

From: **Vicki Harding**

Date: Thu, 10 Oct 2024 at 22:06

Subject: 2024/3982/T 9 Pond Street

To: Nick Bell, Vincent, Liam

Dear Nick Bell and Liam Vincent,

Please would the Camden Tree Officers refuse this application to fell the ash tree at the end of the rear garden of 9 Pond Street close to the boundary of 7 Pond Street due to lack of evidence.

No adequate movement tests have been presented to show that the tree is the cause of the movement of the rear extension of 7 Pond Street.

Both properties, in addition to others along Pond Street here were movement monitored all through the period of building of the Royal Free Hospital's Pears Building and for a time after on account of the evidence of massive movement of the whole of the hill here in the past. This had caused the extensive damage to St Stephen's church - the Grade 1 listed church built by Teulon - and its church hall (now the Hampstead Hill School immediately opposite 7 & 9 Pond Street) in the 1970s and subsequently, that resulted in the closure and abandonment of the church for many years.

On the whole the Pears Building project of 2017-8 was well managed except for one occasion when a large hole was dug at the entrance to the Pears Building site in order to take a very large drain deeply down and across to join the deep Pond Street sewer, unfortunately occurring without authorisation from the contractor's consultant expert engineering geologist. St Stephen's church was not significantly damaged as it has already been essentially underpinned by the basement built below it for school rooms and to repair extensive damage done in the past, but the school (opposite 7 & 9 Pond Street) was significantly damaged, the roof moving on its supporting walls to within an inch of losing

contact, and with severe subsidence and landslip evident in the external paving on the north side of the school.

I was not party to the movement studies performed on the Pond Street houses, but such movement to those immediately opposite the school 7 & 9 Pond Street might be expected. The owner of these properties should pass this information to the loss adjuster and to Camden so that it can be put together with current movement studies and the observation of the numerous rear and side wall ties both very old, old and more recent and clearly countering hill slide, subsidence and movement of both rear extensions away from the main buildings to see if indeed the tree can be held reasonably or significantly responsible for this - or not.

Of course it is possible for trees to amplify clay movement due to shrinkage from moisture loss, but I myself have seen evidence of the river found at the bottom of several trial pits dug around the church's tower and the north side of the church - that same river that Teulon straddled by building the church on arches over it. I have also seen the extensive severe cracking of the building built on the south side of 33 Hampstead Hill Gardens and heard from the owner that there is a large gap that he found beneath its concrete floor plate previously resting on the clay directly, and indicating extensive silt washout from the clay beneath this building by the action of groundwater running downhill here behind 7 and 9 Pond Street.

Since landslide and silt erosions are known in this immediate area with a very long history evidenced by the presence of wall ties of 7 and 9 Pond Street countering it and laid out in the carefully documented history of this movement in the preparation for preventing such movement when building the Pears Building, it is clear that the timing of clay desiccation and cracking needs to be set out so as to distinguish it from

a) landslide of a hill with documented slip surfaces formed in the quaternary period and lubricated by groundwater, and

b) silt erosion by the action of groundwater and a buried tributary of the river Fleet during storm surges, all aggravated by vibration and ground pressure changes associated with

demolition of Hampstead General Hospital,

digging out of the Royal Free Hospital Foundations,

digging out of the RFH basement Car Park,

the demolition of the RFH Linac building and

the deep well dug for the very large drain associated with the Pears Building.

It has been predicted that the landslip movement associated with this last onslaught to the hill - as has occurred for previous landslips - will continue for a decade or more after the induced pressure changes, until a temporary equilibrium in the ground is again achieved.

It should be noted that another extensive basement has recently been dug beneath 13a Pond Street, behind 13 Pond Street and directly inline downhill with the rear of 7 & 9 Pond Street between 2019 and 2022. This fragile hillside is likely to have been set in motion again by the pressure changes associated with the basement dig-out and the subsequent re-loading with the building of this 3-storey new building.

I am currently in France with a laptop that won't open and another that is unable to access all my documents on onedrive. I can categorically state that I have gathered the documents that contain all the information mentioned in this email but unfortunately am unable to pass it on to you prior to the closing date of this case. I was personally very closely involved in many meetings and discussions prior to and during the building of the Pears Building in order to protect the neighbouring buildings, particularly St Stephen's church. I am not aware of what happened to the buildings opposite in Pond Street as this was kept confidential, but believe that movement here, then and ongoing, must be very likely, and that it is evident from examination of the cracking in the area.

Please place a TPO on this tree and its sycamore neighbour that will be the next in the line of fire, both of whom have immense public amenity from their view between 33 Hampstead Hill Gardens and 5 Pond Street, and from the many households, businesses and customers that overlook these trees.

With all good wishes

Vicki Harding

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Dr Vicki Harding

Society Tree Officer

Heath & Hampstead Society