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Your ref:
Our ref: 1-38-2606

15th January 2015

Dear Mr. Doyle,

Re: 8 Pilgrim's Lane, NW3 1SL

Thank you for the copy of the report by Julian Forbes Laird, dated 28.05.13, addressed to Oliver Froment. You have asked me for my comments.

I have adopted Mr. Forbes-Laird's numeration below, for clarity.

1. The tree may or may not be 'Kanzan'. I have not had the benefit of seeing the tree in flower (a useful identification point for Japanese cherries). The precise variety is probably almost irrelevant save in one respect : expected ultimate size as a factor in gauging the age-class of the tree, (*q.v.* 4 below). It was reported in May 2013 to have been 9.5m in height. It was 9m in August 2010. In parts of three growing seasons it has therefore added approximately 500mm. Per season this would equate to somewhere around 170mm in height gain. This does not by any means represent growth indicating high vitality and thrift.

2. 'Flowering profusely' is not at all an unambiguous indication of vitality. Profuse flowering can be a reaction to extreme stress. Whilst this may well not have been the experience of the tree prior to the event reportedly the subject of photos referred to be JFL (not supplied) it is unsafe to rely on this as an indicator of thrift. The location of the tree very close to the superstructure of no.8 precludes crown development along the natural lines that Mr. Forbes-Laird anticipates, *viz*: "flattening out" in maturity.

3. The zone of decay is not "small" – it is extensive : see appended photograph 4. Mr. Doyle (depicted) is standing directly below the defect. Removing the limb containing this defect would entail reducing or removing much of one side of the tree, further degrading its appearance. The two branches on the right in photo 2 may

Registered Consultant of the Arboricultural Association
John Cromar, Dip. Arb. (RFS), F.Arbor A.



well be neglected shoots arising from below the graft. The left limb may be the once dominant scion, now challenged by the adventitious smaller two right hand limbs. The fork between these two limbs is incipiently weak (see photo 5), as branches Q and X (see photo 1) has arisen from adventitious buds and are thus structurally more weakly attached to the tree than branches from buds that arise in the course of extension growth.

4. I assert that the tree is just as defensibly 'early-mature' (another of the BS 5837:2012 age categories) rather than semi-mature; it is a matter of professional opinion. The tree is heavily shaded on one side (the south west side), owing to the adjoining building. This is a significant limitation on natural sun and daylighting and can reasonably be expected to reduce the prospect of this tree reaching the upper ranges of trunk diameters recorded for the largest of the Japanese cherry cultivated varieties – IRO 500mm. The tree in my opinion, noting all its constraints and faults, is unlikely to reach this trunk diameter. For the above reasons I consider the age-class to be not a useful factor in assessing public amenity value.

5. The factor of expected natural remaining lifespan is a major shortcoming of BS5837 (:2012 as now applicable) not because of any personal shortcoming of Mr. Forbes-Laird (BSI Standards are produced by committee) but because human estimation of future events both natural and otherwise is so patently flawed, as history attests. Within or outwith BS5837 any such estimation except in the cases of clear and rapid deterioration of a tree, or at the other extreme, with trees of legendary durability and longevity such as yew, will necessarily always be a rather vague estimate. For this reason I tend not to consider it a particularly useful factor in assessing public amenity.

6. The experienced practitioner is thus left with the somewhat blunt tools within BS5837:2012, currently widely used in the planning process, to attempt to convey pithily the *true amenity value*. For all the above reasons I have placed the tree in the C category / low life expectancy as, in my opinion, *the most appropriate to communicate this information*.

7. The age class exercise is not – obviously - a matter of "identification" as Mr. Forbes-Laird asserts but actually a matter of opinion. See 4. above.

8. I am glad that Mr. Forbes-Laird accepts that the tree is not in the A category. Such a category should rightly be reserved for those of the highest quality and amenity contribution.

9. Accepted.

10. I have placed the tree in the C category *inter alia* because the defect of its being extremely one-sided is *not remediable*. Other defects are remediable (see photos 1, 3) but the net *effect* of these measures, required whether or not the development takes place would be to significantly degrade the appearance of the tree and limit its life expectancy. I would concede only that the tree is in the (notional) upper half of the C category by reason of being (currently) fairly tall, but it is heavily down-graded by being only in sight of a very few households – perhaps as few as 3 - and only in extremely partial general public view, *i.e.* a highly restricted glimpse through the archway to Pilgrim's Lane.

