

Stocks Green Plane Tree

Report for Oakington & Westwick Parish Council meeting 9 January 2023

The tree on Stocks Green is in excess of 120 years old. These trees can grow to at least 300 years old and perhaps many more than that. They simply have not been grown in England for much longer than that so no-one really knows. Some grow to a height of 100 feet with a commensurate width of root spread.

A number of city councils have banned further planting of London Planes because of the proven damage they cause to surrounding street infrastructure: paths, roads, drains etc.

The London Plane on the green has now reached the stage in its growth when it is beginning to present problems to its surroundings. It will continue to present the same problems for the rest of its life, maybe 200 years into the future.

The situation on Stocks Green is complicated by the presence of the two lime trees and the conifer hedge.

Together with the plane tree they suck moisture out of the clay subsoil as they search for moisture in dry spells.

Before undertaking an action, the Parish Council clearly must seek further expert advice, however this advice will likely fall within the three options below. It is most helpful for us that the residents give a clear indication of their views so that we can include these in our discussions with the expert consultant.

There are several options which may be considered. This may not be the definitive list.

1. *Do nothing:* It will continue to grow taller and wider as the years go by and will continue to damage paths and walls. The damage will be repaired by people in the community (councils, parish and county and the Baptist church, for example).
2. *Curtail its growth by reducing the crown and root pruning:* Both of these measures will slow growth for a while. Eventually the tree will grow again to its present height and root width, with the same problems as before. Some form of barrier could be constructed at subsoil level to prevent root spread, once pruning was done. Once again this would only delay the inevitable until roots find a way under or over the barrier (or both). Plane trees are very resilient. One ageing specimen was cut to within two feet of the ground- it regrew branches from the stump at a very vigorous rate.

3. *Remove the tree and replace with a 'mature' native tree:* This would solve the problem. On a negative note, the tree would no longer grace the village as it has done in the past. On a positive note, there would be no bills for future generations to be paid for repairs to buildings and infrastructure.

Actions of the PC regarding tree planting:

We have recently added an additional Heritage tree in the village— a Jubilee Oak was planted on the Recreation ground a few weeks ago. It may outlive the Plane by many hundreds of years, and in time become a feature of village life as has the Plane Tree. The oak will disturb no buildings or infrastructure.

Additionally, somewhere in the region of fifty to sixty trees have been planted on the Rec in very recent times, not to mention the fruit trees in the community orchards on the rec and off Mill Road.

Many perennial bushes will also be planted on the Rec as part of the plan for the future of the Rec.

All of the new planting has been chosen to use native trees and shrubs (depending on how far back one wants to consider what is native and what is not).

References

<https://www.urbanforestnursery.com/treeprofiles/profilelondonplane.html>

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/trees/plane-tree/problems-with-london-plane-roots.htm>

Comments received from residents to 2 January 2023 posting on OakyFolk and via village e-list:

The Parish Council is looking at options to improve the area in front of the Chapel on the High Street, known as Stocks Green. The renovation will likely consist of replacing the conifers and bushes with a new fence, renewing the track and re-laying the grass over a mesh base. We will also plant flowers in appropriate spots. However, in our preparatory work, we have found that the large London Plane tree is causing damage to the Chapel; is making the path along the Green dangerous and will inhibit the re-laying of the grass. We have discussed the various options and taken advice and, reluctantly, we are considering felling the tree and replacing it immediately with as mature a new tree as is possible to obtain. Options such as cutting the roots back will simply be a short-term fix. From the advice we have received, in the medium/longer term this will be more beneficial to the Green overall.

We would welcome comments on the proposals before the 9th January Parish Council meeting. Please email; clerk@oakingtonandwestwick-pc.gov.uk

Emails:

I'm writing with concern after hearing the proposal to fell the large plain tree on Stocks Green in our village. As one of the largest (or the largest) tree in a public space in Oakington I feel we need to be very considerate when discussing felling.

I would like to know who has been consulted for advice, and hear what the advice was. Has the district council's own tree office been consulted?

The green is well used and loved by the village. The recent works at the chapel haven't been carried out in a considerate fashion. Children on their way too and from school have had to dodge mud, puddles, vans, cranes and builders on a daily basis. The damage caused by the works has only seen very modest reparations. I would ask that the Chapel owners show good will by addressing these issues before calling on the council asking to destroy a much beloved tree.

