



Mrs Barbara Poole  
The English Martyrs Church  
64 Liebenrood Road  
Reading  
RG30 2EB

Frances Martin  
Executive Director for  
Economic Growth and  
Neighbourhood Services

Civic Centre, Reading, RG1 2LU  
☎ 0118 937 3787

Our Ref: 211751/TPO  
Your Ref:

Email: [lee.garner@reading.gov.uk](mailto:lee.garner@reading.gov.uk)

26<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Your contact  
is:

Lee Garner, Planning

Dear Mrs Poole,

**RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO REMOVE A NORWAY SPRUCE TREE (T1) LOCATED WITHIN THE GROUNDS OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE ENGLISH MARTYRS, LIEBENROOD ROAD, READING - SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 51/06**

Thank you for your application dated the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and subsequent and accompanying photos, regarding the above.

Further to my visit on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021, I have the following comments:

During my visit I noted the Norway spruce to be an outwardly healthy individual. The tree provides good visual amenity to the area, being highly visible from both Tilehurst Road and Liebenrood Road; contributes significantly to this important 'treed corridor' located within our designated Air Quality Management Area, where tree retention and planting is a priority, and is considered sustainable in its location.

Concerns within the application relate to maintenance issues with needle/cone build up on the roof, in the gutters and on the patio floor beneath. Also, there are concerns for the lifting/dropping of the flagstone patio, suspected due to root activity from this tree, and pooling of water on these after heavy or prolonged rain.

The Norway spruce would be estimated to be in the second third of its life expectancy (middle aged) and would have achieved most of its growth (height and Width). This does

not mean that there isn't any future growth potential, it just means that future growth would be minimal and can be reasonably managed through pruning operations.

There are pruning options available to help contain the canopy spread toward the building and if undertaken in line with current best practise, can create sustainable clearance for many years, which can reduce some needle fall toward the roof and gutters. However, this would not prevent the need to undertake general maintenance/ clearance of the roof and gutters, which is required of all property owners. Gutter covers could be considered to minimise issues of gutter blockage.

With regards to the flagstone movement and potential drainage issues. We note within your application that you have ticked "no" to alleged damage to property (section 4), which includes damage to drains and flagstones. Had you ticked "yes", we would have required supporting information which demonstrates that there are no alternative options to addressing the issue. If an investigation has not been undertaken it would be hard to determine what the issue is. In terms of the drainage, we don't know what the issues are at the moment, i.e. whether this is linked to root activity or tree debris, hence do not know if removal of the tree would resolve these issues.

During my visit I could see that the flagstones had lifted and dropped in places. The lifting I saw during the visit is typical of root activity, however it is not apparent as to what depth the roots are influencing the flagstones. It is not untypical that the roots can lift light foundation landscape features, such as patios, beneath the hardcore base 200mm down, exaggerating the lifting effect on the flagstones. Solutions are available in resitting the flagstones by removing some of the hardcore base and resettling, level with remaining flagstones. You could also, if conducive use, consider alternative, more flexible paving as paving slabs are unforgiving when root activity is occurring.

In any application we have to consider whether the reasons put forward in support of felling outweigh the amenity that would be lost from the tree's removal. The fall of needles throughout the year is something that can not be alleviated and is part and parcel of having trees within the site. We understand that this requires regular maintenance, however these reasonings do not justify the removal of a healthy tree of high amenity. Undertaking the removal of a significant tree without evidence of investigation (movement of patio and drain concerns) is deemed premature.

**In conclusion, without supporting evidence/information the proposed removal of the Norway Spruce is refused.**

If you wish to appeal against the Council's decision on this matter, 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](mailto: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

*Lee Garner*

Lee Garner  
Consultant Assistant Natural Environment Officer