

WE NEED OUR TREES

Protect Our Trees and They Protect Us



COLPAI Development of the Richard Cloudesley Site

Islington Council and City of London recently granted planning permission for the development of the former Richard Cloudesley School Site. Approval means that seven established semi-mature trees on the site are now at risk. The silver birch and cherry trees line the boundary wall between the Golden Lane Estate, the Golden Bagger allotments and the RCS site. The trees are in good health and appropriate for the site. They have a life expectancy of 20 years or more.

Here are just a few of the reasons why these trees should be retained and considered an asset to the COLPAI development rather than an inconvenience to the building works:

- **Devastating Loss of Habitat**

The destruction of these trees will have a devastating impact on the nesting birds and serious long-term consequences for the loss of sustainable habitats for birds, bees, foraging bats and insects. The Golden Baggers regularly observe blue tits, coal tits, goldfinches and greenfinches as well as robins and blackbirds, sparrows, dunnocks, magpies, collared doves and the occasional wren, all welcome in the centre of the city where habitats are sparse.

Silver birch provides food and habitat for more than 300 insect species - the leaves attract aphids, providing food for ladybirds and other species further up the food chain, and are also a food plant for the caterpillars of many moths.

- **Clean Air for Our Children is Essential**

Trees play a vital role in mitigating air pollution. The City of London has one of the highest levels of air pollution in the country and the Square Mile is designated as an Air Quality Management Area (since 2001).

In September 2017 Mayor Sadiq Khan visited Prior Weston to launch his Air Quality Audit for Primary Schools. The school is attended by many children from Golden Lane Estate and is only 100m away from the RCS site. Despite its proximity to Fortune Green Park it is one of the 50 most polluted primary schools in London and is the first to undergo the audit.

<https://www.priorweston.islington.sch.uk/events/sadiq-khan-visits-prior-weston>

The neighbourhood cannot afford to lose any trees, for any period of time. They will play a vitally important role to in protecting COLPAI schoolchildren from damaging toxins.

- **Planning policy**

Islington Planning states:

'...In the processing of planning applications to aim for retention of trees of high amenity/environmental value taking consideration of both their individual merit and their interaction as part of a group or broader landscape feature...'

Islington Tree Policy states:

'Healthy mature trees will not be removed to create space to plant new trees.'

The Finsbury Local Plan states that public open space should be provided to offset the loss of playground space and to relieve pressure on Fortune Street Park, which is already heavily used by office workers, The Golden Lane Campus and local residents.

The proposal to replace the mature trees with 3 young container trees goes no way to mitigate against the loss of benefits a mature tree brings to the amenity and ecology of a place and contravenes Islington's own policies.

- **Positive Benefits for COLPAI**

These trees have stood on the school site for decades and it is our belief that the beneficial contribution these trees bring to the site and for the future of its residents and school children far outweighs the short-term inconvenience to the developers.

The COLPAI proposal has a stated lack of play space for schoolchildren and open space for residents and goes further in destroying the existing green space on the site and undermining the Golden Lane allotments, which will be overshadowed by the new school hall and kitchens. It makes no new contribution to public open space and it undermines or destroys existing spaces.

The green corridor provided by these trees and existing planting makes an important contribution to an unacceptably barren site. The trees provide a thriving habitat and a rich educational resource for schoolchildren and vital access to nature. Schoolchildren will only benefit from their presence.

Perhaps the urgency of this development means that seven trees are not considered important. But, trees are vital to the health and well being of the city and its residents and to nurturing a huge variety of wildlife. Why should future generations of schoolchildren not prosper by their presence and surely, social tenants have as much right to access nature and to benefit from improved amenity as anyone else.

- **Strength of Community Feeling**

Many residents of Golden Lane Estate and surrounding community feel that the COLPAI consultation process was wholly inadequate and not enough commitment was made by the developers to mitigate the acknowledged 'harm' caused by the scheme. Rebuilding community relations for the future harmony of the neighbourhood is essential and saving these trees could go some way towards that goal. Some heartfelt messages posted to the We Need Our Trees petition:

'Trees and planting enhance all buildings, good and bad and to destroy these perfectly healthy trees rather than work with them as an asset to the whole estate feels like an act of vandalism, bereft of imagination.'

'The design is a disaster but at least keep the trees!'

'The estate feels under attack from all angles - losing these trees would just be heart breaking.'

'We've been living on a building site for the past 2.5 years, about to become however many more... you could at least try and make it comfortable.'

'Improve air quality: We need more trees not less.'

'The existing mature trees provide a scarce habitat in this urban site.'

'There are limited trees & flora in the area - to destroy the little we have & which in the future could provide a natural barrier & a continuing home for birds etc seems positively negligent.'

'This is appalling! We already know the air pollution levels are unacceptably high and removing large trees will certainly not help this plus they act to reduce noise and dust. This is short sighted, irresponsible and another example of planners completely ignoring the communities they are meant to serve.'

The London Tree officers Association has rounded up a wealth of research into the health benefits of trees all of which justify the concern of residents.

www.ltoa.org.uk/docs/References_for_trees_and_human_health.pdf

This document, accompanying letter, and petition noted above are offered by the Golden Baggers to those with influence to do what they can to save the trees currently earmarked for destruction.

The Golden Baggers

Founded by residents with a set-up grant from Mayor of London Capital Growth Scheme in 2010 the Golden Lane Estate community food growing project has been active in improving green areas in this little corner of the city. These projects include a designated wildflower meadow, under-planting of tree pits with herbs and the creation of the Golden Lane allotments. There, 42 wooden raised beds for individual food growing, a wildflower and bio-diversity garden, communal beds for fruit, berries and herbs, a shed and children's shed, composting area and water butts are enjoyed by over 150 residents of the Estate bringing children, families, young professionals, elderly residents, disabled and vulnerable residents and generations of families together in a rewarding project.

During the growing season, the Golden Baggers hold a monthly open day for baggers, families, friends and Estate residents. They also organise Estate-wide growing projects, markets, public talks and workshops, day-trips for residents to other gardens of interest, and participate in London's Open Garden Squares and Capital Growth days. Open Gardens in July 2017 attracted over 450 visitors to the allotments.

The Golden Baggers, their produce and their activities have become a focal point for community engagement across the Golden Lane Estate. It is a thriving and successful community project, otherwise undocumented by the COLPAI planning reports.

We need these trees. We know they are worth fighting for.

