# Toby Carvery faces backlash over felling of ancient oak tree



Toby Carvery, a restaurant chain owned by Mitchells & Butlers, has faced significant backlash following the felling of an ancient oak tree believed to be over 400 years old. The tree, with a girth of 6.1 metres, was located near the Whitewebbs House Toby Carvery car park in Enfield, north London. This action took place earlier in April 2023, after the company was advised by experts that the tree posed a risk to public safety.

In response to the controversy, Enfield Council has classified the situation as criminal damage and subsequently reported it to the Metropolitan Police. The council stated that they were not informed of the tree's removal until last week, several days after the incident occurred. As part of their response, they have also instituted an emergency preservation order on the base of the stump located near the car park, situated off junction 25 of the M25.

The decision to fell the tree has drawn comparisons to the recent felling of the Sycamore Gap tree along Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, which had incited widespread anger across the nation. Local residents and environmental advocates have labelled the loss of the oak tree as "devastating." The Woodland Trust, an environmental conservation charity, has emphasised the ecological significance of ancient oaks, which serve as crucial habitats for various species, including endangered dead wood beetles.

Ed Pyne, a senior conservation adviser from the Woodland Trust, expressed his dismay at the decision. "This is the most shocking fell I think I've ever seen in more than a decade working with ancient trees," he remarked. He added, "In my view, and the view of many others, this is ecologically much more significant than the Sycamore Gap - and certainly a more irreplaceable tree," noting that "ancient oaks are particularly rich in biodiversity with habitats that take centuries to develop."

Community members have also voiced their concerns regarding the felling. Ed Allnut, an Enfield resident and secretary of the Guardians of Whitewebbs group, stated that the tree was an integral part of both the local community and national heritage. "I am personally devastated. We want answers, and we want guarantees that the other trees here are being protected properly," he said.

Ergin Erbil, the leader of Enfield Council, confirmed that the tree felling occurred on April 3. He stated, "Enfield Council cares deeply about protecting trees and green spaces in the borough," and elaborated on their immediate action to inspect the site following the reports of the tree's damage.

Mitchells & Butlers has defended its decision to fell the tree, asserting that it was cut down after being advised of a serious health and safety risk. A spokesperson for the company explained, "Upon further inspection, our specialist arboriculture contractors made the assessment that the split and dead wood posed a serious health and safety risk and advised that the tree was unsafe and should be removed." The company claimed to have complied with all legal requirements throughout the process.

In light of the felling, the Tree Council and Forest Research released a report calling for stronger protections for England's important trees, highlighting the urgent need for a robust system to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)