

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2023/4415/T	Robert Whitby	29/10/2023 12:29:21	OBJ	<p>Sedgwick previously applied to fell the two lime trees at our property, 130 Greencroft Gardens, in March 2021 (application reference: 2021/0970/T). We opposed the application on the basis that the evidence presented did not demonstrate that the trees were responsible for the subsidence issues at 128 Greencroft Gardens. In awarding a Tree Protection Order in April 2021 the Council's experts agreed with this assessment. There was significant opposition to the felling of the trees in 2021 as recorded on Camden Council's website. In 2021, Council experts assessed that "the trees provide a high level of visual amenity and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area". They also assessed that the trees are in "good condition and have a significant safe useful life expectancy". These conditions have not changed. Furthermore the Site Investigation Report dated 3 April 2023, submitted in this new application, records the trees as "lopped" reflecting the regular maintenance that we undertake on the trees which involves extensive pruning every two years.</p> <p>The arboricultural assessment report submitted by the applicant states that "the control of trees ... by removal or pruning as appropriate are proven techniques that can control total soil water loss thereby minimising soil shrinkage". The report concludes that the trees should be felled, but gives no rationale for this conclusion over the alternative remedy of regular pruning. The applicant dismisses mitigation efforts such as root barriers as not effective or appropriate, without providing any evidence for this judgement.</p> <p>The argument presented by Property Risk Inspection Insurance Services that the felling of the trees would reduce the carbon cost of repairs to 128 Greencroft Gardens fails to account for the carbon cost of felling these two mature trees and the associated work with making good. It is also not quantified, as they present no comparative schemes of work. Furthermore it is clear from the reports that the steps of 128 Greencroft Gardens are without foundations. It is sensible to infer that the cracking is due to this fact and that Sedgwick will need to undertake the more extensive and expensive repair work to underpin the steps irrespective of whether the trees are felled. The Insurer appears to be seeking to reduce their costs at the expense of the character of the South Hampstead conservation area.</p> <p>The Level Monitoring Report shows seasonal movement as the moisture in the clay soil changes with rainfall. The greatest movement in the cracks to the steps appears in summer 2022, which was a unusually dry year (NW3 Weather - Rain Detail). The report finds that the cracking reduced significantly in 2023 due to a wet summer. Sedgwick's Engineering Appraisal Report associates all this movement with the trees, but makes no account of the characteristic "shrink-swell" behaviour of the London clay soil on which the steps sit. This same report asserts that the greatest movement is recorded on the side of the steps closest to the lime trees. It is notable that the steps at 130 Greencroft Gardens do not exhibit any signs of subsidence despite being far closer to the lime trees. It could be inferred that this is due to the steps at 130 Greencroft Gardens sitting on foundations.</p> <p>The Engineering Appraisal Report recommends not just the felling of the two lime trees at 130 Greencroft Gardens, but also the removal of vegetation to the front of 128 Greencroft Gardens. This extensive removal of vegetation would not only negatively impact the character of this conservation area, but would also potentially decrease water drainage during wet weather and potentially increase the risk of flooding.</p> <p>In conclusion, we believe that the additional evidence submitted in this application is still insufficient to demonstrate that the trees are responsible for damage to 128 Greencroft Gardens. There is therefore an insufficient case to justify the removal of these trees which are protected by Tree Protection Orders. The trees</p>

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				are well maintained and are regularly pruned. We urge the Council to reject this application and protect the trees.
