

From: Mark van Harmelen
Sent: Monday, July 29, 2024 1:01 AM
To: Planning
Cc: Sue Vincent (Councillor); Julian Fulbrook (Councillor)
Subject: Objection to application 2024/2742/T

**8 (b) Doughty St,
London WC1N 2PL.**

Dear Camden Planners

Re: Application 2024/2742/T

Together with other members of the Doughty Tree Group (DTG) I strongly object to the current planning application to fell two significantly large veteran plane trees in the back garden of 8 Doughty St.

Over the years, the Doughty Tree Group (DTG) has been clear in the reasons to retain the trees, including visual amenity, considerable ecological value (as also identified by the DTGs consultant arboriculturalist and your own Planning Officer in a [Delegated Report in 2022](#)). As the DTG has noted before, keeping these veteran trees is consistent with Borough and City policy. See also community reaction in appendix B here.

On the other hand the Egypt Exploration Society has been persistent in its attempts to get the trees felled. It has resorted to many different tactics to do this, including, it seems from professionals' reports, exaggerating damage caused by the trees, performing no suitable maintenance, and neglecting leaf clearing in the gutter behind the trees.

Additionally, it seems that the EES has exerted influence to get the trees felled by threatening litigation against the Council and One Housing Group (OHG).

However, my key takeaway here is that all of this EES action is totally unnecessary and unwarranted, because there are two simple solutions that

keep the trees for the benefit of everyone.

Solution 1: Low cost and giving 60 years of grace

There is a particularly simple solution that caters for sixty years of growth of the trees. It allows a more level-headed approach to the trees in relation to the mews house or its replacement, giving everyone time to think and formulate a rational long-term way to enable the buildings and trees to co-exist.

Actually this formulation of a long-term solution is not difficult, it is only to decide how to implement solution 2.

Solution 1 was identified by the DTG's professional advisors (an eminent arboriculturalist and eminent engineer) and ratified by the Council's own engineers in 2022:

- Simply remove one layer of bricks (115mm) from a 440mm thick wall in a limited area behind the southernmost tree. This would bring that area of the wall where bricks are removed to a standard solid brick wall thickness, no big deal, and easy and cheap to implement.**
- At the same time the inside face of the wall should be cleared of inflexible cement based plaster, and be replaced in a period-appropriate (for the age of the building) elastic lime plaster that will move if for any reason the wall deflects (which of course will be highly unlikely for 60 years).**
- As pointed out by the DTG's engineer, the gutter should be examined, and if leaks are found they should be fixed. Down pipes should be unblocked. Leaf guards are cheap and easy to install and will guard against further blockage (this should have been done years ago).**

This is probably cheaper to do than felling the trees (i.e. attractive to OHG and their insurers) and allows for a sensible approach to be adopted.

Furthermore, it's fantastic for the environment, residents, passers by, the Borough and the City.

Advantageously, this course of action still affords the EES every opportunity to seek to fell the trees if the trees disturb the building.

It also has the advantage of allowing the EES time to provide lateral wall-movement measurements to demonstrate wall movement (as recommended by their engineers in 2020, and still, four years later, not provided by the EES and/or their professionals).

Solution 2, for the life of the current building and/or its planned replacement

Again, identified by the DTG's professional advisors, this is as long-term as one can get, for the lifetime of the building backing on the trees.

- **Build small bays at ground floor level of the current building and/or its replacement, extending the bay for the southernmost tree for half a floor beyond the ground floor.**

These would be very limited in footprint (estimated as 0.5 to 1 square meter per tree) and could be both a fantastic windowed architectural feature and community-reputation -building enhancement for the EES.

Exhibits pertaining to this objection

[A previous DTG objection](#) from 2022 provides a cogent and well-structured summary of all issues, I recommend the first three pages and appendices 2, 3 and 9 for a brief get-up-to-speed read.

[This is a link to a 15 second video of the trees](#) to show their magnificence and appeal as to the rationality of keeping them. Please watch this.

A fifteen second viewing should, I hope, assure any decision maker of the absolute need to keep the trees, particularly when renowned engineers and a renowned arboriculturalist recommend an easy, cheap and non-threatening way to retain the trees.

[Camden's own consultant engineers recommend the DTG's professionals cheap and easy solution](#) to safeguard the trees for 60 years. Please read page 2's point 2-4.

Point 4 summarises the matter thus:

4. The solution provided is simple, practical and does not require major refurbishment works to be done to the structure except for cosmetic repairs. The tree has not caused structural damage to the wall and there is a risk that removing the tree might undermine the overall stability of the structure. The tree growth is reported to be slow and the recess should accommodate that growth for a considerable time. However, as has been repeatedly stated in the engineers reports, the wall movements are to be regularly monitored and re-evaluated, with remedial action taken should it be necessary.

Thank you for your attention to the trees over the years.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Mark van Harmelen

Appendix A: Some quotes from our professionals, reproduced in the 2022 DTG objection above

We can do no better in conclusion than echo conclusions by our professional consultants:

"In terms of our lifetimes, these trees are irreplaceable."
[Howorth 2022, p8]

"there may be a misconception that there is a choice between tree removal or loss of the Egyptian Exploration Society library and its archives. This is not the case, in fact, tree retention could reduce disruption to the buildings and their precious contents."
[Howorth 2022, p13]

"The two plane trees in the garden of 8 Doughty Street are important parts of our natural world, and we should try and retain them whilst safeguarding building fabric that is nearby."

"Creating pockets in the face of the wall will allow the trees room to grow, whilst relieving pressure on the brickwork so further distortion of the brickwork is prevented."

"This approach allows both wall and trees to coexist and removes the potential for damage from ground heave that removing the trees may induce."
[Three paragraphs from Price & Myers, p18]

"We can not sleepwalk into the future by allowing such mature and important trees to be removed whilst there are viable alternative course[s] of action and missing baseline information."
[Howorth 2022, p13]

Appendix B: Comments in support of keeping the trees from 333 consultation responses in 2022

As summarised in the Councils Delegated Report of 2022, this is a huge number of objectors:

"The principle themes of the 333 consultation responses, including a petition with 94 signatories, are:

- **There are immediate and permanent solutions to keeping the trees**
- **The trees are an integral part of the conservation area**

- The trees help the environment
- The EEC can make a feature of the trees
- The trees benefit the children in the nearby school
- The property damage is minor and can be fixed
- The trees help to remove air pollution
- The trees provide shade in the summer
- The trees contribute to positive mental health
- Camden Council is a signatory since 2019 to the Climate Change Alliance
- The trees store carbon
- The applicant should focus on how to manage the structure with the trees
- The CAVAT value of the trees is in excess of £600,000.
- The evidence submitted is not sufficient to show the trees are responsible for the damage
- The tree provide habitat
- The trees are an asset to our community
- Camden Council has pledged to “enhance biodiversity” and “improve green space”.
- The decision to fell the trees would constitute a breach of Camden’s Policy 4 on Trees
- Removal of the trees may cause heave
- The trees are visible from far away
- The trees are beautiful
- Young trees do not provide the benefits that old trees do
- The applicant has not proved that the trees are responsible for the damage"