Mrs Lesley Stevas,
Flat 7,
57 Christchurch Hill,
London,
NW3 1JJ

The Tree Preservation Team,
London Borough of Camden,
5 Pancras Square,
c/o Town Hall,
Judd Street,
London WC1H 9JE
e.mail nick.bell@camden.gov.uk
cc planning@camden.gov.uk
cc tulip@tulipsiddiq.com#

28th February, 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: 34 Christchurch Hill, London NW3 1JL 2016/0779/T

All the relevant issues have already been raised, in my previous comments, dated 30th November 2015. (see objection to removal of Horse Chestnut at 34 Camden Cottage, Christchurch Hill, NW3 1J - planning ref. 2015/6438/T); I do not repeat all of these here but I feel that certain points raised then have still not been suitably addressed.

I am glad that further assessment of the tree has been undertaken. However, I'm not sure that the latest assessment provides conclusive assurance that the tree is structural dangerous.

The arboricultural report that has been submitted in support of the removal of the tree appears to serve 2 purposes:

1. To object to the making of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO)
2. To provide supporting evidence for the removal of the tree in relation to safety

As this is an application for the removal of a TPO tree rather than the confirmation of a TPO I don't believe that it is helpful at this time to get too embroiled in discussing the merits of TPO criteria (such as public visibility, or using scoring systems such as TEMPO); the LPA have obviously satisfied themselves with their own assessment when making the TPO. Instead, this is the kind of discussion that will be more appropriate if this application is refused and the LPA goes on to consider the confirmation of the TPO.

Rather, the main points at this time should be:

1. Is the tree significantly dangerous?
If the tree is found to be dangerous then of course it should be removed and replaced; however, a condition should be made to plant a replacement tree of a similar species and of a decent size as close as reasonably practical to the location of this tree, and the replacement tree should continue to be protected by the TPO.

2. Is the supporting evidence suitably adequate to justify the removal of the TPO tree?

On reading the supporting arboricultural report I understand that:

1. There are some damaged roots
2. There is fungal mycelium present
3. There are some pockets of internal decay
4. The tree would require further pruning to reduce the immediate risk (but that this is not deemed an acceptable option)

1. **The roots:** The copy of the report that is available from the LPA website is a black and white scanned copy and I am unable to see any detail in the photos of the damaged roots. I will defer to the LPA Tree Officer's assessment of the damaged roots.

2. **The fungal mycelium:** The report states that honey fungus is the only common species that produces mycelium. I understand that mycelium is actually a product of many different species of fungi, and I would also like to ask how this substance is confirmed as mycelium, could it be something else? Furthermore, the other identifying features of honey fungus that are the toadstools and the characteristic black rhizomorphs (bootlaces) seem to be absent. I think that the only conclusive way (at this time) to show that this is indeed honey fungus is to send a sample of the mycelium that is said to be at the base of the tree for laboratory testing.

3. **The pockets of decay:** Honey fungus is a killer of the outer layers of the tree (specifically the cambium), and is known to be a precursor to secondary fungal invaders. I understand that it is not known as a heartwood rotter (internal decay) so I find the executive summary at para 2.2 confusing: In the first sentence it says that the internal decay is characteristic of honey fungus and in the second sentence it says that the internal decay could be a different fungus but that would make no practical difference. I understand that different fungi cause different types of rot (and different issues) within a tree so I would like clarity on why this would make no practical difference. Usually for internal decay (such as hollows) an assessment is made of the amount of structurally sound wood that remains, and I ask that such an assessment is made from the resistograph findings, if this to be used as an argument.

4. **Pruning to reduce the immediate risk.** As pointed out in my previous objection (planning ref: 2015/6438/T) the tree was lopped in 2012 and an excessively large proportion of the crown was removed (much more than the recommended amount detailed within best practice at the time or since), I would not be surprised if this sudden shock lowered the tree's resistance to fungal pathogens (such as honey fungus).

However, para 2.4 states: '*Pruning could reduce the immediate risk, but the tree would need regular cutting'*. Does this mean that there really is an option for its retention and should it not also be factored in that the tree already had a significant amount of its canopy removed? I think that the tree already has a significantly lesser risk of becoming windblown and might not actually need any further pruning as the risk is already significantly lower than when it had a full crown in 2012.

The application as it stands seems dependant on whether or not the tree is infected with honey fungus, but the presence of honey fungus is still not confirmed. As requested in my previous objection I think that a sample of the mycelium that is said to be at the base of the tree should be taken for analysis.

If it is confirmed as honey fungus then I defer to the judgement of the LPA tree officer as to whether or not he has enough evidence to make a balanced and informed decision. If the tree does not have honey fungus then further clarification should be provided about the type of decay that is present and what the decay means in relation to the structural and physiological condition of the tree.

Based on the above I do not think that adequate evidence to justify the removal of the tree has been provided and therefore object to this application of the felling of this tree.

Yours faithfully,
Mrs Lesley Stevas