SIMON JONES ASSOCIATES Ltd.

ARBORICULTURAL PLANNING CONSULTANTS

Arboricultural Consultancy - Tree Surveys Planning & Development · Hazard & Safety Tree & Woodland Management - Expert Witnesses 17 CROSS ROAD **TADWORTH** SURREY KT20 5ST

Tel: (01737) 813058 E-mail: sja@sjatrees.co.uk

Principal: Simon R. M. Jones Dip. Arb. (RFS), F. Arbor. A., Arb. Assoc. Registered Consultant Associate: Mark Mackworth-Praed BA (Cantab), M.Sc.,

F. Arbor. A., Arb. Assoc. Registered Consultant



Arboricultural Implications Report

Proposed re-development at

10, Ferdinand Street Camden **London NW1 8ER**



January 2014

Ref. SJA air 13058-01

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Instructions.

- 1.1.1. Simon Jones Associates Ltd. has been instructed by Messrs T. And N. Cockburn of OpticRealm Ltd. to visit 10, Ferdinand Street, Camden, London NW1 8ER, and to survey the mature London plane tree growing on Council-owned land immediately to the north of this site.
- 1.1.2. We are instructed to record the tree's location, species, dimensions, age, condition, and visual importance; and to categorise it in accordance with British Standard BS 5837: 2012, *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*—

 Recommendations.
- 1.1.3. We are further asked to consider the implications of a proposed redevelopment of the site on this specimen; to advise how it should be protected from unacceptable damage during construction period; and to assess its relationship to the proposed building, and its effects on the living conditions of incoming occupiers, following construction.

1.2. Scope of report.

- 1.2.1. This report and the appended tree protection plan (TPP) and reflect the scope of our instructions, as set out above.
- 1.2.2. The proposed development comprises the construction of a four-storey building comprising seven 2- bedroom flats and one studio, following the demolition of the existing garages at the rear of the site.
- 1.2.3. The report is intended to accompany a planning application to be submitted to the London Borough of Camden. It complies with the recommendations of BS 5837: 2012, and responds to the requirements of the Council's Tree Officer as set out in the report of a pre-application meeting held on the 29th October 2013.

1.3. Site inspections.

- 1.3.1. An initial site visit and tree inspection was undertaken by Mark Mackworth-Praed of Simon Jones Associates Ltd., on Friday the 5th of April 2013. The tree was re-inspected subsequently by Ben Oates on Wednesday the 4th December 2013, in order to ascertain details of the number, heights and extents of its branches overhanging the site which might require pruning in order to provide satisfactory clearance from the proposed apartment building. At the same time, a trial excavation to assess the likely extent of the tree's root system underlying the site was inspected, recorded and photographed. The tree was out of leaf at the first inspection, but still in partial leaf at the second.
- 1.3.2. The tree protection plan (TPP) at **Appendix 1** is based on the proposed site layout plans and elevations by Lees Munday Architects, drawing nos. 412-101 to 104 (various revision nos.), and 413-200 rev 05.

1.4. National policy context.

- 1.4.1. Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), (March 2012), states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development:
- "At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking."
- 1.4.2. The NPPF makes it clear that planning permission for development should be granted unless the proposal is inconsistent with policies within the development plan, any adverse effects significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or the NPPF itself indicates that the proposal should be restricted.
- 1.4.3. Under Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, local authorities have a statutory duty to consider the protection and planting of trees when granting planning permission for proposed development. The effects of proposed development on trees are therefore a material consideration in dealing with planning applications, and this is normally reflected in local development planning policies. However, as an overriding principle of national policy in the NPPF is that planning permission should be granted unless the adverse effects of a proposal

significantly outweigh its benefits, it follows that development should only be refused on arboricultural grounds where loss of trees would have a significant and adverse impact on the character and appearance of the local landscape, on amenity or biodiversity. Against this background, the effects of the current proposal are evaluated in the following sections of this report.

