

Arboricultural Statement		Prepared by:	Hal Appleyard Dip. Arb(RFS), F. Arbor.A MICFor
Project:	179-181 High Street, Hampton Hill	Produced for:	Clive Chapman Architects
Date: 6th July 2017	Ref: ha/an1/179-181hh		
Planning Ref:			

1.0 Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 A planning application for the redevelopment of 179-181 High Street Hampton Hill is under consideration by London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council. An arboricultural report has been prepared by Challice Consulting in association with the proposed development. The Council's tree preservation officer has raised objections to the proposal upon the grounds that a group of Sycamore trees may become under pressure for removal following occupancy of the residential element of the scheme. The Sycamore trees are protected by an area tree preservation order dated September 2014.
- 1.2 I have been requested to inspect the trees and site and to review the scheme, with particular focus upon the potential implications from the proposal upon the protected Sycamore trees.
- 1.3 I visited the site on 28th June 2017 and viewed the trees from neighbouring land.

2.0 The Site and Trees

- 2.1 The site faces the Hampton Hill High Street and is adjoined to the rear (west and south) by car parking areas including for the flats in Taylor Close. Commercial units are located to the north of the site. The development site supports several trees and small tree groups including Hazel, Holly, Ash and Sycamore. A young Eucalyptus and an Apple tree also grow within the site. With reference to the existing report, the quality of the trees is mediocre and poor and all trees are graded 'C' 'Trees of low quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 10 years, or young trees with a stem diameter below 150mm'¹. The Council has raised no objections to the tree data.
- 2.2 It is not uncommon for Council's to issue an area tree preservation order (TPO) in the first instance, if the Council deems trees of amenity value are under threat from removal. An area TPO protects all the trees (of any species) within a line (often the boundaries of a site), shown on the TPO plan. The area TPO will protect all the trees within that line, which are growing at the time.

- 2.3 I understand that the proposed removal of selected trees, is not in dispute, rather that the retained trees are at a high risk of being lost because of their proximity to the rear of the proposed building and their dominance over the communal amenity space.

3.0 Implications of new development upon retained trees

- 3.1 The Council's position relating to the proposal and the retained trees is reported to be:

'...the relationship between the retained trees and the residential units will not be sustainable; the trees have yet to reach a mature size, and the largest (Sycamore) will most likely be seen as overbearing by anyone occupying the neighbouring property.' Email from Craig Ruddick Tree Officer for Richmond, dated 10th May 2017.

- 3.2 It is to be recognised that the above concern is subjective. There are as many people who welcome the benefits that trees provide as there are those who find them an inconvenience. I have set out an example of this later in this document. The proposed designs have been developed to incorporate the trees of highest public visibility and contribution to the local landscape. The TPO affords legal protection to the trees as the Council recognises that '...These trees [Sycamores] are essential in softening a heavily urbanised landscape...'. There is no dispute that the trees are effective in the landscape and the TPO will be effective in protecting the trees from removal in the future. It is clear that the public amenity the trees provide outweighs any potential inconvenience caused to residents from dappled shade or from leaf litter. The Council feels that it would not be able to resist pressure to remove the trees but I disagree. Any calls for their removal or heavy pruning that might jeopardise their contribution to the landscape can be and would be justifiably refused. Given that impact upon amenity is the primary test for a Planning Inspector assessing an appeal against a Council's decision to refuse tree felling, the prospects for a successful appeal decision (for the applicant) in this case, are extremely remote in my view.
- 3.3 The trees will be within communal ownership and there will be no single person who will be able to exercise a right to remove the trees. There would need to be a collective agreement from the residents and any landlord to remove the trees, even if the Council or and Inspector were to agree to their removal, an outcome which in my view is extremely remote.
- 3.4 It is to be recognised that pruning trees within the urban context is common place and normal and it would not be unreasonable for example, to apply for and to permit some tree pruning work. Pruning to raise the canopies by removing the lowest branches for example from over the parking areas for neighbouring flats, would be entirely justifiable, irrespective of the proposed development. Such work,

coupled with canopy thinning to reduce density and increase light permeability, would of course be normal tree pruning work, to which I am confident the Council would raise no objection (see Fig. 1 below).

Fig. 1 Pruning of the trees is reasonable irrespective of development (over-hanging the car parking area)



- 3.5 The trees in question (below in Fig. 2) are formed of dense canopies with many branches and shoots. Pruning trees with type of canopy cover can be carried out readily without creating poorly-formed trees or inflicting large pruning wounds, which can be harmful. The Council would be in a position to agree to pruning but not complete removal.



Fig 2.

Protected Sycamore trees can be pruned without causing harm or disfigurement

- 3.6 It is important to recognise that whilst the trees are to be preserved for the benefit of public views and the landscape in general, but the views of residents looking out on to trees is of course to be valued also. It has already been established by the serving of the TPO and it is recognised that the trees are essential in softening the heavily urbanised landscape. To this end, it is more likely in my view, that new residents will prefer to; i) be secluded from public views by the trees and ii) prefer to look out onto trees rather than onto the heavily urbanised landscape of the car park and red brick-built structures within Taylor Close. Fig 3 below, provides an insight into the type of landscape that would be seen if the trees were not in place.

