

# CRASH

*Combined Residents' Associations of South Hampstead  
48 Canfield Gardens  
London NW6 3EB*

Development and Regeneration Management  
London Borough of Camden  
Town Hall  
Judd Street  
London WC1 8ND

7<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

Dear Sirs,

Planning Application 2015/5289/T 67 Greencroft Gardens, NW6 3LJ

We wish to put on record our strong objection to the above application to fell to the ground three mature London plain trees in the garden of the above premises. We feel it necessary to point out that this proposal is made, not by the owner of these premises, who herself staunchly objects and resists any such action, but by the owner of 57 Aberdare Gardens – premises which back onto her property.

These trees, which are probably over 120 years old and over 60 feet high, form an important, much-loved and significant local landscape feature and currently form part of an almost continuous 400 metre-long belt of mature trees which once bordered a small stream running between the gardens of Greencroft and Aberdare Gardens. These trees provide screening and privacy for rear gardens in both streets as well as providing much needed shade to the south-facing gardens in Greencroft.

This application, which if approved, would force the owner of the above property, against her will, to demolish the trees, is made purely to convenience the owner and insurers of the property at 57 Aberdare where, it is claimed, the tree roots are causing minimal damage to a rear extension. The proximity of these trees and their root patterns should presumably have been investigated when the original planning application for the extension was made. The developers' inability to allow for their existence now calls into question whether or not the developer followed the required BRE guidelines when making that application.

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A letter from those acting on behalf of the owners of the 57 Aberdare Gardens declares that recent investigations “confirm a clay subsoil” and that “clay is susceptible to volume changes due to moisture. Therefore in the summer it is prone to shrinking and rehydrating.” Such local soil conditions have long been known to virtually all property owners in the area and are constantly being taken into account by every developer undertaking any kind of building work. The added complication of a row of tall mature trees which have probably existed in close proximity to 57 Aberdare since that house was built at the turn of the twentieth century, should surely have been allowed for before the rear extension building works were begun. Large mature trees delineate the boundaries of very many of the rear gardens in the South Hampstead area and have done so for many years without problem. If we are now to fell to the ground any tree suspected of, or likely to, impact the foundations of nearby properties, the whole of South Hampstead and the streets locally known as “the Gardens Area”, would become a virtual desert. Furthermore, by denuding the area further of mature trees, we run the undoubted risk of increased ground flooding – already a problem in an area which is on Camden’s own list of streets at risk of flooding.

An application to reduce by 25% the crown of one of the trees now under threat from this current application, was made by Mr E. Caplan of 69 Greencroft Gardens in August 2009. It was refused by Camden Council on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009, after which the applicant went to appeal. Camden’s decision was upheld by the Planning Inspector, Mr Jim Unwin, BSCFor., MICFor., FARborA., CEnv., and in his decision to refuse permission he stated:

*The tree belt between Greencroft Gardens and Aberdare Gardens is a very significant local landscape feature, providing screening and privacy between rear windows along both roads and enclosure and privacy for rear gardens. The appeal plane tree and three other planes on No 67’s rear boundary form a significant group in the centre of the belt described above. The appeal tree is on the south-west end of the group, so is an important element in the group, and therefore an important part of the belt as a whole. I agree with the local authority that the (trees) provide a significant level of visual amenity value to its locality.*

He goes on: *Greencroft Gardens is within Swiss Cottage Conservation Area; the character appraisal for which notes that mature trees provide an attractive and serene quality to the dwellings and streets. London plane is a frequent tree within the Conservation Area, so is entirely appropriate to the locality. The tree belt between Greencroft Gardens and Aberdare Gardens, within which the appeal tree stands, compliments the linearity of the buildings to north and south. Therefore the tree belt, and by inference the appeal tree, do make a material contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.*

The Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal (See Appeal Ref: APP/TPO/X5210/909) even to crown reduce by 25%. To allow now, with this application, the removal of these magnificent specimens altogether would be little short of an act of gross vandalism.– one which would set a tragic

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precedent for the future of the whole of the South Hampstead Conservation Area

CRASH respectfully asks you to refuse the above application.

Yours truly,

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

Peter Symonds  
Chairman

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