



Mr Nathan Cantell
Beechwood Tree Care Ltd
2 Playhatch Farm Cottages
Playhatch
RG4 9QX

Frances Martin
Executive Director for
Economic Growth and
Neighbourhood Services

Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU
☎ 0118 9373787

Our Ref: 230005/TPO
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎01189 374294
andrei.nazare@reading.gov.uk

1 March 2023

Your contact is: **Andrei Nazare, Planning, Development & Regulatory Services**

Dear Mr Cantell,

RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO THREE OAK TREES AND A GROUP OF ASH AND SYCAMORE TREES AT PROSPECT SCHOOL, COCKNEY HILL, READING - PART OF W1 OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 109/002.

Thank you for your application of 4 January 2023, regarding the above.

Your application includes works to a large number of trees on the school grounds, but I note that of these only three Oak trees and a group of Ash and Sycamore trees are part of the TPO. Whilst 0590 Poplar, 2371 & 2372 Ash have been included in your application (and these species are included in the TPO), as these are not visible on your location plan, it is assumed that they are not in the TPO woodland area, hence they have not been assessed as part of this application. As such, my comments below and this decision will refer to the Oak trees 2528, 0588/2594 and 0589/2596 and the Ash and Sycamore group 2559. The proposed works to all other not protected trees mentioned in the application do not require permission and can go ahead.

On 9 February 2023 I visited Prospect School where I met Mr Chris George, standing in for Mr Jawaid Aslam, who allowed me to walk around the woodland and look at the trees. Following my visit, I have the following comments:

The crown lifting proposed to the **2528 Oak tree** and to the **2559 Ash and Sycamore group** of trees is in line with good arboricultural practices and is part of the maintenance of the trees to mitigate conflict with vehicles or structures (fence) and is, as such agreeable.

You have also applied to reduce and reshape the crown of the **2594 Oak tree** by varying amounts according to current shape; on South side reduce by 3-4m while keeping the natural shape; on North side reduce by 0.5-2m. You stated the aim is to reduce the risk

factor of branch failures whilst respecting the natural shape as much as possible. As supporting evidence, you provided a **Tree Safety Audit Report Ref. 1242.bjh.Nov22** prepared by Bernie Harverson which is based on a Tree Survey carried out on 27 October 2022.

This report notes *no obvious defects* on the base of the tree, *epicormics and numerous holes* on the trunk and *epicormics throughout* in the crown. However, a climbing inspection was not conducted on this occasion, as such the findings also refer to the recommendations of an **Arboricultural Assessment Climbing Inspection Report Ref. BJH.0553** prepared by Bernie Harverson dated January 2012.

I derive that, in essence, the crown reduction and reshaping proposed in your application are based on and supported by the recommendations of the 2012 Climbing Inspection report.

The 2012 Climbing Inspection found no defects that pose safety implications except for one cavity in the upper crown ('cavity 1' in the report) which was found to contain extensive soft decayed wood and detritus and to be susceptible to failure. It is noteworthy that while two other cavities were inspected these were described as having no safety implications, as mentioned above.

With regards to 'cavity 1' specifically, the report recommends the branch cluster beyond it *should be removed back to the next suitable juncture adjacent to a connecting limb below this cavity* which I find it is reasonable and agreeable.

In the overall **conclusions** and **tree works recommended** sections, however, the author refers to shortening 'other decayed branches' and the reduction and reshaping of the crown by 3-4m on the south side and 0.5-2m on the north side. This comes as a surprise as the findings section of the report does not mention 'other decayed branches' and does not appear to support such an extensive reduction as that proposed. It is considered the recommended works in this report are disconnected from the findings and that the latter do not lead/imply to the extensive works of the former.

Another consideration in this matter is the age of the Climbing Inspection Report, at over 10 years old, as this does not reflect the current condition of the tree. We usually require that any arb reports submitted are not older than 2 years as trees are dynamic organisms which can, equally likely, improve (compartmentalize a wound for example) or deteriorate their condition in that period.

In addition, it is worth noting that contrary to the findings of the 2012 Climbing Inspection Report and even if the recommended works have not been carried out in this period, the tree has fared remarkably well in this period, including during a number of more recent heavy storms.

As you are aware, on 9 February 2023 I e-mailed you my concerns with regards to the reasons for the works to the 2594 Oak, as expressed above, and offered you an opportunity to comment or add additional evidence to support the proposed works. You replied on 13 February confirming that: *'I completely understand your thoughts on this. Having not inspected the tree myself I don't really feel that I can comment or add any*

additional information'.

In conclusion, for the reasons stated above, the following proposed works to one Oak tree are refused:

- 1x Oak (0588 Tag, 2594 on Application) - Reduce and reshape the crown by varying amounts according to the current shape i.e., at front (south) side reduce by 3m to 4m whereas at the rear (north) side the reduction will be 0.5m to 2m. Shape crown as indicated on the annotated photographs of the 2012 Climbing Inspection Report.

I can confirm that lesser works to the 2594 Oak tree and the works relating to the other trees, as proposed in your application, are approved subject to the conditions below:

- 1x Oak tree (0588 Tag, 2594 on Application)
 - the branch cluster beyond cavity 1 (as identified in the 2012 Climbing Inspection report) should be removed back to the next suitable juncture adjacent to a connecting limb below this cavity (see annotated photo below)
 - remove deadwood
- 1x Oak tree (2528 on Application)
 - Crown lift to 5m above the car park
- Group of Ash & Sycamore trees (2559 on Application)
 - Crown lift to clear above the boundary fence (3m above ground level)
- 1x Oak tree (0589 Tag, 2596 on Application)
 - Remove hanging limbs

Although lesser works are approved to Oak 2594 as part of this letter, given the trees are located on school grounds and considering the time since last inspection, it is recommended that a new Climbing Inspection is conducted to the large trees in the woodland. This should provide an update on their condition and guide on how to approach risk assessment with regards to their management. We would then welcome a new application.

