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13 October 2022

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

Dear Miss Lock-Smith

RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO TREES AT LEIGHTON PARK SCHOOL, READING - SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 27/07.

Thank you for your application of 12 September 2022, regarding the above, with supporting tree report from B J Unwin Forestry Consultancy Ltd.

Further to my visit on 30 September 2022 accompanied by Tom Sheldon, I have the following comments:

The schedule of works is within a tree document connected to planning permission 220890 relating to Grove House. However, T7 Horse chestnut (within G14 of the TPO) is well outside the affected area but I note works are proposed to this tree, which are discussed below.

Generally speaking, the works specified seemed in excess of that necessary to allow for the implementation of the planning permission, specifically, appropriate vehicular access. Why some of the works had been specified was unclear as they did not appear necessary at all, and some exceeded that which seemed prudent in arboricultural terms as well as being unnecessary or excessive in assisting access to implement the planning permission. Individual comments are given below, which were discussed and agreed with Tom Sheldon on site - he has been copied in on this letter so is free to point out if there are any instances in which he considers I have misunderstood or have incorrectly stated that discussed.

- Horse chestnut (T7 of application; G14 of TPO) - the proposed work to this tree is to reduce the main stem down to the fork, as indicated in 4.4.2 of the report. The report in 4.4.1 notes '*historic cambial death*' at the basal section of the trunk.

Had the report author liaised with me, Tom or the School's regular tree consultant we would have been happy to comment and confirm the extensive Oyster fungi (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) on the tree earlier this year. Given the presence of this fungi, clear dysfunction at the tree base, the historic loss of the other stem (impacting the tree's amenity value) and the regular use of the area for children (which could also have been confirmed), it has been decided to amend the application to the felling of this tree.

- Turkey Oak (T23 of application; T86 of TPO) - the works described for this tree are a 'severe crown lift', proposing to crown lift to 6m to re-balance and provide construction access. However, on site, the works required to provide adequate clearance above ground are in no way 'severe' and sufficient clearance can be provided through the removal of secondary growth only.
- Oak (T28 of application; T87 of TPO) - the proposed clearance is reasonable, but again I would not describe this as a 'severe' crown lift with the removal of only small diameter growth being required.
- Horse chestnut (T31 of application; T88 of TPO) - The works to this tree include crown lifting the south side to 6m and entire removal of the eastern stem. The crown lifting is acceptable however, the entire removal of the eastern stem was deemed to be excessive. It is proposed as it is considered that '*there is no space for this low stem to grow on a full sized tree*'. This is a large diameter, leaning stem, the removal of which would create a large wound and remove a significant percentage of the tree's foliage and detrimentally impact its appearance. The removal is not recommended for arboricultural safety reasons. However, a reduction to reduce the weight on this stem, given the lean, was deemed reasonable, hence the application is deemed to have been amended on site and lesser works have been approved below.
- Sycamore (T32 of application; W1 of TPO) - the proposed works seek to crown lift/trim back as needed to achieve 5m clear height at 0.5m behind the kerb, for construction access. However, the crown is already fairly high, there is a raised concrete slab under this, in front of the kerb line, and the question was raised as to whether heavy construction vehicles would feasibly be travelling around the back of the building from the west anyway. It therefore did not seem that this work was necessary. However, I have included this in the approved works but with a caveat.
- Sycamore (T34 of application; W1 of TPO) - the TPO status of the tree is not acknowledged in the survey. The proposed work is to fell this tree because it is slender and suppressing adjacent T35 Holly and T36 Hornbeam - I note that the survey has both T35 & 36 as Hornbeams; it could be that the reference was supposed to be to T33 Holly, which is stated to be a poor tree. The reasons cited and therefore unrelated to the planning permission and its felling doesn't seem necessary particularly if it is to favour a poor Holly tree. The felling of this tree is therefore refused.
- Hornbeams (T35 & T36 of application; W1 of TPO) - the proposal for both is to crown lift / trim back as needed to achieve 5m clear height at 0.5m behind the kerb. T35 is set back away from the kerb edge at the Pepper Lane boundary - the work specified is not required to this tree. T36 is close to the kerb edge but no foliage currently requires cutting back to achieve the desired access clearance. Both trees have therefore been omitted from the application.

I can confirm that the following proposed works, as detailed in your application (amended on site), are approved subject to the conditions below and with reference to the attached photographs:

- Horse chestnut (T7 of application; G14 of TPO) - fell
- Turkey Oak (T23 of application; T86 of TPO) - Crown lift to provide 6m clearance above the access road by removing secondary growth only
- Oak (T28 of application; T87 of TPO) - Crown lift the south side to provide 6m clearance above the access road
- Horse chestnut (T31 of application; T88 of TPO) - Crown lift the south side to provide 6m clearance above the access road; reduce foliage on eastern, leaning stem by a maximum of 2m back to suitable growing points.
- Sycamore (T32 of application; W1 of TPO) - crown lift/trim back as needed to achieve 5m clear height at 0.5m behind the kerb ONLY if necessary once an assessment of vehicular clearance is confirmed

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. Following the felling of the Horse chestnut tree (T7 of application; within G14 of TPO) authorised by this consent, one native or naturalised broadleaved species of a similar ultimate stature to a Horse chestnut shall be planted within, or within 5m of, the G14 area during the planting season (Nov-March) following or at the time of the felling of the tree, whichever is soonest. The species shall be agreed with the Natural Environment Team prior to purchase and planting.

Planting should be carried out in accordance with clause 10 (Planting) of BS 8545:2014 'Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations'

Should the replacement tree be removed, die or become severely damaged or seriously diseased, all within 5 years of planting, it shall be replaced by a tree of a similar size and species to that originally planted. Modifications to the requirements of this condition must be agreed in writing with Reading Borough Council Natural Environment Team.

PLEASE NOTE: The requirement to replant is the responsibility of the tree owner even if the application was submitted by another person.

Reason: To retain the present visual amenity value of the area and ensure continuity of tree coverage.

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. It is best to avoid works in the period immediately before or during bud burst and leaf fall to minimise the effect on the long-term health of the tree
5. 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.
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.

If you wish to appeal against the refusal to allow the felling of Sycamore (T34 of application; W1 of TPO) or against any of the conditions attached to this consent, 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 5570

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

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

C.c. Mr Keith Eldridge, Leighton Park School
Mr Tom Sheldon, Leighton Park School