

On behalf of The Belsize Society:

We write to comment on the proposed development of a garden structure at 13 Lambolle Road: we are concerned that the current proposal underestimates the proposed building's adverse impact on nearby trees and provides inadequate tree protection measures.

The trees at the back of 13 Lambolle Rd and 51 Lancaster Grove form part of an important green corridor of trees at the back of Lambolle Road, Lancaster Grove and Lancaster Drive that includes many mature trees providing an extended and unbroken green canopy. This green corridor, visible to varying degrees through gaps between the buildings of the three roads, forms a significant landscape feature that contributes to the character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area. As well as providing privacy and a sense of wellbeing to local residents whose homes overlook the trees, the green barrier of trees provides protection against noise and air pollution and helps combat climate change. The abundant green canopy of a variety of trees also forms an extended diverse wildlife habitat, with the potential for biodiversity beyond that of individual, isolated trees.

The planning application does not envisage the immediate felling of any trees, but it is vitally important that the proposed development does not have an adverse impact in the medium to long term on any of the numerous nearby trees, including some cherished mature trees, leading to their failure and potential gaps in the green corridor of trees. There are several trees in the vicinity of the proposed garden structure. The proposed structure extends across the width of the garden and a satellite view of 13 Lambolle Rd indicates that there may well be trees in adjoining gardens to this property and to 51 Lancaster Grove, whose roots extend into the footprint of the proposed construction. The developer is clearly aware of the potential impact on nearby trees and has commissioned an Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report, a Tree Root Mapping Report, a Tree Constraints Plan and a Tree Protection Plan. We have also had sight of the arboricultural report commissioned by 51 Lancaster Grove, which casts doubt on some of the assessments made in the developer's AIA Report and Tree Root Mapping Report.

The AIA Report states that "The underlying site soil has been identified as CLAY, and great care should therefore be taken to ensure no compaction of the soils occurs within the identified RPAs, as this soil type is less favourable to tree root growth / moisture movement and aeration." However, "There appears to be no consideration given to the rain shadow created by the new building. There is no reference to water management to avoid reduction in rainwater availability to the trees that will lose significant parts of their RPAs." - as pointed out in the Report commissioned by 51 Lancaster Grove. Some of the developer's reports seem to be provisional in nature, which is perhaps inevitable given the lack of any detailed information about the proposed structure. In particular, the tree protection plan in App7 of the AIA Report appears to be guidance about what should happen, rather than fully worked out operational tree protection plans that will be implemented. The AIA Report, which appears to have been prepared before the Tree Root Mapping Report, assumes that it will be possible to use "no-dig' ground screw foundations... which, although within the RPAs of adjacent trees, will be located between pre-identified locations of tree roots" but this is just an assumption and is not

demonstrated as possible in the available documentation, and the Report commissioned by 51 Lancaster Grove challenges whether it will in fact be achievable at all.

There are several trees - more than have been acknowledged by the developer - at risk from the proposed garden structure and the current plans are inadequate to address satisfactorily the risks involved. We request that the planning application should not be allowed to proceed until it is clear that the trees can and will be protected into the future.

Comments made by B A Abraham for The Belsize Society