



Rebecca Peace

— Arboriculture —

Robinia Removal at Larch House

Section 211 supporting arboricultural report

Larch House also known as Larch How

Old Knebworth Lane, Knebworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6FS

Prepared for Mr and Mrs Cooper

Site visit 1st September 2026 | Report dated 11th September 2026

Planning reference 26/00424/FPH | Report reference LH-R-2026-01

Purpose and Recommendation

Removal of one mature B-category Robinia is recommended to allow the approved replacement cartlodge to be built on the former stable footprint. The building has been kept on that established footprint rather than pushed farther forward within the site. As R1 stands immediately alongside it, there is not enough room to construct the building safely while retaining the tree and its rooting area. Moving the building approximately 2 m rearward was considered, but the reported main sewer behind the building makes that option impractical.

The proposal is designed to retain the character of the site as far as possible. It is not based on an allegation that the tree is dangerous or that it has damaged the sewer. The neighbouring purple-leaved maple and surrounding trees will be retained and protected. Two well-chosen replacement trees, supported by five years of aftercare, will provide new canopy, seasonal interest and a positive long-term contribution to the garden and the Conservation Area.



The Robinia beside the former stable slab, with the purple-leaved maple to its left.

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1 Scope and Planning Context

This report follows the site visit on 1 September 2026 and considers the removal of the large Robinia beside the former stable slab. It is identified here as R1, a report-specific reference separate from the architect's T1-T11 numbering. The photographs identify the subject tree; no work to the adjoining maple or other trees is proposed. This is a focused removal assessment, not a full BS 5837 survey or an engineering assessment.

North Hertfordshire District Council granted permission on 28 April 2026 for a four-bay cartlodge with first-floor habitable accommodation and an external staircase following demolition of the stables and store.

2 Tree Quality and Amenity

R1 is a mature Robinia with a substantial fissured stem and a broad, irregular crown. It is assessed as Category B, meaning moderate quality with worthwhile retention value. This classification is not a finding of poor condition or an automatic justification for removal. No immediate danger, significant decay or specific structural defect is relied upon in this proposal.

The tree stands well within the property, below the level of the road at the head of the sloping driveway. It is not readily visible from the public highway. The approved solid black timber gates and retaining wall at the driveway entrance will further screen views into the site, so removal is expected to have limited effect on the public street scene.

3 Development Conflict and Alternatives

The replacement cartlodge is proposed on the footprint of the former stables, rather than being moved farther forward within the site. R1 stands immediately beside that footprint. Its stem, rooting environment and crown are therefore in direct conflict with the excavation, foundations and working space required to construct the approved building.

A rearward movement of approximately 2 m was considered as a means of increasing separation from R1. That alternative would move the building towards the reported main sewer running behind the proposed build area and has therefore not been pursued. The sewer is not presented as the sole reason for tree removal, nor is any claim made that R1 has damaged it. It is a site constraint that limits the practicable relocation of the building away from the tree.

The supplied plans 8411-P11 and 8411-P12 provide the existing and approved layout context. Confirmation of the sewer alignment and the coordinated building footprint should accompany the notice so that the Council can assess the combined constraints clearly.

Crown pruning alone would not resolve construction within the tree's rooting area. Retaining R1 would be likely to require either a material redesign of the approved cartlodge or a specialist foundation and construction solution, together with potentially substantial asymmetric crown pruning and an ongoing pruning commitment. In arboricultural terms, that is not considered a satisfactory long-term relationship between a mature tree and the new building.

On the proposed same-footprint replacement, removal with replacement planting is considered a proportionate response to a genuine physical conflict, while retaining and protecting the neighbouring maple and the wider tree cover.

4 Mitigation and Retained Tree Protection

Retain the purple-leaved maple and the other trees around the development.

Where existing surfacing overlaps retained rooting areas, agree a supervised removal method before work. Lift material carefully from the existing hard surface without stripping underlying soil or pulling roots. Stop if substantial roots or roots of uncertain ownership are exposed. The removal of R1 does not make the adjacent ground free of roots belonging to retained trees.

Provide two replacement trees as voluntary mitigation: one field maple as the principal successor canopy tree and one suitable non-fruiting tree, such as hornbeam or silver birch, to provide complementary seasonal and ecological value. Final species and positions should suit the soil, drainage and available mature growing space. Locate both within the property where they contribute to views of the development, outside the sewer corridor, access routes and retained tree protection areas, with positions agreed before planting.

Use healthy nursery stock, provisionally 12-14 cm stem girth, and plant in the first suitable November-March season following removal where construction permits. If the planting area remains occupied by works, agree a specific planting date at completion. Set the root flare at finished soil level, provide appropriate support and a weed-free mulch area, keeping mulch clear of the stem.

The owners should provide five years of aftercare: check moisture regularly during the growing season and water thoroughly when required; maintain mulch and weed control; adjust ties and guards; undertake light formative pruning where needed; and replace any failed tree in the next planting season. Retain the replacements thereafter as the intended successor canopy.

5 Tree Work Specification

R1 Robinia: dismantle in controlled sections and cut the stump as close to ground level as practicable. Protect the neighbouring maple, other vegetation and retained structures. Undertake any necessary stump grinding only after locating utilities and assessing adjacent roots; do not pull out the stump or excavate indiscriminately. Monitor for Robinia regrowth and suckers and manage these without damaging retained trees. Use a competent, insured contractor working to BS 3998 good practice.

Check for active bird nests before work and assess potential bat-roost features. If an active nest, bats or a suspected roost is identified, stop affected operations and obtain appropriate ecological advice. Wildlife constraints apply independently of the Section 211 process.

6 Section 211 Procedure

R1 is not subject to a Tree Preservation Order but is located within a Conservation Area. The proposed removal will therefore be notified to North Herts Council under Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This arboricultural report is provided in support of that notice and sets out the arboricultural justification for the proposed works and the associated replacement planting.

Works will not commence until the statutory six-week notification period has expired, unless North Herts Council confirms beforehand that it has no objection to the proposed works.

7 Photographic Identification



R1 is the large green-leaved Robinia immediately beside the slab. The purple-leaved maple at the left is to be retained.



Roots and the edge of the old slab, illustrating the close physical relationship between R1 and the existing stable footprint.

8 Conclusion

Removal of R1 will allow the approved replacement cartlodge to be built on the established stable footprint. Moving the building rearward to create more separation from the tree is not practical because of the reported main sewer behind the build area; bringing it farther forward is not proposed. The retained purple-leaved maple and surrounding trees will preserve the leafy setting, while two carefully positioned replacement trees, with sustained aftercare, will create meaningful successor canopy for the future.

Subject to completion of the Section 211 process and confirmation of the coordinated footprint and sewer information, this is a sensible and proportionate solution to the site constraints. With the retained trees protected and the replacement planting properly established, the proposal will maintain the site's green character and provide a positive long-term landscape outcome.

Documents and Guidance

Sources: site photographs dated 1 September 2026 and client photographs; Cooper correspondence of 5, 11 and 20 August and 10-11 September 2026; drawings 8411-P11 and 8411-P12; decision notice and delegated officer report for 26/00424/FPH dated 28 April 2026. BS 5837:2012 and BS 3998:2010 inform the recommendations.