

The Director of Planning
London Borough of Camden
Camden Town Hall
Judd Street
London
WC1H 9JE

29th June 2015

Our Ref: SJA s211 15187-01

Dear Sir/Madam

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, Section 211
Tree at No. 5 Highfields Grove, Highgate, London N6**

I write to inform you of our client's (the applicant's) intention to fell one sycamore tree at No. 5 Highfields Grove, Highgate, London N6. The property is within the Highgate Village Conservation Area. The tree is not covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Details of the sycamore tree can be found at **Table 1**, overleaf.

No.	Species	Height	Trunk diameter	Radial Crown Spread	Crown Clearance	Age class	Physiology	Structure
154	Sycamore	12m	190mm	0m N 0m E 3.5m SE 6m S 4.5m SW 0m W	2.5m (S)	Semi-mature	Below Average	Indifferent
Comments								BS Category
Off-site tree; situated on top of the retaining wall, self-set specimen; one sided suppressed canopy by adjacent specimens. Drawn-up slender trunk at risk of failure if companion shelter removed; of low quality and low value; but of medium-term potential.								C (123)

Table 1: Details of the sycamore tree as per our survey in line with BS 5837

The reason the applicant wishes to remove the tree is because of the future potential for it to damage the boundary wall. The justification for removing it is threefold:

1. It is of poor quality;
2. It is of low value; and
3. Its situation atop the boundary wall is not sustainable.

Reason 1 - Quality

The sycamore tree is a self-sown specimen growing within the above address but is almost entirely overhanging the property to the south (the applicant's property). It is growing at a higher level than the applicant's property to the south; approximately 1.5m higher and the tree immediately abuts the retaining wall. The base of the trunk is in direct contact with the wall and has had to adapt its structure to accommodate it; **Photograph 1**, below illustrates this point:



Photograph 1: Picture showing the base of the sycamore tree and how it has had to adapt its structure due to its proximity to the boundary retaining wall.

As the base of the tree's trunk is situated approximately 1.5m above the applicant's property which has hard surfacing right up to the base of the retaining wall it is highly unlikely that there is any rooting south of the wall due to unfavourable anaerobic conditions. This can be seen in **Photograph 1**, above, the tree has developed prominent buttresses to the east and west parallel with the wall. The lack of rooting environment is compounded by the presence of several other specimens all competing with each other.

As well as the less than optimal structure at the base of the trunk and limited rooting environment the tree's canopy is suppressed by adjacent specimens to the west, north and east. In response to the competition the sycamore has developed a drawn-up and slender stem. The canopy is over-topped and suppressed; but what canopy the sycamore has, is entirely overhanging the applicant's property. **Photograph 2**, below, helps to illustrate this point:



Overhanging sycamore tree

Photograph 2: picture taken from within the applicant's property showing how suppressed the tree is and how much of it overhangs the property.

With indifferent structure ("**significant morphological or pathological defects; but these are either remediable or do not put the tree at immediate or early risk of collapse**") and with below average physiology (as it is overtopped and suppressed on three sides) the tree has been assessed as being of low arboricultural quality. It is not a good example of the species.

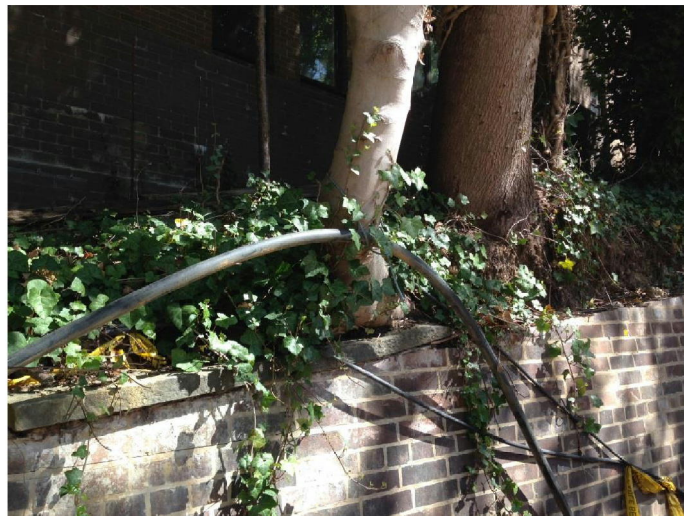
Reason 2 – Value

The sycamore tree is overtopped and suppressed by larger, more dominant and better quality specimens on three sides. It is only visible as an individual specimen from within the applicant's property to the south. It is a long way from any public vantage point. Highfields Grove is within a private estate and the grounds of Witanhurst are private. Should the LPA consider Highfields Grove a public place then we can confirm that the tree is not visible from here either as it is obscured by the larger specimens to the west and north-west.

With complete lack of visibility from a public place and with the tree only being individually distinguishable from within the applicant's property the sycamore has been assessed as having low landscape value. Our assessment of landscape value is guided by the recommendations of BS 5837 and is akin to an LPA's assessment of public amenity value. Therefore we believe this tree has next to no amenity value and does not make a contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reason 3 – Unsustainable situation

As can be seen from **Photograph 1**, above, and **Photograph 3**, below, the sycamore is in direct competition with the boundary wall and the base of the trunk has had to adapt to this situation.



Photographs 3: Further illustrating the relationship between the wall and the sycamore tree

At present there is no evidence of structural damage to the wall. This is not surprising as the tree is still only semi-mature and sycamore, as a species, is inherently vigorous. Therefore the tree is young enough and growing fast enough to be able to adapt to its situation without exerting much pressure on the wall. However, if the tree is retained, as it matures it will increase in girth and mass and will form large structural roots and buttresses. The tree's canopy is also likely increase in size, despite the suppression,

and the tree will continue to flex in the wind. All these factors will exert direct pressure on the wall with increasing intensity and it is highly likely this will result in damage to the wall.

We acknowledge that the likelihood of future damage may not, on its own, be sufficient to justify the removal of a tree, but it is not sustainable in the medium to long term. The combination with the tree being of poor quality and having low landscape value means that removing it at this juncture will not have a deleterious effect on the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The three trees surrounding the sycamore are a plane, an alder and a cedar gum; all three are more appropriate species for this position. Removing the sycamore at this juncture will remove any present or future suppression this tree may exert on adjacent specimens and will aid in their continued growth and development.

I trust the above supplies you with sufficient information to process this S211 notice but if there is further information or clarification you require please do let me know.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Simon Jones Associates.