My Oakington friends write that the Parish Council is considering an application to fell one or all of the big trees close to the Baptist Chapel.

Having spent my childhood in the village, I trust the PC will accept this objection from afar. The pathway through from the school to the bakehouse is as familiar to me as lines on the palm of the hand.

The Fens, like everywhere else, need mature trees & Stocks Green is immeasurably enhanced by their presence.

Possibly the felling is wanted for enlarging a car park, or it has been suggested by building insurers or pavement maintenance contractors. In some urban situations Victorian plantings have become a threat to the infrastructure: best practice allows for tree specialists to remove less than a third of the top ["crown reduction"].

Climate change means trees are essential, not just ornamental. They contribute crucially to clean air and cooling manmade surfaces in summer, destined to heat up more and more in coming seasons.

In the heart of the community there is every reason to preserve them while humans gratefully adapt around them, letting greenery flourish along with abundant hedgerows and wildflower rich verges (Non-resident)

I am writing to you to express my alarm and dismay at your recent post about the 'renovation' of Stocks Green which includes the proposed felling of the old London Plane tree.

This magnificent tree has been in the village over 135 years, planted for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and is part of Oakington's heritage.

It is one of the largest if not the largest tree in the village accessible to the public providing shade in the summer and food and shelter for wildlife. It supports a vast amount of biomass such as aphids invertebrates & moss which are all good bird and bat food and also provides nest building materials. It is also a place where birds congregate, a few years ago it even hosted a number of waxwings. Not to mention the aesthetics for everyone locally living, a tree this size soaks up tonnes of water & CO2 each year. I'm pretty sure that the local tree officer will put a TPO on this tree for its amenity value so let's nip this idea in the bud to save everyone time and anguish.

This tree is in it's prime, fair to say there are possibly a couple of surface roots which with a little root pruning could alleviate any potential damage to the chapel.

Also replacing the area with mesh and fencing is not an environmental choice.

We look forward to hearing from you and will be voicing our opposition at the next PC meeting'

'I am getting in touch after seeing a post on the Oaky Folk Facebook page, regarding the potential removal of the mature Plane tree on Stocks Green.

The post states that the tree is preventing the laying of grass, is making the path dangerous and is damaging the chapel and that the council has taken advice that the best option is to remove the tree.

1. Please may I ask, have any arboricultural reports been carried out or arboricultural advice been sought? Are you able to share?

2. Have any structural surveys been commissioned to identify the cause of the damage to the chapel and its severity?

3. What evidence has been gathered that proves the tree is at fault for the damage to the chapel?

4. Has any kind of valuation of the tree been carried out, such as CAVAT?

5. Have any engineering solutions been considered to repair the chapel and keep the tree in situ, such as a root barrier?

6. Is the tree within a conservation area? Is the tree TPO'd?

7. Are you able to share detailed plans of the overall scheme for Stocks Green?

I am currently unconvinced the tree needs to be removed based on the reasons given in the facebook post. It has high amenity value, is a heritage tree next to a heritage building. It has been suggested that the tree was planted to commemorate Queen Victorias Golden Jubilee. Any redevelopment of this site must strive to keep and retain the tree'

I would like to add my name to the list of people who do not agree with cutting down the beautiful London Plane tree on Stocks Green.

May I add one or two reason please.

Now more than ever, trees are needed not only for our eco benefits but for the myriad of lives that are supported by those trees, either singly or as a group.

The tree is healthy and should therefore be allowed to live out it's life naturally, as we do.

There are more reasons but will not add them here. I would however be happy to voice them if a meeting is convened any time in the future.

I have just heard there are plans to fell the best tree in our village . Surely this cannot be true?.

The beautiful historic tree on Stocks Green must be over 150 years old, it's in it's prime, I remember my mother calling it The Victoria Tree.

Why does it have to be done away with?. The young tree that would no doubt replace it would have nothing of the grandeur of this beloved tree.

One of my happiest memories is when a flock of waxwings settled in it's branches due to it being the tallest tree in the area.

I will do everything I possibly can to stop this planned act of vandalism.

