



Mr R Cutting
(on behalf of Holy Trinity Church)

Frances Martin
Executive Director for
Economic Growth and
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12 October 2021

Your contact is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning

Dear Mr Cutting

RE: PROPOSED FELLING OF FOUR LIME TREES AND ONE FALSE ACACIA AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, OXFORD ROAD, READING - SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 168/01.

Thank you for your application of 7 August 2021, regarding the above and apologies for the delay in providing this formal response.

Further to our site meeting of 6 September 2021, I have the following comments:

In relation to the Lime trees, your application and supporting letter detail your concerns relating to these trees which, briefly, relate to the cost of repeated re-pollarding, coping with the nuisance from natural tree debris (including 'secretion' which makes the flagstones slippery; with the church having limited resources to deal with this) and the blocking of the view of the church when in leaf. In relation to the False acacia, the main issues are natural tree debris affecting the church roof and blocking the gutters, along with managing the sucker growth. You have expressed concern about the presence of, and falling of, dead wood from all trees and the cost of having this removed on a regular basis. No arboricultural reasons have been provided to support the felling of any of the trees, i.e. no concerns over their condition have been raised.

When considering applications to fell, officers have to consider the reasons put forward in support of the proposal and whether these outweigh the loss of amenity from the trees' removal.

In this case, the trees are important for a number of reasons, which need to be considered in weighing up the justification to fell. The site is located in a Conservation Area, where trees help to add to its character and provide important greening. The row of Lime trees

is noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal document for the 'Russell Street / Castle Hill' (now Castle Hill/Russell Street / Oxford Road CA) as some of the most '*significant trees for residents in the area*'. They sit on the frontage of the listed church and, along with the church, form an important view looking north from Russell Street. The site is within a low canopy cover area and on a 'treed corridor', as defined in our Tree Strategy, and within the designated Air Quality Management Area. As such, it is a priority site for tree retention and planting. The Conservation Area Appraisal states (with reference to the previous Tree Strategy, which is still of relevance):

'Most of the Conservation Area has ten percent or less canopy cover, so protecting and enhancing the area's green assets is a priority, as defined in the Council's 2010 Tree Strategy document and in line with the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency Motion'

Lastly, this part of Oxford Road sits within one of the Council's designated High Street Heritage Action Zones, one objective of which is to 'improve the public realm'; the trees in question contributing to this positively.

Turning to the reasons put forward in support of felling, these were discussed further during our meeting. We are mindful of the fact the resources (physical and financial) of the church may be limited in order to deal with the issues you raise. However, the cost of tree maintenance is an often-cited reason for tree removal and is not considered to justify the felling of high amenity trees. Tree nuisance issues are appreciated but again are not considered to be acceptable reasons to fell healthy trees of high amenity value. Maintenance of trees, the associated cost of clearing up natural debris and potential cost of e.g. gutter covers, as preventative solutions are all considered to be part and parcel of normal maintenance of a property, alongside that of the building itself. Your concern about the Lime trees blocking the view of the church is noted, which I understand relates not just to the visibility of the church (as an important listed building) within the Conservation Area, but also to allowing more prominence of the church to the public. The Limes are pollarded and must therefore be managed as pollards through regular re-pollarding - normally every 3-5 years. This will allow full visibility of the church in 'year 1' (at the time of pollarding) and will limit the overall stature of the trees, i.e. they won't reach the optimal size of this species, hence the visibility impact on the church is much reduced.

The reasons put forward to support the proposed felling are not considered to outweigh the loss of amenity that would result from the felling of these important trees, in terms of their overall benefit to the locality, i.e. from a visual and environmental point of view. As such the proposed felling is refused.

If you wish to appeal against this refusal of consent to fell the five trees, 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.

You mentioned during our meeting that you regularly remove some growth from the Lime trees; your accompanying letter referring to that blocking the notice board and hanging low over the pavement. Please note that whilst minor pruning to ensure the branches are 2.75m above the pavement does not require formal approval, please ensure you provide notice of your intention to do this. Any other works (other than the removal of dead wood), e.g. removal of basal growth, pruning to provide clearance of the notice board and pruning above the statutory height of 2.75m, requires formal approval to be obtained through the submission of a tree works application. Applications can include multiple operations so you could submit an application seeking consent to e.g. removal basal growth four times a year for the next 5 years and prune twice a year to provide Xm clearance from the notice board.

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