Arboricultural and Woodland Consultants

Quaife Woodlands

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26th March, 2011

Our Ref: AR/2477/jq

Mr A. Collinson,
New World Designers,
727 London Road,
Westcliffe-on-Sea,
Essex.
SS0 9ST

Arboricultural Statement at Shangri-La Cattery, Lower Road, Hockley, Essex

Dear Mr Collinson,

Thank you for your instructions issued on behalf of the owner of the site above. The planning application made to Rochford District Council (reference 10/00324/FULL) was refused consent and you have asked that I consider the grounds stated in Reason for Refusal 2, which I have reproduced below.

> 2. *The application lacks an Arboricultural assessment with sufficient information to demonstrate that the impact that the development, which has already been part implemented, would have upon the longevity of the trees within and immediately surrounding the application site.*

I visited the site on the 10th March when you recounted the recent history of the site in respect of the cattery building to the west of the dwelling. I gather there was an intervening fire and the building was reconstructed *circa* 2007/8. I have attached Appendix A which has two aerial photographs of the site from Bing Maps and Google Maps, which although undated show the site at different stages.

The two plans at Appendix A show the existing and proposed layouts area extracts from New World Designers drawing number 2219/3/31 (sheet 6 of 7) dated February 2011. The existing layout shows the Oak **1** within the building, but this part has now changed. In the proposed layout the existing building footprint has actually remained the same and the only difference is in respect of the Oak **1**. Previously this was (unusually) enclosed within the building with a cut-out in the roof for the stem to protrude through. The roof and outer walls have now been removed and the tree is now "external" to the building as shown in Photograph 1 at Appendix A. The concrete floor remains and the tree is within a small raised bed with a brick retaining wall of just two courses and the tree is in satisfactory condition.

In terms of tree protection in accordance with British Standard 5837:2005, Trees in relation to construction – Recommendations, the situation is one where the footprint of the building exists and consequently one cannot specify protection in the normal way.

The western flank wall of the building is along the boundary and I understand that it will not be altered. The trees on the neighbouring ground to the west are shown in Photograph 2 at Appendix A and they may well have been adversely affected by the original construction, but with the passage of 3 or 4 years they have clearly adapted. They appear to be in satisfactory condition and the proposed changes to the building will not affect them.

However, severe effects of root damage can take several years to manifest themselves, and although the trees appear to have adapted, should their condition decline in respect of the building (as opposed to disease or other effects) then remedial action may be necessary. The ground was clean of low vegetation at my visit, but as it was in the first half of March this is not unexpected, however the only effective restorative action would be to cover the ground under the crowns of the ailing trees with woodchip mulch. This should be laid at a depth not exceeding 100 millimetres. Whereas one might also consider ground decompaction in these circumstances, with reference to the Geological Survey Drift Map, Sheet 258/259, Southend and Foulness, the site is situated on London Clay. Decompaction of this soil type is rarely effective and should it be necessary best results would be achieved with mulching.

The trees to the rear of the main building will if anything have their growing conditions improved slightly by the alteration to the hard surfacing, but these trees are internal to the site and have little or no public presence. They are not worthy of a tree preservation order and although the intention is to retain them, if they were to be removed the impact upon the landscape would be indiscernible. The line of Cypresses will be retained and will not be affected by the proposal.

The Oak **2** by the road frontage is in poor condition and I suspect that the work done around it to build the retaining wall and the nearby hard surfacing has been detrimental; particularly as the root distribution is likely to be eccentric into the site due to the road. I note that the proposal drawing shows the car parking spaces further back from the tree and the surfacing between this edge and the road frontage (shaded in yellow at Appendix A) should be considered for landscape planting. The zone shown hatched in yellow at Appendix A should be mulched once the ground is cleared and restored to the original level. This will help the tree to recover. However, if the tree is in terminal decline then it should be replaced with another Oak.

The Oak **3** on the western boundary (foreground of Photograph 2 and left in Photograph 3 at Appendix A) has had the paving taken up to the north-east and this is to be kept open as an herbaceous bed. The tree does have some dead wood, but shoot extension is normal and it appears to have adapted. As with the trees on neighbouring ground, if the condition of this tree should decline then mulching would be beneficial. The mulching would need to be on the neighbouring ground but I would anticipate agreement by the owner because it would be beneficial to the adjacent Oak to the south-west.

Where I have suggested that existing surfacing should be taken up in proximity to trees the method set out at at the foot of this letter should be employed.

In summary the protection of trees is a matter of prevention of impact damage by erecting free-standing guards (i.e. not in contact with or supported by the tree) around stems that are vulnerable, and using the method at the foot of this letter where surfacing under the crowns may be taken up. Specific advice should be taken with the alteration of the ground levels around the roadside Oak **2**.

