for the garden.

6.7 Other considerations

The owner has alluded to replacing the trees with a more appropriate species if the Council does not object to their current proposal to remove them. However, this is not legally enforceable.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 These are currently fine trees with limited public visual amenity. There have been two comments in support of their removal and none objecting. Although their loss would be

regrettable, the limited retention span before they outgrow the garden, coupled with their limited public visibility makes a Tree Preservation Order inappropriate. On balance, the Trees Section has no objections to their removal.