

Sunnybank
King Street
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 1LA



Nicola Price
Sunnybank
King Street
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 1LA

15th May 2023

Flintshire County Council
Chief Officer - Mr Andrew Farrow
(Planning, Environment & Economy)
County Hall
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 6NR

Re: Objection to Tree Preservation Order No. 345 (2023)

Following advice given by the Forestry Officer representing Flintshire County Council, to investigate concerns of safety and structural damage caused by two Corsican Pines to the Grade II listed building of Sunnybank, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 1LA. Professional Arborist(s) and a Structural Engineer conducted site visits and inspections at a considerable cost and their findings are detailed below.

Overview:

Sunnybank (privately owned) is an Edwardian Grade II listed property built in 1910 and of importance in amenity and significance to the local area. The property is in danger of structural damage being caused by close proximity of two large trees and needs to be saved, preserved and protected on an urgent basis for now and future generations.

Edwardian homes are typically built on shallow foundations making them vulnerable to ground movement caused by large tree growth in close proximity to the building.

There are two large Corsican Pines in the grounds of the property (front garden), which are in close proximity to the property (house) and roadside border. The height of the trees is approximately 60 feet (18.29m) with a trunk and branch weight of approximately 20 ton per tree. The height of the property is approximately 39 feet (12m), with an approx. distance of 20 feet (6m) from tree to house.

There is only one vehicle entrance (driveway to the property) which means all vehicle movement is driving over the shallow tree roots. The tree roots have become more evident in the past ten years breaking through the driveway creating large, raised areas (bumpy surface), visible on all parts of the driveway (loose gravel, tarmac and pathway) - the driveway was originally flat.

Structural Engineer

A structural engineer who conducted an inspection of the property advised that pressure is being applied upwards beneath the foundations and floor at the south west corner of the property – most common being related to the physical presence of tree roots – the larger the tree, the greater the zone of influence the root system will have on adjacent land, buildings and drainage systems with the two large Corsican Pines within close proximity would appear to be the most likely cause of the structural problem evident.

Structural damage to property - During the inspection it was noted that there is significant cracking to the internal, original featured Edwardian tiled windowsills, this cracking profile corresponds to diagonal cracking to the mortar joints within the external brickwork. It was also noted that the opening window (original single glazed window) within this room no longer sits square (right) within its frame and has had to be temporarily repaired (sealed shut) to protect against further movement/structural damage.

The floor of the 'Turret' room, consists of the original parkay (wood block) flooring, which looks to be in good condition, but when applying a spirit level to the floor surface it is apparent that the floor slopes up (lifting up) to the south west corner. It was also noted that the original tiled windowsills appear to be following the same profile, with the south west corner being higher than the rest of the sill structure.

Arborist Advice

Four independent Arborists have visited Sunnybank to evaluate the trees and assess the impact on the property. With a report submitted to Flintshire County Council including a risk assessment to the property. In summary it was considered that the trees present a risk to the property with signs of existing structural damage.

It has been suggested by the Forestry Officer of Flintshire County Council that the trees could be reduced in height to mitigate the risk of further structural damage and subsidence to the building. This option is not viable and short-sighted as the percentage of canopy reduction that would be required to sufficiently reduce the risk would leave the trees with very little live growth for *long term survival*. This would also remove the majority of the amenity value currently provided by the trees to the local area.

The only option that sufficiently reduces the risk of tree limb failure and further structural damage to the property is to fell both trees to ground level. This option will enable me, as the owner of Sunnybank to commit to reparative structural building repairs and safeguard the property.

While it is unfortunate that felling to ground level is the only option to preserve the long-term integrity of this Grade II listed property, the amenity and historical value should be taken into account when considering this application for tree work inside a conservation area.

Pine trees in general have shallow rooting habits which is particularly relevant in this case as they tend to use a large proportion of the available water in the upper sections of the water table, which can contribute to subsidence related damage to buildings. Pines have a deep tap root with a much shallower root system, the roots can be double the length of the tree. These shallow pine tree root systems can be 12 inches or less underneath the grounds surface.

Even if the pine tree root structure was not close enough to the property to damage the foundation, which they are, the trees still present a threat to the property and surrounding public areas.

Builders

Two builders who visited the property to quote for repair to the windowsill have confirmed structural damage due to tree root activity. Roots are pushing the windowsill upwards. I can confirm that these structural cracks were not apparent when I first moved into the property in 2005 (see images)

Risks

The arborist reported the tree closest to the property has a lean towards the property with multiple trunks and has a codominant stem union at approximately 8m high which is likely to be structurally weak due to the substantial amount of included bark within the union. The weakness of this union means the tree is susceptible to major limb failure during the events of high winds, heavy rain, snow, ice and storms. In March 2013 a large limb fell leaving one precariously hanging (see images)

Climate Changes

With the ever-changing climate conditions of drier/hotter summers, rainier winters, strong and random storms, strong winds: tornado/funnel clouds, this compounds concern of safety to road users, public, residents and the Grade II listed building.

Conservation Officer

A visit made to the property by Mr. Chris Rees-Jones, Conservation Officer on 28th April 2023 accompanied by the Forestry Officer, Mr Stuart Body. Mr. Chris Rees-Jones said that he would share information on the situation with Mr. Terry Parry (Consultant Engineer, Earl Road Mold) and would follow up with advice on additional assistance about funding support which could be granted. No advice or details of assistance has been received to date.