I am writing to you with my concerns regarding the proposals circulated by the Oakington and Westwick Parish council for the re-development of the Stocks Green area in Oakington High Street. I understand that Council is proposing 3 changes as follows:

1. To cut down the large plane tree as it is considered a danger to local building and land and replace it with a suitable mature tree that will be safe and enhance the environment.
2. Re-lay the grassed area by first laying concrete rings as a base and growing grass through these. It is argued that this will provide a more sustainable surface for grass retention and be easier to manage than the current classic foundation of earth.
3. That the large leylandii hedge bordering the area opposite the Baptist Church be removed and replaced with a wooden fence to ease and improve maintenance of the Stocks Green environment.

The Plane Tree

If the parish council has taken the necessary advice from an expert that requires the loss of the tree and a replacement then as a resident of the High Street living directly opposite Stocks Green I am grateful to the council for its suggestion that includes a mature replacement tree.

Laying a Plastic Mesh Foundation For Grass

This is neither sensible or needed to maintain the grass area. Indeed this suggestion is unwise being an increase the use of undesirable materials on the ground when grass has grown perfectly adequately using traditional methods for decades. The very poor state of the ground and the grass is entirely explained by extensive, protracted misuse of the land by building contractors for parking heavy duty and other commercial vehicles on the site for an estimated 6 years (finished only in the last year) whilst carrying out agreed works on the Baptist Church. The state of the ground has never been repaired back to its former condition and no effort has been made to do so. Instead cosmetic repairs have been carried out through either surface topsoil reseedling or turf laying on the broken ground. There does not however appear to have been an assessment for the need for more extensive expert groundwork to return the green to its previous perfectly healthy state such that grass can be grown using usual methods without the need for plastic mesh

Plastic mesh as a ground base rather than a full recovery of the land with earth and relaying turf subsequently, seems a convenience with no thought for the local environment, inconsistent with the need for maintaining a lower carbon environment and potentially increasing the need for more maintenance in the longer term.

I object to the Council's suggestion for this wholly insensitive and unacceptable strategy for the grassed land.

The Leylandii Hedge

This hedge that borders the green separated by a path from it, has recently been trimmed and tidied and much improved. The hedge provides an important environment for birds and likely other small mammals. I agree that its upkeep to a suitable standard consistent with maintaining the local ecosystem and supporting the wildlife is essential. The current plan for a fence replacement is neither consistent with the needs of the local environment nor supportive of our wildlife habitat. The loss of the plane tree will itself be a negative for wildlife and a fence will only provide further loss to our ecosystem.

I object to the Council's suggestion for this wholly insensitive and unacceptable strategy for the replacement of the leylandii hedge with a fence.

I am writing re the proposals to cut down the plane tree and reorganise the ground and environs of Stocks Green.

It seems surprising that the tree would be responsible for any structural damage to the Baptist Chapel. I say this since obviously they would have had this assessed before undertaking extensive renovations and building work. If this change is in the last year it may well be due to the dry summer. We have to respect the views of structural engineers but it would be nice if there were 2 or 3 opinions made available for the village to see.

I am incredibly concerned by the proposal to place a web on the grass area. These tend to look scruffy, to be slippery and are not environmentally friendly. Extensive damage to the grass was caused by the building work and it will take time for the area to recover. The proposal will destroy one of the few greens in the village.

Similarly replacing a hedge with a fence will be expensive, and will not be long lasting. It will also urbanise the area changing the view from a green hedge to houses. The current leylandii hedge had been reduced in height and look healthy and better than a fence. You could plant a replacement hedge in front of it as a long term strategy.

I would hope we can have a wider discussion regarding these quite critical changes and come to a more environmentally acceptable proposal. Any proposal should also consider the lime trees which are too close to the road and are damaging the plane tree as they are growing into it.

This tree is in a conservation area where all trees have protected status as stated in Greater Cambridge Shared planning document. It enhances the area's special character and is a great asset to the village.

This species shows resistance to pollution making it valuable as a street tree especially along the route taken by so many of our school children.

We need more not fewer mature trees to help combat climate change - so please don't cut it down.

Village resident for 48 years.