1.5. Site description.

1.5.1. The site is located on the east side of Ferdinand Street, NW1, which is a broad two-way street running northwards from its junction with the A502 Chalk Farm Road. The site currently comprises a row of six lock-up garages set to the rear of a square concreted forecourt, with a central vehicle access via a dropped kerb and crossover. To the south, it is abutted by a four-storey apartment building of relatively modern construction, which spans the length of its south boundary; to the north, it adjoins Broomfield Court, a six-storey apartment block set back from the roadway with a fenced-in communal front garden area, from which it is separated by a concrete pedestrian footpath, leading from Ferdinand Street to a gated entrance at the rear, which gives access to these apartments. The north boundary of the site is defined by a low rendered blockwork wall 300mm in height on the south side of this footpath. The site, and the surrounding area, are generally level.

2. THE TREE.

2.1. Results of inspection.

- 2.1.1. The tree inspected is a mature London plane (*Platanus X acerifolia*). It is the southernmost in a line of four similar trees growing at regular intervals within the communal front garden area of Broomfield Court, which I understand is in the ownership of Camden Council.
- 2.1.2. The tree stands 2.3m north of the garden boundary railing fence (measured to the nearest face of the trunk), and 2.0m east of the continuation of the fence along the frontage of Ferdinand Street (again, measured to the nearest face of the trunk). Its trunk diameter is estimated to be approximately 900mm at 1.5m above ground level. It stands around 22-23m in height, with crown spreads, as shown on the tree protection plan **hatched light green**, extending 7.4m to the north, 7.5m to the east, 9m to the south, and approximately 11m to the west.
- 2.1.3. The tree is a single-trunked specimen, its trunk initially leaning noticeably to the south-west, before correcting to vertical above the point where it divides into a principal central stem and two sub-dominant stems at approximately 6m. Below this, at 3.5m on the south-west side, there is a 400mm diameter lateral branch arising from the main trunk at an angle of approximately 60 degrees from the vertical. This extends out to the south-west to overhang the road, dividing into dominant and sub-dominant secondary branches at around 4m from the main trunk.
- 2.1.4. Of the two sub-dominant stems arising from the main trunk fork, the one to the south-east divides 2.5m out from the trunk into two evenly-sized lateral branches, one of which (around 250mm diameter at its point of origin) has been lopped, leaving a 2.5m long stump. There has been less recent, but very extensive, pruning carried out on all sides of the tree to lift the level of the crown, particularly towards the front of Broomfield Court. All pruning wounds observed appear to be occluding normally with normal woundwood development, and older ones are fully occluded. The main fork structure and all major branch unions all appear to be sound, with no signs of incipient splitting or failure.

- 2.1.5. The tree's crown distribution is one-sided to the west and south, due to the extensive past pruning and crown lifting on the east side towards the apartments. In this respect it is similar to the other three trees in the row, all of which are leaning slightly away from the flats to varying degrees, the northernmost having the most exaggerated lean.
- 2.1.6. Overall, the plane appears to be in moderate structural condition and normal physiological health, with no obvious defects that would call its longevity or safety into question in the immediately foreseeable future. It is visually very prominent in the street scene, and makes a significant visual contribution both as an individual specimen, and collectively as part of the row in which it stands. On this basis, it has been considered to warrant a category 'B' grading under the BS 5837: 2012 system of classification.

2.2. Statutory controls.

2.2.1. At the time of writing we understand that the tree is not covered by a tree preservation order (TPO), and it is not within a Conservation Area; it is, however, within the ownership and control of Camden Council, and the Council is concerned that it should be satisfactorily retained and protected in the context of the proposed re-development of the site.

2.3. Extent of root protection area (RPA) and root growth.

2.3.1. Based on its estimated trunk diameter of 900mm, the tree's 'Root Protection Area' (RPA)² has been calculated in accordance with Section 4.6 of BS 5837 to be an area of 366.5m², which equates to a circular area of 10.8m radius. However, in line with the recommendations of the British Standard, the extent and disposition of this area has been assessed taking account of factors such as the likely tolerance of a tree to root disturbance or damage, the morphology and disposition of roots as influenced by existing site conditions (including the presence of existing roads or structures), as well as soil type, topography and drainage, so that it reflects the likely distribution of the tree's root system more accurately.

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² The minimum area around a retained tree "deemed to contain sufficient roots and rooting volume to maintain the tree's viability, and where the protection of the roots and soil structure is treated as a priority." BS 5837, paragraph 3.7.

