

Badgers Mount



PARISH COUNCIL
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Mark Bradbury
Head of Economic Development and Property
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
TN13 1HG

21st October 2015

Dear Mr Bradbury

RE: Woodland West of M25 between Shacklands Road and Badgers Road, Badgers Mount

Following the meeting on 22nd September 2015 between Cllrs John Grint and Noel Wills, and Leigh Keating, we confirm the following.

Badgers Mount Parish Council is very concerned about the proposed disposal of part of Jenkins Neck Wood adjacent to the west side of the M25 motorway between Shacklands Road and Badgers Road, and east of Sunnyside, Blue Haze and F M Conway's Chelsfield Depot, Badgers Mount.

At the inquiry into the Swanley to Sevenoaks section of the M25, great importance was given to the woodland alongside the motorway providing both visual and acoustic screening. At that time the woodland was owned by the Forestry Commission, a Government Department, which would ensure that the woodland was properly maintained to preserve this screening. Some additional areas of land were also acquired and planted with trees to provide additional screening to mitigate visual and acoustic intrusion. The protection provided by all areas of woodland adjacent to the motorway was, therefore, well accepted. This woodland is the community's only effective barrier against the noise and pollution generated by the M25 and, as such is an important part of the local infrastructure.

After SDC took over responsibility of these woods, the previous owner of Sunnyside succeeded in persuading you not to clear the trees because of the assurances which had been given that they would be retained to maintain the essential screening.

In 2008, you leased part of this woodland adjacent to the Shacklands Road Cottages. This area is designated Ancient Woodland on your maps. The majority of the trees were felled to make a field for grazing horses, and coppiced sweet chestnuts have not re-grown, which they would normally start to do in the following spring. Residents report that there appears to have been an increase in noise levels from the motorway since this occurred.

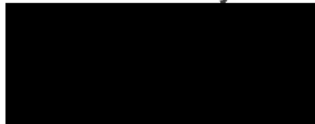
We have received a copy of the Tree Preservation Order, which has just been made on this woodland, and that this, together with the Ancient Woodland designation, should give further protection. However, this Council is sceptical about Sevenoaks District Council's ability to enforce these protections in view of what has already occurred. A TPO is not necessarily a guarantee of protection as it is sometimes ignored, and once the trees are gone, they are gone. Enforcement can only act after the event which by that time it is too late and would take decades for the barrier to re-grow. If the trees are felled following the proposed sale, the increased noise will impact on both the tranquillity of the present local community and on the value of many of the properties.

Badgers Mount Parish Council believes that the only way to ensure that the protection of the woodland is maintained is that it remains in Public Ownership. If Sevenoaks District Council is no longer prepared to carry out this function and is unable to guarantee that the woodland will not be cleared, then this Council would like to enter into discussions with Sevenoaks District Council with a view to the transfer of ownership of the woodland to Badgers Mount Parish Council.

Our view, that it is important that this woodland be retained by the public, is supported by Shoreham Parish Council and by Halstead Parish Council.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Sarah Moon.

Sarah Moon
Clerk to Badgers Mount Parish Council