



Mr. Sam Harmer
19 Tower Close
Emmer Green
Reading
Berkshire
RG4 8UU

Giorgio Framalicco
Head of Planning, Development
& Regulatory Services
Civic Centre, Reading, RG1 2LU
☎ 0118 9373787

Our Ref: 180457/PREAPP
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎01189 372440
sarah.duckworth@reading.gov.uk

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Your contact is:

Sarah Duckworth, Planning and Building Control

Without prejudice

Dear Mr. Harmer,

**RE: PRE-APPLICATION FOR TREE WORKS AT 19 TOWER CLOSE, EMMER GREEN,
READING, PROTECTED AS WOODLAND 1 OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER 33/002**

Thank you for your pre-application enquiry of 23rd March 2018, regarding the above. Further to our meeting on 27th April 2018, my pre-application response to you is provided below.

Any subsequent TPO application following on from this pre-application advice should be submitted on line via the Planning Portal www.planningportal.gov.uk . Alternatively, applications can be submitted using the 1APP Tree Preservation Order form available on request.

Overview

Trees at the rear of your property are protected in a Woodland Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The woodland category's purpose in a TPO is to safeguard the identified woodland as a whole. So it follows that, while some trees may lack individual merit, all trees which grow in the woodland of the species listed in the TPO are protected and made subject to the same provisions and exemptions. In addition, trees and saplings which grow naturally or are planted within the woodland area after the Order is made are also protected by the Order.

Where trees grow as groups in a woodland setting it is not unusual to find individual trees of poor form or with notable defects. These features often result when a tree is growing in competition with adjacent trees. It is these features which give woodland groups their value for wildlife, habitat and local biodiversity. Decay

pockets, cavities and deadwood are features in woodland which provide shelter or foraging opportunities for animals, birds and invertebrates which may also be protected under other legislation. It would be undesirable to prune all trees in order to remove such defects unless there is an overriding health and safety need to do so.

With this in mind, the Borough Council encourages tree owners to consider biodiversity in the management of their trees. Dead trees and branches can provide very valuable habitats for other species so to conserve biodiversity it can be good practice to retain deadwood on living trees and at least the lower trunk of dead trees, especially 'ancient' or 'veteran' trees unless, for example, safety reasons justify removal. Safety has priority, but safety considerations may not necessitate removal of all dead branches on living trees or the whole of a dead tree. It may be helpful to seek expert arboricultural and ecological advice.

If you have a tree which is considered dead or imminently hazardous, unless work is urgently necessary because there is an immediate risk of serious harm, 5 working days prior written notice must be given to the authority before cutting down or carrying out other work on a dead tree. An email will suffice and it is helpful if you can also provide supporting photographic evidence. The authority's consent for such work is not required but we may visit beforehand to confirm the condition of the tree(s). You may be asked to confirm the condition of the tree after it has been removed therefore it is always expedient to keep photographs and copies of any arboricultural advice which led you to fell the tree(s).

The exceptions allow removal of dead branches from a living tree without prior notice or consent; however we would appreciate notice being given for our files. All other works to a live tree will require an application to be submitted to the Borough Council.

Where a dead or dangerous tree is removed within a Woodland Tree Preservation Order, there is no duty on the landowner to plant a replacement tree as it is considered the woodland will regenerate naturally. We encourage woodland owners to either replant or encourage the growth of appropriate natural regeneration in order to maintain the tree coverage.

Tree works

On site you advised me that you are looking to crown lift three Oaks to the rear of your property and to carry out the necessary tree works to two Ash trees with cavities at their base. We then discussed work to an additional three Ash trees viewed on site which also exhibited features which might indicate the presence of decay.

- Three Oaks

The three Oak on the northern boundary of the woodland and closest to your property have epicormic growth (shoots) growing from the main trunk. An application to crown lift these trees (removing the shoots back to the main

trunk using sharp hand tools) to a height of 4-5m is likely to be considered acceptable under the Tree Preservation Order.

- Laburnum

There is a small Laburnum tree within the woodland group which has been supported with a tie and stake. This tree is a small ornamental and not a significant feature of the woodland group. The tree is not subject to the Tree Preservation Order as this species is not listed in the TPO schedule.

- Ash #1

To the rear of the woodland area there are a number of Ash trees, two of which you indicated to me have cavities at their base. The tree centrally located (nearer the property) we identified as having a large column of decay up to 3m with a cavity at least 1.2m high from ground level with very slender residual walls. The tree has a full canopy and naturally this will increase the stresses on the trunk of the tree. Given the extent of the decay (and very thin residual wall around it) this tree could be removed under a 5 day notification as it is considered to be dead / dangerous. Although you may not wish to retain the trunk as standing deadwood, consideration should be given to felling the trunk in long length(s) and leaving it on site for habitation.

- Ash #2

A second Ash on the western boundary also has decay at the base which was originally associated with the removal of a second trunk at ground level. The decay again is fairly advanced although as a small tree in a reasonably sheltered and low occupancy area, the tree is not likely to be considered imminently hazardous. An application to fell or reduce this tree would therefore need to be submitted as a standard tree works application rather than a priority 5-day notification.

- Ash #3

Whilst on site I identified a third Ash which has the decay fungus *Inonotus hispidus*. The base of the tree is in a satisfactory condition however there is a column of decay midway up the trunk around the decay bracket up to the ? therefore the tree would be considered dead / dangerous under the TPO regulations. This decay fungus tends to cause stem or branch fracture. If the tree was reduced to a standing monolith above the point of the cavity (to keep the cavity roofed and dry) then it can remain on site and continue to provide habitat for local fauna and invertebrates.

- Ash #4

Adjacent to Ash #3 again on the eastern boundary there is a broader Ash. One branch of this tree has signs of holes and woodpecker activity approximately 9m above ground level. This branch is in decline but given the low occupancy around the base of the tree, it might not be a particular cause for concern at this time. If you would like to remove this branch, an application will be necessary and I would encourage you to reduce it to a long stub so that the habitat hole(s) can be retained.

- Ash #5

The final tree we discussed in the southeast corner of the site is an Ash which appears to have regenerated from a felled stump and has an area of decay with standing water at the base associated with the previous tree stump. Although a notable 'defect', this tree is a small specimen whose canopy is well sheltered by the surrounding trees.

Protected species

Please be aware that it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to disturb roosting bats or nesting birds. An inspection of the trees should be undertaken prior to commencing any tree work. If nesting birds or bats are suspected or identified once work commences on site, the work will need to cease immediately and professional advice sought. Wildlife and habitat controls are administered by Natural England who can be contacted on 0300 030 6000.

Sustainability

The woodland to the rear of your property is dominated by a number of similar aged Ash and Oak trees. In order to improve the diversity and sustainability of the woodland, you might like to consider planting new trees in the area now so that they can become established and ready to take the canopy places of the older trees when the time comes for them to be felled. A cost effective means of doing this is to plant whips (bare-root saplings) during the winter months (November - March).

I do hope this information is of interest to you and assists with the future management of your woodland. If you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Duckworth

Sarah Duckworth
Assistant Natural Environment Officer

Disclaimer

Comments given in this letter on the condition of the tree(s) and suggestions for pruning are provided in order to be helpful. The contents of this letter do not form a full condition survey of the trees and will not identify all defects present, nor should they be taken as such. For a full condition survey of the tree(s), a suitably qualified arboriculturist should be employed to carry out an inspection and provide a written report. The Council are not responsible for carrying out such an inspection and are not liable for any harm caused by failure of the tree or part of it following this response or for any harm caused by carrying out the suggested works.