- 2.3.2. In this case, the presence of Broomfield Court, as a substantial existing building, has been assumed to represent a barrier to root development under its footprint, as has the carriageway construction of Ferdinand Street itself. Taking account of the tree's trunk lean and uneven crown weight distribution to the southwest, it is likely that the majority of its active and anchoring root system will be concentrated within the open ground area of the communal front garden to the front of the apartments, as the tree will have preferentially developed root growth in this area as a natural response to compensate for the mechanical stresses induced by its lean and weight distribution to the south-west.
- 2.3.3. There is evidence of some root growth southwards from the tree, beneath the concrete footpath and the low wall which marks the north boundary of the site, as both of these have been cracked and disrupted in places as a result of direct root uplift. However, the extent of rooting under the site itself is likely to have been limited by the presence of the substantial impermeable concrete hard-standing over its forecourt, creating less favourable underlying soil conditions for root development.
- 2.3.4. Moreover, the presence or growth of any significant proportion of the tree's root system under the concreted forecourt is likely to have been interrupted as a result of the relatively recent excavation of a trench from west to east across the length of the forecourt area, immediately adjacent to the low boundary wall defining the site's north boundary. This is understood to have been dug to a depth of around 2.3m. In view of the fact that in most situations, the majority of a tree's root system tends to occupy the uppermost 1m depth of soil, it can reasonably be inferred that any roots from the London plane which may have been encountered in the course of this excavation now terminate at the line of the northern face of the former trench.
- 2.3.5. In order to verify the inferred likely distribution of the tree's active rooting zone, and in line with the Council's Tree Officer's requirements as set out at the preapplication meeting, a trial pit was excavated in a location towards the western end of the forecourt, abutting the north low boundary wall, and due south of the tree's trunk, as shown on the accompanying tree protection plan. This location had been selected as the position most likely to expose or encounter larger, significant roots, being the closest point on the site to the tree's trunk, at around 4.25m from it. A 1m X 1m excavation had been specified; in reality, the pit was slightly larger than

this, measuring 1.07mm in depth, by 1.38m in width from east to west, and extending beneath the footing of the boundary wall.

- 2.3.6. Inspection of the profile of the pit's faces showed that the soil profile underlying this part of the site is formed of made ground or fill from previous excavations, consistent with past construction and resurfacing operations, and the evidence of a substantial trench having been dug along the length of the forecourt adjacent to the site boundary in the relatively recent past. No clear strata or horizons of undisturbed topsoil, subsoil or parent material were evident within the profiles.
- 2.3.7. The faces of the excavation, and notably the northern face closest to the tree, revealed distinctly sparse evidence of minor and fibrous root growth (i.e. < 10mm diameter), with very small quantities being apparent at upper levels just below the concrete surface and at the base of the footing of the boundary wall, and only very occasional and sporadic single projecting rootlets of 3mm or less below these levels.
- 2.3.8. Only three roots of diameters in excess of 10mm were found to be present within the trial pit. The uppermost of these roots arose from the north face of the pit at a depth of 500mm beneath the boundary wall footing, extending out into the pit by approximately 250mm, then returning back to the face of the excavation nearest to the tree at a depth of 340mm. The root's maximum diameter was measured at 45mm.
- 2.3.9. The second root extended at a right angle from the northern face of the pit at 700mm below the underside of the concrete surfacing, with a diameter of 84mm measured at its point of emergence from the excavation face. It extended into the pit by just over 700m, at which point it had been previously broken off, presumably by the former excavation at this point.
- 2.3.10. The third, smaller root extended out from the corner of the pit closest to the Ferdinand Street frontage at a depth of 750mm, with a diameter of 22mm. This root then extended downwards and into the base of the pit, extending out from the face by approximately 120mm.
- 2.3.11. The findings of the inspection therefore support the inference that as a consequence of the combination of (1) an inimical rooting environment under the

impermeable hard surfacing over the forecourt area of 10 Ferdinand Street and the footway between this and Broomfield Court; (2) the tree's natural bias of root distribution within the open communal garden of Broomfield Court to the north, coupled with the adaptive growth effects due to its trunk lean and unequal crown weight distribution; and (3), the effects of past construction, resurfacing and excavations along its northern boundary, there is very limited (if indeed any) active root presence from the London plane tree beneath the proposed site area at 10 Ferdinand Street.

