



Frances Martin
Executive Director for
Economic Growth and
Neighbourhood Services

Civic Centre, Reading, RG1 2LU
☎ 0118 9373787

Mrs K Fisher
Environmental Services
Unit 4, Linnet Court
Cawledge Business Park
Alnwick
NE66 2DE

Our Ref: 200527/TCA
Your Ref: IFS-AVI-SUB-19-0084937

Direct: ☎01189 372440
Email: sarah.hanson@reading.gov.uk

24 April 2020

Your contact is: Sarah Hanson, Planning and Building Control

Dear Mrs Fisher

RE: PROPOSED FELLING OF ONE BEECH TREE AT READING NATIONAL SPIRITUALIST CHURCH, 81 BAKER STREET, READING - SUBJECT TO CONSERVATION AREA STATUS.

Thank you for your Section 211 Notice of 6 April 2020 regarding the above. Your Notice was supported by the following documents:

- Arboricultural Report dated 14/01/20
- Claim Assessment Report dated 19 December 2019
- Root Identification Report dated 3 February 2020
- Site Location Plan
- Soil Analysis Report dated 13 February 2020

To assess the Notice, Reading Borough Council has employed the services of Subtilis Consulting to review the engineering aspects of the submission. A site visit was carried out on 17 April 2020 by myself and Tim Pither from Subtilis Consulting to view the damage that has occurred.

As you will appreciate, the mature Beech tree in question is a very prominent feature of Baker Street contributing positively to the street scene and Conservation Area. Given the Council's climate emergency declaration last year and the revision of the Council's Tree Strategy (consultation pending), the retention of trees is of vital importance, where appropriate, in order to maintain the canopy cover of the Borough and the multiple environmental benefits provided by trees.

As such, it is important when assessing any application to fell a tree, particularly one of high amenity value, that all parties are satisfied that the tree is the major contributory factor to the damage occurring. Where that is the case, the Council take such matters seriously and support appropriate tree management. In addition, we would not wish to see tree owners spending significant amounts of money on felling large trees if their contribution to the damage is not certain, i.e. only for the problem to not be resolved by felling.

The submitted reports and damage have been carefully considered and I attach a copy of the report provided to the Council by Subtilis Consulting. As you will see, there are a number of issues raised that question whether the evidence sufficiently demonstrates that the tree is the cause of the damage. Recommendations have been made within the report as to a reasonable way forward in order to eliminate other causes and demonstrate that the damage is as a result of vegetation related subsidence.

The tree in question appears to be in good condition and provides high degree of amenity value to the surrounding area. Given that its removal would have a detrimental impact on the area and given the contents of this letter and attached report, I am seeking your withdrawal of the Section 211 Notice. Following that, it would be prudent for the recommendations within the attached report to be followed and further evidence, with a new S.211 Notice, submitted at a later date, if considered appropriate. I would be grateful for confirmation of withdrawal of the Notice within 7 days of the date of this letter, i.e. by 1 May 2020.

If I do not receive confirmation of the withdrawal of the Notice by the date specified, the Council will have no option but to serve a Tree Preservation Order to prevent the felling at this point in time. The service of the TPO will then require a tree works application to be submitted, if considered appropriate, to seek approval for the felling of the Beech. Based on current submissions, such an application is likely to be refused.

I look forward to hearing from you before the end of Friday 1 May 2020.

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. Ms Helen Shearer, Reading National Spiritualist Church, 81 Baker Street