

Kernahans,
4 Englands Lane,
London,
NW3 4TG

Date: 07 December 2014

Your ref:

My ref 14/119

FAO

By e mail

Dear Brian,

Trees at Belsize Court, Wedderburn Road, NW3

1. Further to my visit and inspection of the trees on 25 November I hope this report is helpful. Numbers are the same as used in my original survey of 1998 and the subsequent ones.

Item 8 - Bay and laurels

2. It would be advisable to reduce the laurels and other growth over the pavement, but there is no compelling need to reduce the bay unless the intention is to create a lower and more compact group. Camden have indicated that they do not object, their Conservation Area notice reference is 2014/1512/T.

Tree 9 - Swamp cypress next to the entrance to Block A

3. This has been giving concern for some time. I see from my records that I inspected it in 2002 after it shed a large branch and the tree surgeon carrying out the remedial work was concerned about it. My letter report of 5 December 2002, ref 99/080 refers. At the time I recommended that the tree surgeon should check the old topping cut for signs of decay when he trimmed the broken stumps and that it would be prudent to shorten the main shoots growing from the old topping cut.
4. Since then it has shed several more branches and the most recent work carried out was to reduce the height by 3 - 4 m, reshape and prune to clear the building by 4m. Camden did not object to this either, it is also covered by their notice 2014/1512/T. That was done earlier this year, but it shed another large limb recently and the tree surgeons (Modern Arboricultural Services) advised that it was getting to the point where it could not be retained safely. Having seen it recently I agree with that, since I first saw the tree it has been progressively shedding branches in the same way that old cedars do. It is an increasing hazard to users of the entrance and Wedderburn Road and is becoming increasingly difficult to reshape satisfactorily after the repair work, so its value as an amenity is rapidly diminishing. It was a prominent specimen, but has unfortunately got to the point where the problems it is causing outweigh the benefits, so the most practical option is to remove it.
5. It would be necessary to send Camden a new conservation area notice to fell the tree. If they object they would need to make a TPO, which would be difficult to justify, given the tree's declining condition and amenity value.

Tree 33 - Horse chestnut near the end of Block C

6. This is covered by a tree preservation order (TPO) and there is a consent , ref 2014/1331/T to reduce it by 30% back to the previous reduction points. It was reduced following subsidence in the end of the Block C, which was underpinned, but that was confined to the affected end of the building, so further growth could lead to it causing movement in formerly undamaged areas. It is also close to the grounds of the nearby school and reducing the end weight of the main branches will lessen any risk of failure and give an opportunity for any dead or defective branches to be removed. Therefore I would recommend carrying out the work.

Tree 34 - Sycamore

7. Camden's notice 2014/1512/T also indicates that they do not object to dead wood over 25mm diameter being removed. In fact dead wood removal does not need consent. There does not appear to be much dead wood, but as it overhangs the playground it would be sensible to get that done.

Tree 35 - Ash

8. This was reduced by about 30% some time ago, the operation has been repeated at least once and it is growing on. The Conservation Area notice covering the other trees allows it to be reduced back to the pruning points again and the application states that there are indications of decay at the base. I probed two points at the base with a steel probe about 400mm long. In one point this penetrated dead bark and decayed timber for almost its full length and when put into a small opening it revealed an extensive cavity that seems to extend under most of the tree's base. This was not evident when I inspected the tree in March 2008, but decay was developing by the time I next inspected it in 2011, so I recommended felling the tree then, my ref 11/004. Since then the decay has spread even more.
9. The permitted reduction would lessen the uprooting risk slightly, but the decay is too extensive for that to be effective or reliable and, as the tree is near the school playground it should be felled for safety without delay. This can be done under Regulation 14 of the 2012 TPO Regulations which states that consent is not needed for "*the cutting down, uprooting, topping or lopping of a tree, to the extent that such works are urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm, or to such other extent as agreed in writing by the authority prior to the works being undertaken.*"

Tree 39 - Cappdojian maple (and 38)

10. We looked at this tree and agreed that it would be prudent to remove the dead wood, some of which is large. The application notice and Camden's decision refer to removing dead wood from tree 38, but that does not need consent, so dead wood can be removed from both.
11. I hope this is helpful but if you have any queries or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Pryce

Simon Pryce

Photographs

Probe 400mm long in decay in two points at the base of tree 35, orange cord indicates the end of the probe.