- 2.3.12. Moreover, our inspections of the tree show no evidence that any past works at 10 Ferdinand Street have adversely affected the tree's physiological health or vitality, which gives further support to the initial assessment of likely rooting distribution, and to the findings of the trial pit inspection.
- 2.3.13. For these reasons, we do not consider that the proposed redevelopment works at 10 Ferdinand Street and associated excavations are likely to result in damage to, or loss of, any significant proportion of the tree's active rooting system, and that as a consequence, no threat to its stability, health or likely future longevity would ensue from the proposed apartment building.

2.4. Extent of canopy overhang.

- 2.4.1. Although the tree's crown overhangs the north-western section of the site by up to approximately 5m southwards of the site boundary, due to the generally ascendant growth of its main branches and the effects of past crown lifting, the lowest overhanging branches are at a relatively high level, and these generally comprise only the outermost and descendant branch ends of small diameter, which could readily be pruned back or reduced by up to 3-4m without any significant effect on the tree's appearance.
- 2.4.2. Although it does not directly overhang the site, the large lateral branch arising on the south-west side, which extends out over the road, contributes significantly to the tree's unbalanced appearance. Although it would result in a sizeable pruning wound on the tree's main trunk, a case could be made for the removal of this branch on the basis of counteracting the tree's unbalanced crown distribution and improving its visual symmetry, as well as removing any risk of danger resulting from contact

with high-sided vehicles on the carriageway. As an alternative to its removal, removal of the eastern branch arising from its fork some 4m from the main trunk, and reduction of the more westerly branch, might be preferable in arboricultural terms.

2.4.3. In view of the high canopy level over the site, and the scope for minor crown reduction or crown lifting on its south side without detriment to the tree's overall appearance or amenity, in our opinion the extent of canopy overhang does not represent a major constraint to the re-development of the site.

3. ARBORICULTURAL IMPLICATIONS.

3.1. Trees to be removed.

3.1.1. The development proposals, as shown on the proposed layout drawing, will not require the removal of the London plane tree within the Council-owned land to the north of the site. There are no other trees within the site or its immediate vicinity which will be affected by the proposals.

3.2. Tree pruning.

- 3.2.1. In order to provide adequate clearance from branches of the tree which overhangs the site to enable implementation of the proposals, and to prevent conflicts arising from future growth, detailed measurements of the heights, sizes and extents of lateral branches on the south side of the tree's crown were taken by means of laser rangefinder from ground level. These details, together with photographs of the tree taken from a number of viewpoints, have been carefully examined, in conjunction with the proposed plans and elevations, to produce a detailed assessment of the degree of pruning which would be necessary to satisfy these requirements.
- 3.2.2. The specification arrived at is set out in an inset panel on the accompanying tree protection plan, and is reproduced for convenience in *Table 1* below.

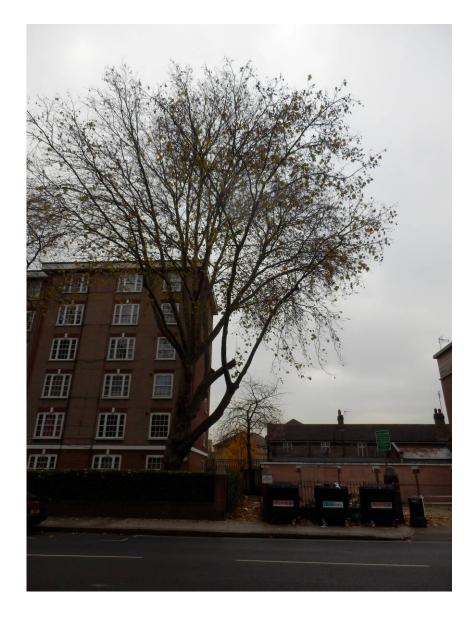
Tree no.	Species	Proposed Works
1	London plane	 Remove E sub-dominant branch arising from lowest lateral branch on SW side at point of origin at fork 4m out from main trunk. Reduce remaining W branch overhanging road by approximately 3m back to live growing points. Remove 3 lowest secondary branches on S side of S stem from main fork overhanging site at points of origin at 10m and 12.3m above ground level. Remove descendant minor growth from secondary branches on S side of S stem from
		main fork at 13.5m to lift canopy to 13m on S side over site.