In addition the condition of the trees should be monitored and if any decline is seen the arboricultural advice should be sought. The monitoring should be observation of the foliage colour, density and size of the subject trees. This should be established with photographs taken in the first week of April and maintained by photographs taken every following month, preferably from the same positions (marked on a plan and with accurate location measurements) and in similar light.

In conclusion, the construction work that has taken place to date is likely to have adversely affected the trees, but their condition is currently satisfactory. This is likely to have come about due to a tree's ability to adapt to non-catastrophic stress whether physical or physiological. It may be that the full impact of the works has yet to manifest itself and in those circumstances I have recommended remedial action.

I must emphasise the importance of keeping a photographic record of the trees and in the event that any differences in foliage condition are seen, arboricultural advice is sought from the Council or privately. (Please note that emerging leaves are paler than mature leaves and darkening in late spring is normal.)

With my recommendations adopted the long-term well-being of the subject trees is safeguarded. Should there be any further queries please direct them to me.

Yours sincerely,

J. Quaife
AA Registered Consultant
Dip.Arb.(RFS), F.Arbor.A, CEnv

Attachment: Appendix A, plan and photographs (one page A3)

Method Statement for the uptake of hard surfacing and buildings near to trees

[RPA refers to the Root Protection Area as specified in the Report, derived from paragraph 5.2.2 and Table 2 of BS5837:2005]

1. The uptake of the existing surfacing and buildings should be carried out from outside the RPA whenever possible and from within the footprint of the existing surfacing or building where within the RPA of a tree.

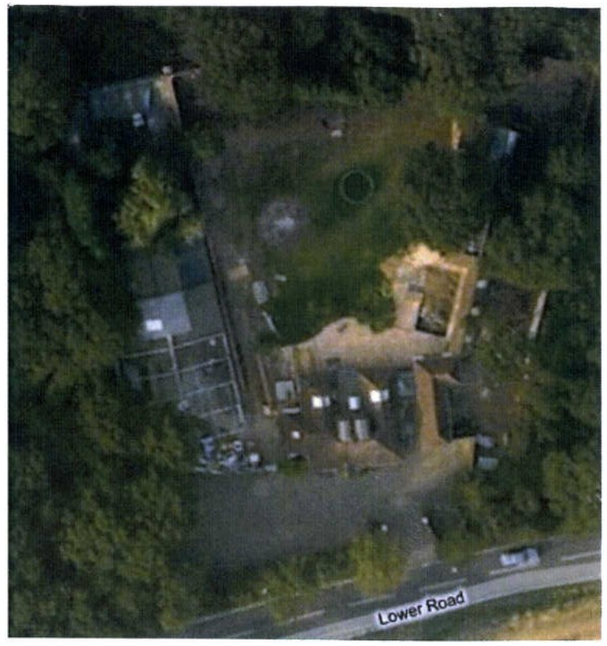
2. The excavation of the material must not extend into the soil underneath. In practical terms the bucket of the excavator must be used so that the teeth are horizontal so that any disturbance of the underlying soil is kept to an absolute minimum. Where the surfacing is very thin and/or roots are very near the surface, the digging should be done manually.

3. The rubble must not be stockpiled within the RPA of the tree and must be exported without crossing the RPA.

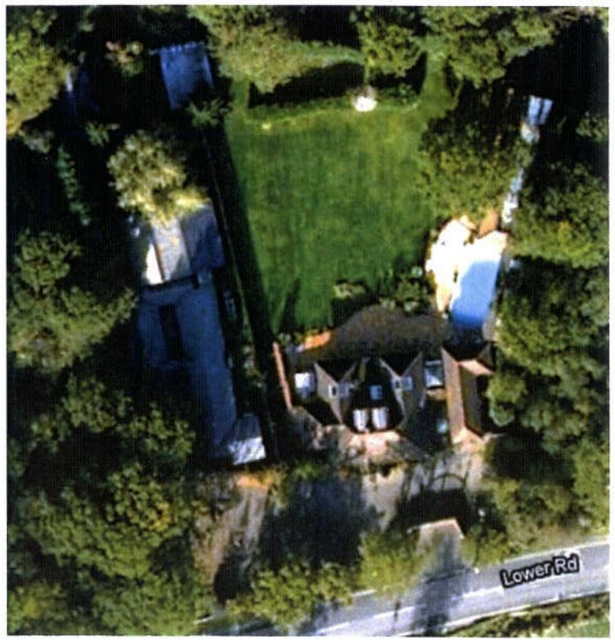
4. Due care and planning must be taken to ensure that the operational arcs of excavators do not damage the crowns of retained trees.

