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Mr D White
Whiteknight Tree Care & Consultancy
5 Cressingham Road
Reading
RG2 7RS

Our Ref: 230681/TPO
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎01189 372440
sarah.hanson@reading.gov.uk

19 June 2023

Your contact is: Sarah Hanson, Planning, Development & Regulatory Services

Dear Mr White

**RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO TWO YEW TREES AT 62 TILEHURST ROAD, READING - T6 & T7
OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 29/03.**

Thank you for your application of 18 May 2023, regarding the above, with a copy of the works notice from Thames Water dated 03.03.23.

Your application seeks consent for the following:

- *T6 (yew): remove to just above ground level for the following reasons:*
 - Audible decay at base between buttresses on all sides -
 - Open cavity on South side at approximately 0.5 m above ground level, 20cm wide, 20cm tall, 20cm deep. Fibre buckling on pillar of reactive growth on East side of cavity (see photo)
 - Small cavity at ground level on North side (see photo)
 - Exposed wood decaying
 - Nearby sewer main has been damaged by roots. The tree's proximity to this could implicate it in the damage (see attached report from Thames Water)
 - Crown has unnatural form resulting from pruning due to proximity to telegraph pole
 - The pavement adjacent to this tree (Western Elms Avenue) is a high target area, with many parents and school children loitering for prolonged periods.
- *T7 (yew): Crown raise to approximately 2.5m above ground level to ensure clearance for garden users and pedestrians.*

Further to my visit of 5 June 2023, with my colleague Andrei Nazare, I have the following comments:

In relation to T6 Yew, the cavity of the south side was noted. It did not appear that this, posed any immediate risk for the tree, which you agreed during our telephone conversation whilst I was on site.

It is acknowledged that pruning to clear the adjacent telegraph pole and wires has affected the shape of the tree, but that in itself is not considered to be a reason to fell. The tree still forms part of the tree coverage along that boundary and within the garden, alongside other protected trees, contributing positively to the street scene.

The document from Thames Water is very unclear as to where the blockage was and whilst I was on site there were no works taking place adjacent to the Yew trees, i.e. within the Western Elms Avenue pavement, but TW were accessing their pipe from the south end of the garden (near the fence), well away from the Yew. I am therefore unable to place any weight on this as part of the justification to fell.

The tree appeared to be in fair physiological condition, similar, if not marginally better, than adjacent T7 Yew.

The proposal to fell the tree is not considered to be warranted at this time hence is refused. However lesser works, akin to that proposed to T7 Yew, are approved below.

I can confirm that the following works are approved subject to the conditions below:

- T6 & T7 (yew): Crown raise to approximately 2.5m above ground level to ensure clearance for garden users and pedestrians.
Officer note: crown lifting can include branches that originate at a point up to 2.5m from ground level; otherwise pruning should be confined to reduction of branches to appropriate growing points.

Your application also gives notice of the following:

T6, T7 and T3 (cedar): Remove accumulated green waste/soil along East boundary, which is pushing the fence onto the pavement. This will involve working within the RPA of some protected trees, however care will be taken not to dig beneath the historic ground level and the ground will be decompacted with a fork once the material has been removed.

I have photographs from December 2012 that show accumulation of green waste and raised soils levels in the same area then; how long it had been there before that visit is unknown. It therefore raises the question of what the 'historic' levels should be taken as given that these raised levels have formed part of the rooting environment for the last 10+ years, i.e. there is the potential for rooting to have occurred within those 'raised' levels in that time period. If by 'historic' levels, you mean that of the main garden (putting the slope of the garden aside) then works would be removing ground in which trees have potentially rooted. There did not seem to be raised levels around the base of T7; levels seemingly appearing to increase north of the adjacent non-TPO tree. The raised levels do not extend up to the trunk of T3 (Cedar) but are within its potential rooting area. On balance, the removal of the raised levels and accumulated green waste would be acceptable but it should be from a point north of T7 (north of the adjacent non-TPO tree) and away from the trunk of T3 Cedar. In addition, and on the assumption that machinery is to be used for this, suitable ground protection (with ref to guidance in BS5837:2012) should be laid to avoid compaction of the ground and any rutting within RPAs. Please refer to the working zone indicated in the photos below:



