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Mrs R Groark
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RG4 8NF

Our Ref: 220288/TPO
Your Ref:

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7th April 2022

Your contact
is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning & Building Control

Dear Mrs Groark,

**RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO 2X LIME TREES AT 1 SURLEY PLACE, EMMER GREEN, READING
- SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 11/06**

Thank you for your application of 28th February 2022 which was validated on 16th March 2022 following receipt of further information from your tree surgeon, within your email of this date.

You have applied to reduce the height of 2x Lime trees (T1 & T2) and to cut back the side branches and reduce the top of a Douglas Fir (T3).

The reasons given for the proposed tree work is as follows:

‘During the recent storms we were fearful that the trees would uproot and topple. Due to the close proximity of the trees to our property and that of numbers 2 & 3 Surley Place, and that the trees are in excess of 80 feet high, we are living in constant fear that the trees will fall especially as we are experiencing higher winds and more frequent storms due to climate change.

The trees overhang Surley Row, which is a busy residential road and the main route for children who attend Highdown School. Fortunately, although there was a lot of debris after the storms on the road no one was hurt but we feel it is a matter of time before disaster strikes due to the increasing amount of storms and high winds.

Both our nearest neighbours have expressed the same deep concerns. My husband suffers from Parkinsons Disease and the worry and stress of that someone being seriously injured, and the possible destruction of our property is affecting his mental health and wellbeing’.

In support of your application, you have provided letters of support from neighbouring residents and an email from your tree surgeon, Philip King of Kings Tree Care Services. In his email Mr King advises that the Lime trees are 25-27 metres tall. He has suggested a reduction down to above roof height and quantifies this as '*down to 15 metres in height*'. Mr Kings estimate of the height of the trees is not considered to be accurate. Although Limes are among the tallest of broadleaf species in the UK and can reach 25-27m in exceptional cases, the trees at 1 Surley Place are grafted low down the trunk and have broad, branching canopies and are considered to be closer to 18-20m tall.

The Council's Arboricultural Consultant, Sarah Duckworth, visited the property to view the trees on 6th April 2022. At the meeting you advised that your intention was to reduce the height of the trees down to the apex of the roof which is approximately 7-8m tall. This would effectively reduce the trees by over half their current height and create monoliths of the stems with large pruning wounds at the top of the trunks, exposing the heartwood and allowing decay to enter and colonise the trunks, with little resistance.

You advised that you were looking to manage the trees as 'pollards' as has been undertaken for a number of street trees elsewhere in the Reading Borough. Pollarding is the decapitation of a tree at a certain height above ground level, a traditional management practice which begins when the tree is usually young, and the work is repeated on a periodical basis. By commencing the pollarding management when the tree is young, it keeps the size of any pruning cuts small and can be undertaken without significant harm to a tree.

However, the Lime trees at 1 Surley Place have not been managed as a pollard or been reduced in the past. This is confirmed in Mr King's email in which he states '*they have never been reduced before just minor pruning on the sides*'. The proposed reduction would therefore be considered as 'topping' or 'lopping;' being the indiscriminate removal or reduction of large branches and contrary to good arboricultural practice. The proposed reduction of the Lime trees' canopies constitutes major pruning works which would have a lasting detrimental effect on the trees' physiological health and likely result in a mortality spiral, ultimately resulting in the early loss of these protected trees.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to supply adequate proof, with the TPO application, regarding the specification and reasons for the proposed works. Section 6 of the application form requires that if the condition of the tree is suspect then proof of this is required. The 'yes' box has been ticked with regard to concern about the condition of the tree but no technical or no arboricultural evidence has been submitted in support of your application to reduce T1 & T2 - Lime or to demonstrate that the trees pose an unacceptable risk to persons or property - other than simply being large, mature trees growing close to the public highway. The size and proximity of these trees to the public highway is not exceptional for an urban area and these factors would not be sufficient to support an application to carry out major pruning works contrary to established arboricultural good practice.

In considering the proposals we have assessed the amenity value of the trees and the likely impact of the proposal on the amenity of the area, and in the light of this assessment have considered whether or not the proposal is justified, having regard to the

reasons put forward in support of it. In general terms the higher the amenity value of the tree and the greater the impact of the application on the amenity of the area, the stronger the reasons needed before consent is granted.

The two Lime are mature, highly visible trees of very high amenity value. The proposed works would have a significant detrimental impact on the amenity value of the trees and the locality. The reasons put forward in support of the reduction are not considered to outweigh the loss of amenity value that would result, as discussed above.

The proposed reduction T1 & T2 Limes is, for the reasons given, considered to be contrary to good arboricultural practice and has not been justified, hence your application to reduce these trees has been refused.

I can confirm that the following works to T3 - Douglas Fir, are approved subject to the conditions below:

Approved Tree Works

T3 - Douglas Fir

- Reduce leader by approximately 2m to prevent competition with adjacent Lime.
- Reduce lateral spread by 1-1.5m

Officer Notes: This tree is a small, suppressed specimen tree which previously lost its leader. The tree has an asymmetrical canopy having grown in competition with the adjacent Lime. The proposed works will reduce the new apical leader shoot back to the previous topping point and reduce the over-extended lateral branches. Although it is rarely appropriate to reduce a conifer in this way, the Council has noted that the tree has a sub-optimum form and limited long-term potential in this location. The proposed pruning work will enable the tree to be retained for longer without causing a nuisance to 1 Surley Place and the adjacent Lime tree.

Conditions relating to the approved works

1. All tree surgery shall be in accordance with BS 3998: (2010) Tree Work - Recommendations. Pruning cuts shall not exceed 100mm diameter
Reason: To ensure that all works are carried out in an acceptable arboricultural manner
2. 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

If you are aggrieved by the refusal of consent to reduce the height of the Lime trees as per your application, or against 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 5570 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 you suffer any loss or damage as a result of this refusal of consent, you may be entitled to recover compensation from the Council. If you wish to make a claim you 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

Sarah Hanson

Sarah Hanson
Natural Environment Officer