# Toby Carvery apologises over felling of 400-year-old oak in Enfield



The chief executive of Toby Carvery has issued an apology following the controversial felling of a 400-year-old oak tree situated outside one of the chain’s London restaurants in Whitewebbs Park, Enfield. The tree was cut down on 3 April after Mitchells & Butlers, the parent company of Toby Carvery, acted on specialist advice that the ancient oak was dying and posed a safety risk to the public.

Enfield Council has treated the removal of the tree as an act of criminal damage and has referred the matter to the Metropolitan Police. The council leader expressed strong condemnation, describing the incident as “outrageous”. Ergin Erbil, head of Enfield Council, stated: “I am outraged that the leaseholder has cut down this beautiful, ancient, oak tree without seeking any permissions or advice from Enfield Council. This tree would have been home to countless wildlife, fungi and pollinators. This tree is a part of our ecological and cultural heritage.”

In response to the public backlash, Phil Urban, chief executive of Toby Carvery, wrote a letter to local residents acknowledging the upset caused by the tree’s removal. Urban assured the community that the company had “acted in good faith” when sanctioning the removal based on the expert advice indicating a direct risk to life or serious injury. He said: “Clearly the felling of a beautiful old tree is a very emotive subject and is not something that any of us would undertake lightly. I can only apologise for all the upset that it has caused.”

Urban also acknowledged that Mitchells & Butlers will need to review its approach in future cases, noting that the company may have benefited from allowing “a fuller consultation” before proceeding with the work. He emphasised the company’s commitment to environmental responsibility, stating that since 2022 they have planted over 90,000 trees in partnership with various organisations. Urban concluded: “On a personal level, I am very sorry for all the anger and upset that this incident has caused. I am not expecting my words to resolve the depth of feeling, but I do hope that you will accept that we do try to always be responsible operators, and that the people involved did act in good faith and with good intentions.”

The incident has drawn strong criticism from local environmentalists and residents, who have described the loss of the oak tree as “devastating”. Comparisons have been drawn to the felling of the iconic Sycamore Gap tree in 2023, highlighting the cultural and ecological significance of such ancient trees. In an attempt to mitigate further damage to the site, Enfield Council has imposed an emergency preservation order on the remaining tree base.

The case continues to draw attention to the complexities involved in balancing public safety, environmental preservation, and business operations. The company has pledged to conduct a thorough review and to treat exceptional cases with greater sensitivity in the future. Meanwhile, Enfield Council’s investigation, in partnership with the police, remains ongoing.

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

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/toby-carvery-boss-apologises-after-centuries-old-tree-felled-outside-one-of-its-restaurants-13350620> - Confirms Phil Urban's apology and Mitchells & Butlers' explanation that internal protocols allowed health and safety concerns to fast-track the tree's removal.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/whitewebbs-oak-tree-enfield-council-toby-carvery-london-b2734489.html> - Substantiates Enfield Council’s outrage, Ergin Erbil’s statement about lease violations, and local community reaction including residents' testimonies about the tree’s ecological value.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/04/15/toby-carvery-admits-chopping-down-400-year-old-oak-tree/> - Details the company’s claim of acting under expert advice about the tree being a safety risk, and Woodland Trust’s rebuttal that it was alive with new growth.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-04-15/locals-devastated-after-400-year-old-tree-mysteriously-felled-in-london-park> - Supports comparisons to the Sycamore Gap incident, the council’s emergency preservation order, and expert assessments of the tree’s ecological significance.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/toby-carvery-boss-apologises-after-centuries-old-tree-felled-outside-one-of-its-restaurants-13350620> - Reiterates Urban’s acknowledgment of insufficient consultation and commitment to revised environmental protocols post-incident.