



**WOKINGHAM DISTRICT VETERAN TREE ASSOCIATION  
WOKINGHAM TREE WARDEN NETWORK**

[www.wdvta.org.uk](http://www.wdvta.org.uk)

**Comments on the Planning Application for the redevelopment of Elms Field, the Paddocks car park and Wellington House.**

**Planning application number 153125**

The Officers and some local members of Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association (WDVTA), in association with the Wokingham Tree Warden Network, wish to make the following comments on the tree-related aspects of this planning application.

1. As we stated in our earlier comments on previous plans and during the design of the current plans, we would like to record again that we particularly regret the need to fell the mature English oak trees (T12 and T30), the mature London plane (T24) as well as the row of lime trees bordering Demark Street (T1, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8 and T10) which have been recorded on our veteran tree survey.
2. However, we do appreciate that many of our comments have been responded to and that the new scheme includes a stand-alone English oak, a stand-alone London Plane and several common lime trees, which in time will recreate a similar degree of high and medium quality trees in the area.
3. We also appreciate that the plans include saving the Pride of India tree (T85) by relocating it into a more appropriate site within the Elms Field itself, and that the other trees that we have recorded on our veteran tree survey (T45, T57, T68, T78 and T81) would be to be retained.
4. We are pleased that the plans include 12 *Ulmus 'New Horizon'* trees. The planting of elms to reflect the historic name of the area, Elms Field, has been important to us, but clearly the variety used needs to be able to withstand Dutch elm disease.

We have looked at information on this elm variety and, while it is reported to have some resistance to Dutch elm disease, this is not guaranteed. It also appears to need monitoring to ensure a good growth habit. It is a cross between the Japanese and Siberian elm and is cultivated in America. It is difficult to see what historical reference trees of this variety might claim. Moreover it is 'architectural' in form and therefore quite different from an English elm.

We would prefer a few of these 12 elm trees to be the potentially disease resistant variety of English elm that is now available. WDVTA has planted one of these trees on Council owned land in Twyford, and so far it is doing well. We would be pleased to discuss further possible sources of such trees with the council's arboricultural consultants.

5. The plans appear to indicate that the existing hedge along the Wellington Road edge of Elms Field will be taken out and replaced with a new planting of *Ulmus glabra*, wych elm. Most of the current hedge is of English elm, *Ulmus procera*. It has been maintained at hedge height and has not fallen prey to Dutch elm disease. There is evidence that similar English elm hedges elsewhere in the borough and beyond have lasted for over 40 years since the onset of Dutch elm disease. It does have bramble and other species mixed in with it, but we consider it to be a major historically important source of English elm stock and its associated biodiversity within the borough. Of the over 7000 trees recorded in our survey, we have no elm trees of any variety. However of the surviving elm hedges we know about in the borough this is the most important. We strongly request that at least some part of this hedge is retained, improved with the removal of the brambles, definitely not replaced and potentially made a feature for the new area.
6. We see that several other areas of new hedge are planned and would be planted with *Ulmus glabra*, wych elm. Extending the number of elm hedges is a very appropriate design, given the name of the site. Consultations with advisors suggest that although wych elm, like English elm, is prone to Dutch elm disease as a tall tree, it is likely that, if kept at hedge level, it will be resistant to the disease. This relates to the fact that the elm bark beetle flies higher than normal hedge level. We would welcome further professional confirmation, on the basis of research evidence, that this is the case.
7. Overall, we feel that the species of trees that have been selected for the planting reflect the local mix of trees found around Wokingham and the numbers and varieties are a suitable mix for the planned use of the new design.
8. We wonder whether it has been stipulated anywhere in the plans what monitoring for growth, health and maintenance will be undertaken for all the new trees being planted, but especially for the 'New Horizon' elms. The experience we have with the very successful Jubilee Tree planting joint project between WBC and WDVTA, is that this monitoring over several years after the initial planting is critically important.
9. Finally, we would strongly urge that all construction workers should be fully aware of protection measures for retained trees. Experience on other construction sites suggests that this ruling needs to be applied rigorously throughout the construction period and regularly monitored.