

SIMON JONES ASSOCIATES Ltd.

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Mr James Light
c/o Sandfords
213-215 Gloucester Place
Regents Park
London

11th September, 2012

Dear Mr Light,

RE: CHERRY TREE IN FRONT GARDEN, 2 FITZROY CLOSE, HIGHGATE.

At your request I visited the above address on the morning of Friday 7th September, 2012, and inspected the Cherry tree growing in the front garden adjacent to the road, on the north side of the house. This Cherry tree is covered by a Tree Preservation Order Ref: C728, and was until last year, one of a pair of Cherry trees, the one to the south having died last year and been removed following a Section 198 (6) Notice having been submitted to the Council.

I understand that as part of the current refurbishment of the house you are preparing some landscape plans for the garden, and that you are concerned that the remaining Cherry may not be of long term potential and therefore should not be retained as part of this landscape.

The tree is approximately 6.5m in height and has a single trunk with a diameter at 1.4m above ground level (just beneath the main crown break point) of 315mm. The crown extends 2.75m to the south, 4m to the east, 5.75m to the north and 6.75m to the west. This asymmetrical shape is indicative of the fact that the tree is growing only 2.3m from the northern flank of this two-storey dwelling.

I tapped the trunk with an acoustic hammer to see if I could detect any variances in tone that might suggest any decay or defects of the wood within. There was no variation in sound received on different sides of the trunk, but there was a significant variation in the sound received below and above 500mm. Above 500mm the trunk had a strong resonant sound

suggestive of healthy and sound wood, but below 500mm it had a dull thudding sound suggestive of some degradation or decay of the wood within. No evidence of fungal activity or of bacterial activity (i.e. no fungal fruiting bodies and no seepage or slime fluxing) consistent with these was noted, but the sound of the lower trunk is clearly indicative of some issue. There is also some wounding on the east side of the trunk at approximately 750mm: this has completely occluded but may have been a mechanical wound at some time in the past. It is possible that the indications of decay within the trunk beneath this are connected to that wound. However, I detected no evidence to suggest that this wounding or any decay at the base of the trunk would make the tree unstable..

The crown breaks at 1.5m into three main stems and one lateral branch that grows to the north/north-east. The crown is dominant, not suppressed by the canopies of any other trees, only by the presence of the two-storey building adjacent. It is immediately apparent that the foliage is sparse, although leaf sizes appear to be normal. However, many leaves are showing signs of chlorosis with significant yellowing between the veins suggesting a lack of nutrients, most probably caused by a lack of water that may be indicative of root malfunction. There is also some die back scattered through different parts of the crown, and there are several small scars and several un-occluded pruning wounds showing that the tree has been crown lifted above the road and the garden in the past, as well as having been cut away from the house. The largest of these wounds is on the lateral branch that grows to the north-east at approximately 400mm from its point of origin, where it is clear that a subsidiary branch has been torn off leaving a wound of approximately 150mm long x 100mm wide. This is not recent, as significant woundwood has formed around it.

The canopy heavily overhangs Fitzroy Close, and extends down to within 2.5m of the road surface, particularly to the north of the trunk. These low branches are more than likely to be hit by high sided delivery lorries and could be damaged or even torn off accordingly, hence some further pruning would be required if the tree was to be retained. The same would be the case on the house side where foliage is actually touching the flank of the building and is in close proximity to the first floor window. So some cutting back would have to be undertaken here. Furthermore, in the crown there are four or five branch stubs all approximately 1m or so long overhanging the main steps to the front door of the property suggesting that these have been removed to provide adequate clearance for pedestrians and/or cars parking immediately adjacent. This is shown by the wounding on the underside of the lowest of these branches suggesting that it has been hit by a vehicle in the past. Almost all the branches that overhang the road have got pruning wounds and small bark wounds which are evidence of branches having been cut off, broken or torn off by high sided vehicles; these are all entry points for decay organisms, most particularly fungal spores, and

as Cherry is highly susceptible to fungal infection is it quite likely that further decay may occur as a result. The presence of so many wounds with the tree being in a below average physiological condition is all consistent with the tree being in decline; and even if the roots were watered and mulched I do not think this would be likely to have a major impact on its long-term physiological condition.

To summarise, the tree is of below average physiological condition and of indifferent structure. Being a small ornamental specimen it does not make a major contribution to the character or appearance of Fitzroy Close or of the Conservation Area. However, it does provide some softening of the built form of the adjacent house in views from the west. It does not contribute to the skyline in views from end of Fitzroy Close as the large trees over the eastern boundary of No. 2 are of significantly greater height.

The tree is growing in an amenity area which is currently covered in pea shingle. This has been placed on a geotextile membrane which is visible in places where the pea shingle has been moved. To the north/north-west the centre of the trunk is only 550mm from the edge of a brick retaining wall between the garden and the road. No evidence of cracking, bowing or any other damage to this brick wall consistent with root pressure could be seen, but the wall is certainly close enough that future damage to it cannot be ruled out and indeed is likely to be a distinct possibility.

The presence of the wall and of the tarmac roadway to the north suggests that the roots of this tree are likely to be growing entirely in the 2.85m wide shingled area behind the house and the retaining wall, and therefore will be in close proximity to the foundations of the house. This is of some concern as Cherry has often been implicated in cases of subsidence on clay soils and at 2.3m away it is likely that the number of roots adjacent to foundations is such that some desiccation of the soil on which the house is founded could be occurring. Hence, if this tree became much larger a risk of subsidence damage could materialise.

Ornamental cherry trees such as this are not long lived specimens, typically lasting only 25-50 years in an urban or suburban environment such as this. A calculation based on the diameter of the trunk of this specimen suggests that it may be in the region of 40 years old and therefore, its remaining life span may be no more than 10 years. Its currently sparsely foliated state suggests that it may have difficulty surviving for even this long and that it can only be regarded as being of limited potential. Accordingly the production of the landscaping scheme for this garden risks being compromised if it is designed around the retention of this tree. Consequently, removal of the tree, and replacement at the same time as the replacement for the tree that died last year is planted would be an appropriate course of

action. This would have a further advantage in that both replacement trees would be of the same size and age thereby providing consistency.

The proximity of this tree to the house, the narrowness of the strip in which it is growing, the shrinkable nature of the subsoil and the present of surrounding trees particularly over the eastern boundary all combine to suggest that the replacement for this tree and for the previously removed one should be with specimens that are more ornamental in nature and are not capable of growing into large forest type trees. Too large a specimen planted here would risk causing subsidence of the house, damaging the brick retaining wall, and dominating and excessively shading the gardens of both this and the surrounding properties. Consequently showing non-ornamental or forest trees as replacements in the landscape plan would be inappropriate.

To conclude: the age and the structural and physiological condition of this tree suggest that it is unlikely to survive for more than another ten years. As the garden is soon to be re-landscaped, and at least one other tree is to be planted on the Fitzroy Close frontage, it would be appropriate to remove this tree as part of those works, and to replace it with a new specimen of an appropriate species and of longer potential. The impact of this on the character and appearance of the Close and the Conservation Area would be minimal, and being of better quality and longer life expectancy the replacement tree(s) would provide a long-term enhancement of the local landscape.

I trust this provides sufficient information for your purposes, if I can be of further assistance to you please do not hesitate to contact me at the above number or address.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Jones

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