

From: Christopher Traulsen
Sent: 28 April 2021 21:27
To: Planning
Subject: Tree removal application ref 2021/1598/T

Re application ref: 2021/1598/T
Contact: Tree Allocation

To whom it may concern:

The trees in question (2x Limes) and other plantings in the garden of 30 Lymington Road are owned by the freeholders of 30 Lymington Road collectively. The request to fell the trees was submitted without having obtained the consent of the freeholders, and I absolutely withhold my consent. I don't think anything further is required as the submitter has no legal basis for having requested to fell the trees without consent of the freeholders. However, I would note that the proposal was previously rejected under 2020/4088/T. That and this new submission appear to have been generated on the instruction of an insurance company anxious to go with the least costly solution for itself, largely by forcing the affected community to bear the costs of the lost trees instead.

My response to the previous application remains relevant here, though it is perhaps superfluous in light of the applicant lack of standing to make the application in the first place:

I write to object to the proposal to fell to the ground two lime trees at 30 Lymington Road, London NW6 1HY. I am the owner-occupier of Flat 3 at this address. I note that all my fellow freeholders share my objection to the removal of the trees, which appears to have been proposed at the direction of an insurance company without the approval or consent of any of the freeholders.

The proposal for removal is based on a finding that the trees may be the cause of subsidence recently experienced by the ground floor flat (Flat 1). While I am in favour of resolving the subsidence issue for what I hope are obvious reasons, no representations have been made that removing the trees in question will actually halt the subsidence, nor has any data been provided that would suggest this is the case or even that tree removal is better than other possible solutions. Indeed, if the cause of subsidence is shrinkage of the clay soil as it dries, I note that the trees have been here for many, many years, so the odds of them suddenly becoming a factor at this juncture are low—particularly in comparison to other potential factors, such as recent changes made to drainage around the property that might be depriving the soil of moisture. Further, it would appear that for any insurance company recommending the solution, tree removal is a low-cost option as opposed to, say, underpinning the foundation. There would therefore seem to be a clear economic motive on an insurer's behalf to try the low-cost solution instead of or before undertaking more extensive works.

The removal of the trees, while low-cost to the insurer, is not so to me (nor, as I gather, is it so to my fellow freeholders). The trees are of large size and provide an ample screen across the entire rear of the property. Without them, my view would be of a concrete playground, trains, and tower blocks. This screen is also increasing in value to me rapidly given the ongoing construction of additional blocks of flats on the 156 West End Lane site extending back through the former Wickes lumber yard.

I consider the trees extremely important to my well being. In addition to privacy, they provide a calming view, attract a wide array of birds in the spring and summer, and provide a wonderful soundscape with the wind rustling in their leaves. I also note that Lymington Road runs between two streets with extremely heavily vehicular traffic, Finchley Road and West

End Lane, and itself experiences heavy traffic as it is used as a cut-through between these two major arteries and attracts idling cars for school sports drop-offs at the cricket/tennis club. Given that trees of this scale help clean the air, removing them as an unproven, cost-saving solution to subsidence is seriously misguided as it ignores the value of cleaner air, the loss of which imposes a cost on the broader community. Unless there is clear evidence that (1) removing the trees will stop the subsidence and that (2) removing the trees will stop the subsidence with more certainty and for a greater duration than other possible remedies, then allowing their removal would simply amount to permitting insurers to attempt to lower their own costs by imposing a much larger one on neighbourhood residents—less privacy, less wildlife, and dirtier air chief among them.

In short, unless and until clear data is presented showing that the trees are the cause of the subsidence and that the subsidence cannot be at least as well addressed via other means, e.g. underpinning or adjusting site drainage, then their removal should not be allowed to go forward.

Kind regards,

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