



Mr N Wilson
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Frances Martin
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16 September 2021

Your contact is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning

Dear Mr Wilson

RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO WESTERN RED CEDAR TREES AT CAVERSHAM LAWN TENNIS CLUB, QUEENSBOROUGH DRIVE, READING - G1 AND T9 OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 76/09.

Thank you for your application of 27 July 2021, regarding the above and accompanying Specifications of works and reasons for works document.

Your application seeks consent to:

Reduce height to approximately 7m

Face trim back tennis court side as far as possible whilst retaining a neat, tidy and relatively flat finish.

The proposed reduction is illustrated in your accompanying photograph:



Your supporting document lists 12 reasons to support the proposed work covering various matters.

In your email of 2 August 2021, you provided clarification on the reasons for the reduction of T9 and on the trimming of the court side of the trees:

'The reasoning behind reducing T.9 to the same level as G.1 is to create 1 uniform hedge on the boundary that is easy to maintain and limits the risk of root damage to the tennis courts.

The tennis club are already experiencing problems with root ingress, from trees adj to T.9, lifting the surface of other courts and wish to pre-empt any problems with this tree. In relation to 'Face trim back tennis court side as far as possible whilst retaining a neat, tidy and relatively flat finish.', I estimate that this would remove approx 0.5m and we will face trim as far back as possible whilst retaining live growth'.

In response to my question of whether the Club had consulted neighbouring residents in Fernbrook Road, you advised:

The tennis club have been in touch with the residents and sent me the following comments [from the applicant].

'I've dropped off the attached letter to the three neighbours directly affected. I spoke to the owners of nos. 17 & 19 and they were both very pleased and supportive. No. 19 mentioned how imposing the hedge was and how good it would be to see it lowered. He also mentioned the hedge branches encroaching laterally into his garden but I didn't pursue that point. No.21 wasn't in so I just posted the letter.'

Subsequent to your email I received a query from 19 Fernbrook Road regarding the proposed works. I was provided with a copy of the letter sent to neighbours which did not specify the degree of the proposed height reduction in this current application, which is pertinent given planning and tree works history on this site. As you are aware, clarification of the proposed work has resulted in objections from No. 19 & 23 Fernbrook Road, specifically to the degree of reduction rather than the principle.

As you know, reduction of these trees was agreed in 2015 (ref 151266) and 2018 (ref 180085). In 2015 the height reduction approved (agreed by neighbours) was indicated by the submission photo below with the height being to the bottom of the 'v-shaped' gap in the centre of the tree line:



The 2018 approval was for a repeat reduction to the same height agreed in 2015.

The tree screen is important as a visual (and noise) screen for the neighbours from the

impact of the tennis air dome, at approx. 10m high at its (wide) apex. This has been the case since consideration of the dome, which was given approval (on appeal) in 1992; the Inspector's decision commenting that:

6. The proposed air hall would be about 8.5m at its highest part. In considering the previous appeal, the Inspector considered that the existing tree planting along the southern and western boundaries of the tennis club site, particularly if the deciduous trees and shrubs along the western boundary were to be augmented by evergreen tree planting, would provide a satisfactory screen to the air hall at all times of the year. I agree with that assessment.

A condition was attached to that consent to secure landscaping and indicate retained trees. Consideration of subsequent planning applications submitted by the Club have mentioned the presence of the tree screen.

You will note that the appeal decision above referred to a height (from court level) of 8.5m, whereas the current dome (as confirmed by the applicant) is 10m high, hence the tree screen has become more important than it was in 1992.

The objections received rightly question the acceptability of the reduction, from just above 10m (G1 height) to 7m in height (measured from court level), in terms of then having a detrimental impact on the function of the tree screen and making the air dome visible; with 7m being lower than the previous reductions. Given the planning and tree works history, this is a significant point in weighing up an appropriate reduction, taking into account the reasons put forward in support of the proposal, and I have put more weight on this than ease of maintenance or general nuisance issues for the club.

In relation to several specific reasons for the work, I note the reasons commenting on root damage and amenity. In relation to root damage, I am aware that this has occurred on other courts, with root severance having been agreed. You state that *'The proposed reduction in height of will stop any further root growth'* but I would suggest it is difficult to say with any certainty what level of reduction would prevent root issues occurring. In relation to amenity, you state that *'The area has plenty of trees cover and therefore any loss of visual amenity will be minimal'*. In this case, I have taken the assessment of amenity impact to include the impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties as a result of the proposed work, which is discussed above.

In conclusion, the Council, along with neighbours, are in agreement with the principle of a height reduction to alleviate concerns, however it is the degree of proposed reduction which is deemed unacceptable due to the reduced screening the trees would then give, specifically to the air dome. A lesser reduction to that proposed, in order to maintain a 'useful' screen is acceptable.

The proposed works to reduce the hedge to 7m in height (measured from court level) is refused for the reasons given above.

However, I can confirm that the following lesser works are approved subject to the conditions below:

- T9 & G1 Western Red Cedar - reduce to 9m in height (measured from court level) or to the previous reduction height (2018), whichever is greater; trim the court side by approximately 0.5m ensuring live growth is retained.

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

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. 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.

If you wish to appeal the refused reduction of against any of the conditions attached to the consented works, 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. Duncan Gilmour, Caversham Lawn Tennis Club