

Simon Pryce Arboriculture

Report

Client: Nestbrik Ltd

Site: Site at Lamble Street, London, NW5 4AS

Subject: Tree and proposed building work

Inspection date: 12 July 2023

Report date: 20 July 2023

Reference: 23/037

Author: Simon Pryce, BSc, FArborA, RCarborA, CBiol, FICFor



I Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared for Nestbrik Ltd in connection with proposed building work on land at Lamble Street, Gospel Oak, London, NW5.
- 1.2 I have been asked to inspect trees growing on and near the site and to prepare a report impact assessment, and tree protection plan, as set out in British Standard 5837: 2012, Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

Survey method

- 1.3 This report is based on a site visit and visual inspection of the tree on 12 July 2023. The site is heavily overgrown, so this was done from adjacent roads and reasonable views of the tree were possible over the fence.
- 1.4 Its maturity, health and structural condition were assessed and it was assigned to retention category C of the four [A,B,C,U] specified by BS5837. The individual descriptions and other relevant information are contained in the attached schedule and they are shown on the attached plans, based on the original supplied by AMS Planning.
- 1.5 The existing plan shows the current site layout. The plan of the proposed layout shows tree protection measures and is the tree protection plan (TPP) specified by BS5837.

Previous report

- 1.6 In August 2013 I inspected this site and the two similar end terrace plots to the south for architects retained by Camden Council, but none of them have been built on and that has no direct connection with this report.

2 Background

The site

- 2.1 The site is an enclosed plot with an area of about 62 square metres at the NE end of the terrace where Lamble Street meets Grafton Road. It is bounded to the SW by the end wall of no.49 Lamble Street and on the other sides by a brick wall about 1.5m high topped by a wooden fence. There is a gateway into the plot from Grafton Road, but the site has not been actively managed since at least 2013 and is too heavily overgrown with bramble to be accessible. The area of the plot is about 62m².

Proposal

- 2.2 This is shown on the plans produced by AMS and is to build a new house facing onto Lamble Street. It takes up most of the site and has a small paved courtyard at the front with cycle and bin stores and a new tree planted next to the public footway.

3 Trees

- 3.1 In 2013 there were two mature birches and a small holly on the site, but the holly has gone and one of the birches snapped off at about 3m leaving the top of the stump just visible above the bramble. The remaining birch could not be inspected closely, but there are some quite large old pruning cuts where branches were removed in the past to clear no.49. The foliage is dense in places, but patchy and the crown is still one sided due to growing next to the tree that was lost.

- 3.2 The older houses in Oak Village are locally listed, but Camden Council's website shows that the site is not in a conservation area. The site has no site specific information about tree preservation orders (TPOs), but there is no record of any orders and it would be unusual for a council to have made a TPO on one of their own trees.

4 General comments

- 4.1 The two main functions of tree roots are 1) physical support and 2) the supply of water and nutrients from the soil. Roots are opportunist and grow wherever conditions are favourable i.e. there is a suitable supply of air and water. Many are in about the top metre of the soil, but they can and do grow much deeper if conditions are favourable. The small water absorbing roots die each winter, then new ones develop in spring and grow according to the tree's needs. This allows trees to recover from damage to the fine network of small roots, possibly with some short term reduction in vitality. However damage to larger roots close to the trunk can lead to instability, either immediately or in the longer term, if the wounds are colonised by decay fungi.

Root protection

- 4.2 Construction near trees can damage roots directly, by excavation, and indirectly by soil compaction due to heavy machinery and contamination from things like diesel oil and cement. BS5837 recommends measures to avoid or minimise this, the main one being that root protection areas (RPAs) are established round retained trees and fenced to exclude access. No ground work should take place within these without suitable safeguards, such as protecting soft ground against compaction or contamination.
- 4.3 The starting point is that a single trunked tree's RPA has an area equivalent to a circle with a radius 12 times the trunk diameter measured at 1.5m above ground. The 12x figure is not based on research, but it has proven effective in most cases. In fact most root systems spread well beyond that and significantly deeper than 1m.
- 4.4 Under open ground roots spread more or less uniformly from the tree, but they are affected by obstructions and variations in growing conditions, so depth and spread are far less predictable near roads and buildings. RPA shapes should be adjusted from the original circle where there is evidence that root spread and/or depth are uneven, but this must be based on a sound arboricultural assessment of the extent and shape of the root system.

5 Discussion

Arboricultural implications

- 5.1 In 2013 the two birches were noted as declining and they had developed asymmetrical crowns due to growing close together, so the loss of one has left the remaining one more vulnerable to storm damage. The one sided crown detracts from its appearance and there are signs of decay in the cuts where branches were cut back in the past to clear no.49, so its safe useful life is limited.
- 5.2 The RPA has been shown as a circle in order to illustrate the area concerned, but in practice roots will be confined by the foundations of the flank wall of no.49 and the boundary wall round the site. The RPA, as defined by BS5837 is 84m², but the plot is significantly smaller at 62m². That clearly did not affect the remaining tree's health, nor that of the other one when it was present, but it would not be possible to build on the plot with the tree in situ.

- 5.3 The proposed house fits in with the existing terrace and the new tree in the front courtyard will mitigate the effect of removing the birch in the immediate area. There is not a great deal of space, but there is a wide range of small to medium sized trees that would make a positive contribution to the street scene. The other existing trees in the vicinity, particularly the large mature ones on the other side of Grafton Road will continue to make a major contribution to the character and amenity of the wider area.