I am writing to lodge my outrage at the proposal to remove this historic tree in the centre of Oakington on Stocks Green and am disappointed at the lazy proposal shared. This is an amazing opportunity to invest in a central area of the village which many walk past every day to and from school or on short walks around the village.

As a village with an active sustainability group SOW and ecological and biodiversity groups I would have expected engagement with these before creating and sharing such a ridiculous proposal.

This area (footpath and track) does appear to have been affected by building work at the chapel and house adjacent so surely work to remediate the path and track would be all that's required if looking for minimal investment and if wanting to make the area more usable for the community some benches for people to sit at might be a good starting point.

This area is low maintenance at best and engagement asking about the village's ideas should have been your first approach.

The response from the Environment Action Group (EAG) is given below

One only has to go to London to see how many of these trees grow in close proximity to the built environment to see how the two coexist. **Consequently, the EAG has 3 questions:**

1. What is the actual evidence that the roots are damaging the Baptist Chapel? Can this be made public?
2. Where has the PC taken its advice and can that be made public?
3. Will the PC take a 2nd opinion, and make this advice public as well?

Benefit /Disadvantage analysis on felling the London Plane (Platanus x hispanica) at Stocks Green, Oakington, and replacing it with a sapling.

This tree is perhaps 15 m high and is situated away from the road, with two lime trees in front of it.

	Benefits of a tree the size of this London Plan
1	This mature tree is pulling in carbon dioxide at a significant rate, (possibly 22-30 kg CO2 per year)
2	It is a beautiful tree which provides many aesthetic and landscape benefits
3	It appears healthy. It could live for several hundred years (Woodland Trust)
4	The root system has an accompanying mycorrhiza system which helps to recycle nutrients to feed the tree and keep it healthy. This system would be destroyed if the tree was cut down
5	The London Plane adsorbs pollution, especially nitric oxide and particulates from the air (mainly from traffic). This why this species has been planted for generations in London.
6	May give protection from weather and predators to birds, invertebrates etc
7	It will absorb a lot of water and reduce flooding risks and soil erosion
8	It will help keep the area cooler in hot weather because of water vapour created by photosynthesis

	Possible disadvantages
1	Its root growth is likely to be about the same size as its top growth. There are concerns about the roots undermining the structure of the Baptist Church building. I believe, before the felling of this tree is considered, there should be clear evidence of this risk. The building is some 11 metres from the trunk and the perimeter of the canopy is quite close to the building. Root growth near the church should be small
2	The tree stops some light reaching the grass underneath the tree so the growth of grass is suffering. This has upset people who wish to park on this grass which can become muddy. Maybe this calls for a change of thinking and that cars could be parked in the road and only those who are disabled should be permitted to park on the grass. The alternative is grass under the trees and parking only at the end away from the road, perhaps after putting down a gravel surface
3	The felling of this tree is likely to cost several hundreds of pounds
4	The sapling will not repeat the benefits of a mature tree for twenty years or so
5	The sapling will require management for 3-4 years including watering
6	This type of tree emits a lot of tree pollen, not good for people with breathing problems

The 2 lime trees are growing into the plane tree. If the decision is for the latter to remain, the lime trees should be coppiced. Maybe they should be coppiced whether the London Plane remains or not.

Other observations:

1. Apart from the felling cost, stump removal alone will cost several hundred pounds (Brookfield charge £100 per foot diameter at ground level).
2. If it has to be removed, perhaps the stump could be used as a central table for a circular seat?
3. Or the stump could be chainsaw carved into a feature?
4. Replacing this tree with another will be difficult because of the complex root system and the need for several years watering.
5. There is no need to replace one tree on PC land because the PC has planted 19 in 2020, 22 hornbeam plus the oak in December 2022 - all on PC land.
6. What were the original covenants concerning Chapel use? Or were these oral? Or what 10+ year evidence of use relates?

Comments on *replacing the conifers and bushes with a new fence, renewing the track and re-laying the grass over a mesh base. We will also plant flowers in appropriate spots.*

If the conifers and bushes are replaced by a fence, we feel it will be essential to have climbing plants to cover the fence to give a 'green' feel to it.

If grass is re-laid over a mesh base, can a mesh that is environmentally friendly be used, i.e. something other than plastic.

