The Heath & Hampstead Society

The Society examines all Notices of Intent for tree work relating to Hampstead and Hampstead Heath Fringes, and assesses them for their impact on the Conservation Areas, the local environment and building stability.

To London Borough of Camden, Tree Preservation Team

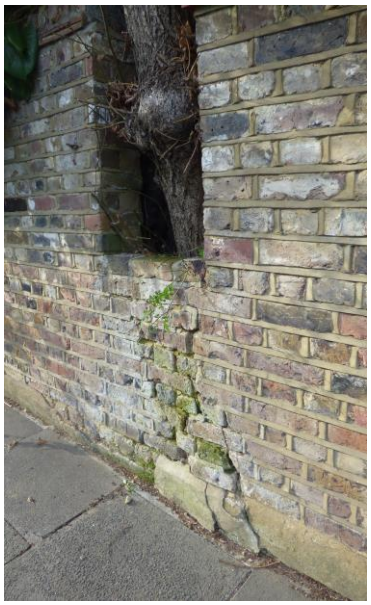
Planning Ref:	2022/0247/T
Address:	44 Denning Road London NW3 1SU
Case Officer:	Tree Allocation
Date:	5th February 2022

Dear Tree Officers,

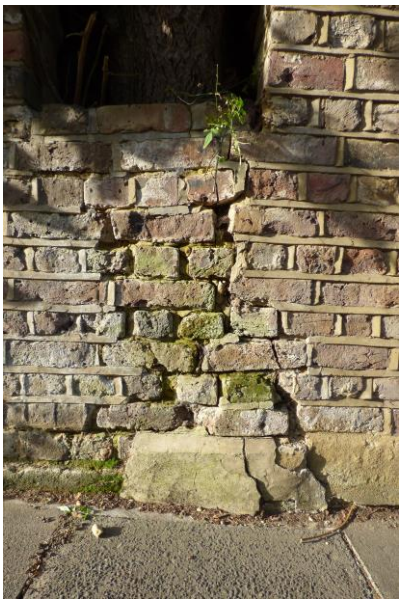
We are concerned about this Notice of Intent to fell 2 lime trees at this property fronting Pilgrims Lane.

We agree with the arboriculturalist that a structural engineer is required to determine the fate of the wall. The wall by T1 & T2 is in a pretty damp state, by T1 it is in a parlous state, partly due to inappropriate cementitious pointing that has allowed frost damage of the bricks. It requires a significant degree of re-building, though Street View indicates this has been present and little different since 2017 at least.

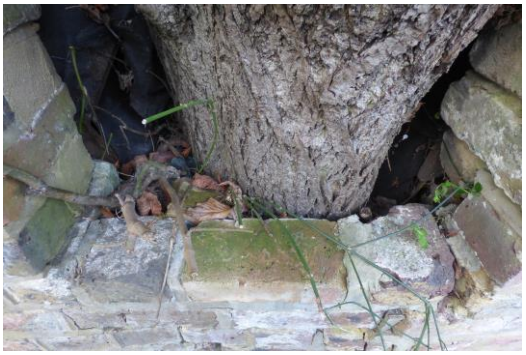
The wall has been pushed on for many years by both T1 & T2's expanding trunks. The wall in front of T1's lower trunk has been cut out and replaced with a one-brick width thick wall, while the wall was extended out in the past to go in front of (but too close to) T2, with a minimal lean outwards, considerably inside a lean-angle of concern. Photo 4 seems to indicate this length of angled wall that is one-brick *length* thick and built to 'contain' T2 has not moved since, but T2 is up against it. Since risk is not an immediate issue, we suggest there be no rush to fell the trees, but advice sought from a structural engineer (as suggested but which has apparently not yet occurred) regarding how the wall in front of T1 and T2 can be safely re-built and supported *with the trees retained*. This could be done with complete gaps where both T1 and T2 are to allow for the trees' future growth long term, and for a slight degree of trunk movement during strong winds. Low weep holes may be recommended to drain the damp soil behind. Retention of the Conservation Area character by re-using these bricks with appropriate mortar/pointing will also be essential.



