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28th March 2023

TPO Application Imperium, Imperial Way, Reading RG2 0TD

Dear Jamie

I am writing regarding your recent application to remove trees subject to a TPO at Imperial Way. You have forwarded me an email from Andrei Nazare, tree officer for Reading Borough Council dated 14th March 2023 which asks for clarification on the proposed tree removals (appendix 2 below).

I make reference to the planting scheme by Chiltern Garden Design drawing number CDG176-200 dated 01/09/2022. I have also received the plan annotated by Andrei Nazare (appended below for reference) and refer below to the numbering on that plan (appendix 1 below).

I am an arboricultural consultant and hold the Level 6 Diploma in Arboriculture, I am a professional member of the Arboricultural Association, and I have been an arboricultural consultant specialising in trees in relation to planning matters for 15 years. I visited the site on 22nd March 2023 to inspect the trees.

From visiting the site, I agree with the identification and numbering helpfully provided by Andrei Nazare, that there are 10 x *Populus alba* and 10 x *Alnus cordata* present. The application should therefore be changed to propose the felling of 10 Alder trees and 10 Poplar trees as suggested.

In relation to the reasons for the proposed removals I would like to add the following commentary:

The trees are growing in a narrow landscape margin at the edge of the carpark which provides a limited rooting environment. T6, T7, T8, T9, T10 are located close to the adjacent building to the north, such that the canopies overhang the roof. The Poplars average a height of 23m with canopy spreads of 7.5m to the south, and 4.5m to the north.

Originally choosing Poplar as a species for the landscape scheme for the site will no doubt have achieved an instant impact due to their rapid growth, but the species is a poor choice in terms of long term management. Poplar are a very fast growing species, so there has been an ongoing requirement for pruning. There will be a continued constant requirement for the trees to be pruned away from the building and over the carpark in the future. Poplar grow very quickly at the expense of any strength, and do not recover well from pruning, with wounds from pruning becoming prone to decay. In turn this means that the trees are likely to shed branches, or have snapped stems over time. Then in turn there is further requirement to prune to mitigate this risk.

Due to the close proximity to the building to the north there has been an ongoing requirement to trim the crowns. Furthermore the trees have been crown lifted such that there are no branches on the north of the stems to a height of 10-12m. Where the canopies have been reduced away from the building, the canopies are unbalanced and weighted to the south. The canopies extend to 7.5m south and 4m to the north where they have been cut around the building. (Photo 1)



(Photo 1) T5, T6 & T7 pruned away from building, and unbalanced crowns

Where pruning away from the building has been carried out in the past, the canopies are now weighted to the south, leaving them unbalanced and one sided. This is obviously an unwanted situation adjacent to the car park, as any future branch or stem failure will be in this direction. (Photo 2) This issue could be addressed by pruning the canopies to the south, however the trees will rapidly grow again in response, with the response growth based on areas prone to decay.



(Photo 2) T8, T9 & T10 – T20 pruned away from building, and unbalanced crowns

The trees are not planted at even intervals, so do not serve the function of providing a consistent visual buffer. In terms of screening of the building the trees have a very limited function. The crowns are at least 6m above ground level, with the bare stems providing minimal visual screening.

Due to their limited rooting environment the trees have extended root growth beneath the porous block paving of the carpark, causing damage and disturbance to the surface.



(Photo 3) base of T8 example of damage and disturbance to car park surface

In summary, unfortunately Poplar is a poor species choice for their current position, growing too large and requiring constant pruning – then the species does not respond well to pruning, so will be prone to branches and stems failing.

Of the 10 x Alder trees at the site, T1, T11, T12, T18 and T19 have a very limited life expectancy. T1 and T11 are dead from 8m upwards. T12 has staining on the main stem consistent with disease caused by *Phytophthora* spp. (Photo 4) T18 & T19 have very sparse crowns and a low crown volume such that they are unlikely to survive beyond 5 – 10 years. The remaining 5 x trees have been closely planted such that their stems and crowns are leaning and uneven.



(Photo 4) T11 *Phytophthora*

In terms of the future for the trees currently on site, it is likely that in 10-20 years most of the Alder will no longer be present due to Phythophthera. Over the same time period the Poplar will have had the requirement for constant pruning, creating wounds which will become areas of decay, and the trees will require more heavy surgery works, or removal. For these reasons I would agree that the trees have 'no long term potential'.

I would recommend removal of the trees as per the application as this will allow for the proposed planting scheme by Chiltern Garden Design to be implemented. The species of tree proposed include Acer campestre, Liquidambar styraciflua and Sorbus aucuparia 'Golden Wonder'. All of these species are very attractive trees that do not cause major long term management issues like Poplar. Extensive shrub planting is also proposed as part of the plan that will provide an attractive buffer at the lower level. This will provide a much better result in the long term and I would request that the council grant permission for the application.