APPRAISAL

For the reasons outlined above, the state of the tree *in toto* argues strongly for the down- rather than up-grading of the tree. It is for such good reasons that Camden Council's tree officers, over the time I have been dealing with this application, have never questioned the categorisation of the tree. It was accepted during a site meeting between the writer and Mr. Little (Camden Council) that replacement of the tree with a suitable replacement would be appropriate :

[22.04.2013] : 'Our arboriculturalist John Cromar spoke with Tom Little today. They agreed the tree can be removed and a replacement planted; *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Gallissoniere' , 14/16cm girth , 85L pot size. Tom's suggestion is that this is dealt with as part of the current planning application rather than a standalone TPO application. We therefore propose to amend the proposed tree plan showing the replacement tree. This drawing will be submitted shortly.'

Michael Doyle to Rob Tulloch, Camden Council.

If I can be of further assistance, or any point needs clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

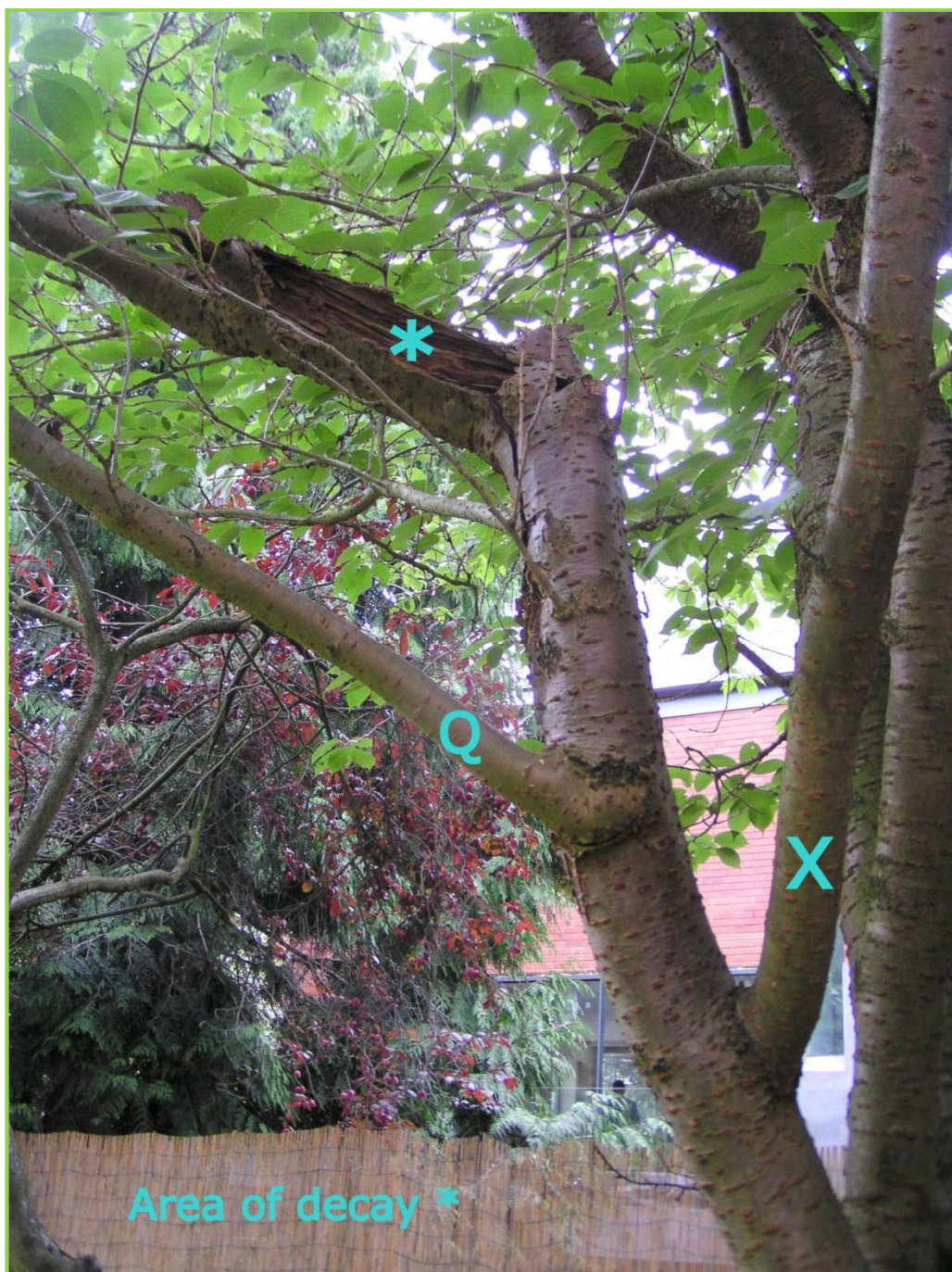
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Cromar', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John C. M. Cromar

