

Delegated Report		Analysis sheet		Expiry Date:	12/01/2021
		N/A / attached		Consultation Expiry Date:	
Officer			Application Number(s)		
Nick Bell			2020/5587/T		
Application Address			Drawing Numbers		
8 Doughty Street London WC1N 2PL					
PO 3/4	Area Team Signature	C&UD	Authorised Officer Signature		
Proposal(s)					
REAR GARDEN: 1 x Plane (T1) - Fell to ground level & poison stump. 1 x Plane (T2) - Fell to ground level & poison stump.					
Recommendation(s):		Object to notification of intended works to tree(s) in a conservation area.			
Application Type:		Notification of Intended Works to Tree(s) in a Conservation Area			

Consultations

Adjoining Occupiers:	No. notified 38		No. of responses 70+ No. electronic 00	No. of objections 01
Summary of consultation responses:	<p>Councillor Fulbrook, Councillor Vincent and Councillor Olad submitted objections to the removal of the trees. The Council received in excess of 70 objections which are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plane trees help combat air pollution • The cracking in the Egyptian Museum is historic • Residents recycle the leaves to make compost. • The trees have not been maintained regularly enough • The removal of the trees poses a risk to surrounding properties • One of the trees has a tree preservation order ref. C777 2008 • This is an opportunity to help climate change and for our council to put into practice their pledges for clean air by NOT allowing such longstanding and beautiful trees to go. • The trees provide habitat to wildlife • The trees have a positive impact on the mental health of residents in the area • The trees dominate the skyline • There is the intention to redevelop the property • They are a rare survival of significantly sized trees in this corner of east Bloomsbury. • My objection to their removal is one of aesthetics and amenity. • The trees in Doughty Mews are an asset to our community and they enrich the entire community • Felling them would also run against the stated policies of Camden Council • Further surveys are needed to confirm certain points. • The case for removal is badly motivated and is not proven in the engineer's report accompanying the application • Three structural engineers state that removal of the trees is very likely to cause ground heave • There are design and/or engineering solutions that would allow for the trees to be retained which have not been explored • The significance of the cracking has been overstated • There has been little change to the wall between the two surveys which were undertaken three years apart, there is no need to rush. • 4 Doughty Mews may depend on the trees • A ground investigation should be undertaken to determine the foundation arrangements and subsoil profile to the mews properties within a distance that may be affected by the tree roots • The cracks are cracks in the plasterwork rather than the brick fabric of the wall, and there no structural repairs to perform • Camden has lost many trees due to HS2 <p>One letter of support was received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EES strongly supports this application. Inspection has shown that the trunk of the nearest tree (T1) is actually leaning against the rear wall of the EES premises and is causing structural damage. Tree (T2) is also very close to this wall and the applicants tree expert has advised that the damage to the wall cannot be mitigated with these trees retained. A structural engineers report prepared on behalf of the EES by Owain Evans of William J Marshall & Partners dated 1 July 2020 has been submitted to the Council by OHG as an attachment to their application, and this includes site plans and photographs of the damage already suffered to our building. 			

Assessment

The s.211 notification is for the removal of two London plane trees from the rear garden of a residential property that is situated within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. The notification alleges that the trees are causing damage to a neighbouring property. Neither tree is subject to a tree preservation order.

The two large, mature London plane trees are in excess of 20m tall and have been managed by crown reduction. The trees are similar in size and form, they are co-dominant with asymmetric crowns and form one aerodynamic mass due to their close proximity. The trees appear to be in at least fair condition both structurally and physiologically. The stem of T1 is in contact with the rear elevation of no. 4 Doughty Mews.

Both trees significantly contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area and provide a high level of amenity to the public. Section 5.64 of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011 states that "*The mature trees across the Conservation Area are a valuable part of the streetscape and make a positive contribution to its character and appearance.*" The removal of the two plane trees would be harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The trees are highly visible from the public realm and are visible from Doughty Mews, Doughty Street, Northington Street and John's Mews, including from more than 200m away at the southern end of John's Mews.

London plane trees perform a valuable function of capturing airborne particulate matter with the downy underside of their leaves. 2016 is the most recent year for which an accurate air pollution model is available for mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} levels. This study shows that both Doughty Street and Doughty Mews fail the annual mean objective for NO₂ levels with between 43 and 46 microgrammes per cubic metre. The trees are less than 100m from a primary school.

A letter from a structural engineer was submitted with the notification. The second paragraph of the letter refers to investigations that are yet to be undertaken. The letter states that "... *we have not had access to carry out a detailed inspection of the rear wall of the Property and further investigations will need to be carried out in due course.*"

The same letter also states in section 12 that "*The arrangement and extent of the cracks on the wall of No.4 is generally unchanged from August 2017*". Section 17 states "*Formal monitoring of the cracks with tell-tails is required to determine if there is ongoing movement*". Section 22 states "*Trial pits should also be excavated to determine the extent and depth of root growth below the foundations on No.4, and possibly the adjacent properties.* These investigations are essential to accurately assessing the damage and its cause. This information could then inform design and/or engineering solutions to address the damage, which could allow for the trees to be retained. Solutions which involve the retention of the trees appear not to have been explored. No consideration appears to have been made for the impact of removing the trees on neighbouring properties, it is recommended that a full assessment of heave potential is undertaken.

The Council received in excess of seventy objections to the notification that shows there is considerable public interest in the trees and support for their retention.

It is recommended that further investigations are undertaken and solutions explored that allow for the trees to be retained. If further investigations show that the trees cannot reasonably be retained the Council may have to approve their removal.

It is recommended that a tree preservation order be served to protect the amenity the trees provide and the character and appearance of the conservation area.