

From: Louise Cole
Sent: 14 February 2023 11:29
To: Planning
Subject: TPO Application ref: 2023/0365 & 0366/T

Dear Sirs,

Application ref: 2023/0365 & 0366/T

I write with reference to the above application to fell an oak tree which is subject to a TPO at 45 Gondar Gardens NW6.

I am not resident at no 45 Gondar Gardens - but I am a resident of Gondar Gardens. This area is a pleasant and green area next to Hampstead Cemetery. One of the charms and features of the area is that it has old trees which support wildlife and makes the area desirable and pleasant to live in.

I have read the supporting documentation for the felling of the tree (which is subject to a TPO). I understand that the application has been made because subsidence has been affecting a neighbouring insured property.

The council will be aware that subsidence is affecting a large number of properties in the area. This is most notable at the block adjacent to the opening to the Gondar Gardens reservoir (well away from this issue) and also, for example, at the front of no.47 Gondar Gardens. As the engineering report submitted to you notes, properties in the area were built at the end of the 19th century and do not have what we would now be considered adequate foundations. My understanding is that subsidence is caused by movement when the clay shrinks - and this shrinkage is being exacerbated by climate change. Subsidence is a serious issue for the entire area and will require support and remedial measures other than felling trees. Felling trees will only degrade the area and run counter to Camden's tree preservation, urban forest protection and climate change policies.

The tree in question is a 150 (at least) year old oak tree - an existing and significant tree which is an important asset for the whole area. This is a mature tree with good canopy cover which will act as a bridge for wildlife and be a marker for bats (we have several bat species in the area). Mature trees are especially rich in biodiversity and the beneficial biodiversity aspects of this tree will not be replaced in the next century, even if other trees are planted in

its place (and even if these trees survive). It is now spring and birds are already seeking out nesting spots - this tree will support a substantial amount of nest and/or food for nesting birds, insects and possibly also for bats.

In addition, oaks are uniquely valuable - they are a haven for 2,300 wildlife species (326 depend on oaks for survival and 229 species are rarely found anywhere else). Allowing this tree to be felled will encourage other insurance companies and/or residents to apply to remove trees - the side of Gondar Gardens in question is relatively well wooded as it backs onto Hampstead Cemetery. Camden recognises that trees and vegetation are key components in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change. Trees not only drink water (the feature of trees which this application concentrates on) but are also valuable for screening sunlight, glare and the mitigation of air pollution. The ability of trees and vegetation to soak up and drink water also reduces the risk of water ingress and increases the ability of drains to take away excess water.

Properties affected by subsidence clearly deserve solutions and support. However, if one proposed solution itself causes other damage, surely there has to be a balancing exercise that takes everything into account, including the damage that would be caused by implementing the proposed solution. I do not believe that felling a 150 year old oak is a proportionate response to the subsidence, especially as I note from the engineers reports that alternative measures could be taken (albeit at more expense). If the oak were to be felled, then the wider damage to the environment and ecology of the surrounding area as a whole would be substantial, and this destruction of what is (especially in the current environmental circumstances) a significant public amenity that could not be replaced within the lifespan of anyone affected, would seem somewhat unreasonable. I would therefore encourage the council to ask for continued monitoring and to encourage the insurance company to explore all other options open to it.

Louise Cole