

23/00007/TORDER

Objector Stanton on the Wolds Golf Course

Location Stanton on the Wolds Golf Course

Objection To Stanton on the Wolds No.1 Tree Preservation Order 2023

Ward Keyworth and Wolds

THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. The Tree Preservation Order (TPO) protects 4 early mature Oak and a Beech tree close to the north-western edge of the golf course on the 16th hole. The trees are located within a wider group of young, or smaller growing trees on the edge of the fairway. To the south of the trees is a public footpath which runs through the golf course.

DETAILS OF THE TREE PRESERVATION ORDER

2. The TPO was made on the 19th January 2023 and needs to be confirmed within 6 months of being made otherwise it will lapse. The Council has a duty to consider all representations before deciding whether or not to confirm the TPO.

SITE HISTORY

3. The TPO was made following a request from a member of the golf course membership who contacted the Council regarding ongoing course redesign, whilst they recognised that many of the changes were considered to be positive, concerns were raised about the “number of mature trees which have, and are continuing to, disappear from the course” and that they have “observed fairly extensive modifications to the golf course, in the past couple of years, and in particular the removal of many mature trees with little consultation or involvement of the membership.” Concerns were raised in regard of the redesign of the 16th hole with a plan being supplied with a number of red ‘X’ marks on a group of trees. A Council Officer visited the site and considered that the wider group of smaller trees could be thinned out without harm to the overall amenity of the area and such work could perhaps assist the golf course with their intention to improve the hole, but the 5 mature trees which were subsequently protected had the potential to become large, high-quality specimens that would further enhance the setting of the course and the public right of way as they mature. Given the quality of the trees, the concerns raised by the member of the public, and the Council’s Corporate Strategy’s priorities towards the environment a TPO was made.

REPRESENTATIONS

Objection From The Golf Club

4. An initial objection to the TPO was received on the 25th January 2023, following this the Council's Senior Design and Landscape Officer met representatives from the club to look at the course and offered them the opportunity to make further representations. The following objections to the TPO have been made:
 - The TPO was made following an enquiry from a member of the public without any consultation with the landowner
 - There are no plans to fell trees on the 16th hole and further indigenous tree planting is proposed for this location
 - In 2015, there was a proposal put forward by an external course designer to reposition the tee's which would have affected the trees the TPO has been issued to protect
 - The course designer proposal was rejected in 2020 by the Greens Committee who are responsible for any changes to the course
 - A decision was made, however, to extend the hole by simply moving the existing tee back which meant the TPO trees were even more integral to the way the hole must be played
 - The tee extension was completed in 2021 and the members have played the hole for 12-15 months which should have provided confidence on the importance of the copse and removed any concerns we were going to remove any trees
 - We acknowledge that we must learn from this experience and will ensure that communication with our membership improves and create 'go to people' which members can contact if they have any questions
 - We will also keep your department advised should we consider any future re-designs that may involve the felling/thinning of trees under our management
 - We applied and have secured our Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission and declared that it only related to Willows, Silver Birch, and Spruce.

APPRAISAL

5. It is entirely appropriate for members of the public to request a TPO and for the Council to make one without consulting the landowner. Whilst the lack of consultation may seem a little underhand, it is standard practice given that there is often a risk of trees being felled. The process allows for objections to be made and the matter considered before a decision is made as to whether or not it is appropriate to confirm the TPO. Officers have a legal right to access land to assess trees.
6. Whilst only 1 member of the public contacted us, feedback from one of the local Councillors to the proposed TPO was that they had received reports of trees being felled on the golf course and they supported the making of the TPO.
7. It is clear that there appears to be some disagreement between various parties at the golf club about the appropriateness of work that has taken place and the

risk of future tree work. At the site visit it was apparent that some tree felling had taken place in parts of the course that were not visible from public vantage points, but overall, it seemed the general amenity of the course was being retained with some signs of tree planting. The objection to the TPO is an accurate reflection of the discussion that took place on the site meeting where an understanding was reached that neither the Council or the Golf Club wanted to respond to future complaints about tree work, it is hoped that better communication between both organisations could be beneficial and reduce the need for reactive TPO's in the future.

8. Larger scale tree felling requires a Felling License from the Forestry Commission and the Club have secured one. Details of this are not publicly available, but if as the Club states, it relates to Willows, Silver Birch, and Spruce and this will limit the amount of tree felling of other species they can carry out to no more than 5 cubic metres of growing trees per calendar quarter, as long as no more than 2 cubic metres are sold. This means limited felling can take place on the site, but not large-scale works.
9. The decision for the committee to make is whether or not the Order should be confirmed and made permanent or recorded as unconfirmed which would end the protection it provides. Whilst it appears that the risk to the trees is low, given the selective nature of the TPO, it does not adversely affect the use of the 16th hole. Smaller and younger trees were not protected with the view that this would allow the Golf Club some flexibility if their intention was to allow some visibility through the group. Given the concerns raised by a member of the Club, confirming the Order will err on the side of caution and offer some piece of mind. Confirming the TPO would require the Club to apply to the Council if they wished to prune or fell the trees and the Council recognises that lifting canopies to allow access below them would be appropriate management. Whilst having to apply to prune the trees may be an inconvenience to the Club as it requires some prior planning, it is not considered unreasonable and there are no fees connected to a TPO application, there is also a right to appeal if the Council were to refuse such an application.
10. Given the importance placed on protecting the environment in the Council's corporate strategy and the concerns raised by the member of public it is considered that confirming the TPO would be prudent.

RECOMMENDATION

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Stanton on the Wolds No.1 Tree Preservation Order 2023 be confirmed without modification.