



Mr H Morris
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19 November 2019

Your contact is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning & Building Control

Dear Mr Morris

RE: PROPOSED FELLING OF ONE LIME TREE AND PRUNING OF ONE LIME TREE AT 20 CHURCH ROAD (THE RECTORY), CAVERSHAM, READING - SUBJECT TO CONSERVATION AREA STATUS.

Thank you for your Section 211 Notice of 14 October 2019 advising us of your intention to fell one Lime tree and prune an adjacent Lime tree at the above address; both on the boundary with Caversham Court Gardens.

As you are aware the Diocese (and you on their behalf) have, over the course of 2019, worked with the Council Officers regarding the two Lime trees and damage to the Council owned listed wall of Caversham Court Gardens, with an aim to retain both important trees whilst carrying out repairs to the wall to ensure its long-term safety. Officers from Planning (including the Conservation Consultant, Planning Officer and Natural Environment Officer) and Parks (including the Tree Officer and Landscape Services Manager) have been involved in these discussions. It was established through site visits that both trees are causing damage to the wall.

Given the importance of both trees to the Conservation Area and their specific setting, our default aim was to retain both trees whilst carrying out necessary repairs to the wall to enable this. This resulted in the submission of a Listed Building application (190944), on behalf of the Diocese, specifying works to the wall to strengthen it, hence allow retention of both trees. The works were deemed unacceptable in conservation terms and it was agreed by all parties that they would in any case only address the issues in the short term.

Our sites visits identified that the damage from the tree closest to the Rectory was limited to minor issues to the top of the wall but the damage from the tree furthest from the Rectory was more substantial, as detailed below:

T1 Lime (closest to the rectory)

Basal growth of this tree is abutting the wall but is not densely compacted and does not appear to be causing any damage to the wall. Historically a low branch was removed but the reaction wood around the branch stub has resulted in the coping stone being pushed (one section is also missing) along with pressure on the very top of the section of wall in contact with the stub. Smaller low branches are resting on top of the wall.

T2 Lime (closest to Caversham Court entrance)

The trunk is not in contact with the wall hence the trunk is causing no issues. However, basal growth is extensive and densely compacted, historical expansion of this putting pressure on the wall which has resulted in cracks. The tree is causing a direct nuisance by virtue of causing damage to the wall and the safeguarding of the wall is not considered possible with the tree in place.

The final conclusion was that unfortunately one of the two trees (T2) would have to be felled in order to safeguard the important, listed wall and pruning works were necessary to the second tree in order to prevent ongoing damage to the wall. This resulted in appropriate works being recommended which are included in your S211 Notice.

I can therefore confirm that the Council have no objections to the following proposed tree work:

- T1 Lime (closest to the Rectory) - crown lift to 1.5m above the wall and remove a small (1-2cm) 'slice' of the branch stub to provide clearance.
- T2 Lime (furthest from the Rectory; closest to Caversham Court entrance) – fell

The felling of T2, i.e. prioritisation of the wall, has been agreed by Lead Councillors.

The works should not be carried out before six weeks from the date of your notification, i.e. before 25 November 2019. After this date, the works can go ahead but should not proceed without the following:

- A structural survey of the wall being undertaken to establish that it will be secure once T2 has been removed
- A method statement for the removal of T2 being submitted and agreed with the Council (Parks)
- A risk assessment for the work being submitted and agreed by the Council (Parks)
- Providing a copy of your tree surgeon's insurance details, which should include a minimum £10 million public liability insurance
- Specifications for necessary repairs to the wall and confirmation that the Diocese

will either carry out this work (subject to agreement) or provide monetary compensation to allow the works to be carried out by the Council [this could be agreed post felling and replacement if necessary to avoid delay]

Once the above is agreed, please inform us of the intended date of felling in order that we can advise interested parties.

Under Section 213 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, a landowner is under a duty to replace a tree in a conservation area which is removed to prevent or abate a nuisance. The duty on the landowner is to plant another tree of an appropriate size and species at the same place as soon as he or she reasonably can.

In this case the Council would expect a replacement Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) of a minimum 10-12cm girth and 3m high to be planted on the same grass area in the planting season (Nov-March) following or at the time of felling, whichever is soonest.

A tree of a larger stock size would be welcomed in order to provide further mitigation for the amenity lost by the felling of T2. The Diocese may wish to approach Ethical Reading (Trees for Reading) to find out if any funding could be made available to assist in the cost of planting a larger stock size: <https://ethicalreading.org.uk/trees-for-reading/>.

It would obviously be prudent to plant the replacement tree further away from the wall and to ensure the tree pit incorporates root barriers of an appropriate depth to minimise the chance of damage to adjacent structures in the future. If there are sound reasons why the replacement tree should not be planted on the same grass area, please inform us of those (with full justification) in order that we can discuss alternatives.

In terms of timescales and the continuing damage to the wall, please ensure that this matter is moved on without undue delay so that the felling and replacement can take place prior to the end of March 2020, i.e. before nesting season starts and before the end of the planting season.

Informatives

1. 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'.

2. 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 060 3900; enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

3. 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

4. This decision is valid for two years from the date of this letter, after which it lapses.

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. Carolyn Jenkins, Landscape Services Manager, RBC