

Project	UE0664 Sunte House	Date	August 2025
Subject	Response to LPA objection	Ref	DM/25/1705
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Status	Public		

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This technical notes relates to the Proposed Development at Sunte House, Birchen Lane, Haywards Heath, West Sussex and responds directly to the objection comments received by the Mid-Sussex District Council's Tree Officer.
- 1.2 A summary of objection comments are as follows:
- The felling of several category B trees is contrary to DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2033;
 - The new route to be constructed within the RPA of veteran tree T85 is unnecessary;
 - The construction of the proposed pool house will need deeper foundations than the current greenhouse, and will undoubtedly have an impact on veteran tree T85;
 - The methods mentioned in the AMS section of the AIA will not adequately protect T85.

2 Removal of category B trees contrary to DP37

- 2.1 The proposal seeks to remove the trees T105, H11 and partially remove the group G9. These trees been attributed category B status in accordance with the cascade chart for tree quality assessment in accordance with the recommendations outlined in BS 5837:2012. These are trees that have been attributed 'moderate quality'.
- 2.2 Due to the BS 5837:2012 cascade chart, most trees that are over 150mm in diameter at 1.5m above ground level, but "lacking the special quality necessary to merit the category A designation" are attributed category B status. As a consequence of this, more trees are attributed category B status than any other category. This results in a varied population of trees within the category B designation.

- 2.3 While category A and B trees should be a priority consideration for retention, BS 5837:2012 recognises that attempts to retain too many trees on a site can result in excessive pressure on the trees during construction. This usually results in the loss of some category B trees with appropriate mitigation forming part of development proposals.
- 2.4 The group of trees 'G9' and the hedge 'H11' have been attributed to the B2 sub-category. The BS 5837:2012 definition of the B2 category is as follows:
- "Trees present in numbers, usually growing as groups or woodlands, such that they attract a higher collective rating than they might as individuals; or trees occurring as collectives but situated so as to make little visual contribution to the wider locality".*
- 2.5 The B2 category recognises trees that would normally be attributed category C status i.e. of low quality, but are upgraded due to their presence in numbers so that they attract a higher collective rating. The B2 category also recognises that these trees make little visual contribution to the wider locality. This contrasts with category A trees which are "of particular visual importance, as arboricultural and/or landscape features".
- 2.6 The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2033 however, does not mention specific BS 5837:2012 category trees. The plan recognises some of the ecosystem service value of trees and instead states:
- "Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted".*
- 2.7 It follows, that the removal of category B trees is not in contrast to "the loss of trees... that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance" as only category A trees are "of particular visual importance as arboricultural and/or landscape features".
- 2.8 It remains to be established, whether any of the trees "contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area".
- 2.9 To determine this UEEC has used the original survey data, observations made on-site during the survey, the tree constraints plan, topographical survey information and an additional desk study.
- 2.10 H11 is a small row of semi-mature European hornbeams approximately 3m in height planted on the northern boundary of the tennis court as a wind shelter. The trees are not visible to the public and serve only the residents for their intended function. The trees do not contribute to the local visual amenity or character of the area and their removal is not in conflict with DP37.
- 2.11 The group 'G9' is rooted on the northern boundary of the site. It is mostly comprised of laurel trees and has been planted as an evergreen screen for privacy. The trees are partially viewable from an informal walkway 90m away. The proposals seek to partially remove the southern section of the screening group leaving the northern boundary visible to the public intact. The trees are small non-native shrub like species that do not reflect the character of the area, provide little amenity and serve a private function

for the residents. The little visual contribution they provide will be retained within the development proposals and consequently will not be in conflict with DP37.

- 2.12 The tree T105 is a southern magnolia tree. The tree is located within a walled garden 135m from the nearest informal walkway. The tree is early mature, 7m in height and growing against the garden wall. The tree is a non-native ornamental species, part of a private garden collection that does not reflect the character of the area. The top 1-2m of the tree is partially viewable from 135m away. The tree does not significantly contribute to the amenity value or character of the area such that its removal would be in conflict with DP37.

3 New vehicle route to be constructed within RPA of T85

- 3.1 The role of the arboricultural consultant is to determine the impacts of development as proposed on behalf of the LPA. UEEC has no comment to make on whether the design proposals are necessary or otherwise.