5. Where new surfacing is to be installed, if the depth of the old surface is insufficient, the wearing surface may need to be higher than existing in order to accommodate the appropriate thickness. There may be a requirement for a geo-textile membrane to be laid on the soil surface, but this is an engineering matter dependent upon soil type. The separation is beneficial for root development.

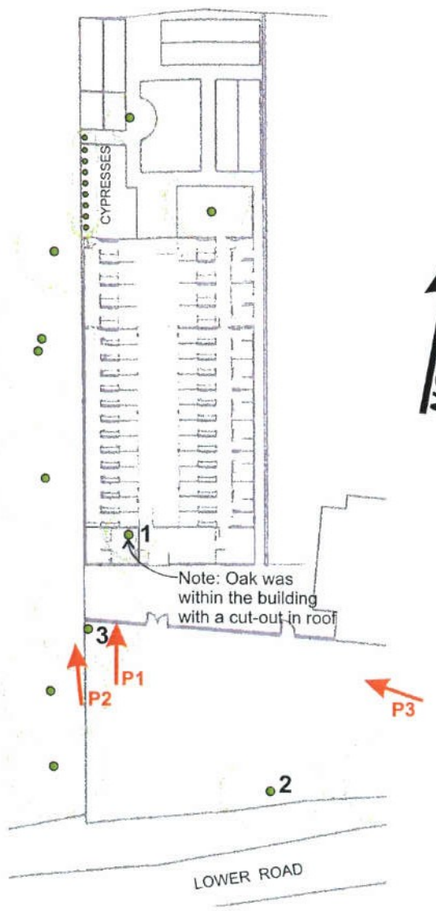
6. Where the old surface is taken up and not replaced, the infill should be of good quality topsoil laid without compaction.



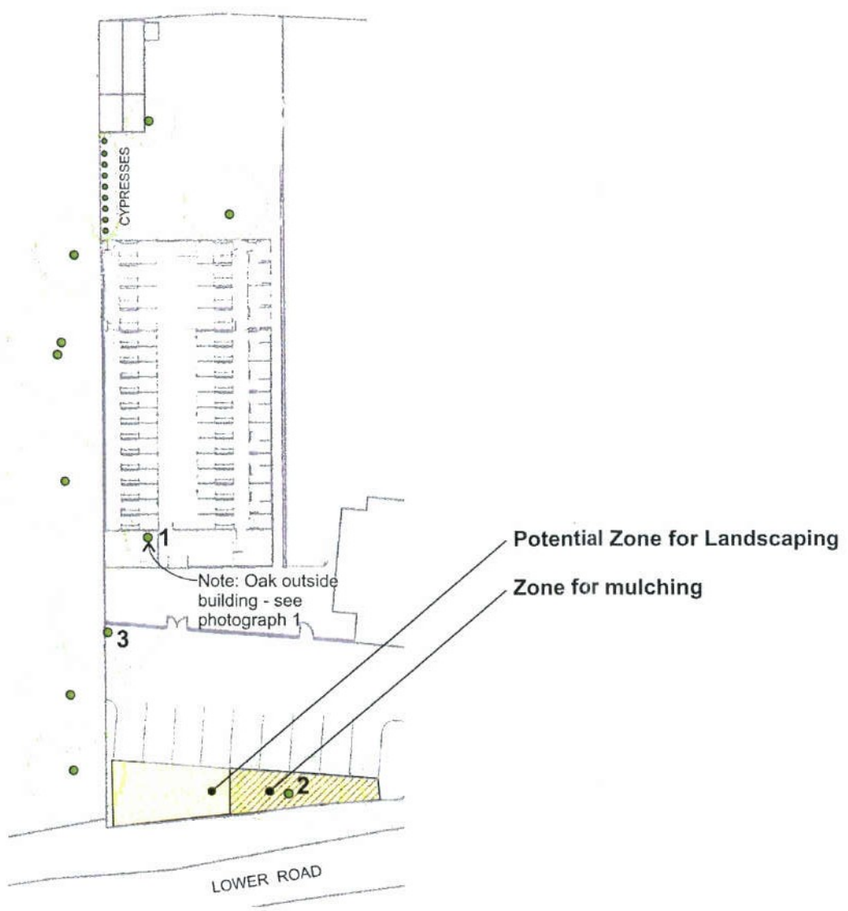
Bing Maps



Google Maps



Existing Layout



Proposed Layout

Appendix A

Photograph 1. View of Oak now external to the building

Photograph 2. View looking northwards along the western boundary (taken by leaning over the fence)

Photograph 3. View across the front of the cattery looking to the north-west

Quaife Woodlands **Arboricultural Survey AR/2477/jq**

Shangri-La Cattery, Lower Road, Hockley, Essex

Site Plans - Existing and Proposed Layouts
with subject trees and photographs

NOT TO SCALE 26th March 2011