EAG
06/1/23

OakyFolk Facebook: (Comments from those who have not emailed separately)

The tree is in a conservation area, stocks green has been damaged by the building works and should be repaired at the builders expense. Should the parish council be wasting good money demolishing a beautiful tree. There are many more things the council could spend the hard earned money people pay for. The path can be made safe at a much reduced cost
I agree, there may be other ways to save the tree and protect the Chapel foundations. Who will do the research?
Please can this decision be delayed. I think there should be wider consultation, perhaps put this in the Oakington and Westwick Journal for a start. I would hate to see the tree cut down.
what! Its a daily delight and a star in the village ...
As for the other ideas grass on a mesh tends to be unsuccessful and there has never been a significant problem with the grass except caused by building works. As far as replacing the conifers with a fence, this will be expensive, unsightly and will release carbon stored in the conifers. Again, let's have a wider consultation
I disagree with the felling of this tree
how do you fix the problem with the roots that are lifting the path and making a trip hazard aslo they said the roots are damaging the building.its not a simple job as just cut the tree.that is why they are asking what can they do?
This magnificent tree is part of Oakingtons heritage, planted for queen Victoria's golden jubilee, provides shade in the summer, food and shelter for wildlife, soaks up tons of water and CO2 and is a beautifull old specimen in it's prime. A little root pruning perhaps let's not get carried away
I, like many parents, do not consider it dangerous otherwise we would not walk our children to school past it every day. Of all the things the Parish Council could be turning its attention to, this seems completely unnecessary. I would like to fully understand why the tree is a problem for the church building. I'm unable to attend the meeting on Monday as I'm working but urge as many as possible to attend and also to email, clerk@oakingtonandwestwick-pc.gov.uk , if they dispute the cutting down of this old and very beautiful tree.
That tree means a lot too everyone who's grown up in the village. I can't say about other children. But when I was a kid we used to play hide and seek around it, just run around it. If it not grown (which I doubt it's grown in the past 20yrs) It can't have done any damage to the chapel. You need to keep as much nature in the village as possible. Please don't cut it down. (I haven't got PC email. But feel free to forward this on to them). Thanks for looking after our village.
I love that tree, it would be a huge shame if it were cut down.

If the PC are saying it is causing damage to the chapel it must have been doing so for some time since the tree has been there as long as the chapel if not longer, why therefore is this application only happening now? Why has the damage only just come to light? Puzzling. It is as you say a very beautiful and old tree that provides a public amenity to the entire village. My understanding is that the Parish Council does not support the cutting down of such trees so it seems out of character that they should be leading on this.

What tree surgeons are willing to cut down this beautiful old tree?

Why does this tree not have a TPO on it?

Why did the PC not post this on Oaky Folk as well as their own page, given the significance of the area and tree?

Perhaps the chapel has subsidence? Just a thought. Especially given the long dry summer. But then why replace with another tree?

It would be a terrible shame to lose this loved and lovely tree 😞

The tree (and the chapel) is in the Oakington Conservation Area, so consent will have to be granted by the District Council before it is cut down. You might therefore want to write also to our District Councillors to get their support (or otherwise!) for the protection of the tree. Their details are here <https://scambsmoderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD>

I love the tree too. Does it have a TPO?

I will Happily look through the structural engineers report if they are willing to share their findings. Once viewed I will get some free advice from the structural engineer I have used for last 20 years.

Dear Parish Council,

I learned with dismay that there is a proposal to fell the plane tree on Stokes Green.

I strongly object to this proposal. I enclose a description of the beautiful tree.

I hope you will add this objection to those I am sure you have already received.

Yours faithfully,



LONDON PLANE *Platanus* × *hispanica* Muenchh.**Pl. 24**Syn. *P.* × *acerifolia* (Ait.) Willd.; *P.* × *hybrida* Brot.

Hybrid between the Oriental Plane and the American Plane, *P. orientalis* × *P. occidentalis*. The latter scarcely grows in Britain and the hybrid probably arose in Spain or S. France in about 1650. First planted in England in about 1680 at Ely and Barnes, Surrey (both trees still magnificent and healthy). Abundant in town and city streets, squares and parks and frequent in large gardens in England S. of the Pennines, less common north to mid-Scotland, rare north to Ross-shire, infrequent in Ireland. 45m at Bryanston, Dorset; 35 × 8.4m at Bishop's Palace, Ely, Cambs.