Table 1: Proposed pruning works

3.2.3. Due to the tree's crown structure and overall configuration, which has been significantly influenced by its past crown lifting and other crown management, the numbers and extents of branches projecting over the site at levels which would conflict with the proposed apartment building (i.e. below 12.8m, its proposed roof

height) are very limited. In order to achieve satisfactory clearance, only three secondary branches on the tree's main ascending southern stem would require removal, and the sub-dominant stem arising from the fork 4m out from the trunk on the lowest lateral branch on the south-west side. Any residual growth below 12m over the site is entirely accounted for by minor descendant or trailing branches of diameters estimated to be no greater than 50mm, arising from secondary branches above, removal of which would not be of any significant detriment to the tree's health or appearance.

- 3.2.4. The effectiveness of the above specification is demonstrated on the accompanying tree protection plan, whereby the relationship of the tree to the proposed elevation of the apartment building is shown by means of the superimposition of its outline and branch structure onto the architect's elevation drawing. This is based on a photograph of the tree taken from the west side of Ferdinand Street at a point directly opposite the northern boundary of the site, reproduced as *Photograph 1* overleaf. This has been accurately scaled onto the elevation drawing, whilst taking account, as far as possible, of the effects of perspective and foreshortening which are inevitable due to the photograph having been taken from the ground.
- 3.2.5. The left-hand panel on the tree protection plan shows the tree's present outline against the proposed building, and the limited extent of its lower crown which would be in conflict with it. The right-hand panel shows the tree's outline with the branches or parts of branches identified in the above specification removed, that is to say the "post-pruning" profile.
- 3.2.6. It can be readily appreciated from these illustrations that in terms of its appearance and crown structure, the effects of the required pruning are minor, and will have very little overall visual impact. In many respects, indeed, the proposed pruning could be argued to result in a net improvement in the tree's symmetry and visual balance, as it will partially correct the uneven distribution of its crown to the south-west and south. In any event, it is clear that the resulting visual profile and outline will be entirely acceptable in terms of its visual amenity contribution to the street scene.



Photograph 1. London plane from Ferdinand Street, opposite north site boundary.

- 3.2.7. As is well known, London plane, as a species, is very tolerant of even heavy levels of pruning or indeed pollarding. The light level of branch removal and minor pruning proposed in the specification in this case is therefore extremely unlikely to have any effect whatsoever on the tree's vitality or longevity.
- 3.2.8. Besides providing adequate clearance for access and construction purposes, the post-pruning situation illustrated on the tree protection plan also demonstrates that there will be no conflict between the tree's branches and upper floor windows or balconies following completion and occupation. The lowest branches of the tree will be some 3.5-4.5m above the balustrade of the nearer third floor balcony (approximately 2.5m above the top of the window level). No fenestration is proposed

on the north elevation of the building, with the exception of a panel at second floor level continuing from the front elevation around the building corner onto the north flank. However, it is clear from the tree protection plan drawing that this will be well below the lower limit of the tree's canopy.

3.3. Relationship to Root Protection Area.

- 3.3.1. The results of our assessment and investigations described in Section 2.3 above convincingly demonstrate that the effective southward limit of the tree's root protection area is defined by the north boundary of the site. The effects of the tree's natural preferential direction of root growth, inimical rooting environment beneath the site area and crucially, past severance of roots as a result of trenching and excavations, combine to render the application site area immaterial, in terms of its underlying soil volume making any contribution to the tree's sustenance or physiology.
- 3.3.2. For this reason, we do not consider that the construction of the proposed apartment building within the footprint of the existing site area will have any significant impact on the integrity and functioning of the tree's effective root system, and accordingly, no special measures will be required to prevent or mitigate any such impacts in the design, excavation or construction of the building's foundations.
- 3.3.3. By contrast, it is likely that the concrete pathway serving the southern access to Broomfield Court, and the area of the public footway to the front of the site northward of the existing vehicle crossover, will contain a moderate, if not indeed significant, proportion of the tree's effective root system, and it is therefore important that as far as possible, these areas remain undisturbed for the duration of the construction period. Moreover, we recommend that the existing hard surfacing over these areas is retained *in situ* and not removed or replaced, as it will be providing protection to underlying roots from effects of damage or compaction from passage or traffic of construction vehicles or plant.
- 3.3.4. Further recommendations, in the event of the surfacing having to be removed or replaced during the construction period, or if any excavations are required within these areas, are given in the relevant inset panels on the tree protection plan.

