



Dear Mr Oxford,

Thanks for clarifying me the aspects of TPO and its consequences for Applications to carry tree works. It was very helpful for appraisal.

I would like to take this opportunity and to extend comments to LPA on Application 2015/6160/T and TPO C1160 2015 as they are interrelated issues.

Application 2015/6160/T.

I would like to partly oppose the Application on the following grounds.

I welcome a good husbandry to the trees in the Conservation area and therefore support the proposed 20% crown thinning of English oak (referred under No 9 in supporting documentation). However I oppose felling 7 Sycamores. I would ask to consider my objections in conjunction with the previous LPA decision made on Application 2015/4417/T.

A bit of a history first.

Initially the Application 2015/4417/T was made for 12 healthy specimens of various trees to be felled. Apparently after having received the objections from neighbours and Highgate Society (and perhaps after subsequent consultations with LPA), the Applicant changed the scope of works and the Application 2015/4417/T was approved as follows:

"1 x Oak - No work Required.

Nos 2-3-4-5-6-7-&8 Consisting of 9x Sycamore Ht 16m dbh 200/500mm. We would like to remove 3xSycamores of the smallest diameter to be agreed on site with Camden Tree Officer. The remaining 6xSycamore we would like to Thin the crowns by up to 20% removing whole branches throughout crown retaining Height and crown spread of all 6 trees. This would allow more light into this very shaded part of the Garden. Nos 9-10 Sycamores Ht 16m dbh300mm. Thin crowns by up to 20% removing whole branches throughout crowns Retaining Height and crown spread to allow more light into garden. No 11 Beech Ht16m dbh500mm. Thin crown by up to 20% as above. No 12 Oak Ht 16m dbh450mm Fell to ground level due to proximity property. No 13 Oak Ht 16m dbh 650mm Very close proximity to property Over sails garage and main property Roofs Draw Back south side of crown to allow clearance from main property roof and allow light in to space between Garage and main property Maximum cut diameter 100mm specification to be agreed with tree officer on site. "

The decision seemed to satisfy the Applicant as it was no appeal. Almost immediately the tree works were carried out. The garden became lighter and undoubtedly the works contributed to overall wellbeing of forestry in the Conservation area.

However there is now a new Application requesting permission to fell seven trees. It should be noted that in supporting documentation the Applicant seeks permission to fell 13 specimen including request to fell a tree on neighbour's plot and prune another one there. I would however limit my comments to the wording of 2015/6160/T and assume that a permission to fell only 7 Sycamores has now been requested. There is another Application 2015/6476/T lodged to fell 4 Lawson Cypress and 1 Yew (using the same supporting documentation) and for those tree works I have no objection and therefore leave 2015/6476/T out of scope of my comments for 2015/6160/T and C1160 2015.

My objection is based on the following arguments.

Request for felling trees on the grounds of potential hazard is not supported.

The Applicant's Agent *"inspected the trees from the ground only without taking samples of wood, roots or fungi. A full hazard or risk assessment of the trees was not undertaken"*. There is no indication that even visually the Sycamores bear signs of either hollowness or decay or cavity or fungal damage. No Tree Hazard Evaluation Form was prepared but nevertheless the Applicant's Agent gave to all 7 trees a "Noticeable" Hazard Rating.

To justify the request it was claimed that Sycamore trees under Nos. 11, 12 and 14-18 are at risk of failure due to slenderness and referred LPA to C. Mattheck's formula for estimation of failure. In fact it was a reference to a formula from a limited field study http://www.ifh.uni-karlsruhe.de/science/aerodyn/bilder_organale/Wind_2003/pdf/Session%209/P9-1.pdf which suggested that if trees are not young then a threshold of Height / DBH $\cong 50$ exists for solitary growing trees or trees in thinned stands. Sycamores in question apparently are not the type of trees Mattheck's formula was relating to.

From their DBH and life expectancy of a Sycamore tree of up to 300 years, one may assume that trees in question are still young specimens. They also are not solitary specimens as they grow in a forest type environment. Arguably to the claim, Sycamores seems to be reasonably sheltered by growing on the lowest point of a slope Highfields Grove built on, they are protected by surrounding buildings on elevating slope and by number of high trees in Fitzroy Park, The Elms, The Hexagon and Highfields Grove. The trees in the area show no sign of damage or decline thus reasonably assuring that they will continue to lend their support to Sycamores in question as their companion shelters. It would be worth noting that the

recent storm “Barney” as well as previous weather extremes including heavy snowfalls in February 2009, December 2010 or very recent snowfall in February 2015 apparently made no damage to those Sycamores as well as to the other trees in the area.

Questionable is also a reference made in the “Tree Schedule: Explanatory Notes” to the “Well Maintained Highways” from non-compulsory Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance when rating tree hazard potential. Clearly the planning issues in Conservation Area are different from the issues relating to the safety of public highways network. No concern of threat to public ways by those Sycamores was mentioned.

Privacy issue to the garden of No 19 Highfields Grove.

Since the Sycamores are growing relatively close together they provide a screen not only by their canopy but by their trunks too. The removal will further open the view onto the garden from Fitzroy Park which is elevated in relation to the level of the No.19 garden and allow a look through.

Negative impact on the Conservation area amenity.

The trees requested to be felled constitute a part of natural woodland in the Conservation area. Together with the rest of vegetation, they form a necessary canopy to masque Highfields Grove from the view available from Fitzroy Park and Hampstead Heath. The argument that losing those trees will do no harm to overall canopy due to their small numbers seems to be a dangerous deviation from the LPA policy of protection the Conservation area and could create an unwelcomed precedent when trees will be dispatched *en masse* under purportedly glib excuse. Moreover, since those trees grow relatively close to each other their removal will inevitably produce a bold patch in a tree line visible from the ground level and from heights of Hampstead Heath. I checked personally when recently walking on the top of the Heath that those trees are visible and their removal will be noticeable. I believe that TPO C1160 2015 made by LPA on number of trees in No.20 Highfields Grove and reasons given supports this view as well.

Sycamores are seen by the residents of practically all 24 houses in Highfields Grove. Highfields Grove has on average about a 100 people (including residents, their visitors and trades) enjoying daily Highfields Grove amenity. Skyline tree canopy forms important part of this amenity.

Highfields Grove is adjacent to Fitzroy Park. The latter has considerable volume of pedestrian traffic consisting of residents, their visitors and trades servicing about 70 dwellings. Fitzroy Park also welcomes gardeners of about a hundred of Council Allotments, members of North London Bowling Club and significant number a general public using Fitzroy Park for recreational walking or pleasant pedestrian access to The Grove and Highgate Village. Altogether there are hundreds of people enjoying Fitzroy Park views on daily basis.

There is much larger number of people using the recreational facilities of Hampstead Heath where from the elevated positions Highfields Grove can be seen.

Such numbers justify the term of “Enjoyment by the Public” and it is not a “negligible public benefit” as it was alleged by the Applicant when evaluating amenity value of trees.

Tree Preservation Order C1160 2015.

I support above TPO.

The main argument to protect the trees could be their integral importance for general amenity of Conservation area. The trees are really the important feature of the area as they are specimens in good health and it was not proved to present a hazard. The trees requested to be felled provide useful natural screening (even with their trunks let alone crowns) to maintain privacy of Highfields Grove residents

including garden of No 19 and at the same time they help to keep a woodland appearance of this otherwise built area.

LPA seems to correctly appraised the trees on No 20 grounds and rightfully and correctly protected the local amenity.

I hope that my opinion will be heard.

Kind regards,

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