

RHU & SHANDON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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5th March 2025

24/02065/TPO: Proposed felling and reduction in height of 18 various trees The Gardens Ardenconnell Mews Rhu Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute G84 8LS

Rhu and Shandon Community Council object to the above application.

The trees for this proposed felling lie within the grounds of Ardenconnell House and Mews. The area of land is between the main house and the property owned by the applicant, and on land shared with the 25 residents of the Mews and Ardenconnell House. This is within the curtilage of a listed building. The trees form part of a woodland which is integrated into the wider woodland around the main house. Features of woodland within a garden are evident. Adjacent is long established plantation origin (LEPO) woodland and closer to the house is a garden with woodland features. All three types of woodland display features typical of ancient woodland as well as evidence of historical woodland management. It is evident that all sections of woodland along with the grounds of Ardenconnell House and Mews would benefit from a more active and carefully planned woodland management strategy.

It is, however, inappropriate to propose woodland removal from one section of the grounds in isolation and out of context from the surrounding woodland. This is a very complex mosaic of interconnected woodland features and the proposed works will be detrimental to the wider health and survival of the ancient woodland features. As well as considering the wider environmental impact of this proposed felling, any good woodland management plan is developed in a consensual, collaborative manner. There is strong evidence that this proposal is being conducted in isolation and for the benefit of the applicant who seeks to gain a view with additional lighting for his garden. It would be inappropriate to grant felling permissions for individual gain without the consensus of all the owners within an agreed strategy for the garden as a whole.

High quality information is the next key to developing a strategy for which consensus is to be sought. Unfortunately, the applicant has submitted a tree inspection report which does not adhere to accepted British Standards for tree surveys, BS5837:2012. It has not been possible to check or verify the qualifications of the company writing the report as this company (SC602675) appears to have been struck off the register and dissolved on 17.12.2019. There are multiple errors and inaccuracies within the tree report and we suggest that the applicant be required to withdraw this application and advised that a more comprehensive report, positioned within the wider context of the surrounding woodlands is required if resubmission is planned. At its simplest level the nonconformity of the tree survey is evidenced by

- a) The tree survey plan is inaccurate, not to scale and there is no correlation between the trees listed in text, numbered on the map and marked on the ground in the woodland;
- b) There is no 11 point schedule presented for each specific tree;
- c) There is no 5 point tree constraint plan for each tree.

Some examples of the inaccuracies include:

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- i. None of the markings on the trees referred to in the text and map match up with the numbering written on the trees;
 - ii. The tree identified as number 1 and across the road is referred to as being a dead "Beach" tree, (what is a beach tree?) This tree is difficult to identify as it has not been marked or numbered. The most likely tree referred to is in fact a Lime tree which is very much alive. It shows evidence of pollarding relatively recently, perhaps about 30 years ago, and in its earlier life was coppiced and is now multi-stemmed. The original central stump shows evidence of rot as would be expected but the newer tree limbs are healthy. Active management might benefit this tree but there is no indication for its removal;
 - iii. The tree referred to as 2 is not a "beach" tree and bears the marking of number 1. It is an ash tree, very much alive and is not covered in ivy;
- d) Ivy is cited as a cause for trees perishing and a reason to remove trees. Current view on ivy in woodlands does not support this theory and trees with ivy are generally not only healthy but are wonderful habitats for biodiversity;
- e) The silver birch trees, 10 & 11 in text, possibly 6, 7 and 8 on the map are not dead. One is in poor condition but as it poses no threat to any surrounding structure would be best left as standing deadwood anyway;
- f) The yew tree referred to as number 18 in text and on map is in fact an ancient tree of significance. It is completely unreasonable to propose works to this tree described as "small crown lift (annual trim)" This tree deserves an individual tree management plan and to grant permission for this work based on so loose a description of the works is inconceivable. This tree should be photographed, mapped and any individual branch to be cut should be clearly identified and agreed with the consent of the owners before any consent or action be allowed;
- g) No evidence is provided for the rationale for felling either an unhealthy or a healthy tree.

The applicant's house is too far from the vast majority of these trees to suffer in the event that any of the trees should fall. Access to an improved view is not a reason to overturn a TPO. If the applicant seeks more light for his garden then removal of the surrounding invasive non-native species Laurel would result in a much greater gain.

The proposed tree works are not compatible with the objectives of NPF4, policies 2 & 3 as there will be an adverse impact on biodiversity, the natural environment and will be negative for nature solutions.

We are of the opinion that permissions to fell these TPO trees should be withheld and further submissions should only be considered if presented with evidence of a management plan based on collaboration with and consensus of the landowners. This is a historic property and the woodland displays many features which would qualify for inclusion within the ancient woodland inventory. We strongly suggest that permission for felling of a section in isolation, without regard for the wider context and consensus, is not granted.

Jean Cook.

Jean Cook
Secretary, Rhu & Shandon Community Council

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