

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

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

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01504/TCA	London Plane - Reduce the crown by approx 8-10m, back to suitable previous reduction points over the car park only. Shorten lateral limbs and secondary growth extending over the car park and adjacent access areas. Retaining a natural crown outline and balanced form.	Hitchin Priory Tilehouse Street Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 2DL

Submitted Plan Nos

1.0 Policies

2.0 Site History

14/01434/1TCA - Crown reduction by 50% of 1 Lime tree (1); crown reduction by 30% of 1 Lime tree and remove branch from neighbouring Horse Chestnut tree which is interfering with trunk of Lime tree (2); fell 1 Lime tree (3) - No objection

16/00591/1TCA - Prune one Sycamore tree (T5) - reduced by 25-30% (approx. 1-2m) - (blocking light into the adjacent property - the Hair Shop) - No objection

17/02360/1TCA - (G1) 3 x Field Maples, 10 x Elm, 8 x Laurel, 1 Holly - Fell to ground level. - No objection

3.0 Representations

None received.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site

London Plane (applicant's plan) is located within the grounds of The Priory, close to the boundary with the rear car park of No. 32 Bridge Street. The tree is partly visible to the public realm. The site is within the Ashwell Conservation Area.

4.2 **Proposal**

Reduce the crown of the London Plane on the Ashton's Land and New Homes car park side only by approximately 8–10 metres, pruning back to suitable previous reduction points where present. Works to include shortening of the lateral limbs and associated secondary growth extending over the car park and adjacent access areas, whilst retaining a natural crown outline and balanced form.

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 not highly visible to the public realm.

4.3.2 London Plane is a large tree with considerable girth and appears to be in normal health. Due to its large girth it is likely to be of significant age and will have some historic connection with the Priory setting. The crown is wide spreading with extensive encroachment into neighbouring properties. The crown also hangs low and is less than 2m above ground level in places. There appears to be some evidence of previous branch pruning over the car park area, but this is inconsistent with a full crown reduction and it is not possible to determine whether the tree has undergone major pruning works in the past, although the tree's height does appear slightly stunted in relation to the girth of the tree.

4.3.3 A reduction to previous reduction points on the neighbouring car park side is acceptable as this work should not breach existing defensive barriers created by the tree post any previous pruning works. A reduction by 8-10m appears excessive, but this is due to the length of pendulous, low hanging branches growing downwards towards ground level.

4.3.4 London Plane has a durable heartwood and is known to resist decay, but the applicant has reported recent limb failures and although no obvious signs of this was observed, London Plane is susceptible to Massaria (*Splanchnonema platani*) infection which produces signs that are not always visible from ground level and can cause large limbs to be shed. A reduction over the car park will reduce the risk of limb failure and resulting damage to vehicles and pedestrians. The work is likely to have a negative impact on the amenity of the tree, but this should be short-term and not detrimental to the health of the tree. Due to the limited public visibility of the tree and the works being confined to the neighbouring car park side, the impact to the surrounding area and Priory setting is considered to be low.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 The proposed works 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	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer	
Date: 16 July 2026	