

objection.

Appendix A.

ack
31/12/09
PF.

ULCOMBE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr V Hampton
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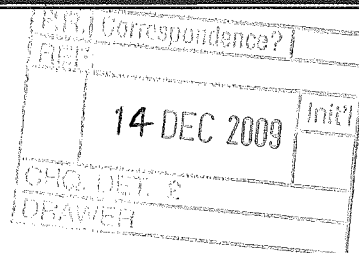


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Team Leader,
Landscape, Conservation and Design,
Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House,
King Street,
Maidstone,
Kent,
ME15 6JQ.



Wednesday 9th December 2009

Dear Team Leader,

Ref: TPO 27 of 2009 – 406 / 134 / 10

Thank you for the notification of a Tree Preservation Order on the Dawn Redwood on land described as being 'adjacent Ulcombe Primary School, The Street, Ulcombe.' I am minded to inform you that this land is part of Ulcombe CE Primary School, not simply land adjacent to it, and that it is part of our school playing fields. I am also minded to point out that you have informed me through this letter that I have twenty-eight days to lodge any objections, but only have until Christmas Day. As there will probably not be anyone within your staff team available on that day, the reality is that I have until Thursday 24th December, which is only seventeen days from the day on which the Order was received. Perhaps there is a procedural issue which ought to be addressed here? However, these are tangents, as the principle reason for my writing is to raise my objections to the placing of this TPO as I feel in the strongest possible way that the reasons given are not valid.

The Dawn Redwood is, of course, a very tall tree and so it could be prominent visually. My first point is that although this is a fact with which I have no argument, there are actually very few locations within the village from where the tree forms part of the skyline. From most places within the village, the tree is not prominent and it is often obscured from view by other trees, or obscured from view by buildings including the school and houses on The Street. The tree itself is set back from the road and becomes only close to fully visible when standing on The Street, near the school entrance, facing westward. As the road is approximately north-south in direction there are few, if any, people who often see the tree clearly. Indeed the only place from which the tree can be seen completely is when on the plot of land where the tree is situated, which is private land, owned by Kent County Council, or when by the gate to that piece of land. To this end I find it incredible that it should be thought to be making a valuable contribution to the character of Ulcombe. The tree, in my opinion, adds little or nothing to the character of the village since it is within an area where there are other trees, including others of similar height.

The second point I wish to make is that this tree cannot be an amenity, since anyone wishing to use it would have to first trespass. As referred to previously, the land is private in the ownership of Kent County Council. My understanding of the word is that the tree, if it were an amenity, would be something to be used. I can think of only one use, which is for climbing. Since health and safety on the site is principally my responsibility (with support from the Governing Body) I know that no one is allowed to climb the tree. Therefore I am unable to comprehend how this Dawn Redwood is an amenity when even those of us with access to the land do not use it.



Healthy Schools



Eco-Schools
in Kent



The third point is that I am of the opinion that having a Tree Preservation Order placed on the tree in question is simply an attempt by someone to block the proposed improvements to the school, and little to do with the tree's attributes or what it brings to the village. This opinion has been formed primarily, but not solely, due to the timing of this order, but also from anecdotal evidence. Since Ulcombe Parish Council unanimously supported the proposal for the school's improvement and all that it entails, I am disappointed that anyone has seen fit to apply for this TPO without any discussion with the school, and potentially delay proceedings for no gain to themselves or the wider community. Indeed I have it on very good authority that at a recent meeting of the Parish Council there was little if any support for this TPO and that there may even be some consideration given to making objections to you yourselves. I believe the Parish Council are holding an extra-ordinary meeting to discuss their response to the TPO in the very near future.

As you will be aware, planning permission for the land may be influenced by the placement of an Order on a tree. It will be a great cause of distress to the staff, governors and parents involved with the school if this influence on planning were to impact upon our own development. The issue of the sale and development of the land on which the Dawn Redwood is situated is intrinsically linked with our own planned improvements, since we are using the capital from the sale of the land to fund an extension to include a new entrance and a new library area. At the present time our fiction library is by the Staff Room and the non-fiction library is in the corridor. These improved facilities will then also be made available to the wider community for a variety of activities including breakfast and after-school clubs, adult education and meetings of village groups such as the Parochial Church Council.

The situation in which we have found ourselves is that KCC have declared the land surplus, but, despite these times of great financial difficulty, we as a school have managed to gain written assurance from the authority that the proceeds from the sale of the land will be made available to the school to fund improvements to the building and playing areas. Therefore, it will be completely true to describe the planning consent, to be applied for in due course, as an enabling development. It will increase the value of the land and so the level of finances made available to the school will be greatly increased. We do not have, and never will have, sufficient funds to tackle these essential works on our own and this is the only means of support that we have been offered. It is vital that we take it, and very many of us would be devastated if this TPO were to affect the value of the land to the extent that we are unable to build our library and improved access and security. There will, I am sure, be no other opportunity like this, when we as a school can benefit from generosity of KCC.

For all of the reasons outlined above I hope you will be able to decide against placing a TPO permanently on the Dawn Redwood as previously identified, here at Ulcombe CE Primary School. We believe that the tree does not merit the Order, but that in fact placing such an order will have only a detrimental impact on the ease of passage for the plans of KCC for the land on which the tree is situated. This could have an extremely adverse affect on our own planned improvements which would be catastrophic. If there are any other issues which you wish to raise I would be only too pleased to help in any way I can. Please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details at the top of this letter should you wish to do so.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Vincent Hampton,
Head Teacher