Fig. 3. View from rear of 179-181 High Street Hampton Hill



- 3.7 Whilst it is true that the area immediately beneath the canopies of the trees would be shaded at ground level, there is no residential accommodation proposed at this level. The residential areas, facing west are located at first floor level and set back from the trees by 10-13m. I am not confident that calls for tree removal or heavy pruning/disfiguring pruning would be justified, bearing in mind their contribution to amenity and landscape softening in this urbanised location.
- 3.8 Returning briefly to my first point that the relationship between trees and residents in their proximity is a subjective one, I note that immediately opposite the rear of the site (within Taylor Close) that trees have successfully attained their mature dimensions, with relatively little intervention (tree pruning). Fig. 4 below, shows the mature trees, which are positioned approximately 6m from the flats and the canopies are closer, at 3-4m. This is a demonstration that trees and people can co-exist harmoniously and to the benefit of both residents and the wider public.

Fig. 4 View of trees and their relationship to existing residential apartments in Taylor Close



Fig. 5 The canopies of the trees have been raised, which allows more light to penetrate to ground level. None of the trees has suffered from the limited pruning work.



- 3.9 Finally, rather than conflict with the relevant planning policy, the designs have complied with the aims and reflected the requirements within its contents. DM DC 4 is the relevant local planning policy.

Policy DM DC 4

Trees and Landscape

The boroughs trees and landscape will be protected and enhanced by:

The use of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) where appropriate;

Planting and encouraging others to plant trees, clumps and thickets particularly in areas of deficiency as shown on the Proposals Map and of a type and species as set out in the Borough's Tree Strategy;

continuing to maintain trees in streets and public open spaces and of selectively clearing and replanting trees;

requiring landscape proposals in submissions for new development, which retain existing trees and other important landscape features where practicable and include new trees and other planting. Where trees are removed, appropriate replacement planting will normally be required. **There will be a presumption against schemes that result in a significant loss of trees, unless replacements are proposed** and there is good reason such as the health of the trees, public amenity, street scene or restoration of an historic garden. Landscaping schemes should take account of the Borough's Tree Strategy.

- 3.10 I have emboldened the relevant parts of the policy in respect of this proposal. It is accepted that the proposed loss of trees is acceptable because these are not of high public visibility or landscape contribution. However, the trees to be retained are important landscape features, as we have outlined above. To further comply with the policy, two new trees are proposed to be planted in a location of very high public prominence in the High Street (within the demise of the development site). This is a positive contribution to the landscape and to the public, which is a direct result of the development.

- 3.11 The policy 7.21 of the London Plan is replicated below:

Policy 7.21 Trees and woodlands

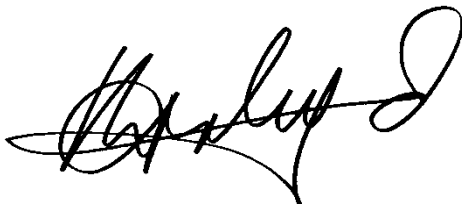
Strategic

A Trees and woodlands should be protected, maintained, and enhanced, following the guidance of the London Tree and Woodland Framework (or any successor strategy). In collaboration with the Forestry Commission the Mayor will produce supplementary guidance on Tree Strategies to guide each borough's production of a Tree Strategy covering the audit, protection, planting and management of trees and woodland. This should be linked to the borough's Open Space Strategy.

- 3.12 The proposal is clearly in line with this policy for the same reasons as it complies with the local plan policy.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 4.1 To summarise, it is my opinion that whilst it is accepted that shade will be cast over the ground and leaves and tree debris will fall to the ground annually, this will occur in a communal area, which is not designed for amenity space. The residential outlook and aspect of the development is set back at first floor level at approximately 10-13m separation from the trees.
- 4.2 The prospects for calls for their removal are extremely remote in my view, owing to the heavily urbanised views, which would be exposed were the trees to be felled. All tree work would be in control not only of the Local Planning authority but also by the management committee and/or landlord. No single individual would be able to gain the ability to remove or heavily prune the trees. Any calls for their removal or disfiguring pruning could be and would be justifiably rejected. I am confident that owing to the prominence in the landscape and the function the trees perform, that together these far outweigh any potential inconvenience resulting from shade or leaf litter. In this, an appeal made to the Planning Inspectorate, would almost certainly fail in this case.
- 4.3 Pruning the trees would normally be acceptable and which could be readily controlled by the Council. The trees and location could be improved by some pruning work, which is normal in the urban setting.
- 4.4 With reference to the above, I conclude that the implications upon the retained trees from the development are that some pruning may result but no so much that would be of detriment of detriment to the landscape. In addition, the development provides new trees in a highly prominent location to the benefit of the landscape and public.



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1. BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – recommendations'