4 Foundations for the proposed pool house

- 4.1 UEEC does not dispute the LPAs Tree Officers comments made in relation to foundation depths. The foundations necessary for the pool house are likely to be deeper than the current foundations for the green house when constructed using conventional foundations. However, UEEC disagrees with the Tree officers objection comments that “the construction of the pool house...will undoubtedly have an impact on (T85)”. The rationale for this, site specific conditions and background information relating to the Application Site are detailed below.
- 4.2 Pedunculate oak tree ‘T85’ has been attributed veteran status. UEEC has attributed T85 veteran status in accordance with Figure 1.3 ‘*Chart of girth in relation to age and developmental classification of trees*’ of the publication by the Ancient Tree Forum ‘*Ancient and other veteran trees: further guidance on management*’ (2013).
- 4.3 While T85 is considered a veteran tree in accordance with the size criteria, the tree shows a limited number of other attributes associated with veteran trees. The tree was observed to be in good physiological condition with high vitality and vigour. The tree lacked signs of crown retrenchment and significant deadwood features associated with tree senescence. While the tree had suffered a diametral sheer crack on the northern bole, a distinct rib formation was observed with good wound wood providing evidence of high vitality.
- 4.4 In accordance with the recommendations outlined in BS 5837:2012 the tree has been provided a RPA capped at a 15m radius from the stem. Following recommendations from Natural England and the Forestry Commission on veteran trees, T85 has been granted a buffer zone of 15 x the DBH at 1.5m from ground level to ensure further protection from development and create an additional ‘minimal root protection area’.

- 4.5 The recommendations for the spatial distribution of buffer zones however, distinctly lack guidance for situations where development has already occurred within the buffer zone. Instead, guidance recommends that buffer zones should consist of semi-natural habitats, be part of the green infrastructure of the area and contribute to wider ecological networks. When applying the buffer zone to T85, this has included an area that has been historically developed.
- 4.6 The proposed pool house is located within an area of existing development contained within a walled garden including glass houses with concrete foundations, retaining walls and additional in-situ poured concrete hard standing. The area also contains some raised beds. Two flower beds are retained and cultivated at the perimeter adjacent to the garden wall. The garden wall is 2.7m high according to topographical survey information.
- 4.7 While it is expected that the glass houses have been constructed on shallow concrete foundations poured in-situ, the height of the surrounding garden wall will have necessitated deeper foundations. For a 2.7m high wall it is expected the wall footings to be at least 1m deep with a concrete base poured onto a consolidated base.
- 4.8 It is common arboricultural knowledge that tree roots grow predominantly near the soil surface with 90% of all roots contained within the first 600mm of soil and generally located within the first 300mm. Where soil conditions permit some trees will grow vertically orientated roots capable of penetrating metres into the soil. This is the case for tap root systems, sinker root systems and heart root systems which provide the structural root plate with a mechanical advantage in loose textured soils.
- 4.9 However, beyond the structural root plate, trees develop a lateral root system growing parallel to the surface of the soil. This exploits the higher nutrient content and larger soil macropore space essential for root function.
- 4.10 Figure 4:1. Below shows the typical distribution of tree roots.