Non-TPO tree north of T7 - work on north side of the red line, away from the tree (if the tree is to be retained)



T3 Cedar work from the north-east side of the red line, away from the tree, providing ground protection as appropriate

In the assumption that a mini-digger is to be utilised, a toothless bucket should be used as earth removal nears the 'historic' ground level to avoid scraping into the historic rooting ground level and potentially harming roots.

I note that the work is likely to involve the removal of a few non-TPO trees in the north-east corner of the garden and would encourage replanting to avoid canopy cover loss.

It was noted on site that a zip wire has been installed between T3 Cedar and T1 Wellingtonia, with cabling to secure that being around the trunks of both. This is far from ideal, albeit at least the trunks are protected from severe harm by the cables being protected by plastic tubing. If this is to remain on the trees, annual checks should be done for evidence of harm to the trunks, specifically whether the bark is being damaged such that the loosening and/or relocation of the cables is required. Continuing use and resulting harm through lack of maintenance may be deemed as deliberate damage to protected trees.

Conditions

1. Five days' notice in writing shall be given to the Council prior to undertaking the approved works.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority is given sufficient notice of the works to enable the effective monitoring of tree work within the Borough.

2. All tree surgery shall be in accordance with BS 3998: (2010) Tree Work - Recommendations.

Reason: To ensure that all works are carried out in an acceptable arboricultural manner

3. Climbing spikes shall not be used whilst undertaking any form of works on living trees, except on trees to be felled.

Reason: Spikes can cause extensive long-term damage

Informatives

1. You are advised that, in accordance with Part 4, 17 (4) of The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012, this decision is valid for one pruning operation (as per the approved specifications) to be undertaken within two years from the date of this notice, after which the consent lapses and a new application will be required.

2. Removal of dead or dangerous wood: This does not require the formal consent of the Council. However written notice must be given 5 working days in advance of removing dead wood. Where a branch is deemed to be 'dangerous', i.e. where works are 'urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm', you are required to give notice to the Council 'as soon as practicable after the works become necessary'.

3. Disturbance of wildlife: It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to disturb roosting bats or nesting birds. It is advisable to consult your tree surgeon/consultant to agree an acceptable time for carrying out any work. Wildlife and habitat controls are administered by Natural England who can be contacted on 0300 030 6000

4. Crown lifting of trees over the footpath and carriageway: If the clearance of vegetation overhanging the highway only involves the removal of branches to give a ground clearance to the statutory heights of 2.7m over the footpath and 5.5m over the road, this does not require formal consent from the Council. You are advised, however, to give notice to the Council of these intended works in order that they can be agreed.

5. Trees not considered to be protected by the current Tree preservation order: Work can be carried out to this tree without the formal consent from this Council.

6. For the avoidance of doubt, pruning of roots of protected trees requires formal consent through a tree works application. No root pruning is agreed by virtue of comments on removal of raised ground levels.

If you wish to appeal against the refusal to allow the felling of T6 Yew or against any of the conditions attached to the consented works, please contact the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of receipt of this letter to obtain the relevant forms:

Trees and Hedges
Room 3A Eagle Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Telephone: 0303 444 5000

E-mail it to: treeandhedgeappeals@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

If your client suffers any loss or damage as a result of this refusal of consent, they may be entitled to recover compensation from the Council. If they wish to make a claim they must do so within 12 months from the date of this decision (or, if they appeal to the Secretary of State, within 12 months from the date of his decision). Claims should be made in writing to the Insurance Section, Reading Borough Council, Civic Centre, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU.

If you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hanson

Sarah Hanson
Natural Environment Officer

C.c. Mr Elton, 62 Tilehurst Road