Bark. Until large, dark grey or brown, large flakes falling to leave whitish-yellow patches; large boles reddish-brown or grey-brown with fine vertical fissures and folds.

Crown. Tall-domed on long bole; old trees immensely domed, tall and spreading, large branches twisting; bole sometimes heavily burred.

Foliage. Shoot at first pale green covered in loose white fluff, later orange-brown or purple-brown, bloomed lilac at base. Bud red-brown, ovoid, slightly curved tip, 6–8mm on large, protruding base. Leaf unfolds pale brownish grey-green in mid-May from fine hairs soon shed. Shape varies greatly with clone, several of which are in use in London. Ely tree has typical, large leaves, to 20 × 23cm, short-cuneate base sweeping round entire or with one tooth each side to basal lobes; five big lobes cut only to within 14cm of base; central lobe (6cm deep) with five curved teeth each side or five one side and three the other, each tooth large, mucronate, 2–20mm deep; entire for last 3–4cm to acute tip; rich, shiny bright green with dense close wool on veins above, paler beneath, the veins more woolly; petiole 5cm, dull red-brown with dense, close brown wool. Variation in depth of lobing is considerable, one form has a leaf 14 × 12cm with broad, triangular lobes cut one third to the leaf-base and with three curved teeth each side. Another, 11 × 11cm, is abruptly cuneate and cut to half way. Young trees retain broad, ovate, toothed stipules.

Flowers and fruit. Catkin with 2–6 flower-heads, male and female on separate catkins, 6–8cm long. Males yellowish, soon shed. Females crimson in mid-May, globose. Fruit brown, seeds scatter in spring, cylindrical, ringed by hairs at one end.

Growth. Remarkably vigorous even under very trying conditions, provided it has warm summers, hence biggest mostly south and east of Cotswolds. In park in C. London, one 23 × 3m in 57 years. Such growth in (until recently) sooty air is due to short season in leaf and glossy leaf easily washed by rain. Other trees very late in leaf and liking the warmth of London are *Catalpa*, *Robinia*, *Liquidambar* and *Taxodium*. More important in streets is the ability of the roots to function in compacted and covered soil. Never known to blow down, rarely affected seriously by pest or disease, although some shoots killed annually after leafing out, by Anthracnose (*Gnomonia veneta*). Trees nearly 300 years old are in full vigour, so this species promises to provide S. England with its biggest trees on a grand scale in the future.

'SUTTNERI' Very rare, strikingly white-variegated form, some leaves inside crown completely white. 22 × 2.5m (Puttenham, Surrey).

Similar species. *P. orientalis* (p. 272).

T.B.E.

S

17 Church View.

Oakington

CB24 3AU

5th January 2023

Tree Wardens Report on the London Plane, (*Platanus x acerifolia*), Stocks Green.

This is an independent report, to date, I have not been asked to comment on the above tree.

I have been Parish Council Tree Warden since 2008, when I signed up Andrew Grimmer was tree officer for the SCDC, there was more funding available, we were able to attend quarterly tree training one-day seminars. I also have a degree which encompasses Environmental Science.

It is reported somewhere that the above tree was planted around Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. making the specimen around one hundred and sixty, for this species it is in its prime. The London Plane gets the name from a unique trait that it carries, in times of stress the tree has the ability to shed its bark to no detrimental effect, in truth, for today's current environment situation this has a major advantage. Used for tree planting in the capital hence 'London Plane' the species absorbs pollutants in its outer bark or cambium, then annually sheds and replaces it, making it ideal for survival in heavy atmospheric pollution in the city. Our tree showed a prime example of this in 2018, following extreme heat we had a thunderstorm, the next day this Plane and the other two Plane in the High Street shed their bark, on cue. Another asset being that they rarely shed their branches.

The Baptist Chapel has always been prone to structural movement, due to the Victorian problem associated with a lack of foundation. Again, another contributory factor could be the recent changes in groundwater level, combined with the renovation work. undermining the structure. We sit on alluvial deposits, the Kimmeridge clay will be affected by the current lowered groundwater issues, causing shrinkage.

