

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Removal of Oak Trees in Willow Drive, Billingshurst**

Billingshurst Parish Council is saddened to report the forthcoming removal of two long-established trees on land at Willow Drive.

The trees have become a valued feature of the local landscape, and their loss will be felt by many in our community. The removal will take place following a request from a resident and their insurers, who raised concerns that the trees were contributing to damage on their property. Unfortunately taking into account all of the circumstances, the advice of the Parish Council's own insurers is also to grant landlord's consent to the removal of the trees.

Accordingly, with reluctance, the Parish Council has decided to follow the professional advice it has received in order to reach a resolution to this matter and avoid further time and resources being spent on it now and in the future.

The Parish Council's insurers undertook a great deal of work in trying to save the trees, questioning what other options had been investigated and taking into account case law and potential future financial risk to the Council. In addition, the Council commissioned its own independent report (attached), and our District Councillors also sought the advice of HDC officers as to why they felt they had no option but to grant planning permission for the trees to be felled; all of this reinforced the advice given to the Parish Council by its insurers. It was ultimately determined by all that if the trees remained, the risk of possible future action against the Parish Council was too great.

As things stand, work to remove the trees and make any repairs to property will not be funded by the Parish Council, and it is thankful that the financial cost has not had to be borne by the public purse.

The Council was able to clearly demonstrate throughout that despite comments to the contrary, it has a robust tree inspection and maintenance programme in place and that it has, over the years, sought expert advice from qualified arboriculturists and tree surgeons. The Parish Council believe this was a key consideration in it not having to meet the costs of the work, and the Parish Council will continue to do so wherever necessary to uphold the health and safety of its tree stock.

It has also been agreed with the resident's representative that replacement trees of a good size will be planted this Autumn, either at Willow Drive or another suitable location. These will contribute to the Parish Council's wider commitment to protecting and enhancing our green spaces—reflected in the planting of more than 40 new trees across Billingshurst in recent years.

\*\*\*\*\*

For all further enquiries please contact the Parish Council.

12 August 2025