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

4. The approved works should not be carried out in the period immediately before or during bud burst and leaf fall to minimise the effect on the long-term health of the trees.

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. Tree work consents on land not owned by the applicant: It is strongly recommended that the owner of the tree be advised of any proposed works. The owner's permission must be sought if the tree works involve work past the boundary line. This consent does not in any way imply that this Council has informed the owner of sought permission or will condone the use of consents to force any landowner to grant such permission.

5. 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.

6. 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.

Appeals

If you are aggrieved by the refusal of consent for the proposed crown reduction or by any of the conditions attached to your consent, you may appeal to The Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Because of coronavirus (COVID-19), you currently can only make a planning appeal online. You cannot currently apply by post.

For more information go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-preservation-order-appeal-form>

Telephone: 0303 444 5500 or e-mail it to:
treeandhedgeappeals@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Your appeal should be received within one month of receipt of this decision or any such longer period as the Planning Inspectorate may allow.

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 you 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.

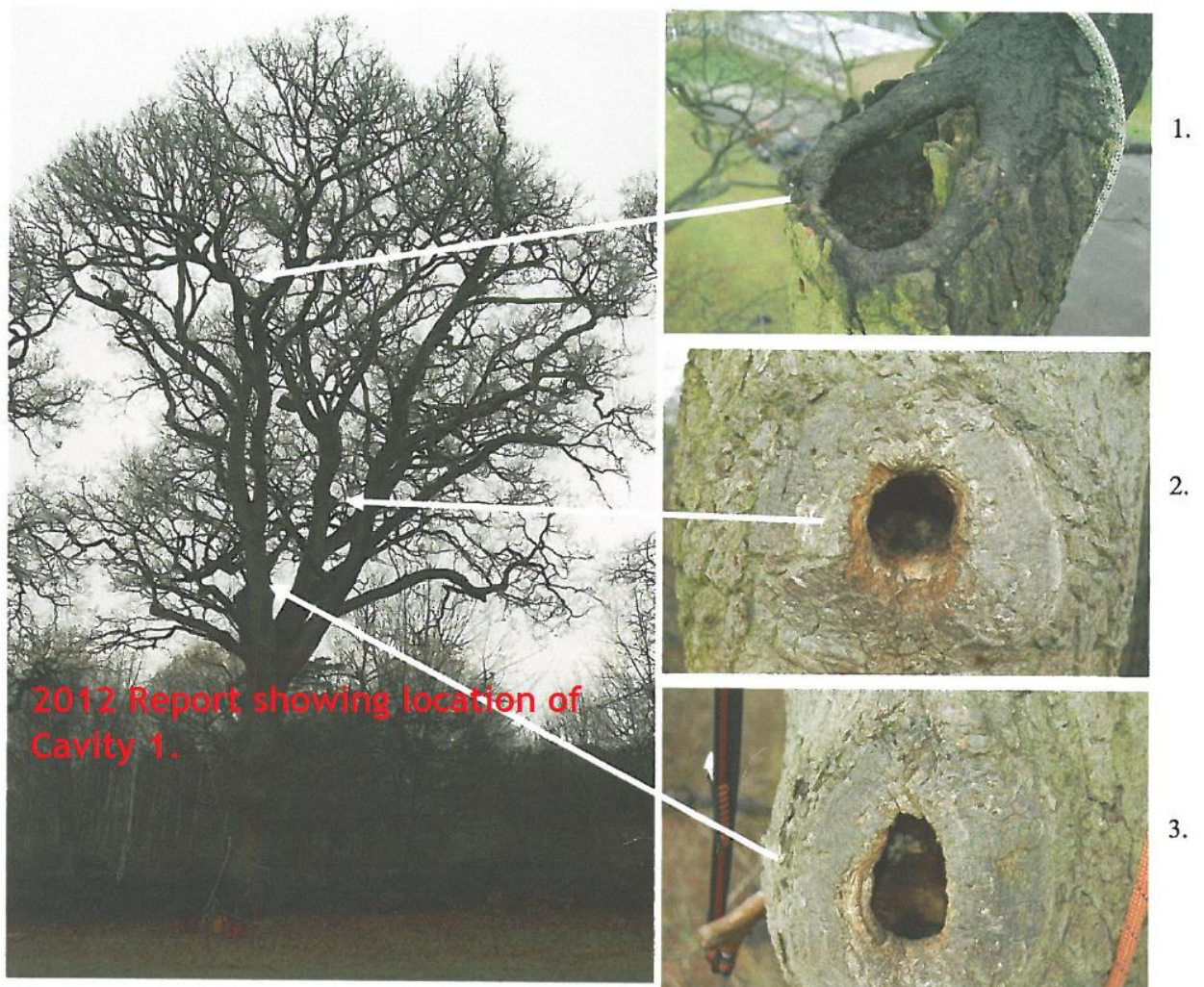
If you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely,

Andrei Nazare

Andrei Nazare
Assistant Natural Environment Officer

C.c. Mr. J Aslam, Kings Academy Prospect School



Extract from Climbing Inspection (above)



Assumed location of cavity (red circle) and suggested pruning point (red line)