From: Darren Berman
Sent: 04 January 2025 17:31
To: Planning
Cc: Jade Llw; Tirabassi Giacomo; Rob Sanders

Subject: 2024/5347/T – application to remove a mature Ailanthus tree

Dear sir / madam,

Please find attached a report from SJ Stephens Associates which we understand has been sent to you.

As per the letter (along with representations from various other parties) we would like the council to reject the application for planning to fell the tree entirely and instead make a recommendation that they instead reduce the crown of the tree if they require. The reasons for our suggestion is:

1. The tree is on our property (178 Camden Road) and the freeholders of the property were not aware of the proposed felling of the tree.
2. We have not seen evidence that it is the tree of Heaven (T7) that is the cause of any impacts to our neighbouring property and would note that there is no movement whatsoever of the paved area between the tree and 180 Camden Road
3. We would be concerned that removal could result in issues of soil heave and as such reduction rather than complete felling would be strongly recommended

These points and recommendations have been clearly set out by SJ Stephens (Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant)'s report which is attached.

Please could you add our email and associated letter attached to the planning application folder on the web site?

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards,

Darren

Share of Freehold and Leaseholder at 178 Camden Road

Darren Berman

SJ Stephens Associates

ARBORICULTURAL, LANDSCAPE & MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

The London Borough of Camden
5 Pancras Square
London
NC1 4AG

2nd January 2025

Dear Sirs,

Re: 2024/5347/T – application to remove a mature Ailanthus tree, protected by a Tree Preservation Order, at 178 Camden Road to alleviate alleged subsidence damage to 180 Camden Road

An application has been submitted by Crawford & Co to remove a mature Ailanthus tree, protected by Tree Preservation (TPO S9-T10 1957). I have been instructed by the owners of the tree, which is growing in the garden of 178 Camden Road, to review the evidence on the council website supporting this application. This application has been submitted without the knowledge of the tree owners who do not wish to remove the tree.

To prove vegetation related subsidence, one normally needs to establish

- a shrinkable clay soil
- the presence of roots of the appropriate species
- seasonal movement

The Auger SI report, dated 06-01-2020, records “dry stiff brown sandy fine to medium gravelly silty clay”. Normal practice would be for Plasticity Index measurements to be provided to demonstrate whether the soil has adequate shrinkage capacity for subsidence to be possible. In this case no Plasticity Index information as been provided. Although the site is on London Clay, the presence of sand and gravel will reduce the shrinkage potential.

Ailanthus roots have not been identified.

The Crawford report, dated 28-11-2024, includes two sets of level monitoring information. The first set includes five readings between August 2021 and May 2022. This shows levels dropping markedly between October 2021 and March 2022. If there had been subsidence the previous summer, one would expect recovery during this period with levels rising as a clay soil rehydrates. Here, the opposite trend suggests some other factor may be involved. The second set includes four level readings between July 2022 and August 2023, which begin to show a more typical pattern.

SJ Stephens Associates
ARBORICULTURAL, LANDSCAPE & MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

The Crawford report, dated 28-11-2024, suggests that Ailanthus is an invasive species and the owner "is required to take all possible steps to remove it". This is misleading. Ailanthus has a propensity to produce vigorous sucker growth and therefore should not be allowed to establish in the countryside, however there are numerous Ailanthus which play a valuable role in cities across the UK. This tree, in particular, is an important tree which plays a valuable role in the street scene – hence its protection by a Tree Preservation Order.

The Crawford report, dated 28-11-2024, discounts the option of installing a root barrier as the the proximity of T7 "is likely to cause the tree to become unstable". Since the root barrier could run under the path in No 178, adjacent to the boundary wall with No 180, approx 8m from T7, there would be no possibility of making the tree unstable.

Since a shrinkable clay soil has not been demonstrated, roots from the Ailanthus have not been found by the foundations and the level monitoring information is not entirely clear, I do not consider there is adequate evidence, at present, to justify removal of the tree.

However, as a precautionary measure, I recommend that regular crown reduction should be allowed which will reduce root vigour and the chance of the tree causing subsidence in the future.

If additional information is provided to show that the Ailanthus is causing damage to No180, then the situation should be reviewed. Alternatively, the owners of No180 could consider requesting permission to install a root barrier in the garden of No178.

If we can be of any further assistance, or should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Stephens
Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant
MA Oxon, Dip Arb(RFS), MArborA. CEnv, MICF

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