

ACES

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To whom it may concern,

Proposed TPO, Haig House, Princess Street, Hawick

I am writing to substantiate the points raised about trees G1 and G2 in the letter dated 17th July 2019 (written on behalf of Image Estates (Queen Street) Ltd) regarding the proposed Tree Preservation Order (TPO) at Haig House (March 2019).

It is important to clarify at this early stage that I come from a tree conservation, community liaison and landscape design background, this report provides an honest appraisal and accurate representation of my understanding of the current tree health and status of the Lawsons cypress trees (G1 & G2) in question throughout this correspondence. Please see Appendix B for a summary of my relevant experience.

I understand that in spite of their poor quality (stature and health) as specified in the TPO data chart produced by Scottish Borders Council - the only reason for their inclusion in the proposed TPO is for the screening benefit that they offer to the adjacent privately owned home. In support of the letter (17th July) I too would argue that these trees appear to provide very little relevant screening to the house or any useable areas of its associated garden space, due to the topography of the area and the presence of many more unaffected, healthy mature trees within the woodland area. In my opinion the TEMPO scorings provided in the above document are overly generous, particularly given the existing obvious presence of an issue affecting the health and forecasted longevity of this species within the woodland stand.

Unfortunately limitations on access make it impossible to conduct a closer investigation and assessment of the nature of these issues. We have however inspected the trees to the best of our ability using zoomed photography from the adjacent development site.

Please see the photographs in Appendix A for reference. Photo 1 - Even from a distance it is obvious that there are numerous dead standing Lawson cypress specimens within the stand which points to the fact that there is a significant local threat to these trees. Without closer inspection it is difficult to confirm whether or not these trees have: suffered historical damage (ring barking, root compaction from former land use activities), have fallen victim to substantial waterlogging or drought, or there is a fungal pathogen present.

In my opinion the latter option seems to be the most likely issue, given the fact that the trees are completely dead and lack any foliage (and that they are growing in an area that has suffered significant flooding over the years) strongly points to the potential presence of a fungal pathogen affecting the tree roots, e.g. honey fungus or Phytophthora root rot (a disease primarily associated with heavy, waterlogged soils - laboratory examination would be required to determine its presence).

I would like to draw your attention to Photo 2 which evidences some further browning on branches in the adjacent surviving trees, this suggests potential early signs of a continuing issue that will undoubtedly affect the longevity of the trees included in this TPO.

The development proposal for the adjacent site will pose no additional risk to these specific trees. Given the estimated age of these trees and the historical land use of the adjacent area, it can be concluded that the trees were planted in unfavourable conditions and have grown in conjunction with the challenging surrounding land use conditions over the course of their lives to date, i.e. hard landscaping in an industrial area on a flood plain = existing compromised root structure, poor stature and poor health. The area of woodland appears to have benefitted from little or no significant management and maintenance over recent years and many of the trees appear to be competing for space and light, in turn, affecting the quality, health and structure of the trees.

I would also like to state at this point that Lawson's cypress are a non-native ornamental species that provide little ecological benefit for our native fauna and invertebrates. There are many other more quick growing, more beneficial species that could be replanted in the space created by removing the dead trees, should recognition be given by their to their current poor health and imminent demise or, by way of mitigating any loss of small shrubby regen plants along the woodland perimeter during site development.

In conclusion, Trees G1 & G2 are in poor health and provide limited benefit as a screen, they are not aesthetically pleasing, nor are they beneficial ecologically. They are blatantly suffering from a significant health issue and they have undoubtedly faced growth limitations and challenges since they were planted 20 - 30 years ago due to their location in a regularly flooded, hard landscaped industrial area. I believe that they are not of sufficient enough quality/ health to be included in a sweeping tree preservation order area and that imposing any associated root protection areas on trees in this state of health would be negligible.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Craigen

BA(ord)/ MA(hons) Landscape Architecture

Appendix A

Photo 1



Photo 2



Appendix B

Anna Craigen (ACES) – Summary of Relevant Experience:

1993 – 1998: BA(ord)/ MA(Hons) Landscape Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art/ Heriot Watt University. With one year professional practice (Landscape Architect Assistant) at Portsmouth City Council (1996-97).

2000 – 2002: Complex Plans Examiner (RO2) at Registers of Scotland, Edinburgh. GIS Mapping; Property/ Planning Law; resolving boundary and land ownership conflicts.

2002 – 2019: Community Liaison & Education Officer (now part time) at Borders Forest Trust. A local woodland/ environmental charity that focusses on the conservation/ protection and creation of woodlands in the South of Scotland for the benefit of wildlife and people. Project work involvement included: management of selective tree thinning operations in sensitive sites in the Tweed Valley; recording, surveying and monitoring veteran trees; leading general woodland survey and monitoring activities – tree health and biodiversity, and liaising with the public over a wide array of tree related issues.

ACES (established in 2013): relevant project work has included:

- Leading public/ volunteer team tree health and biodiversity survey events (culminating in written reports to highlight ongoing site management recommendations) on behalf of the Haining Charitable Trust (Sept – Oct 2014).
- Providing advisory services in community woodland/ orchard establishment and ongoing woodland/ tree management to a variety of Borders based Community Groups, e.g. Cove, Craik.
- Leading weekly volunteer team sessions in carrying out a variety of woodland management tasks, e.g. selective thinning, pruning, tree planting etc.
- Woodland management advice/ site visits and recommendations to a variety of Private Estates in the Borders, e.g. Newhouses
- Risk assessment policy & procedure development, landscape/ woodland management advice and design of natural play areas at Born in the Borders visitor centre, Lanton, nr Denholm.
- Tree Reports/ Planting Proposals for GLS Limited (2014-2015)
- Tree Reports (site mitigation recommendations & RPA calculations to direct site design and development) for Private Landowners to support Planning Applications (2016 – 2019)