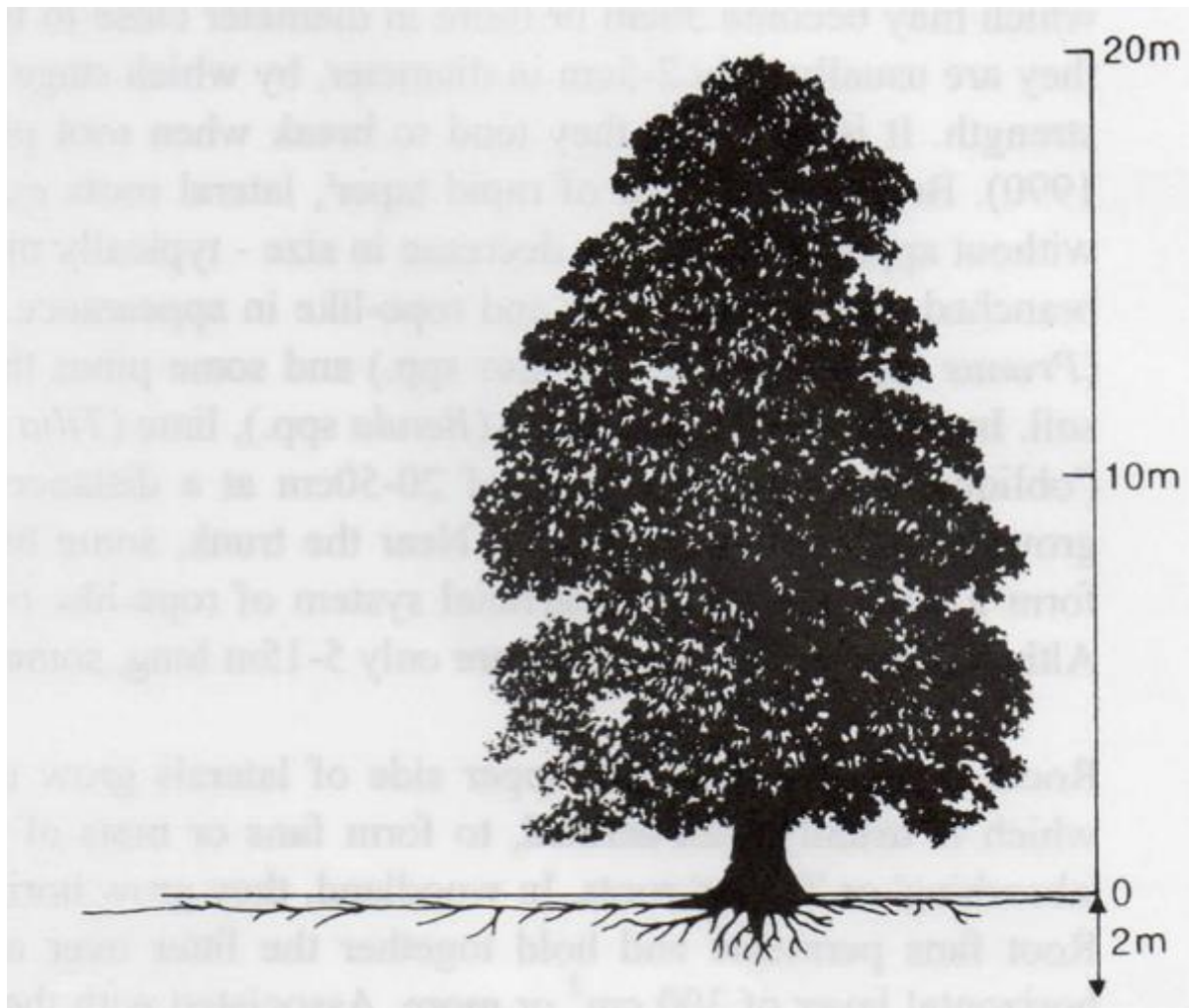


Figure 4:1 Typical tree root distribution

- 4.11 Root form is generally governed by soil characteristics and downward penetration of roots is inhibited by compact soils and a lack of atmospheric oxygen.
- 4.12 A desk study using the British Geological Survey's online web map revealed the soil in the area to be 'loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage'.
- 4.13 Root growth declines rapidly with increasing soil density. Growth ceases at a soil bulk density of 1.6 g cm^{-3} . The soil at the Application Site due to its high clay content is easily compactable to a point that it prevents tree root growth. It is expected that within the perimeter of the garden wall the soils will have been compacted in the process of historical development. It is assumed that heavy plant machinery will have been involved in the pouring of in-situ concrete bases for the glass houses and consolidated the existing soil for the garden works to a point that inhibits tree root growth.
- 4.14 The desk study revealed soils at the Application Site to have impeded drainage. Soils with impeded drainage prevent tree roots from growing deep into the soil as the high moisture content creates anaerobic conditions not conducive to tree root growth. Trees growing in these circumstances will develop shallower root systems close to the soil surface where root respiration can occur.

- 4.15 Due to the combination of existing soil conditions, the presence of the garden wall foundations, the historical development within the walled garden and the likely distribution of tree roots at the Application Site, UEEC does not expect the construction of the pool house in the proposed location to impact T85.

5 Methods within the AMS section are inadequate

- 5.1 UEEC has not provided an Arboricultural Method Statement in relation to the Proposed Development at Sunte House. An AMS has been recommended within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and its recommended contents summarised within section 3.3 *Arboricultural Method Statement Heads of Terms*.
- 5.2 UEEC has provided arboriculturally sensitive construction solutions that will facilitate the development as proposed as part of the AIA. These should be subject to an AMS. This is necessary at this point in the planning process so that arboriculturally sensitive engineering solutions can be identified and developed once post consent detailed planning and technical design begins.
- 5.3 The proposals for construction within the RPAs of retained trees conform to the recommendations contained within BS 5837:2012 and centres on the use of proprietary 3D cellular confinement system subbases. These are well documented construction solutions for use within RPAs of retained trees having been widely used across the industry for the last 20 years. The Arboricultural Association has released its own guidance on their installation and use.