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21 December 2017

Your contact is: Sarah Hanson, Planning and Building Control

Dear Mr Freeman

**RE: PROPOSED WORKS TO ONE HORSE CHESTNUT TREE AT 16 WELLSWOOD GARDENS,
READING - SUBJECT TO TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 16/12.**

Thank you for your application of 6 December 2017, regarding the above.

Further to my visit on 13 December 2017, I have the following comments:

As you are aware, a tree survey was carried out in 2012 by Julian Forbes-Laird Arboricultural Consultancy to accompany the planning application for the development of Wellswood Gardens. In that survey, the tree in question is tree 3093 about which the following recommendations for work were made:

'Intervention pruning is advised to prevent limb failures of large limb at south and limb to north-east: reduce end-weight of both by reducing by 20% of their overall length.'

For the following reason (in relation to the southern limb):

'Very large and over-extended scaffold limb to south results in a significant crown bias, the size of this section in relation to the stem and structure is such that I consider a future failure to be likely and that a failure would ensue following loading by weather such as heavy rain with wind or snow accumulation'.

This work does not appear to have been undertaken.

The current application, supported by a 'Visual Tree Assessment and Preliminary Report' from Wessex Woodland Management Ltd proposes a 40% reduction of one branch, assumed to be the southern limb referred to in the 2012 survey, by cutting the entire branch at the fork indicated in the report in order to relieve 'evident timber stresses at union of large, over-extended scaffold branch'. This is then a further 20% reduction in length than that recommended in 2012.

As can be appreciated from the photograph and during my visit, the proposed work would result in a substantial reduction of that limb, loss of the majority of the foliage bearing structure of that limb and the creation of several large wounds. Whilst it is agreed that a reduction of this limb is justified, I have concerns that the amount proposed would result in the decline of this limb as a result of foliage removal. Given the stress that this species is already under from pest and diseases, loss of foliage bearing structure needs to be considered carefully. In addition, decay (given that this species do not resist decay well) in the wounds created is inevitable, which would then (along with re-growth) need to be managed. The degree to which such limbs should be reduced is ultimately an educated guess as it is not possible to determine the exact reduction required to reduce potential risk to an acceptable level. However, in this case for the reasons above, the extent proposed is considered excessive and is therefore refused. However, lesser works are approved as detailed below which will still substantially reduce the branch.

In addition to the branch discussed above, the 2012 survey mentions another limb on the same tree and suggests a reduction of the end weight by reducing its length by 20%, the reason cited as: *'Limb to north-east has early symptoms of internal stresses visible as distortions of the overlying bark'*. It appears that this work was not done. It would seem reasonable to address this at the same time as the southern limb, hence (as agreed with Mrs Haynes), this has been added to the application and works are approved as set out below.

In addition to the two main branches, some additional minor work was discussed on site to improve the clearance above the garden by removing one low, secondary branch – this has also been added to the application and is also detailed below. Lastly, one thin, poor condition tree was noted on the rear boundary which could be removed – this is also included in the approved works.

I can confirm that the following works are approved subject to the conditions below:

Horse chestnut (tree 3093 of the 2012 survey)

- Reduction of over-extended main branch growing south/south-east to the multiple points indicated on the attached photographs
- Reduction of twin, main branch growing north over the adjacent woodland (Cadugan Place) approximately to the boundary as indicatively shown on the attached photographs
- Removal of one, low secondary branch over the garden, as shown on the attached photograph
- Removal of one small tree on the rear boundary in poor condition, as shown on the attached photograph

Please note condition 5 below in relation to timing. Given that reduction of these limbs was first suggested 5 years ago and is outstanding, it would be prudent to organise the approved work within the current window, i.e. before the end of January, rather than delay until July/August.

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

5. The works hereby approved to the Horse chestnut shall only be carried out in December-January or late July-August.

Reason: To avoid harm to the future health of the tree.

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. 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 or sought permission or will condone the use of consents to force any landowner to grant such permission.

If you wish to appeal against any of the conditions attached to this consent or against the refusal of consent to allow the 40% reduction in length of the southern limb, please contact the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of receipt of this letter to obtain the relevant forms:

The Environment Appeals Team, 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: 0117 372 8192

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

C.c. Mrs Haynes, 16 Wellswood Gardens