6 Summary and conclusions

- 6.1 The site has been unmanaged for a long time, so is heavily overgrown with bramble and one of the two birches that were growing there has snapped off in a storm. This has left the remaining tree one sided, reducing its amenity value and leaving it more vulnerable to damage and limiting its safe useful life expectancy.
- 6.2 The tree's root system is contained by the site boundary and is smaller than the root protection area (RPA) defined by BS5837, so it would not be possible to build on the site with the tree in situ.
- 6.3 The proposed house fits in with the existing terrace and the new tree in front will mitigate the removal of the birch and make a positive contribution to the street scene. The larger mature trees will also maintain the character and amenity of the wider area.

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Tree no.	Species	Age / vitality	Ht. m	Spread				Dia. mm	RPA rad m	RPA area m ²	Crwn ht. m	Comments and recommendations	Cat
				N	S	E	W						
The tree's location is shown on the site plan.													
1	Birch	M/N	13	5	3	6	6	430	5.2	84	4	Close inspection not possible due to dense undergrowth. Foliage dense, but uneven and there is some large dead wood in the crown. Lower branches have been cut back to clear the building and there are signs of decay in the cut. In 2013 it was bleeding from the trunk, which was not evident this time. Has been left one sided and vulnerable by the loss of the other birch nearby.	C

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Notes

Observations are made from ground level unless stated otherwise.

Trunk diameters are measured in millimetres at 1.5m above ground or at the narrowest point between the root buttresses and branch flare in multiple trunked trees; in such cases this is indicated by [c].

Crown spreads are taken from the trunk centre to the end of the longest live branches in the directions indicated [usually the four cardinal compass points]

Crown height is the clearance under the lowest significant branches.

Tree ages are estimated as below, based on the normal life expectancy of a tree of the species concerned on the site:

Immature.	[IM]	Newly planted or self-set tree.
Young	[Y]	Young tree that is established but has not yet attained the size or form of a fully developed example of its type.
Middle aged	[MA]	Between one third and two thirds of its estimated lifespan.
Mature	[M]	Over two thirds of its estimated life span.
Veteran	[V]	Old tree with characteristic features including hollow trunk, old wounds etc. that give high landscape, ecological and cultural value.
Ancient	[A]	Exceptionally old tree, typically has short, wide hollow trunk and low squat shape due to the crown retrenching over many years.
Dying/Dead	[D]	Dead/dying or so badly decayed that it should be removed without delay if a potential threat.

Vitality is assessed on the basis of what is normal for the species concerned as:

High	[H]
Normal	[N]
Low	[L]
Dead / dying	[D]

Root protection areas [RPAs] - BS5837:2012

For single trunked trees these are calculated as an area equivalent to a circle with a radius 12 times the trunk diameter at 1.5m. For multiple trunked trees it is based on the diameter of a single trunk that would have the same cross sectional area at 1.5m.

Any deviation from a circular plot should take into account the following factors whilst still providing adequate protection for the roots.

- The shape and disposition of the root system when known to be influenced by past or existing site conditions, such as the presence of roads, structures and underground services.
- Topography and drainage.
- The soil type and structure.
- The likely tolerance of the tree to root disturbance based on factors such as species, age and past management.

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Tree categories – based on BS5837: 2012, Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations

Trees for removal				
Category and definition				Colour code
Category U				Red
Those in such a condition that they cannot realistically be retained as living trees in the context of the current land use for longer than 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trees that have a serious, irremediable structural defect, such that their early loss is expected due to collapse in the foreseeable future, including any that will become unviable after the removal of other U category trees. (e.g. where, for whatever reason, the loss of companion shelter cannot be mitigated by pruning.) Trees that are dead or showing signs of significant immediate and irreversible decline. Trees infected with pathogens significant to the health and/or safety of other trees nearby, or very low quality trees suppressing better ones nearby. <p><i>NOTE: Category U trees can have existing or potential conservation value which it might be desirable to preserve.</i></p>			
Trees for retention				
Category and definition	Criteria – sub categories			Colour code
	1 – mainly arboricultural values	2 – mainly landscape values	3 – mainly cultural / conservation values	
Category A				
Trees of high quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 40 years.	Trees that are particularly good examples of their species, especially if rare or unusual; or those that are essential components of groups or formal or semi-formal arboricultural features (e.g. the dominant and/or principal trees within an avenue)	Trees, groups or woodlands of particular visual importance as arboricultural and/or landscape features	Trees, groups or woodlands of significant historical, commemorative or conservation value. (e.g. veteran trees or wood -pasture)	Green
Category B				
Trees of moderate quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy at least 20 years.	Trees that might be included in category A, but are downgraded because of impaired condition (e.g. presence of significant though remediable defects, including unsympathetic past management and storm damage), such that they are unlikely to be suitable for retention for beyond 40 years; or trees lacking the special quality necessary to merit the category A designation.	Trees present in numbers, usually growing as groups or woodlands, such that they attract a higher collective rating than they might as individuals; or trees occurring as collectives but situated so as to make little visual contribution to the wider locality	Trees with material conservation or other cultural benefits.	Blue
Category C				
Trees of low quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 10 years, or young trees with a stem diameter below 150 mm	Unremarkable trees of very limited merit or such impaired condition that they do not qualify in higher categories	Trees present in groups or woodlands, but without this conferring on them significantly greater collective landscape value; and/or trees offering low or only temporary/transient landscape benefits	Trees with no material conservation or other cultural benefit.	Grey