



Domestic Housing:

Integrating trees into individual housing development



St George's Avenue, Islington, London

**Trees on sites adjacent to developments
can be highly significant**

Introduction

The improvement of individual housing properties whether by extension, refurbishment or complete redevelopment can impact not just on trees on the site itself but also on trees that are on neighbouring sites as well. In many cases the presence of trees on neighbouring sites and their requirements are not considered in planning terms because they lie outside the red line of the planning application.

Consideration of the effects of development on trees on an adjacent sites should take place in just the same way as if the trees were on the site itself. In this way the rights of the neighbouring landowner and also the community, if the tree is protected for reasons of amenity, are not subjugated by the rights of the developer to undertake controlled development. All parties concerns should be considered and balanced to achieve a decision that includes tree protection planning conditions if necessary

Background

The site in St George's Avenue is a typical Victorian end of terrace house located immediately adjacent to a local authority block of flats. The owner initially made approaches to the local authority with a view to building a two storey extension to the side of the property. This two storey extension would have necessitated the removal of the local authority owned lime tree on the adjacent site.

Following a site visit and negotiations with the developer it was agreed that a two storey extension was unacceptable for reasons which also included the potential removal of the tree, but that a single storey extension would be acceptable if constructed under strict tree protection planning conditions.

Objectives

- To permit modest extension of individual property
- To retain a key structural tree located on an adjacent site
- To limit vertical extension to a single storey and thereby retain the adjacent tree
- To accommodate future generations of trees on and adjacent to the site
- Protection of adjacent site owner's tree from construction damage and post development pressure
- To implement local authority tree protection policies and planning conditions fully

Actions

- Pre-application meeting between developer and local authority
- Robust interpretation of tree retention policies
- Pre-application site visit between tree officer, developer and their engineering advisors to demarcate tree protection zones and agree tolerances for boundary wall construction
- Building footprint agreed in principle prior to planning application
- Foundation design (Raft) agreed in principle prior to planning application
- Regular on site supervision of tree protection measures during construction phase
- Planning conditions stipulating tree retention and foundation design

Achievements

- Retention of prominent large species structural tree on adjacent site
- Construction of building foundations able to accommodate 2nd generation large species tree planting if retained tree is removed during lifetime of building
- Contribution to the principles of climate adaptation through urban greening
- Visual amenity of wider area secured for current and future residents
- Effective communications, increased knowledge base and trust building between all participants

Lessons Learnt

- Engagement on tree issues must be undertaken at the earliest opportunity e.g. the conceptual and design stages
- Expert arboricultural advice should be obtained at these stages of the scheme as well as during development and implementation
- Set down clear markers on which tree should be retained from the outset
- Establish effective communications between partners
- Construction phase site supervision inspections by the tree officer are essential