My recommendations are that the Parish Council carry out an independent unbiased structural survey on the Chapel.

Secondly, that they carry out a full structural survey of the tree, to include ultrasound, with a qualified arboriculturalist, not tree surgeon. I recommend Eastern Tree Surgery, they are a member of the Association of Arboriculturalists. Who will then advise of what measures can be put in place to preserve the tree and reduce its impact, if any, on the Chapel.

Julie Grove

Cllr. Mrs J. A. Grove, BSc (Hons), Tree Warden.

Oakington and Westwick Parish Council.

Stocks Green London Plane – additional comments from residents 6 Jan 23 – 9 Jan 23

Why on earth should the Parish council, namely us the payers be responsible to correct the damage done by the builders and users of the Chapel. The Green was perfectly alright prior to all the work. Were the conifers the property of the council or were they planted by the householder. They seem to match the ones at the front of the house.

As for the Plane tree it is a village feature and is in a conservation area. To remove a tree planted in 1888 is an obscenity. It needs to be left as removal is far more likely to cause more damage to the Chapel. They have lived side by side for almost all their lives. Many people I have spoken to are strongly against the trees removal. The path could be made totally safe at a minimal cost. The huge Beech tree next to the vicarage is closer to the building, should that also be removed, of course NOT.

While I am writing I feel that the public footpath across the entrance to the Drift is in a far more dangerous state and needs correcting before somebody gets injured.

I would hope that the fate of the tree is put out for a more general consultation as the Oakyfolk facebook page confirms the strength of opinion against its removal. The cost of the suggested works would be staggering and the money could be spent on more pressing matters.

I would like to add my voice to those who object to the felling of the Plane Tree on Stocks Green. Although I can see that the roots are making the surface uneven, this is no reason to fell such a perfectly healthy and majestic tree which gives much visual delight and provides a As it is perfectly healthy and such a majestic tree and home for birds to rest and nest in.

In response to the notification of the options to improve Stocks Green by replacing the conifers with a fence, re-laying grass over mesh and removing the London Plane Tree as detailed in a post on Facebook I have a few queries/objections:

Replacing the conifers with a fence: The area is within a conservation area, and from our own experience that is not allowed as it's not in keeping with the 'look' of the conservation area (or is that only a requirement when you want a fence to stop young children from running into a road). What is the reason for removing the conifers? They don't seem to be problem, there's no mention of their roots causing an issue. What justification is there for this action? Is the issue maintenance? Is that a valid reason to remove the hedge that provides habitat for wildlife, and looks far nicer than a fence. If it's because the current hedge is not in the best condition, then replace it with a new hedge as a fence will still need maintenance.

Relaying grass: As per one of the comments on the post on Facebook, the grass was recovering but is now not doing so well. I haven't seen cars parked on it, but if cars are parking on it then that will be causing the damage. Is a small barrier/fence possible along the track to prevent access to cars? But leave the side by the footpath open so that if children want to play on the grass they can have access to it.

Removal of the London Plane tree: it seems a massive shame to cut this down, if it's an issue can it not be trimmed and the roots trimmed? And the foundations of the chapel fortified/strengthened? The tree is used by wildlife and has been here since Queen Victoria. Also, replacing the tree with another mature tree that is going to grow will only move the problem a few years - the new tree will have roots that will grow in all directions, including towards the foundations of the chapel. The justification in the Facebook post that this will be better for the mid to long term doesn't seem to factor in that a new tree's roots could also damage the chapel in the mid to long term - or will that be factored in once the old tree is removed and then no tree will be planted to replace it?

Repairing the track would be good, as currently it gets so muddy after rain - although my children will be disappointed, it's one of the places we go to in the village after it's rained so that we can splash in the muddy puddles that always form there.

Unfortunately, I don't think I can make the meeting on Monday due to childcare, but I hope my views and the views on Facebook are acknowledged, and potentially more options are explored and suggested to the community before a decision is made

I would like to add my voice to the growing number of people in the village objecting to the felling of the London Plane tree on Stocks Green. To cut down this tree would be great shame and a loss to the village character.

