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2 June 2021

Your contact is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning

Dear Mr Rose

RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO THREE TREES AT PLAYDAY NURSERY, 100 HEMDEAN ROAD, READING - SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 173/06.

Thank you for your application of 12 April 2021, regarding the above, with supporting 'Arboricultural Report on Pine tree' dated 9 April 2021.

Further to my visit on 26 May 2021, I have the following comments:

Whilst on site, it was requested that some pruning of the Lime (T5 of the TPO) be allowed, hence works were discussed and agreed on site and this has been added to the application.

In relation to the Sycamore, this appears to be in good condition and of good form, providing amenity value to the street scene in Hemdean Road. The reasons for the desire to crown lift this tree are appreciated; with the branches being low and shading the nursery's (now) extended garden area. Your line of crown lift shown was confirmed on site as including five branches, as you indicate. I explained on site to Mr & Mrs Day that I had reservations about the removal of the lowest branch given its diameter. I am not convinced that the size of wound created meets with guidance in 7.2.4 of BS3998:2010 and I am concerned that creation of such a (relatively) large wound at the trunk would result in decay into the trunk at that point. The remaining four branches under consideration are not of concern in this respect but once removed would leave the larger, lowest branch very much 'on its own'. After discussing this on site, it was indicated that there was a desire to have a swing attached to this branch hence it was decided that a long stub would be left (to be determined by the Nursery) in order to allow this and would then also avoid decay being at the trunk (considered to be more relevant than target pruning in this case). However, this does not come without it's own concerns with the

weight on the swing having to be limited to that appropriate to the branch but also the need to monitor the condition of the branch - if it dies off, it will become weaker hence at some point will create a health & safety concern in it's use for the swing.

In relation to the Pine, your report concludes that: *'It would appear that the Pine is relatively healthy and does not require any remedial works at this time'*. The application to fell is therefore confirmed as not being for arboricultural reasons but focused on the nuisance factor associated with the tree, that mainly being the nuisance / Health & Safety issues from bird faeces, with concerns over Pine needles also raised. Details of these issues are provided in the supporting letter from Jan Day and were discussed during my visit.

The Pine is visible from Hemdean Road and forms part of the tree group on the frontage of Heamdean House School, which collectively provide important amenity value to the locality. As an evergreen, the value of the Pine will be greater in the winter months (surrounding trees being deciduous), but it is accepted that the visibility of the Pine when adjacent trees are in leaf is limited. I also note the tree appears to have either been topped or lost its top in the past, with the upper crown therefore abnormal in form, detracting from its appearance.

The injuries caused by Pine needles is noted and appreciated, albeit as a general concern would not normally be a reason to allow felling of a protected tree. As noted above, the main concern, hence reason for the request to fell, relates to the extensive bird faeces and associated issues, exacerbated by the particular use of the land, i.e. intensive use as a nursery garden. As you will appreciate, the nuisance of bird droppings is a regularly cited reason for tree works / felling and is also not one that we would normally accept. Agreeing felling on either/both of these issues, generally speaking, could set an unwelcome precedent for other such requests across the borough. However, each request for felling should be considered on its own merits and I have considered the nuisance these issues cause in this particular case, along with the evidence seen on site, and obviously neither issue can be alleviated without felling the tree. In relation to the injuries caused by the needles, this is not normally such an issue for Pine tree owners, hence the concern in this case is, I would suggest, unique to such a setting (use type and intensity of use). I note, in relation to bird faeces, the multiple attempts at discouraging birds made by the nursery in the first instance, along with the extreme burden it places on staff in terms of cleaning and concerns relating to the health and safety of the children. Whilst there is space outside the canopy of the tree, i.e. not directly impacted by bird droppings, I accept that the droppings will be trod around the play area and into the building. I appreciate that the outdoor space is of vital importance to the nursery and will be used on an almost daily basis, hence, is an intensively used area integral to the nursery's play provision. As such, the nuisance issues are of greater impact to the day to day running of the nursery and I therefore place greater weight on this than, for example, bird dropping issues on a private, intermittently used patio.

It is not a clear-cut decision in relation to the Pine but very much a matter of balancing the positive attributes of the tree against the negative aspects raised. On balance, in this particular case, the negative impacts of the tree are considered to outweigh its wider positive values, particularly given its sub-optimal form, and as such the felling of the Pine

is agreed. This is subject to replacement planting, as per condition 4 below. The application form indicates that the nursery would be happy to plant two replacement trees, and this would certainly be positive in helping to meet the aims of our Tree Strategy to increase canopy cover in the borough.

Please note that the Pine has been cited as, and accepted as, the primary tree with regard to bird nuisance issues over the current artificial turfed, designated outdoor space. I note that the outdoor space has recently been expanded to underneath and north of the Sycamore. As such, it is possible that play areas under that tree will be affected by bird droppings. It should not be assumed that an application to fell the Sycamore for similar reasons would be accepted. Part of the 'on balance' decision with regard to the Pine was its condition/form. The Sycamore currently appears to be in good health with good shape and form and the nursery should ensure that nothing is installed within its root area (including artificial turf) without agreeing the details with the Council first to ensure the future health of the tree is protected.

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

- Sycamore (T3 of TPO; T2 of application) - remove 5 lowest branches as shown on the annotated photograph below, with the lowest, larger branch remaining as a stub (as per discussion above) - this branch should not be removed at source due to likely future decay
- Pine (T4 of TPO; T1 of application) - fell.
- Lime (T5 of TPO) - crown lift (basal and epicormic) up to crown break; selective branch reduction to give 1m clearance from the building.



Branches to be removed; Larger branch - long stub to be left

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 (unless specifically agreed otherwise).

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 Pine tree authorised by this consent, one replacement tree of a minimum 10-12cm girth and 3m in height shall be planted within the grounds of Heamdean School or PlayDay Nursery during the planting season (Nov-March) following or at the time of the felling of the tree, whichever is soonest. The species and location shall be agreed with the Council 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. Crown lifting of trees over the footpath and carriageway: If the clearance of vegetation overhanging the highway only involves the removal of branches to give a ground clearance to the statutory heights of 2.7m over the footpath and 5.5m over the road, this does not require formal consent from the Council. You are advised, however, to give notice to the Council of these intended works in order that they can be agreed.

If you wish to appeal 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 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. Playday Nursery, 100 Hemdean Road
Hemdean House School (office email)