

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/3681/P	Aideen O'Neill	25/10/2020 20:40:30	COMNOT	<p>I am a Flask Walk resident. The proposed application (2020/3681/P) for a basement extension has potential to affect the large (16m), mature holm oak tree (<i>Q. ilex</i>) which is located in the garden of Gardnor House. The tree sits within the garden of Gardnor House where it abuts Gardnor House's perimeter wall. The perimeter wall abuts the current structure of 49 Willow Road including the proposed basement extension. As such, the tree and the proposed basement extension are in close proximity.</p>

A tree survey is included within the application pack for the proposed works. I have concerns about the evidence supplied for the conclusions presented in this tree survey. In the following paragraphs I lay out:

- The potential importance of the Holm oak to the community in terms of heritage, landscape and biodiversity
- The basis for my concerns regarding the conclusions of the tree report
- My request to the planning committee regarding their response to this application specifically as it relates to this tree

IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLM OAK TO OUR COMMUNITY

This tree is of heritage and landscape value to the area. Positioned at the junction of Flask Walk, New End Square, Well Road, Willow Road and Gayton Road, the tree accounts for a substantial part of the greenery visible from a number of different points along four of the roads forming this junction.

As referred to in my comment on previous application number 2020/2519/P, the tree is also important from a biodiversity perspective, being home to a wide variety of bird species including jays, robins, sparrows, blue tits, song thrushes, starlings, pigeons and magpies. Kestrels have been sighted in this tree. Relevant to biodiversity, the tree forms a critical part of the almost continuous tree line from the heath to the village end of Flask Walk. Of note, one of the species sighted frequently in this tree (the song thrush) is included in the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act's S41 Priority Species Action List (a list directed at preventing "further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species"). Of further note, four of the above species (the song thrush, the house sparrow, the starling and the kestrel) are listed in the Royal Society for Protection of Birds BoCC 4 (Birds of Conservation Concern 4) list:

- ¿ The song thrush, sparrow and starling on the Red List (defined as species accorded "highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action")
- ¿ The kestrel on the Amber List (the next most critical list).

CONCERNS REGARDING CONCLUSION OF THE APPLICATION'S TREE SURVEY

The tree survey state that "site surveys place the foundations of the party wall [between number 49 and Gardnor House] at 1740 mm below the ground level of the Holm Oak". The tree survey goes on to say that "Inspection pits have revealed that there are no Holm Oak roots within the sub base. The conclusion is that the party wall is a continuous barrier to roots". However, no quantitative details are provided within the tree survey of the nature of the "inspection pits" mentioned (eg, depth or number). Of note, *Q. ilex* is reported in scientific research literature (references available on request) as being characterised by deep root systems (greater than the depth below ground level of the party wall). The tree survey's conclusion of "the party wall forming a continuous barrier to roots" is not supported by the evidence provided in the tree survey.

The tree report goes on to state that "the land at whatever depth beneath the curtilage of number 49 is not

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essential to the normal functioning of the tree.” Given that: (1) the tree report does not convincingly demonstrate that the holm oak’s root system does not extend beyond the plane of the party wall; and (2) the holm oak’s tree roots are certainly adjacent to the works, the above statement in the tree survey is at odds with BS5837 (which legislation the tree survey itself cites). BS5837 states that “The part of a tree most susceptible to damage is the root system, which, because it is not immediately visible, is frequently ignored. Damage to, or death of, the root system affects the health, growth, life expectancy and safety of the entire tree. The effects of such damage might only become evident several years later. Damage can be the result of a number of minor but compounding factors that accumulate over time. Materials such as UNCURED CONCRETE, diesel oil and vehicle washings can all damage roots and lead to adverse impacts on the tree”. Even if only a proportion of the root system is exposed to toxic substances, leaching of those substances could cause the entire tree to be affected.

Of note, another document within the application pack, the BIA ground investigation report, states that “The proposed basement will extend into a tree protection zone. Should the design of the basement not take into consideration the tree root system and greatly alter the surface water regime and infiltration rates, the tree maybe affected and cause damage to the tree not permitted by the TPO”.

REQUEST TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Can the planning committee please stipulate measures that must be taken to avoid potential damage to the root system of the adjacent holm oak as a result of the proposed works. In particular, in light of BS5837, can these stipulations please include reference to measures that must be taken to avoid application of any materials to the site which might prove toxic to the tree’s root system, either immediately upon application, or after later leaching through the soil.

Thank you.
