

Camden Council
Planning and Building Development
4th Floor, Camden Town Hall
Judd Street
London WC1H 9JE

22nd December 2020

Dear Nick Bell (Tree and Landscape officer), Planning Officers and Camden Councillors,

RE: LETTER OF OBJECTION

to

Planning Application 2020/5587/T

for

Proposal to remove trees at 8 Doughty Street WC1N 2PL

These large, London Plane trees are in my back garden and I am writing to object to the application for their removal.

I have lived in the ground floor flat at number 8 Doughty Street for 15 years and lived next door in number 9 Doughty Street for over 20 years. Most of the tenants in these houses have also lived here for many decades.

I was devastated to find out that a planning application had been made for the trees' removal, as were many of my friends and neighbours.

Both my children were born and brought up in these houses and I now regularly look after my two grandchildren at my home. We, together with the other tenants and all our friends and their children, have all enjoyed the beauty and amenity value of these wonderful old trees over many years.

They provide shade for us in the summer and fun playing and collecting the leaves in the autumn. In the spring birds come to nest and the trees provide a haven for wildlife throughout the whole year, from squirrels to magpies, from wrens to jays. They give us oxygen and take away the CO2 so damaging to us all in this crowded part of central London.

These mature trees are probably over 100 years old and are large enough to be seen from the surrounding streets and can be enjoyed by everyone in our local community. All local and government initiatives currently extol all the good things that trees give us, both recommending retaining the ones we have, and increasing their numbers.

Everyone in 8 and 9 Doughty Street has always coexisted happily with the Egypt Exploration Society who own 4 Doughty Mews, and I have been in their offices several times over all these years and seen the cracks to the rear wall. The cracking has never been an issue to them when we've spoken in the past, and I understood that it was successfully managed by applying some filler and redecorating during their cyclical maintenance. They also need to clear the leaves out of their gutters on a regular basis which would be common to any building with large trees nearby.

There are no cracks on the garden side of the wall and only a slight bulging of under 50mm over the two stories which I believe to be common in a wall of this age. There is no apparent ongoing movement and so there has been no structural concern over it's stability.

About two years ago we discovered that the Society was seeking to sell their offices at no.4 Doughty Mews and the adjacent properties that they own, nos. 2 and 3. I allowed access to several prospective buyers together with their arboriculturalists and surveyors, who visited my garden to look at the trees and the rear wall. Any purchaser would no doubt wish to redevelop the buildings and it was my impression that some found the proximity of the trees problematic.

I see that the planning application does not have an arboricultural report attached but the most recent survey carried out by the landlords of 8 Doughty Street, One Housing, about 1½ years ago, found the trees to be in excellent condition and they have been well cared for over the years with regular trimming every 3 - 5 years to control their growth and to stop the crowns from getting too large.

The letter from the structural engineers that accompanies the application appears cursory at best, no investigative structural survey has been carried out and no inspection was made to the garden side of the wall. Indeed the letter states that 'further investigations will need to be carried outour views set out in this letter are subject to review in the light of any further information'.

There appears no conclusive evidence to support the fact that the closest tree to the building is causing damage and none to implicate the second tree. The letter goes on to recommend monitoring the trees for a year to confirm whether or not that they are causing ongoing damage or whether the cracks are simply due to seasonal movement. The letter also raises the possibility that removing such huge trees could, in itself, cause damage to the building and neighbouring properties and past conversations with some of the experts who have visited my garden have also supported this view.

It seems to me premature to permit the removal of these amazing trees when they are in perfect health and any damage to the building by the trees has not been proved or fully investigated.

You are more than welcome to visit my garden and inspect the trees before you make this extremely important decision that will affect our health and well being into the future.

Please call me on _____ at any time to arrange this. I look forward to hearing from you,

With thanks,

Belinda

Belinda Webb
Flat 2
8 Doughty Street
WC1N 2PL