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CROWN ESTATE PAVING COMMISSION

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The Tree Officer
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Dear Sirs

Application to alter tree planting in St Andrews Place, Regent's Park NW1

We have recently conducted a detailed survey of the trees at St Andrews Place, Regent's Park, which has confirmed that the pavement planting scheme of four Lime trees dating back to 1986 is in a poor state of health and that the tree pits are showing structural problems. These findings, in combination with a number of other concerns arising from these trees, have resulted in this proposal to make alterations and improvements to the overall planting scheme in this important part of the Regent's Park Conservation Area.

I attach a report setting out the detail of what we propose together with our supporting case for making these changes. In drafting these proposal we have been in close consultation with the Royal College of Physicians whose various constituent parts occupy all the property surrounding St Andrews Place and who have their own cogent reasons to support changes to the tree planting.

The CEPC has been the statutory managing custodian of the St Andrews roadway and pavements since 1824 and aims to take a long term view of its management responsibilities. It is this long term view that gives rise to this application. We recognise that within St Andrews Place there are uniquely juxtaposed the Nash "old" with the Lasdun "new", and that both these architectural forms need to be set off to best advantage by a planting that compliments them and does not obstruct either the architectural visions or the wonderful vistas that form such key elements in the work of both these great architects.

I would be very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss these proposals with you on site and can provide additional information should you require it.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Powell
Head Gardener

APPLICATION TO REMOVE & REPLANT TREES AT ST ANDREWS PLACE, REGENT'S PARK

St Andrews Place and Royal College of Physicians

St Andrews Place forms an important and sensitive site within the Regent's Park Conservation Area. Along with the remarkable range of other Nash terraces surrounding the park, this quiet roadway is of considerable and unspoiled architectural interest, with its cobbled roadway and grouping of old and new in such close proximity. Both the terrace properties and the Royal College of Physicians are Grade 1 listed buildings - the first from 1826-28 the second from 1964 - and represent one of the few places within Regent's Park where the juxtaposition of the old and the new has been achieved with such success. As part of its statutory maintenance responsibilities since 1824, the CEPC is very conscious of the need to keep the roads, paved areas and planted spaces within its areas of responsibility under careful review.

Trees in pavements

As with much of the residential areas of Regent's Park, the tree plantings are now a dominant visual feature in St Andrews Place. Of these trees, the three oldest are unaffected by this proposal and comprise a large Plane on the north side at the roadway entrance, a beautiful spreading cherry planted centrally in the garden at the eastern end of the close, and a Lime planted on the border of the pavement and the garden of No 9. No proposals are being made with respect to these trees.

Dominating the south side are four Lime trees planted in 1986 in pavement tree pits. It is now apparent that these specimens are of mixed stock and variable quality and do not form a uniform group. A planting within the pavement is a rather unusual one within the residential areas of the park. Nash's scheme involved many gardens around the estate but the trees are almost exclusively planted within these gardens and not in the pavements, in contrast to other areas of London developed in the later periods.

In retrospect, the decision of the CEPC and Royal College of Physicians to plant these Lime trees in the pavements in 1986 could be considered a mistake. Not only have the mechanical planting arrangements for the trees proved inadequate, but the size of the trees now blocks one of the most important vistas along the Outer Circle, that looking from Cornwall Terrace to St Andrews Place. The porticos of both these terraces ought to punctuate this vista; the 1986 planting has blotted this view out after only 23 years.

A summary of the problems created by the current planting scheme, with references to supporting details in the accompanying appendices, is set out below.

1) Tree health and viability

One of the trees shows signs of disease and another of structural weaknesses, both of which will give rise to safety concerns. (See Appendix 1 – Arboricultural Report & Appendix 4 - Photographs)

2) Damage to surrounding property

There is repeated displacement of the surrounding York stone paving slabs around the trees due to heave caused by the ever-increasing leaning of the trees (see Appendix 4 - Photographs). The trees are not well anchored in their pits and inspection reveals them to have very shallow root systems that require attention. Remedial work is required to the pavements every one or two years to maintain them in a safe condition and free from trip hazards. The cost implications of this work are inevitably increasing.

3) **Safety hazards to pedestrians**

The trees' impact on the surrounding paving regularly creates trip hazards (see above). The heavy drip of secretions from the overhead leaf canopy onto the pavements beneath, due to aphid activity, causes the pavements to be very slippery and to require regular and expensive pressure washing. The RCP have reported that their accident report book reveals these slip and trip hazards are the main causative factors in the risk assessments of their property for hazards to visitors. These issues are exacerbated by the way in which the tree canopy also overwhelms the adjacent pavement lighting, making trip and slip hazards more significant in the evening and at night.

4) **Loss of amenity value to adjacent properties**

Over recent years the RCP has spent much time in researching, planting and nurturing the gardens of both the main College building and the front gardens of the terrace properties around the close. This development is most welcome and adds considerably to the horticultural interest of St Andrews Place, particularly since the planting is focussed on medicinal plants appropriate to the College's activities.

Sadly, the fast growing Lime trees are making this cultivation programme an ever more difficult one since the already north facing gardens are being overwhelmed by the Lime trees, reducing the light to both the gardens and the main rooms of the buildings against which the trees are planted.

5) **Impact of trees on the Conservation Area**

The available records appear to show that this is the only original Nash terrace frontage in Regent's Park where trees have been planted in the pavement so close to the properties. The line of the street, such a key feature of Nash's vision, is being quickly lost to sight, greatly diminishing the grace and proportion of this group of buildings and obliterating the major Outer Circle vista from the west. This is a sad loss in exchange for what have turned out to be some rather poor tree specimens.

For all these reasons we are now applying for permission to remove the four lime trees planted in 1986 and to replace them with six alternative trees planted on the opposite side of St Andrews Place, in the two pre-existing rose borders within the pavements on the north side of the close. This location is at an appropriate distance from any adjacent trees and buildings, and will not create shade problems. More importantly, the proposed replacement trees, *Betula utilis* (*Jaquemontii*), will form a wonderfully contrasting foreground to the dark and windowless face of the RCP lecture theatre stretched out behind, without getting so large that they will blot out the architecture.

Two possible planting schemes for the six trees are considered suitable, either an informal line along the length of the two rose borders, or alternatively two trios, one in each border. An appropriate understory planting would be made to complement the trees. Further discussion of these options and potential alternatives would be welcomed. (see Appendix 3 – Replanting Plans)

Once the original Lime trees have been felled and the stumps removed, the vacated tree pits will be filled with appropriate material and the entire area of paving containing the tree pits will be lifted and relaid (approx 24 sq m), with additional matching stone as required, to ensure a flat and level pavement that will return this side of St Andrews Place to its original look and configuration.

The Royal College of Physicians have been consulted about this proposal and they are fully in support of the proposed tree removal and replanting scheme. (see Appendix 5 – RCP letter of support)

APPENDICES

1. Arboricultural Report on Lime trees at St Andrews Place - 15 Aug 2009
2. Site plan – St Andrews Place indicating affected trees
3. Replanting Plans – Options 1 & 2
4. Photographs
5. Letter of support from Royal College of Physicians