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Mr Matt Daley
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Dear Mr Daley

Re: Exploratory excavations around T011 at Agar Grove, Camden

At your request I attended the above site to supervise exploratory excavations around T011 to ascertain the presence of roots beneath the surrounding hard surfacing. The attached drawing 6782-D-EXC shows the approximate location of the trial digging. In order to minimise root damage, excavation was carried out at the edge of the Root Protection Area (RPA) with the view that there would be fewer large roots away from the stem to need to avoid and digging closer to the stem would increase the chance of causing root damage.

Initially, excavation was undertaken south of T011, at the edge of the raised diamond-shaped planter where the MUGA is to be located. Roots were found within the first 200mm under the concrete paving slabs. These roots were a mixture of structurally significant (>25mm) and finer roots (<25mm). The unearthed roots were comparatively isolated from each other rather than presenting as a dense web of material. Having found large roots coming out of the raised planter so close to the surface I decided that we would not learn anything more than we had by digging deeper; I also did not want to risk damaging the roots that we had found.

I was advised by Site Manager Billy More and his engineer that having CAT scanned to the west of the tree a live electrical service would prevent excavation on this aspect. As such, we did not dig so the roots on this side of the tree are unknown. If any proposed works are to occur on west aspect of the tree it is advised that I am present to supervise ground works, either exploratory or as part of the development.

Excavation was carried out 3m directly north of the edge of the raised planter to a depth of 600mm. Once the tarmac surface was broken, the soil underneath was a dense grey clay devoid of roots.

Two surface scrapes were carried out to the east of T011. Immediately beneath the tarmac surface roots were discovered. These roots were also a mixture of

structurally significant (>25mm) and finer roots (<25mm). It appeared that many of these roots were following where old walls had been demolished – presumably prior to the original play area being constructed. I believe that this is a result of seams between the hard surfacing allowing moisture to accumulate alongside the wall footings within the rhizosphere and providing the best conditions available for the roots.

No further excavations took place for two reasons: 1) the presence of roots had been confirmed and 2) I was concerned that continued digging would result in additional damaged roots.

To conclude, the excavations were successful in identifying that roots are present in the soil surrounding the tree and outside of the raised diamond-shaped planter. It is important to have evidence of this so that proposed works and the design around the tree can take the roots into account. For example, we now know for a fact that roots are present and so any design must factor in their presence. If there had been an absence of roots then no special measures would be necessary. With the roots on the eastern aspect found so close to the surface, it may be possible to unearth small sections where decking footings would be situated to find and avoid any roots that are uncovered with only a minimal amount of ground disturbance. It may be feasible that if there is elasticity in the design that footings are moved to where roots are found not to be present.

Additionally, it should be noted that where roots were found as part of the exploratory excavations they were subsequently covered back over with soil and the hard surfacing was returned where possible to minimise the disturbance to roots.

This visit to site allowed me the opportunity to reappraise the tree with better knowledge of what is to be proposed. It is clear that the raised planter is essential for the continued wellbeing of the tree and must be retained. The soil within the planter is not flat and evenly distributed; the soil level is higher around the base of the stem and lower towards the edges of the planter and this must be taken into consideration with any design that crosses over and integrates the planter.

Moving forward with the development around T011, I am happy to advise on any future designs. I would also encourage that when a suitable design is finalised that I am present on site to oversee works around the tree if it is necessary to break ground or conduct tree surgery to achieve development of the design.

I trust this is to your satisfaction. Should you require any further information or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Alexander Turner

Alex Turner
Arboricultural Consultant