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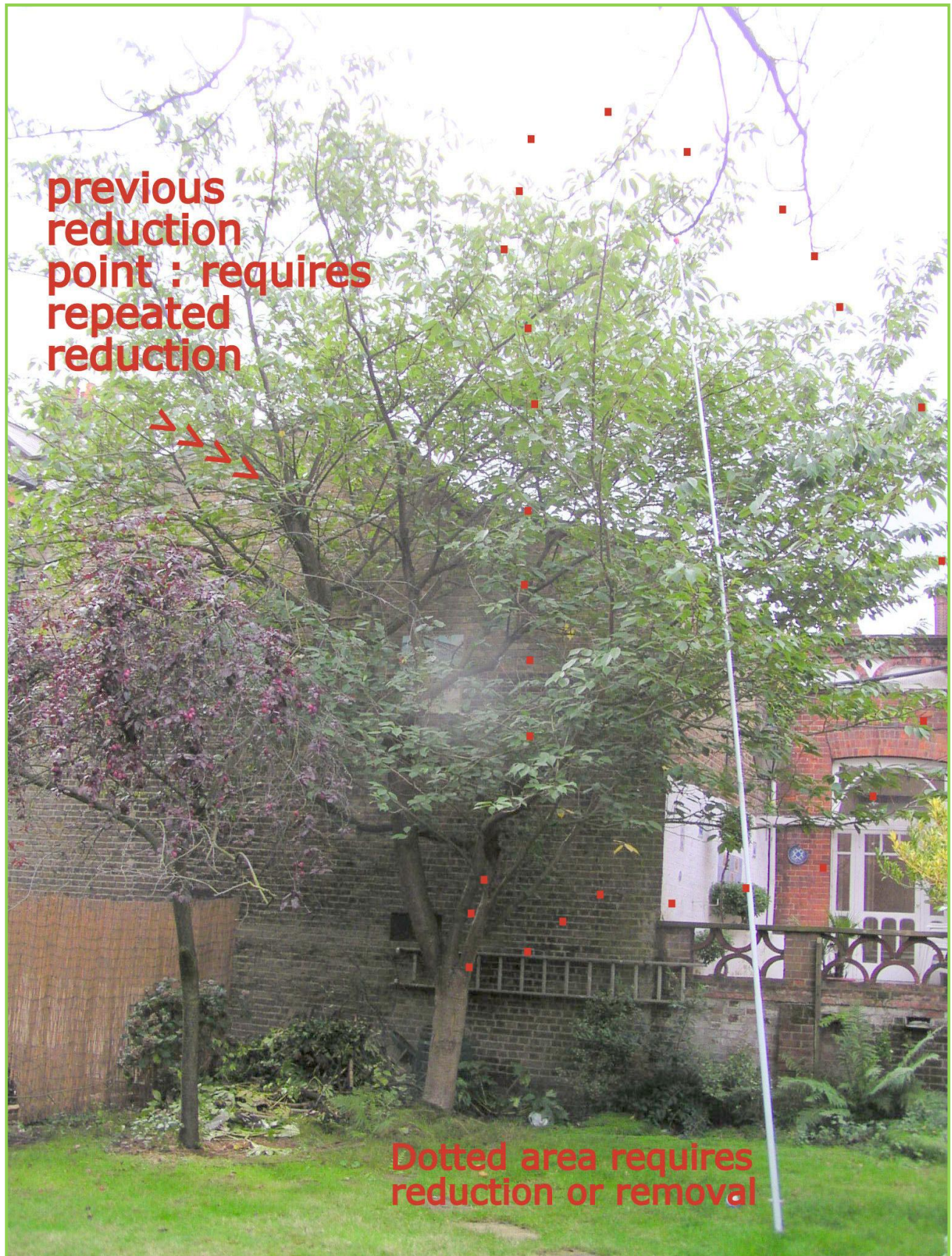
PHOTOS 1-5

1



2





4



5

