

Application to remove dangerously leaning tree over the River Don

Property address

- The Old Sawmill, Forge Lane, Wortley, Sheffield, S35 7DN

Date

9th February 2026

Introduction

The property at The Old Sawmill, S35 7DN is situated adjacent to the River Don. The site was originally a stone quarry which has been redeveloped in parts over the years. There is a house and a holiday rental cottage with their respective gardens, accessed by a 400 metre long drive from Forge Lane via gates situated next to the river bridge. There is approximately 13 acres of land, the majority of which is self-set woodland plus garden areas. Most of the woodland has a blanket TPO in place.

General Site Conditions

Because the site used to be a stone quarry, there is little topsoil cover and little to no subsoil. In many places the ground mainly consists of small, loose pieces of waste stone rubble left over from the quarrying activities. Accordingly, these conditions do not provide a good anchor for tree roots as the stone rubble is easily displaced. The woodland has not been actively managed over the decades. This has meant that trees have been allowed to grow in inappropriate places. A number of trees have grown in an unbalanced way to get light. Some are badly leaning. Many trees have been allowed to grow in close proximity to one another resulting in tall, thin trees with the majority of branches at the top. The turning moment is therefore very high in all these scenarios and when coupled with poor ground conditions (and in particular on banked areas), tree uprooting is very common. The risk increases with windy conditions or when the river is in flood. Trees are generally left where they fall (to promote a natural environment for flora and fauna) unless they present an obstruction or risk.

The river is largely straight as it passes by the property, and at the downstream end near Forge Lane, there is a weir owned by others (facilitating a water supply to Top Forge Industrial Museum). Close to the weir is a stone bridge which leads to Cote Lane and subsequently, Thurgoland.

This part of the River Don is designated a Main River and the waterway needs to be kept clear. The riparian responsibility to keep the waterway clear lies with this property.

Requested works for this application.

Permission is requested to remove a dangerously leaning tree overhanging the River Don.

- The tree is located directly opposite a house called Stonecroft, Old Mill Lane, S35 7EG. This is approximately 250m along the access track from Forge Lane.
- The tree is rooted partially on the riverbank and partly on the riverbed.
- The tree is of the Alder species, with a diameter of approximately 400mm at 1.6m above ground with a height of approximately 10m.
- The tree is leaning directly across the river towards the house opposite at an angle of approximately 45 degrees.
- The degree of lean has progressively increased over the years.
- There is significantly less than 5 cubic metres of timber in the tree.
- If permission is granted to fell the tree, the timber will not be sold.
- Permission is urgently requested because of the high degree of risk posed.

Risk assessment

Risk of tree falling

- The angle of growth at approximately 45 degrees and its attendant turning moment is placing a huge stress on the root system and ground.
- The ground conditions are mainly loose stone and river silt.
- The risk of the tree falling (uprooting) is therefore very high.

Consequences of risk

- It is certain that damage to the property opposite will occur as the tree would fall across a glass and metal protective balustrade and patio.
- It would pose a risk to life if someone were present on the patio at the time of falling.
- A tree fall across the River Don could potentially impede the flow of water causing a flood risk to low lying properties in the vicinity.
- A tree fall across the River Don in a situation where the tree was swept away by the river could cause damage to the weir or bridge.

- A swept away tree could potentially be trapped against the road bridge causing other river debris build up. This could cause damage the bridge or cause flooding.

Other factors to note

- Removal of a fallen tree from the river is a difficult and dangerous task. This could not be undertaken when the river is in flood. Therefore the risk of flooding or damage to the bridge would be significantly higher as the tree could not be quickly removed if it fell in these conditions.
- A tree fall (uprooting) occurred within approximately 50m of the tree concerned in this application, during the summer of 2025.
 - This tree had similar ground conditions as it was located partially on the riverbank and partially on the riverbed.
 - This tree had only a marginal degree of lean
 - Weather conditions at the time of the fall were good with low wind speeds
 - Moderate damage to the property opposite occurred (roof damage).
 - The subsequent removal and clear up was problematic and expensive due to the complexity of the works (working over a deep river, at the bottom of a 7 metre high banking).
 - No one was injured.
 - The risk of a tree fall regarding the current application is much higher due to the increased angle of lean of the tree in this application.
 - Photographs attached with this application.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] have expressed their extreme concern about the risk of the tree falling and damaging their property.

- There are literally thousands of trees on the property so the amenity value of the tree is insignificant in this setting.
- An OS map, a google close up map and a photographic image of the leaning tree are attached to this application.
- The applicant can be contacted by phone or email to provide access for site inspection which is welcomed.

