

Planning Application Number: 43/26/00008

Type: Works to trees in Conservation Area

Location: St Marys Church, Church Road, Shapwick, Bridgwater,
Somerset,
TA7 9NH

Shapwick Parish Council held a planning meeting on Tuesday 15th at St Marys Church to discuss the above application.

The meeting was attended by Parish Councillors and several members of the public.

The only area of concern is the proposed removal of the group of trees T2-T6 and the potential risk that this could create for the Cedar of Lebanon T7, due to the sudden increased exposure to wind and weather.

This risk was raised by a suitably qualified person and is supported by the information below sourced from the reputable RHS source.

The Council and other attendees appreciate that work is required on the T2-T6 group, not least because of the safety risk to the adjacent allotment area.

The Council would like confirmation that the possible risk to the Cedar T1 has been fully considered.

The report does offer an alternative Option 1 in Point 4.3 which would entail a “reduction” rather than “removal”. The council would like confirmation that this option has been fully explored and that due weight has been given to the “nature value” of this group.

There was a strong consensus amongst all attendees that the reduction option be fully considered as a preference, and that further advice should be obtained from alternative sources.

According to **Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)** principles and arboricultural risk factors, the primary dangers and management strategies for newly exposed mature cedars include:

1. The "Windsail Effect" and Structural Failure

- **Canopy Drag:** Evergreens like cedars retain their dense foliage year-round, meaning they act like giant, heavy sails in winter winds.
- **Leverage and Branch Failure:** The long, majestic horizontal limbs characteristic of mature cedars experience sudden, massive leverage stresses. If limbs have grown overextended or have undetected weak forks, sudden high winds can cause catastrophic large-branch snaps. [[1](#), [2](#)]

2. Root Plate Instability (Windthrow)

- **Root Adaptation:** A tree that grew up in a group or behind a windbreak has not developed the thick "adaptive wood" or broad anchoring root base on its windward side that a solitary tree would naturally grow.
- **Saturated Soil Risk:** When strong winds combine with the heavy rain common in UK winters, the soil becomes waterlogged. Because waterlogged soil loses its cohesive strength, the newly exposed tree is at an increased risk of **windthrow**—where the entire root plate shifts or uproots. *Warning sign:* Any shifting of the ground or "heaving" around the base of the trunk during storms means

the tree is failing and requires immediate professional intervention. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

3. Physiological Stress & Wind Scorch

- **Desiccation:** Exposed evergreens are highly vulnerable to [RHS-defined wind scorch](#). Freezing, drying winter winds pull moisture out of the needles faster than the root system can extract it from cold or dry soil, turning sections of the canopy brown and brittle. [[1](#)]
- **Microclimate Shock:** The loss of surrounding trees alters the sunlight and ambient temperature, exposing previously shaded interior branches and bark to environmental shock. [[1](#)]

Recommended RHS & Professional Mitigation Steps

To safeguard the tree and surrounding property, consider the following proactive measures:

Strategy	Actionable Step	Purpose
Crown Reduction & Thinning	Hire an Arboricultural Association-approved tree surgeon to selectively thin the outer canopy.	Reduces the windsail profile, allowing high winds to pass safely <i>through</i> the branches rather than pushing against them.
Install Temporary Windbreaks	Erect artificial, semi-permeable debris netting (50–60% porosity) on the windward side.	Mimics the lost shelter and slows down destructive wind eddies while the tree builds adaptive strength.
Root Zone Protection	Apply a wide ring of organic mulch (5-10cm deep) around the tree base, leaving the trunk flare clear.	Regulates soil temperature, preserves crucial moisture, and prevents lawnmower compaction near anchor roots.

**Soil Drainage
Management**

Ensure proper drainage routes divert heavy rainfall away from the root plate.

Prevents waterlogging, which liquefies the soil holding the root plate in place.