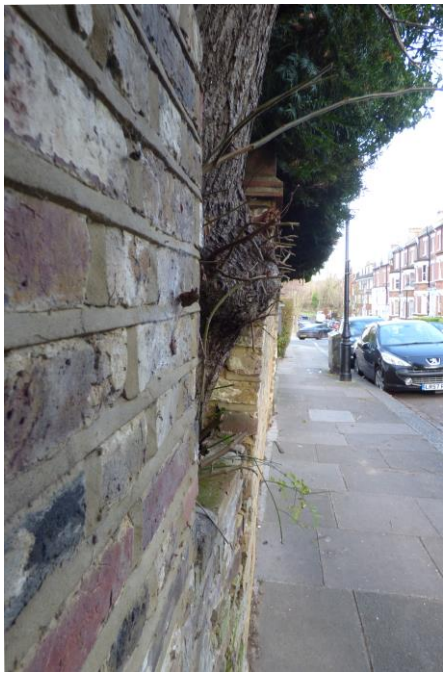
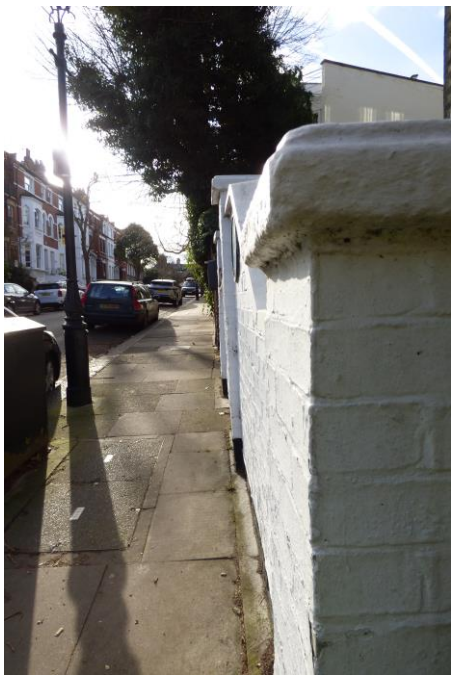
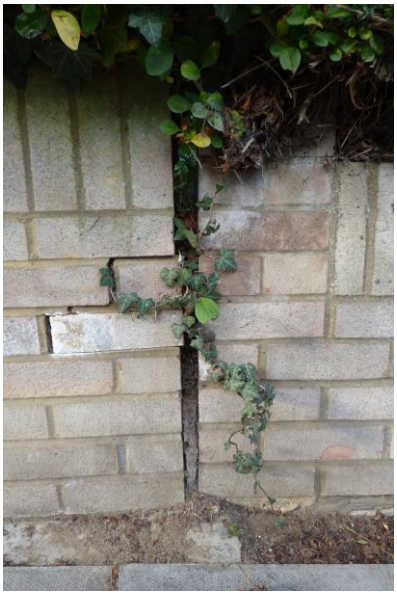
1: Wall in front of T1



2: Wall & cement pointing failure



3: Wall 1-brick width thick by T1

4: View down Pilgrims Ln from above T1 **5:** View up Pilgrims Ln from below T2 **6:** Movement joint in wall near corner

There is a history of building subsidence, roadway potholes and mains pipe failures in this immediate area, generally from silt erosion beneath the foundations of all three by the considerable amount of groundwater in the area. It also suffers from immensely soggy gardens at the lower SE end of Pilgrim's Lane which was originally fairly marshy. These lime trees are very much needed to assist towards mopping up this water and preventing heave.

T5 is by a lower more modern wall that is also cracking, its movement joints widening and showing signs of dropping a little at its corner at the Pilgrim's Lane with Denning Road intersection, in conjunction with cracking pavement and sagging of the roadway over a wider area. This wall is not built to withstand tree or ground movement though it had movement joints, now widened and showing some angulation.

I suggest all the factors operating here require consideration by a structural engineer when planning to rebuild the walls, but that these three trees with high public amenity – as well as the lime tree on the neighbouring property with a low, now cracking, wall built very close around it – should all be retained for the future.

Dr Vicki Harding, Society Tree Officer, Heath & Hampstead Society