

Proposal for two Oak trees in Elms Park



Introduction

The following document has been written for the Town Council's consideration in relation to two specific trees located in Elms Park.

The aim is to highlight an opportunity for the community to enjoy the trees after their removal. To explain and promote the recycling opportunities and offer my services to work with the Town Council on the project. Including liaison with contractors, to generate awareness, learning and excitement within the community for the proposed project.

My name is Ben Scoble, as a Wheatley boy I've been getting to know Thame my whole life. I have been resident of Thame for the last eight years, and married with two children and a dog. I see Thame as a very important part of my family's future and am increasingly proud to call Thame home.

After leaving H M Armed Forces I entered the world of arboriculture and work on trees. Through this I entered forestry and have a fast amount of working knowledge in both these similar yet very separate fields. Trees and the wider environment has become my passion as well as working trade, through this innate interest I have made many relationships and gained further knowledge in the use of wood in all its forms, all of which I offer to the Town Council in this proposal.

The Trees

I am often in the park and have watched the decline of the biggest, oldest Oak in the park over the last three years. So sudden a decline in such a large tree suggests an aggressive fungal or bacterial pathogen has been at play. The rusty brown bleeding from the stem (canker) and regression of its crown signal its demise. It now stands completely dead. This may actually prove to be a positive thing as experience of felling mature Oaks in forestry has taught me that often a

dead standing tree renders some of the most promising English Oak timber as the pathogen responsible for its death has been so swift it (or other saporific fungi) has not had time to eat through the wood itself, this will have relivence further in the proposal. In another setting, a field for example, a tree like this can be a wonderful sight. A large dead standing Oak that poses no threat to man nor beast can stand, be baked by sun, scoured by winds to become a venerable grand tree that can stand for another hundred years and render so much to the enviroment.

However this setting is neither a forest or a field, it is a public park. From a risk assement point of view the tree, and its sister (which exhibits advanced symptoms of its older sister), it is in the red risk and poses a risk of failure, if they fall the targets within striking distance include nearly the whole of the play park, a well used footpath, the park and neighbouring John Hampden Primary School. It couldn't really get more pertinent for pre failure action, I'd expect an arboricultural survey to suggest felling both trees within 12 months.

The operational removal of the trees by a qualified contractor is one of the most efficient ways possible. One of the contractors I know will use the timber as firewood, the majority is arboricultural waste. It will be added to the pile of other timber on local farms and ground down into biomass fuel for farm heating needs, which isnt so bad. If the work is put into a forestry perspective, which its not, as part of a planned harvest of Oak trees, which its not, the Town Council would receive payment from the contractor for felling it, who would then sell the timber either standing or on the forest floor to the highest bidder. There is a gulf between both options which my proposal aims to bridge, both in cost and onward use of the timber.

In the map below the red circles show the approxinmate location and canopy spread of the two trees in question.



Aims

My aim is:

- to use the felling of these trees to produce as many products and art as possible for the benefit of Thame by local craftsmen, trades and artists
- to make this project a story of the tree that can be promoted and celebrated

- to make this project financially viable by not incurring excessive costs other than those which will be already expended in the necessary works.

Vision

The felling of the trees will render a lot of material timber if done in an educated manner. The timber can be used to make benches, signage and art for Elms Park. This is a very broad statement and I will explore the specifics I have in mind. Aside from the products produced for the good of the community, a further range of products, to be auctioned through private sale locally could fund at minimum the purchase of replacement trees in the park and at maximum profit to off set any additional expenses incurred within in the project.

The key to the success of this will be tying in the right local people to whom the Oak is a resource and material for their craft. This is the hard bit.

Drawing on local people I know I propose to draw into the project:

- sculptural carvers
- green work workers
- woodland craft groups
- mobile timber milling operators
- furniture makers
- wood turners and engravers.

I also have professional relationships in the locality with major forestry, static sawmills and major tree surgery companies. I propose to tie in all of these parties to plan and coordinate all works into a functioning project.

I do not have any financial interest in this venture. My primary ambition is to see an old tree used to the maximum of its potential, that it be celebrated and not lumped into worthless arboricultural waste. All I ask is that time I spend in the working week on the project is paid for at the same rate I would be missing from my usual days labour.

I have experience in site coordination, all real time skills in undertaking the physical tasks, the qualifications required, managing small teams, complying with Risk Assessments and Method Statements and the planning process. All of which I offer to the Council to help plan and coordinate the project.

I am under no illusion as to the reality of pulling this together and the potential difficulties. However, it is possible, and being led by a passion for trees, their use and form, I feel there is an opportunity to do something. To create a story and legacy of this venerable old tree and its sickly younger sister to be proud of. By using the knowledge and passion of those around us, by uniting them in this we can create opportunity here that is locally, environmentally and community beneficial. I ask only that the council consider what I have put into words here and a chance to present my ideas and vision.

Some food for thought

Below are just some examples of art and structure made of Oak. Really this is to just try and set out something that may inspire individuals. Really imagination is the limit and the passion of

makers and crafters. I have some thoughts and ideas that are not demonstrated here and would be keen to develop them further in conjunction with the Town Council.



Turned Oak Bird Feeder/Bath



Rustic Oak Bird Box



Oak Pendants



Small Oak Animal Carving



Oak Stool



Large Oak Beam Bench



Engraved Oak Beam



Rustic Oak Park Bench



Oak Chainsaw Carving