Forestry Officer

Mr Stuart Body, who was adamant that the Corsican Pine trees take priority over the Grade II listed building and that there was no point in obtaining any further advice from Arborists as his decision is that the trees are the most important aspect to protect for local amenity value. Forestry Officer Mr. Stuart Body has stated, *"the trees are a prominent and attractive feature of amenity within the conservation area which are clearly visible from King Street and complement the other trees in the locality"*. Mr. Stuart Body had no regard for the urgent need to protect and preserve the Grade II listed building only having concerns for preserving the trees at any cost to the Grade II listed building, believing that the Grade II listed building is secondary to the trees.

Insurance

With known structural damage to the Grade II Listed property, caused by the Corsican Pine roots, if these are left in situ, this places an even bigger issue in obtaining insurance cover for / and protecting the Grade II listed property. Insurance specialist advice is they *will not insure* for accidental damage to a property with trees over 10m in height and within 10m of the property.

Consideration

I too am passionate and believe in sustainability and protecting our environment. I ask for approval to remove the two Corsican Pines which are not suitable for a town centre property, allowing me to look at a replanting scheme of suitable tree species such as a more visual native broadleaf tree, Wild Cherry, Wild Service tree, or even Hornbeam that would not only offer local amenity but also be in proportion and not a threat to the Grade II listed building, both future protecting the property and maintaining local amenity, public safety.

Liability

I have raised concerns to Flintshire County Council (Forestry Officer) on multiple occasions of the potential danger of the trees in question falling and the safety to road users, public, residents and the Grade II listed building. Recently a large neighbouring tree (adjacent to the trees in question at Sunnybank – see images) fell onto the public highway causing significant road closure resulting in a major clean-up operation conducted by FCC. Amazingly on this occasion there was no injury or fatalities caused to motorist, public or buildings. However, there was structural damage caused to the garden wall of Sunnybank. As property owner, I have done my very best by raising and presenting the concern of dangers that the trees in question present to the public and to the Grade II listed building (Sunnybank) which includes a neighbouring Grade II listed building. These concerns have been dismissed with the decision making of the Forestry Officer (Mr. Stuart Body) in maintaining that the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) remains in place based on the one sided view of the Forestry Officer who places tree preservation (on the grounds of amenity) over the risks and dangers to the public and to a Grade II listed building(s) with no care or interest in protecting or preserving the Grade II listed building(s).

Therefore, I now place full responsibility of any incident of the considered dangerous trees onto Flintshire County Council.

In addition, I have engaged with members of the Welsh Government, Local Councillors and Government Bodies listed below to raise concern of the risk and danger to human life and to the Grade II listed building(s) and to report the one-sided view from Flintshire County Council, Forestry Officer who is adamant that the trees in question are the priority not the Grade II listed building(s).

- Hannah Blythyn MS/AS - (Deputy Minister for Social Partnership) Welsh Government
- Rob Roberts - Independent MP for Delyn
- Matt Sprake – Senior Case Worker for Rob Roberts MP
- Councillor Chris Bithell
- Councillor Tina Claydon
- CADW – Welsh Government (protecting historic buildings & structures)
- Planning Aid Wales

Some of whom will be contacting Flintshire County Council directly to question the Tree Preservation Order and the risks, dangers and issues surrounding the matter of public safety and the preservation of a Grade II listed building.

I respectfully request that Flintshire County Council reconsider the placement of a Tree Preservation Order on the trees in question at Sunnybank, King Street, Mold, assessing the information provided within this letter of objection against the decision made.

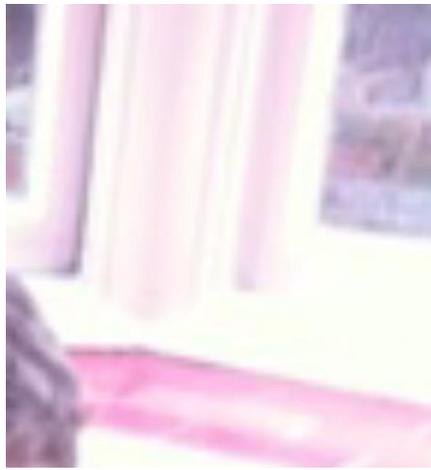
Sincerely, **Ms. Nicola Price**

Damage on King Street roadside/outside Sunnybank following neighbouring tree fall Nov 2021



Image of Sunnybank with the pines in their earlier years

FEBRUARY 2012



May 2023



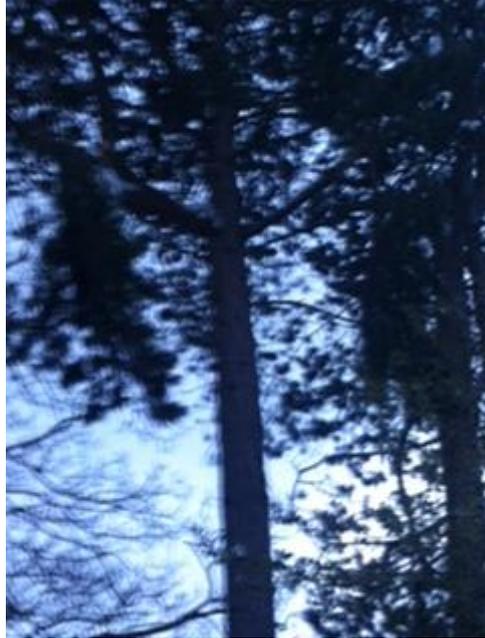
February 2012

Images of turret room where the Edwardian windowsill tiles *are not cracked or lifting*

May 2023

Images of turret room with *cracks and lifting of Edwardian tiles and windowsill*

- Tape measure sits on a **higher** elevation (left side of crack in windowsill)
- Tape measure slopes on crack due to lifting
- Tape measure sits on **lower** elevation (right side of crack)
- Windowsill movement in the sill (lift/drop)



March 2013 – following snow one large limb fell onto the driveway leaving another limb precariously hanging at height