

Two developers were fined at Woking Magistrates' Court for breaching Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

Developer, Shanly Homes, pleaded guilty to causing or permitting the wilful damage of two trees at the Danesfield site on Grange Road, Horsell. They were fined and ordered to pay court costs totaling £1,887. Similarly, Millgate Homes Ltd, pleaded guilty to causing or permitting the unauthorised cutting down of five trees and the wilful damage of nine trees protected by TPOs, at Janoway Hill in Firbank Lane, St Johns. They were fined and ordered to pay court costs totaling £10,077. Both developers were given credit by the Magistrate for their early guilty pleas and the fact that this was their first offence.

Shanly Homes

Following a complaint from a local resident in April 2009, that trees at the Danesfield site were being damaged, Woking Borough Council's Arboricultural Officer investigated and found that a trench had been dug beside a Cedar tree. Excavation works had also taken place within the rooting area of two English Oak trees and soil had been compacted in the rooting area of a Lime and Sweet Chestnut tree - all of which contravened Condition 14 of the development's planning permission.

Building works were immediately stopped, enabling Officers to assess the extent of the damage, and to ensure that steps were put in to place to reduce further damage to the trees. Measures were implemented to reduce the impact of the damage to the trees.

Millgate Homes Ltd

During May 2009, the Council's Arboricultural Officer received a tip-off from another local resident, that Millgate Homes Ltd was conducting unauthorised felling and pruning of a number of protected trees. The Officer found that two Hazel trees, one Beech, one Silver Birch and a Maple tree had all been illegally felled. While two Hazel trees, four Holly trees, two Oak trees and a Yew tree had been heavily pruned. All works were in breach of TPO legislation. The development site was immediately closed to allow Officers to assess the extent of the damage and to ensure a suitable replanting scheme was carried out.

Woking Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning Implementation, Cllr Graham Cundy, said: "Woking is one of the greenest boroughs in the country and we want to keep it that way. That's why there are over 800 Tree Preservation Orders in place across the Borough to protect our most valuable trees.

"Both developers were in flagrant breach of the Tree Preservation Orders that were in place. These two cases should send out a clear warning to others that damaging, pruning, or felling protected trees has serious consequences, and that the Council will not hesitate to take action against them."

Anyone considering works to protected trees should contact Woking Borough Council's Arboriculture Services on 01483 755855 or visit www.woking.gov.uk. Anyone wishing to check whether a TPO is in place on their property, can do so online by typing their address details into the 'Your local services' area on the Council's homepage. This part of the website provides vital information on residents' property, plus neighbourhood services and refuses collections.