

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Francis Mabbett.....

**APPLICATION
REFERENCE**

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF
DEVELOPMENT**

APPLICATION SITE

26/01239/TCA

Sycamore - Fell.

Kennels Gatehouse

Park Street

Hitchin

Hertfordshire

SG4 9AH

Submitted Plan Nos

1.0 Policies

2.0 **Site History**

None relevant

3.0 **Representations**

There has been 1 representation and 13 objections to the removal of the Sycamore tree for reasons including, size of tree (150'), rarity, age (200yrs), effects on climate, conservation, veteran/ancient tree, loss of wildlife habitat and environmental benefit.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site**

Sycamore (applicants plan) is situated upon the East boundary edge of the raised garden belonging to the property, adjacent to the West of the entrance drive. The tree is partly visible to the public realm and is visible to neighbouring properties. The site is within the Hitchin Conservation Area.

4.2 **Proposal**

Sycamore - Fell.

4.3 **Key Issues**

The key issue for consideration is the impact that the proposed works would have on the character, appearance and amenity of the Conservation Area.

4.3.1 The tree is partly visible to the public realm.

4.3.2 T1 is a large mature Sycamore, that is co-dominant from approx. 4m with compression fork that appears included. There appears to be little reaction wood at the fork suggesting there is limited opposing movement of the stems which maybe the result of natural bracing higher in the crown. Some minor deadwood is present, with 2- 3 isolated dead branches, which may be the result of squirrel damage. The tree has been crown reduced previously with no record of a 'section 211 notice' and regrowth appears to be normal. Some epicormic growth is apparent at the base on the West side, with some bark scarring of the buttress roots present here as well.

4.3.2 The Sycamore is located on top of the retaining wall abutting the entrance driveway which it has clearly demolished through annual expansion of its buttress roots and lower stem. The remaining wall is liable to further damage as the tree continues to increase in size. The expansion of the lower stem has also encased adjacent iron railings that are set on top of the retaining wall.

4.3.3 The Sycamore is set back from main public view, but due to its height, (although no measurements were taken it is estimated to be some way short of 150'), and elevated position it is still visible to the public realm from certain view points. This includes the footpath leading up Hitchin Hill and the approach along Park Street to Hitchin Hill, where it is partly visible

above the very tops of surrounding tree cover. The tree has some age also, but the species is regarded as fast growing and this tree is estimated to be in the region of 100 years. Sycamore is a very common species in the UK and large specimens are not rare, but veteran and ancient trees are, however this tree presents no attributes associated with a veteran or ancient tree.

4.4.4 The tree will no doubt have ecological and environmental benefits and provide habitat and a food source for certain wildlife. However, Sycamore is a naturalised species and these benefits will not be as significant as those associated with a native species such as Oak. A drawback of this is the sticky Honeydew produced by aphids feeding on the tree, which can be a nuisance and is frequently associated with Sycamore.

4.4.5 The Sycamore although imperfect in form does possess amenity value, but its limited visibility to the public affects the level of benefit it can provide. Canopy cover in the area is quite abundant and there is adequate, surrounding tree cover with higher visibility, that makes a greater contribution to the amenity of the conservation area. The damage to the retaining wall, with the potential for further damage and the inability to repair it without removing the tree, I believe, makes the tree a nuisance, and the council could be subject to request for compensation claims for repair costs, if the tree was protected and then a subsequent application to remove the tree was to be refused. It would not be expedient to protect a tree that has already clearly caused damage to property with further damage foreseeable. For this reason the tree is not suitable for protection by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 The proposed works is necessary to abate a nuisance and would not result in any unacceptable adverse impact upon the character, appearance and amenity of the Hitchin Conservation Area.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

4.5.1 None applicable

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

4.6.1 None applicable

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 No objection.

Signed Intan Keen Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 19 June 2026	