

From: David Wolton [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 September 2019 17:14
To: Planning [REDACTED] Georgie Wolton [REDACTED]
Subject: Trees in Netherhall Gardens YOUR REF: 2019 / 4491 / T

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Dear Tree Team,

I would like to express my concerns as a long term Camden resident to the application to cut down two Sycamore trees (referred to as T1 and T4) at Fitzjohns Mansions, 10 Netherhall Gardens.

This application appears to be in parallel with correspondence received by residents at 27 Maresfield Gardens regarding two mature Poplar trees (referred to as T2 and T3), with a suggestion from a company called Oriel who are acting as a Tree Mitigation Co-ordinator on behalf of Ruth Tamir at Flat 6 , Fitzjohns Mansions. They are suggesting a process to cut down these two Poplars also.

The documentation includes an **Arboricultural Assessment Report** that recommends felling and treating the stumps of: T1, Sycamore; T2, Poplar; T3, Poplar; and T4, Sycamore. It notes that the condition of both T2 and T3 is "poor"; with T3 "smothered in ivy". I do not believe these mature trees are in poor condition, as I know they have been regularly monitored and treated by specialist tree surgeons when they were pollarded as recently as April this year. The ivy referred to is a visual screen between the houses, and not relevant to the matter.

Underlying the attempt to cut down these 4 trees is a claim for subsidence in Flat 6, Fitzjohns Mansion.

The **Engineering Appraisal Report related to this** describes the nature and extent of the damage:

Under **Significance**, the Report notes:

"The level of damage is very slight, and is classed as category 1 in accordance with BRE Digest 251 – Assessment of damage in low-rise buildings."

This is the lowest level of damage recordable.

In **Onset and Progression**, it is noted that the property owner

"advised that damage first commenced in September 2018. I am advised that the damage has occurred more recently. It is likely that movement will be of a cyclical nature with cracks opening in the summer and closing in the winter."

Under **Monitoring**, it is noted that,

“Level monitoring has been underway since January 2019. The level monitoring generally demonstrated a slight recovery of the rear projection between January and May. Such a pattern of cyclical movement is generally indicative of vegetation related clay shrinkage subsidence. The level monitoring exercise is to continue.” Under **Recommendations**, the felling of “the Poplar tree located to the rear of the property” is suggested, to “mitigate against further movement”. It makes no mention of a second Poplar; nor does it mention Sycamores.

Under **Repairs**, it notes that

“If the street (sic) tree is not removed then it may be necessary to consider underpinning of the foundations of the property in the area of damage, in addition to structural crack repair and redecoration...”

There are a number of comments:

The Arboricultural Assessment Report recommends the felling of two Sycamores and two Poplars. The Engineering Appraisal Report recommends the felling of one Poplar and no Sycamores, and then mentions a “street tree”.

The Arboricultural Assessment Report does not qualify its assessment of the condition of the Poplars as poor. What does this mean in the cases of T2 and T3?

The Engineering Appraisal Report says that the damage is “very slight” and that movement is likely to be of a cyclical nature, which is generally the case in such circumstances. Apparently monitoring has shown a slight recovery between January and May. The Report suggests that if the Poplar is not removed, then underpinning of the foundations in the area affected “may” be necessary. Our understanding is that it would be normal to do at least 12 months monitoring prior to making recommendations.

I note that Camden Council’s website about Tree Removal states:

“We only remove trees if they are

dead or dying

dangerous

involved in tree related subsidence claims, but only as a last resort”

I and others believe there are a number of reasons that the request to cut down these trees should be rejected:

1. Lack of clear evidence - The monitoring and recommendations are inconclusive on the need to remove any trees, never mind up to 4.

2. Air quality - these trees are close to a school for young children near the highly polluting Finchley Road. During this Climate Emergency we need all the trees we can get and many, many more; mature trees, like the two Poplars, are especially important.

3. Neighbourhood beauty - the trees are situated in a Conservation Area and the greenery is what needs to be conserved.

These proposals clearly require further scrutiny.

Will you be able to write to me about this please?

Yours sincerely

David

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