

Planning
London Borough of Camden

5th February 2020

Dear Sirs,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

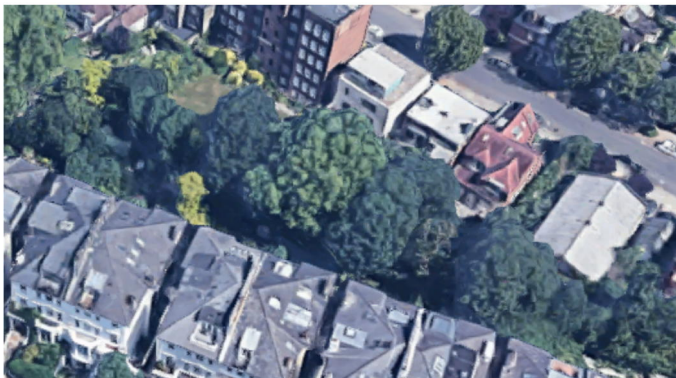
Site at: 28a Glenilla Road, London, NW3 4AN

Planning application ref: [REDACTED]

Hollins Planning have been appointed by neighbours to review a tree works application to fell a London Plane Tree.

Contribution to the character of the conservation area.

The plane tree forms a belt of trees that is at the rear of properties on Glenilla Road and Belsize Park Gardens.



This group of trees makes an important contribution to the character of the conservation area. They can be seen and appreciated from the rear of many residential properties and between the gaps on properties on Glenilla Road and Belsize Park Gardens. Together with the mature street trees they make an important contribution to the verdant character of the area.

If the council accepts the loss of this tree, then it will set a dangerous precedent.

Local Plan Policy and guidance.

The requirement to preserve trees in conservation areas is enshrined in Local Plan Policy.

Camden's Local plan Policy D2, (criterion h) states:

The council will preserve trees which contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area or which provide a setting for Camden's architectural heritage.

Camden's design guidance (March 2019) sets out a number of key messages at the start of each chapter heading. The first key message in section 4 of this document states;

Camden's trees are integral to its character and their protection is important.

Camden's draft tree guidance (March 2018) also contains the following key messages.

Camden's trees and canopy cover have valuable amenity and are an integral asset to the borough's green environment and quality of life.

Using our planning powers and British Standard BS5837:2012 the Council will aim to preserve existing tree and canopy coverage where possible.

Para 2.10 states;

Planning legislation makes special provision for trees in conservation areas. All trees that contribute to the character and appearance of a conservation area should be retained and protected.

The reminder of the guidance looks at the impact of new development on trees, so it is not entirely relevant. However, there is a copy of the council's policy for council owned trees. This states that trees will only be removed if they are causing **significant** structural damage.

The application.

The applicant has submitted an arboricultural report in support of the application to fell the plane tree (T1) at the rear of No. 28a Glenilla Road.

According to the report the tree is taking too much moisture from the ground, this is causing clay shrinkage and this is damaging the rear of No. 16 Belsize Park Gardens.

The occupiers of the flats in this property noticed some cracking in 2017/18. This was surveyed and according to the report the damage was categorised as slight (BRE Digest 251).

251 defines slight damage as:

Cracks easily filled. Recurrent cracks can be masked by suitable linings. Cracks not necessarily visible externally; some external repointing may be required to ensure weather-tightness. Doors and windows may stick slightly and require easing and adjusting. Typical crack widths up to 5 mm.

This is not a council tree, but this does not constitute significant structural damage. There are insufficient grounds to remove the tree.

The submitted report provides no indication as to whether the damage will get worse and timescales. The cracks also appeared over the summer of 2018 which was incredibly dry.

The moisture deficit will no longer be there, and the garden will have now rewet itself after winter rain.

The report also dismisses the possibility of pruning the tree. However, crown reduction needs only to be done once every 3-4 years, so this would be a manageable way to preserve the tree and ensure it does not cause any further structural harm.

It might be possible to make a more objective judgement if the application was accompanied by a tree condition survey. However, the report confirms it does not contain an assessment of the safety of the tree or its condition. This should be a prerequisite for determining any application for its removal.

Conclusion.

The tree makes an important contribution to the character of the conservation area and there is a strong policy presumption to protect trees. Also, as acknowledged by the applicant the internal cracks are slight and they occurred during a very dry summer.

The applicants have not provided any information to demonstrate whether the cracking has got worse (it is possible to monitor). They have also provided no assessment of the tree and have discounted possible management solutions such as pruning.

For the reason outlined in this letter it is contended the application to fell the tree should be refused and the tree protected by a TPO.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Hollins
Consultant Chartered Planner
MA MRTPI

