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Jane Crowther  
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Twickenham  
TW1 3BZ

19 December 2018

Our ref: SJA ltr 18041-01

Dear Jane

**Ref.: Kew Riverside, Melliss Avenue, Kew**

I am writing in regard to trees considered for retention or removal at Melliss Avenue, Kew to facilitate development of the Kew Riverside site. This document outlines the reasons why retention of the belt of fastigiata oaks (*Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata Koster') along the western site boundary is inappropriate for re-development of this site generally and why their removal, together with carefully considered replacement planting, will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the area.

A pre-development tree survey (in line with British Standard BS 5837:2012) was carried out by SJA trees at this site on 14 February 2018 to assess the dimensions, condition, quality and value of all trees on or abutting the site, and this oak belt is listed as group G5 in the resulting survey schedule (SJA tss 18041-01d) and tree locations plan (SJA TL 18041-01a).

These oaks were not assessed as high quality due to the significant and permanent restrictions to their rooting environment (specifically the 1.5m level change down to Melliss Avenue, which is within 1m of most trunks, and the road itself), in particular the inferred shape and position of their structural root plates. As there are unlikely to be any roots growing more than 1m to the west, both tensile and compressive anchorage will be limited to soil to the east of the trees, i.e. only half of the radial area around the tree (the retaining wall is unlikely to support root anchorage as it is made of rotting wooden beams and, where the beams are absent, no substantial rooting activity was observed). Given that these trees are drawn up by their nature, it would be reasonable to assume these trees have a reduced ability to accommodate the lever effect of wind drag and that this imbalance will only increase as the trees gain height. Therefore, their potential (a critical element of categorisation in British Standard BS 5837:2012) would be limited. It is worth noting that one tree has already been lost (though for unknown reasons).

Moreover, these trees are not (as individuals or a group) considered to be “particularly good examples of their species” (cf. Table 1 of the British Standard BS 5837:2012), nor do they have notable conservation, historical or other cultural value. Their landscape value is their greatest quality, but although they do attract a higher collective categorisation than they would as individuals, they are not of “particular visual importance” and do not make a significant “visual contribution to the wider locality”, as they are only visible from the immediately adjacent apartment blocks. They are screened in all views from the public right of way along the river, and from most of Melliss Avenue itself by the nearby taller buildings. As a long belt of uniformly-planted, even-aged trees, they are not in keeping either with the mixed vegetation along the river, which is highly variable in terms of species, age class and size, nor with other ornamental planting along Melliss Avenue and nearby roads, which is also species-rich and generally widely-spaced comprising smaller ornamental specimens and large shrubs.

In the context of other trees on the site, the mature horse chestnuts and semi-mature tree cover along the eastern site boundary, which overtop a public footpath and are readily visible in long-range views across the River Thames, show considerably higher amenity, landscape and habitat values than the smaller, uniform oaks along the western boundary. Proposed buildings, car parking and underground services should therefore avoid the eastern section of the site (as per the proposals), but if the oak belt was retained, its shadow pattern and rooting area would create significant constraints on re-development in the western section of the site.

Finally, and most importantly, these trees were planted for a single purpose, in a specific context, namely to screen the disused Thames Water facilities from the surrounding residential properties. They were not planted as specimen trees or as a street tree avenue, but rather as a high hedge in effect. This planting history is underscored by their position on the apex of a large earthen bund surrounding the site and extending up to 18m into the site interior, constructed to minimise contamination of the surrounding land in the event of leakage from the former sewer plant or biethane reactors. Any change of use for this site would likely require soil remediation and removal of this bund, particularly as any proposed access to the site will be restricted to the western site boundary (existing access is at the south-west corner).

Following re-development of the site, their value as screening will be redundant and, subject to appropriate architecture and landscaping on the site, the visual amenity of this area would not be reduced (indeed, could be improved).

Yours sincerely,

*SJA trees*

**Simon Jones Associates**