3.4. Future relationship between proposed building and existing tree.

3.4.1. To provide an initial assessment of whether a tree to be retained will be in harmony with a proposed building (without casting excessive shade or otherwise unreasonably interfering with incoming residents' prospects of enjoying their apartments, and thereby leading inevitably to requests for consents to fell), British Standard BS 5837: 2012 recommends the plotting of a segment or "shading arc" from its trunk, with a radius equal to the current height of the tree concerned, from due north-west to due east. This gives an indication of potential direct obstruction of sunlight and the shadow pattern cast through the main part of the day³.

3.4.2. As the London plane in this case is located due northward of the application site, it is self-evident that no part of the proposed apartment building will fall within the "shading arc" derived by this method. In terms of obstruction of daylight or sunlight to the windows of principal habitable rooms, therefore, any adverse effect of the tree's presence is patently more likely to be being experienced currently by residents of Broomfield Court itself, which is orientated to the tree's north-east. When in leaf, therefore, it is likely that windows on the frontage of this building will being experiencing significant attenuation or obstruction of daylight and sunlight in the latter parts of the afternoon and early evening.

3.4.3. As noted above, with the exception of the window continuing around the building's north-west corner at second floor level, the proposed apartment building has no fenestration on its north flank. The main aspects of the apartments are therefore to the west, overlooking Ferdinand Street itself, and to the east, over a proposed communal garden area at the rear.

3.4.4. Consideration of the post-pruning illustration of the tree on the tree protection plan, and the orientation of the tree to the building, shows that there is unlikely to be any significant degree of shade cast by the tree's canopy onto any of the windows on its front elevation, as sunlight will always pass beneath the lower level of the canopy. This can be demonstrated by means of the line shown on the tree protection plan, which is drawn from the centre of the proposed third-floor window nearest to the tree

³ BS 5837: 2012, paragraph 5.2.2 Note 1.

at 62.5° from the horizontal, this being the maximum angle of solar elevation above the horizon in London throughout the year, (i.e. midday GMT or 1.00pm BST on June 21st). Following the proposed pruning as illustrated, it can be seen that the line drawn at this angle passes easily under the lower limit of the tree's canopy, and self-evidently the same will be true for all windows southward along the front elevation and on the lower floors.

3.4.5. In terms of requisite daylight levels as required by the recommendations contained within BR 209 Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight – A guide to good practice, we similarly do not anticipate that the tree's presence or canopy extent over the building post-pruning will contribute to any significant derogation from satisfactory average daylight factor (ADF) levels within the relevant rooms, particularly in view of the large window sizes proposed.

3.4.6. Potential issues arising from nuisance caused by falling leaves, seeds and debris from the tree can be addressed by a variety of methods, and are common in most situations in urban areas where large trees are retained. We do not consider that the relationship of the tree to the proposed building in this case can be demonstrated by any objective measure to give rise to problems of such severity as to be only reasonably capable of remedy by the tree's removal.

4. CONCLUSION.

4.1. Summary.

- 4.1.1. On the basis of the above considerations based on the detailed investigations and assessment we have undertaken, we consider that the London plane tree situated in Broomfield Court to the north of the application site is fully capable of being satisfactorily retained and protected in the context of the proposed redevelopment at 10, Ferdinand Street. In particular, our analysis of the proposed extent of pruning required to the tree to achieve implementation of the scheme, and a satisfactory ongoing post-construction relationship, demonstrates that the arboricultural impact of the proposal will be of negligible magnitude, and indeed will result in an overall improvement to the tree's symmetry and appearance.
- 4.1.2. The TPP shows the general and specific provisions to be taken during construction of the proposed development, to ensure that no unacceptable damage is caused to the tree's root system or crown. These measures are set out in the pruning specification, and are indicated by coloured notations in the areas where construction activities are to occur in close proximity to the retained tree, which are to be read in conjunction with the relevant panels on the drawing.
- 4.1.3. The LPA can readily secure the implementation of and adherence to the measures shown on the TPP by the use of appropriate planning conditions.
- 4.1.4. Accordingly we conclude that, subject to the above, the proposed redevelopment would not have a significant and adverse impact on the character and appearance of the local landscape, insofar as this is contributed to by the tree in question; and accordingly it complies with national planning policy.

January 2014

APPENDIX 1 Tree Protection Plan