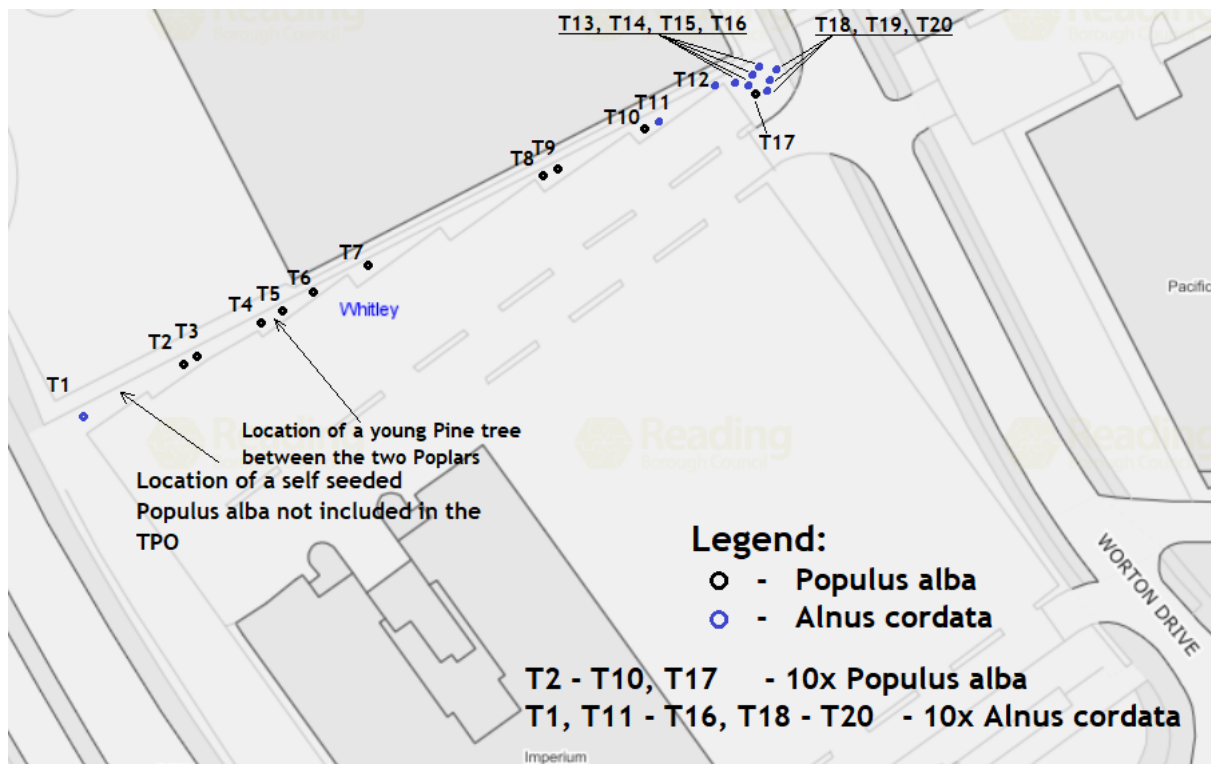
I trust this is of assistance however if you need any further information please contact me.

Yours sincerely



Tom Grayshaw BA (Hons) Tech Cert (ArborA) Dip Arb L6 (ABC) MArborA
Director

Appendix 1 – Tree Plan:



Appendix 2 – Email from Andrei Nazare 14.03.2023

From: "Nazare, Andrei" <Andrei.Nazare@reading.gov.uk>
Date: 14 March 2023 at 16:04:52 GMT
To: Jamie Passant <Jamie.Passant@nurturelandscapes.co.uk>
Subject: RE: 230225 TPO at Imperium, Imperial Way

Dear Jamie,

Following to my visit today at the above address, I am writing to ask for clarification on the proposed works based on the situation on site.

There appears to be some inconsistency between the trees shown on the location plan provided and the existing vegetation on site.

Based on your location plan there are 6 Alder trees and 14 Poplar trees, which you have applied to fell. However, during my visit I found 10 Alder trees and only 10 Poplar trees, which I have plotted on the attached plan for your reference.

In light of this, please confirm that you amend your application to 'proposed felling of 10 Alder trees and 10 Poplar trees', or confirm which trees, with reference to a more specific plan, are to be included in the application, consistent with the situation on site.

In relation to the reasons for the work, it is noted that the felling of the Poplars is cited as being due to: *'Trees are too close to adjacent building, Damaging the car park and trees have no long term potential'*. However, no specifics are provided about the damage and nothing was noted on site that would justify felling, hence your input on this matter would be appreciated. In addition, whilst it is acknowledged that they are close to the neighbouring building, pruning could be carried out to maintain clearance – felling seems an extreme resolution to the proximity hence your comment on this would be helpful.

In relation to the Alder, the reason for felling is cited as being: *'Trees have no long term potential and are in poor condition'*. Of the 10 I noted, I would not agree that the condition of all of them is such that felling is justified. It would be reasonable to remove several of the smaller individuals to thin the group on the east end, hence additional comment on their condition would also be welcome to help support your application. *'No long term potential'* has been quoted for both – please can you elaborate on that point.

Best regards,

Andrei Nazare

Assistant Natural Environment Officer

Planning Department

Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services