



Mrs Charmain Berry
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Frances Martin
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1 March 2022

Your contact
is: Sarah Hanson, Planning

Dear Mrs Berry,

**RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO TREES AT 15 KENTWOOD CLOSE, TILEHURST, READING -
SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 61/03**

Thank you for your application of 15th December 2021 regarding the above. May I firstly apologise for the time it has taken for you to receive a response to your application.

You have applied to undertake the following tree works:

- Scots pine (T1 of application; T2 of TPO) - Fell to ground level
- Douglas Fir (T2 of application; T3 of TPO) - carry out an advanced inspection of the main stem (decay detection) to determine the extent of any decay in the stem

In support of your application, you have submitted a Tree Survey by Mr. Paul Billin of Urban Tree Experts, dated 13 December 2021.

The Council's Arboricultural Consultant visited your property on 2nd February 2022 to view the trees in question.

You have applied to fell a prominent Scots pine growing adjacent to the public highway to resolve cracks in the boundary wall and 'undulations' to the pavement on the public highway - the tree's roots are believed to be responsible for both.

This tree is a healthy mature specimen tree with a high degree of amenity value when viewed from Kentwood Close and appears to be a good condition. As such, the reasons

put forward in support of felling must outweigh the amenity value lost from its felling.

In relation to the issues with the pavement, which the Tree Survey highlights as being a justifiable reason to fell the Scots pine, the Council's Highways Inspector has visited the site to provide an expert opinion on the condition of the pavement. He has confirmed that roots from the Scots pine are causing some minor undulation of the adjacent pavement but that he is satisfied that the damage is not acute and 'nothing of concern or in need of a repair at this time'. As such, this reason for felling is discounted.

The wall consists of double brick pillars between which is a low span of single-skin brick wall topped with wooden trellis. The cracks noted on the wall are on the lightweight single-skin lengths of the structure. Also noted in the length of wall directly adjacent to the tree, is a crack opening between the single skin wall and adjacent pillar where the wall and pillar are not fully connected with integrated bricks.

Lightweight structures such as pavements, patios, paths and single-skin brick garden walls usually have shallow foundations and are therefore more susceptible to direct damage from tree roots and require frequent repair. Due to the nature of the damage, it is likely that sections of the boundary wall would require sections to be rebuilt to facilitate a full repair of this structure. It would therefore be possible for the damaged lengths of wall to be rebuilt on a pile and beam footings which can bridge the tree's roots without the need for tree removal.

The Council considers that allowing healthy and significant protected trees to be felled where they are causing potentially fixable damage to lightweight structures would set an unacceptable precedent when considering similar applications in the future. Such a precedent could be used to justify the removal of other mature protected trees close to paths or garden walls in the Borough to the detriment of the local amenity.

With regards to the Douglas fir, I agree with the initial findings of the Mr. Billin, your Arboricultural Consultant in so far as this tree is in a state of decline and poor physiological health. However, I do not agree with Mr. Billin's recommendation that further inspection with more advanced decay detection equipment is justified on the tree.

Non-invasive decay detection does not require an application to the Borough Council for consent under the TPO therefore you can carry out this further investigation should you wish to do so. However, please also be aware that as the Douglas Fir is in a physiological state of advanced decline from which the tree is not expected to recover, the Council is likely to approve a new application to remove this tree due to its poor health. The cost of decay detection might therefore be better be used for felling and replacement planting of a new tree in a sustainable location within the property. As there are no symptoms to suggest that the Douglas Fir has basal decay, it is difficult to conclude any benefit to you as the tree owner from carrying out further investigation on this matter.

In conclusion, your application to fell the Scots pine (T1 of application; T2 of TPO) is refused.

The proposed further investigation works into possible decay at the base of the Douglas Fir (T2 of application; T3 of TPO) does not require the consent of the Borough Council.

This decision is made in accordance with the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, which sets out the pathway to achieving the goal of 'a net zero carbon, resilient Reading' by 2030 and in accordance with the Council's adopted Tree Strategy. In support of these aims, the Council will actively promote the retention and increase of trees numbers and tree canopy cover within the borough on public land and within private gardens, businesses and schools.

If you are aggrieved by the refusal of consent to fell the Scots pine (T1 of application; T2 of TPO) as per your application, 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