

12th June 2012

Ms K. Francis Lim
Garden Flat
33a Belsize Crescent
London
NW3 5QY



Dear Ms Francis Lim,

Re: Horse Chestnut

Following our recent visit on 15th and 16th May 2012, I am writing with regards to the health and future management of the mature Horse Chestnut in the rear of your garden.

Whilst undertaking the removal of the deadwood from the crown, our operatives took some pictures of the crown and reported back to me on the condition of the crown.

There are some isolated areas of decay present in the crown. A secondary branch has a seam of decay along the top of it which is most likely due to historic pruning (see pictures 1 & 2). The decay runs almost the entire length of the branch; this level of decay does not imply imminent failure but it is a point of weakness and possible further decay. The inherent nature of Horse Chestnut wood means that once fully decayed, the wood dries and becomes brittle. Whilst the picture shows a lot of longitudinal decay of the outer bark, it is impossible to say how deep this decay is as trees form barriers within the wood to halt or slow internal decay (see pictures 5 & 6). Judging by the width of the decay on the top of the Horse Chestnut branch, it is likely that the decay is not very deep and so the strength of the wood will not be significantly reduced.

There is one other section of decay. Below the crown break, there is decay on the stem associated with an historic limb failure. There is good reaction wood at the margins of the decay pocket indicating the tree is reacting well and strengthening at this point (see picture 4). As with the branch decay, it is impossible to say how far into the tree the decay has spread.

The other crown limbs have good unions with the main stem and no other decay is visible (see picture 3). Over the years, the tree has been managed into its present form; a long trunk with a spreading, high crown that has most of its foliage and fine branch structure at the periphery. This gives the tree the appearance of being top heavy. Due to its location on the boundary with three or four gardens, it is impacting on many people. All trees produce and shed minor bits of deadwood which is natural. When trees are pruned, they produce new growth at the cut points. New growths will sometimes form weak attachments to the branch and in high winds are more likely than normal to be broken and fall. It is therefore advisable to re-prune a tree on a regular periodic basis depending on the local factors such as targets under the tree, rate of re-growth after pruning and tree condition.

Your neighbours are entitled by law to cut back to the boundary any branches that overhang their property regardless of best arboricultural practice. They should offer back any arisings to you and should you not want them, they should dispose of them. They would, however, require your consent if they need to come onto your property to access the tree. In this case, they would also need the consent of the local authority as the tree is located within a conservation area. This then implies that they would have to follow best arboricultural practice when cutting the tree.

You, as the tree owner, have a duty of care to people and property that could be affected by the tree. This means that you should undertake reasonable measures (i.e. regular inspections, appropriate pruning and advise from a professional) to ensure the tree is safe.

As mentioned above, it is sometimes impossible to accurately state the extent of decay in a tree. Your tree appears healthy, with some isolated areas of decay around the crown and trunk. I suggest that the crown of the tree should be reduced through the shortening of all the crown limbs by 1-2m to lessen the sail area and weight of the crown and to reduce the likelihood of branch or stem failure. I feel that this pruning is not an immediate imperative but should be done within 12 months. The best time to prune the tree is in the winter months when the tree is dormant and is least susceptible to fungus colonisation and potential further decay.

Yours sincerely,

Ed Campbell-White

For and on behalf of The Tree Company (London) Ltd