- Why was the 'damage to the Chapel' not identified when the building work was carried out recently?
- Why is it necessary for the PC to spend money re-laying the grass over a mech base? If this is public land and a 'green' area, as its name implies, it should NOT be used as a car park and bollards should be installed to stop parking happening. If this were to be done the grass would soon recover. I strongly object to Parish money being spent to accommodate the parking habits of the attendees of the Strict and Particular Chapel, who could quite easily park on the High Street.

I would like to raise our objection to the proposed felling of the Plane Tree in Stock Green, High Street, Oakington.

It is clearly a beautiful mature tree which adds natural historic character to our village, not to mention an excellent roost for birds.

The idea of felling such a tree, when the nation is set on planting millions of trees to help offset CO2 emissions and salvage what biodiversity we have left, seems to me at best ignorant and at worst vandalism.

Thanks your for your time in reading this objection.

Thank you for circulating this information. I shan't be able to attend the meeting, and I hope this comment is not too late.

I am dismayed at the prospect of the village losing a mature tree in this way. You do not suggest that the tree itself is diseased or suffering from any problem beyond being in proximity to the Baptist Chapel.

This article in The Guardian provides examples of how beneficial mature trees are
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/02/a-uk-tree-provides-hundreds-of-pounds-of-benefits-a-year-report-finds>

The article lists among economic benefits the removal and storage of CO2, the removal of air pollutants (this is relevant to the case in point here, as the tree stands in an area where there is a lot of traffic with school drop offs), and slowing the flow of rainwater. There is also the food and shelter it provides for countless birds and invertebrates.

It seems a tremendous waste of this phenomenal resource to chop it down when it has taken over a hundred years for it to reach this size. Anything that might replace it will most obviously take decades to come anywhere close to the value of this London Plane tree.

I would like to add my voice to the growing number of people in the village objecting to the felling of the London Plane tree on Stocks Green. To cut down this tree would be great shame and a loss to the village character.

- Why was the 'damage to the Chapel' not identified when the building work was carried out recently?
- Why is it necessary for the PC to spend money re-laying the grass over a mech base? If this is public land and a 'green' area, as its name implies, it should NOT be used as a car park and bollards should be installed to stop parking happening. If this were to be done the grass would

soon recover. I strongly object to Parish money being spent to accommodate the parking habits of the attendees of the Strict and Particular Chapel, who could quite easily park on the High Street.

I would like to register my disagreement to the proposed felling of the London Plane tree on Stocks Green in Oakington.

I will attend the Parish Council meeting tonight.

On hearing about the proposed changes to Stocks Green, I would like to ask about the level of investigation that has been undertaken to decide that the large London Plane tree needs to be felled.

I would like to better understand the costs vs benefits of such a impactful action.

Who would it's removal benefit from the Oakington community?

In light of the global climate emergency that we are living in, it would be uplifting and motivating to see the council make decisions that demonstrate their understanding of the needs of our natural environment and that by protecting it we support the wellness of our community. I can appreciate many of us find it an uncomfortable and inconvenient reality to live with much of the time.

Therefore, felling a healthy mature tree that has the potential to live for about 400 years while it benefits us by capturing carbon and providing stability to our local environment (water table, tolerant of drought/heat, wildlife provision) seems like an alarmingly short sighted decision.

I understand this will be discussed further as the parish council meeting this evening.

Dear Members of the Parish Council

I am writing to express my disappointment that the large tree at Stocks Green is being considered for removal. I am yet to understand or see the evidence for its removal and how its removal will benefit the village.

Indeed, to cut down such an old, beautiful and majestic tree when it is enjoyed by so many, especially the children who run around it on the way to school and back, is mystifying.

At a time when we should be doing all we can to protect nature, rather than buildings, cutting this tree down is nonsensical and borders on vandalism.

We trust that the Parish Council will take the correct course of action and dismiss this proposal outright.

I am emailing in opposition to the proposed felling of the tree on Stocks Green. No information seems to be readily available as to why felling of a large, majestic and mature tree is considered necessary or appropriate and in the absence of this I consider it a move by the parish council that negatively impacts the local natural environment. Nesting places for large birds, shelter for insects and small creatures should be maintained. If the tree has an impact on the surrounding houses, wouldn't pruning (within reason) be a sensible alternative? If it is diseased, rotting and dangerous it would be useful to be able to discover that information and know what replanting will be undertaken to replace the tree.