

Planning Officer's Report - LDCA APRIL 2023

APPLICATION	2023/11 – Proposed Tree Topping
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Permission in Full
REGISTERED	9 th March 2023
APPLICANT	W.A Thorpe & Sons
PARCEL	JT100048
ZONE	Intermediate Zone
CONSERVATION AREA	Jamestown Conservation Area
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Independent Newspaper on 10th March 2023▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	24 th March 2023
REPRESENTATIONS	None Received
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1. Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2. Energy Division	No Objection
3. Fire & Rescue	No Response
4. Roads Section	No Objection
5. Property Division	No Objection
6. Environmental Management	No Response
7. Public Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	Not Consulted
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	Not Consulted
11. Sustainable Development	No Response
12. National Trust	No Objection
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection - Numerous telephone drop wires in the area that will need lowering to allow

tree topping.

Please contact Sure South Atlantic Ltd. a week in advance of proposed date of tree topping, so that customers can be notified that there service will be interrupted during this period.

14. Heritage Society

No Response

15.

B. SITE & WORK DESCRIPTION

Diagram 1: Location of Trees



ASSESSMENT OF THE TREES AND PROPOSED WORKS (Extracted from Forestry Officers Assessment)

This assessment and recommendation is made following a request from Planning in respect of an application made by Mr Henry Thorpe to top two trees currently growing in the Brewery Yard, Jamestown to alleviate issues raised by adjacent neighbours experiencing problems with tree debris falling and creating slip hazards, vegetative growth from the canopy impacting upon energy and telecommunication lines, the continued threat of falling limbs (following a significant limb breakage during that latter part of 2022), bird mess and overhanging limbs on residential properties. In assessing the trees in their current condition, attention was paid to previous works

Report Author: Shane Williams (Planning Officer)

Report Authorised: Rob Thornhill (Chief Planning Officer)

Application: 2023/11

Page 2 of 5

undertaken in relation to the past assessment made in June 2018 by the Head of ANRD, Darren Duncan. This assessment recommended a two phased approach for both trees over the periods Year 1: 2018/19 and Year 2: 2020/21. It was unfortunate that the approved recommended phased works was halted during 2018, which resulted in the planned reduction of canopy density and spread to a manageable height not being achieved and as a consequence the trees are again causing issues with neighbouring properties and are still out of control in terms of a) canopy spread and density and b) logistically difficult to reduce.

Current Condition:

Both trees are in reasonable condition; there is nothing to suggest that there are structural problems with either tree (no lifting or soil disruption at the base of either tree, no wilting or discolouration of leaves or dieback, no visible signs of any physical damage (barring evidence of limb breakage) and no visible signs of pest or diseases.

The issue with both of these trees is that they have been allowed to grow out of control despite a planned and approved phased approach that would have facilitated a reduction in canopy spread and density, bringing the canopies to a manageable height that would have negated the need for the requested course of action.

Identified Risks:

The assessment made agrees the issues identified by the applicant, highlighted in paragraph one, specifically the risk of:

- Creation of slip and trip hazards that could result in personal injury to all persons using the area from falling tree debris.
- Property damage from overhanging and low hanging limbs
- Disruption to energy and communication (telephone, internet) services and or damage to lines of service providers
- Possible public health concerns resulting from bird droppings that litter the area in front of residential properties.

It should also be noted that these trees in their current condition poses a risk to ANRD staff as service providers, if tasked with reducing the canopies through pruning. In order to undertake and achieve a recommendation of this nature it would involve operators accessing the tree canopy to select and safely remove limbs of significant size, without mechanical support which puts the operator at a disadvantage as the environment in which the works are required offers no opportunity for escape should unplanned events occur. In order to ensure operator safety and tree health and welfare an option that ensures both is required. A further risk associated with a pruning option that stems from canopy inaccessibility is that of minimal tree management options going forward from this point. As the canopy spread, height and density now is such that it is beyond existing capabilities, the capacity to safely manage the trees would diminish to a state whereby in the immediate to medium

term future tree management activities would cease beyond lifting low hanging limbs within the tree canopies.

Recommendations

Reduce the existing tree canopies to a manageable height through topping. Topping to occur at the height of the existing telephone and energy lines as indicated in the photo below. While an ideal solution to mitigate the risk identified, this option if undertaken has negative implications for the tree. Topping is a practice that removes limbs of a tree at any point to reshape and resize the trees canopies and will be effective in reducing the height and spread of the existing canopies. However, this practice involves making cuts in a manner that reduces the trees ability to heal and to seal wounds and in doing so the opportunities for pest, disease and decay increases, leading to a severely stressed tree that is less tolerant of future surgery works. This practice also encourages the formation of new growth that is less strongly attached to the tree, making it more likely that the new limbs that form from the new growth will eventually pose the same level of safety concern that the topping option hoped to eliminate. It is possible that the new growth can be managed more efficiently than the canopies that currently exist, however in reaching this stage with these trees, the level of stress incurred by the tree through this process will most likely cause the tree to die. In removing the volume of green material the trees ability to photosynthesise will be compromised; this will result in minimal absorption of sunlight that creates energy and food, and which can reduce root formation and food storage capacity greatly increasing the level of stress imposed upon the tree and reducing its chances of survival. The recommended rate of removal for the amount of total foliage removed at one pruning for mature trees is 10%, this does not include material that is already dead but refers to actively growing foliage. A consideration in removing more than the recommended 10% is the current age of the trees and the trees ability to regenerate following such a practice. This option, while logistically challenging will allow safe 360o access to the tree canopy, as operations to reduce the spread and height of the canopy will start from the outside and methodically work in and around the canopy to facilitate the reduction required. It is recommended that should this be the most acceptable option, this work should be carried out during the winter months to reduce any increases in stress upon the tree.

Diagram 2: Approximate New Height after Topping



C. PLANNING OFFICER'S STATEMENT & RECOMMENDATION

Trees are significant and important features in Jamestown for various reasons. As a result, most trees within Jamestown are subject to the Tree Preservation Order of 2015. The tree subject to this application has been subject to a thorough and comprehensive examination by forestry experts within ANRD as demonstrated by extracts from the Forestry Officers report above.

The risks has been identified, where without any works carried out, both trees in their current state will remain an ever-present threat to life and property. Topping is a practice that removes limbs of a tree at any point to reshape and resize the trees canopies and will be effective in reducing the height and spread of the existing canopies. However this is not without significant risk to the trees health once the works are undertaken. In the first instance, topping will have an adverse impact on the appearance of these trees within the landscape, as can be seen with those behind the courthouse, however considering the long term goals, these works will allow for better management and improve the overall structure and look of the trees once regeneration begins. Given that both trees are in good health, topping can be supported.