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10 October 2018

Your contact
is: Sarah Hanson, Planning & Building Control

Dear Dr Harris

**RE: PROPOSED FELLING OF ONE PINE TREE AT 19 RICHMOND ROAD, CAVERSHAM,
READING - T5 OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 201/06**

Thank you for your application of 13 May 2018 regarding the above.

Your application to fell the Pine (T5) is based mainly on its lean. I note the supporting comments made by Lawrence Williams, i.e. that *'he feels the Pine has not grown at a natural angle and that as there was no other surrounding competition for the tree to grow from at a natural angle it suggests that the tree has moved to be growing in this way'*. As you are aware, there was a Larch tree directly adjacent to the Pine until 2014 therefore Lawrence's comments are not accurate.

The tree had a lean when viewed in 2014 (ref application 140498/TPO) and is referred to in my decision letter for that application. The question is whether the tree has increased in lean and if there is evidence of movement. I and my colleague Sarah Duckworth visited (separately) on 31 May and 8 June 2018 respectively to assess the current situation.

As confirmed in Sarah Duckworth's email of 8 June, no defects or symptoms were identified which may have indicated that the leaning Pine tree was unstable or suffering early root plate failure at that time. There were no cracks or areas of soil lifting and the ground remained fairly level and evenly compacted around the base. The adjacent fence within 0.6m of the tension side of the tree was undamaged. The canopy of the tree was noted as being dense and vigorous, indicating good overall health and vitality. However

given yours and your neighbour's concerns about the condition of the tree and its lean, along with the shedding of a branch onto your neighbour's shed, it was agreed that your application would be put on hold for a few months in order to monitor the situation.

Sarah Duckworth and I visited again on 8 October 2018, viewing the tree from both your property and from your neighbour's garden at 4 Haldane Road. There was no apparent change in the lean of the tree compared to May/June 2018. A photo taken of the Pine in 2014 (the lean being noted at that time) indicates a similar lean to the current situation, albeit the photos are taken from a slightly different angle - the left-hand photo is 2014; the right-hand photo is May 2018:



In addition, the lean of the Pine was evident in 2009, as can be seen on the two Google Street View images (on left) below from the front of 4 Haldene Road; the right-hand photo being from our visit of 8 October 2018:



As per the situation in May/June 2018, during our visit of 8 October 2018, there was no indication around the base of the tree of any lifting that may indicate early root plate failure. The lean of the tree may therefore be 'natural', a contributory factor being the adjacent Larch, only removed 4 years ago (visible in the 2014 photo above).

For information, measurements of the distance between the trunk and boundary fence to the north and east were taken for future reference. Additional photos were also taken for future comparison.

I understand that the failure of the branch into your neighbour's shed earlier this year occurred during a period of high winds. Whilst we understand yours and your neighbour's concerns in respect of potential future failures, it is not uncommon for trees to lose branches in extreme weather and it is not proportionate for us to allow the felling of otherwise healthy tree on this basis.

Similarly, as discussed on site, the felling of a healthy tree on the basis that it may fail on an adjacent property is not considered reasonable in an urban environment such as Reading where trees are generally within falling distances of buildings.

You and your neighbour requested consideration of some works to the tree to reduce the branch length, hence weight, on the south/leaning side of the tree. It is considered reasonable to undertake a modest reduction of those branches hence pruning is agreed and specified below.

In conclusion, the proposed felling of the Pine (T5) is refused. However, the following lesser works are approved subject to the conditions below:

- Pine (T5) – reduce branches on the south/lean side of the tree by up to 1.5m as shown on the attached, annotated photograph at the end of this correspondence.

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. This decision is valid for two years from the date of this notice after which the consent lapses

4. 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. 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

If you wish to appeal against the Council's refusal of consent to fell the Pine tree or against conditions attached to the consented work, please contact the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of receipt of this letter to obtain the relevant forms:

The Environment Appeals Team
Trees and Hedges
The Planning Inspectorate
Room 3/25, Hawk Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Email: environment.appeals@pins.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 0303 444 5584

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



Figure 1 - Approved reduction works to T5 (Pine) of TPO 201/06