



**WOKINGHAM DISTRICT
VETERAN TREE ASSOCIATION**

WOKINGHAM TREE WARDEN NETWORK

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**Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration
Proposals for trees in Elms Field Park.**

We write to draw your attention to the importance of devising a high quality design and management plan for existing and new trees on the proposed Elms Field Park.

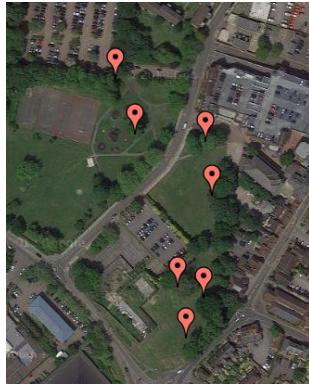
Trees, and especially mature native trees, are a key feature of Wokingham's natural environment, given its long history as a market town in Windsor Forest. The trees on Elms Field play a critical part in the town's treescape and it is vital that they should continue to do so.

In December 2013 this association produced a detailed commentary on the arboricultural proposals drawn up for the earlier planning application for Elms Field, subsequently withdrawn. A copy of this can be found on the WDVTA website at <http://www.wdvta.org.uk/pubs.php>

The concerns we raised still apply for any new proposal and can be summarised as follows:

1. The loss of high quality mature trees should be minimised

As part of its borough wide survey of veteran and significant trees WDVTA has surveyed existing important trees on Elms Field. Seven recorded trees can be seen on the map. Of these the most important are a London plane (184), an English oak (185), two common limes (183, 5437) and a sycamore (695). The two horse chestnuts, (693) and (182) have been felled on account of disease. This species is widely vulnerable to infection and disease and we would not recommend replacing these two trees.



Further details of the remaining five significant trees can be seen at <http://www.wdvta.org.uk/WDVTS/index.php>. We would want as many of these trees to be retained as possible.

2. Commemorative and memorial trees should be retained or replaced

WDVTA has also been recording trees across the borough that have been planted for memorial or commemorative purposes. There are three such trees growing on Elms Field. Two are memorial trees - a lime tree (WOO7 at SU 80935 68496) planted by the local beekeepers' association for a long standing member and a copper beech (WOO5 at SU80840 68406) for a neighbour's mother. A third tree is a weeping birch (WOO15 at SU 80913 68393) planted by Brownies to commemorate the Queen's 25th Jubilee anniversary. We would hope these trees could be retained and appropriately labelled. If this is impossible, the trees should be replaced appropriately with the consent of those who planted the originals. Further details of these trees can be seen at <http://wdvta.org.uk/commem.php>

3. Important species of tree that should feature in the new design (especially if existing trees of these species are lost).

a. English oak, *Quercus robur*

This is a very important tree for Wokingham, historically and culturally. Acorns and oak leaves feature in the town's coat of arms and in the stonework and woodwork of the Town Hall. There are 8 English oaks on Elms Field and all are at risk, including one mature tree (185). Would like to see at least one young English oak tree in a prominent position where it can grow to its full extent over coming years and become a symbolic landmark for the town.

b. London plane *Platanus hispanica*

One very distinctive existing tree is the London Plane (184). We really hope this can be retained, but if it cannot be, there should be definite plan to replace it elsewhere

c. Common Lime *Tilia x vulgaris*

There are a number of lime trees in Elms Field, including two mature trees and the memorial tree mentioned in sections 1 and 2, many of which could be lost. Lime trees are very much favoured by beekeepers and we would like to see new such trees planted somewhere in the park. The trees have the advantage of growing tall but without an inordinately large spread.

d. Elm *Ulmus procera* (but disease resisting variety – e.g. *ulmus minor* var. *minor*).

Since the name of the park is Elms Field and there is an elm hedge along the Wellington Road border, it would be good to have at least one (possibly three) disease resisting elms in the park. We suggest the above variety which is thought to be resistant to Dutch Elm disease.

e. Weeping Willow *Salix x chrysocoma*

There is a fine weeping willow growing at the junction of Elms Road with Wellington Road. This is a much-loved tree and frequently commented upon for its beauty by local residents. We would hope that this tree could be retained.

f. Pride of India *Koelreuteria paniculata*

This is a very distinctive and attractive tree which people have enjoyed as they approach the Elms car park. If this cannot be saved then it would be splendid to plant another such tree.

4. New trees planted should have the capacity to be high and medium quality trees in future.

In choosing new trees to be planted consideration should be given to their attractiveness through the seasons, benefits for biodiversity and longevity. We would be very willing to comment on a detailed botanical plan for the site when it is prepared – as we did for the previous proposals.

5 All workers should be fully aware of protection measures for retained trees

Experience suggests that when existing trees are to be retained there is a risk that they can be damaged in the course of site development. We would expect there to be careful regulations about how they are to be protected during any works.

We look forward to hearing your response to the points we have raised

Yours sincerely

Barbara Stagles – on behalf of the WDVTA committee.

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