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10 April 2025

Your contact  
is:

Sarah Hanson, Planning, Transport & Public Protection

Dear Mr Cantell

**RE: PROPOSED FELLING OF TWO YEW TREES AT 2B KIDMORE ROAD, READING - T1 & T2  
OF TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NUMBER 124/01.**

Thank you for your application of 10 February 2025 regarding the above.

Your application lists reasons for the proposed felling as follows:

- 1. The owner suffers with a severe medical condition, and has been strongly advised by her consultant that the Yew trees are extremely hazardous to her health, due to the species and huge amounts of pollen they create. (Consultants letter provided)*
- 2. The owners understand that these trees form part of the street scene, and are committed to replanting a less allergenic species to maintain tree cover for the future.*
- 3. Due to the condition and quality of the trees I don't feel that they offer much amenity or long-term value. Because the trees are causing a potential danger to the owner's life and quality of life, I see it as a reasonable request to remove these trees.*
- 4. There is plenty of canopy cover in the area and alongside replanting, the loss would be of minimal impact and only relatively short term - which again, when taking the owners health into consideration, is a small sacrifice and a reasonable solution.*
- 5. As above, and stated in the consultant's letter we feel that the trees present an immediate threat to the owner, and felling should be allowed due to the tree being dangerous and posing an immediate risk of serious harm.*

Summary

*The proposed works will make significant difference to the Clients safety and quality of life.*

*The reasons 1.-5. are all credible reasons, to justify the works, in their own right and all far out way the any loss of any visual amenity.*

Further to my visit of 11 March 2025 and my discussion with Mr MacCarthy, I have the following comments:

The trees are located within a verdant area, where they contribute to the general canopy cover, and are on the street frontage of a tree-lined road where they contribute to the street scene, particularly in the winter months when the street trees are not in leaf:



Taking each point in turn:

### 1 & 5. Health issues

The consultant's letter advises of two health conditions, one described as 'severe', with the Yew trees considered to be contributing to these. I don't propose to discuss the specifics of that within this letter as it will be a public document. However, these have been discussed via email with Mrs MacCarthy and on site with Mr MacCarthy hence I understand the issues and acknowledge that the trees can contribute, with male Yew known to release a lot of pollen so have high allergenicity potential, during the flowering period.

It is appropriate to consider what the potential positive impact of the trees' removal will be, if that can be quantified, and therefore whether removal will result in the desired outcome, and if this case can be argued to be entirely different to that of others, i.e. whether the removal of the Yews could set an unwelcome precedent.

As mentioned above, the property is in a well treed area. This includes multiple trees in the immediate vicinity, including two Yew trees opposite at 4 The Mount and others in the area. In addition, the street is lined with London Plane trees whose hairs (on the young leaves and fruit) can cause respiratory problems. Their pollen is also allergenic.

Given the above, it is difficult to quantify what the impact of the Yew trees' removal will be, hence it could be argued that the impact might be negligible, in which case two protected trees would have been removed with no meaningful, positive outcome.

I have no doubt that there will be many residents in the borough with similar health issues. It is difficult to appreciate how this particular case, if felling were agreed, would not result in an unwelcome precedent where other such trees would then be under threat of felling, with the Council then in a difficult position to resist that felling.

## 2. Replacement planting

If felling were agreed, replacement planting would be a condition of the consent and alternate species could be discussed.

## 3. Condition, quality amenity and lifespan

Your application offers no comment on the condition of the trees, either structural or physiological, hence your argument for felling based on 'condition' is unclear. It appears you are suggesting that the condition & quality is poor hence you '*don't feel that they offer much amenity or long-term value*'. From my visit, I acknowledge that their physiological condition is suboptimal with a sparser than expected crown. I expect this is partially due to their rooting environment which the owner could have / could improve to then improve the trees' health, rather than assume they have no long-term value, particularly given the potential long lifespan of this species. I deal with their amenity value above and below.

## 4. Visual impact of removal

As above, the trees contribute to the street scene and their removal would have a negative impact, particularly in the winter months due to their evergreen nature. It is acknowledged that there are other trees in the immediate locality hence some tree cover would remain and in the long-term, replacement trees could replace the Yews' contribution, if of a similar, ultimate size and evergreen, albeit this would take many years.

An objection to the felling has been received from Caversham & District Resident's Association who state: '*These two healthy yew trees are protected by a TPO and are a valued feature of Kidmore Road, contributing to local tree cover and character. We object to their felling but support careful pruning as an alternative*'. The trees' value is therefore appreciated by the local community and given the main reason for felling (health), it is assumed that pruning is not a viable option for the owners - in any case, the degree of pruning that would alleviate the issues would be unknown.

## Conclusion

Your conclusion is that all the reasons provided, in their own right, justify the works and all far out way the any loss of any visual amenity. This suggests that you consider each

reason, alone, to be sufficient to justify felling - I would disagree for the reasons given above.

Proposals such as this are often a finely balanced decision and not clear cut. It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that their decision is reasoned and that the reasons put forward by an applicant outweigh the loss of amenity that would result from the trees' felling. It is also important to ensure that the reasons for the removal of a protected tree are specific to the case in hand and do not set an unwelcome precedent across the borough, especially at a time where the Council are working to increase canopy cover.

The impact on Mrs MacCarthy's health is fully acknowledged and it is agreed that the Yew trees could be contributing to the issues. It is known that other trees in the immediate vicinity are also capable of impacting Mrs MacCarthy's health in the same way, hence the potential positive impact of the Yew trees' removal cannot be quantified. The supporting letter from the Consultant does not take remaining trees into account (there are no mention of them) hence appears to conclude that the removal of the two specific Yew trees is all that is required to result in a 'highly likely' improvement of Mrs MacCarthy's health. It is arguable that health issues could remain due to the other trees mentioned above.

The trees could have a considerable life span, contributing to the street scene and area's canopy cover for many decades. Their felling would result in an immediate loss of amenity that would take many years to replace and only if a suitably sized evergreen species could be found, in this case with low allergenic potential - no replacement species suggestion has been put forward, as is advised should be done on the application form.

In conclusion, the proposed felling of the two Yew trees is **refused**. If you wish to appeal against the Council's decision on this matter, please contact the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of receipt of this letter to obtain the relevant forms:

Trees and Hedges  
Room 3A Eagle Wing  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Telephone: 0303 444 5000

E-mail it to: [treeandhedgeappeals@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:treeandhedgeappeals@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

Website: [Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas)

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. Mr & Mrs MacCarthy, 2b Kidmore Road