

Great Notley Parish Council objection 20/01421/VAR

Great Notley Parish Council wishes to object to the proposals to remove trees which provide a shelter belt to the south east of the Gridserve building.

The Parish Council contends that there is a positive environmental value to the retention of trees and I would like to highlight policies CS8 in the core strategy, RLP81 in the existing local plan and LPP71 of the emerging local plan all of which require consideration be given to environmental and visual impact and encourage the retention of landscaping and trees.

The Applicant contends that the trees they wish to remove are of 'low value' and the planning officer states that just 9 trees are effected, however, the Parish Council contends that they form a group of well-established trees and the cumulative impact is high and the trees should be retained.

The Applicant states that the reason for removing the trees is to further open up the views of the electric charging station. It is noted that the planning officer considers there is justification for this suggestion. However, the Parish Council contends that the argument of a need to promote the facilities for commercial purposes does not outweigh the environmental considerations and is not a sufficiently good reason to fell trees.

The Parish Council contends that the area is already extremely visible from the A131. A number of trees have already been removed from the front of the charging station and to the right-hand side so if you drive past you really cannot miss the building at all as it is both large and of unusual design and stands out in the environment. At night it is equally visible as it is extremely well lit. Also, road signage and sat nav guidance will lead drivers to the facility.

An 8.5 meter i.e. 28-foot-high totem advertising pole has now been erected and is highly visible both promoting the charging station and other retail facilities on site.

The planning officer contends that there is a benefit in having a 'focus' building in the area but the Parish Council contends that if more trees are removed the building would become *overly obtrusive* within the existing environment and thus have a detrimental visual impact.

The applicant seeks to mitigate the impact of removing trees by proposing a planting scheme. The planning officer states that the scheme is 'robust' however the Parish Council contends that the scheme will not adequately compensate for the removal of the trees.

The proposals are to plant 15 trees and 150 whips at the northern end of the development. Thus, the new planting will not replace the trees but will be at the other end of the development and will not compensate for the obtrusive impact of the Gridserve building. Most of the planting will be whips which are very small saplings which are often eaten by wildlife and will take some time to grow to their full height which is only estimated to be one meter i.e. just over 3 feet in height which is far smaller than the existing shelter belt.

The Parish Council therefore contends for the reasons set out above that the proposals are contrary to policy and do not constitute sustainable development and oppose the application.