



Statement to Downs Committee meeting on
18 September 2023

We have been directed to the following minute of the Events & Finance sub-Group held on 30 August 2023 and wish to express our concern about proposals to allow the former Bristol Zoo Gardens Northern Car Park to be used for contractors to park there. It appears that no consideration has been given to the welfare of the trees growing there - trees owned and managed by the Council - or that the car park falls within the Downs Important Open Space.

This is the relevant minute extract:

Downs North car Park

- i. Noted that Bristol City Council had instructed a KC to give legal advice, but none had been received to date.
- ii. It was suggested that the car park continue in use for contractors to park there as it brought in an important source of income of around £40k pa.
- iii. There was concern that remaining open would be a breach of contract however this would only apply if there was disagreement between the parties.

Figure 1 Minute Extract - Events & Finance sub-Group held on 30 August 2023

In the first instance, can you please identify the contractors being referred to. Are or will they be involved in matters relating to the use of the Downs? We appreciate that, under the terms of the Consent Order dated 12 May 2021 in *R v The Master and Wardens and Commonality of the Merchant Venturers etc.*,¹ parking for non-Downs activities on the North Car Park may continue until the end of 2023. We question whether this covers any such parking which is not exclusively for the Zoo's use, however.

We have always been concerned about the welfare of the trees growing on the Northern Car Park, given the continuing impact of vehicles parking within their root zones, as it is well-known to cause them damage. Tree roots extend radially in every direction to a distance equal to at least the height of the tree (assuming no physical barriers) and grow predominantly near the soil surface. Typically, 90% of all roots, and virtually all the large structural supporting roots, are in the upper 60cm of the soil.

It is for this reason that Root Protection Areas (RPAs) are usually established around trees when any construction work is planned. The same considerations should be applied when designing car parks.²

This extract from the arboricultural evidence presented in support of the recent Bristol Zoo

¹ CO 3081/2020

² <https://nbbotanicalgarden.com/2019/05/30/careful-where-you-park-dont-wait-for-excessive-weight-to-kill-your-trees/> & <https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/files/b6/b6a05a2e-ec86-4d23-aa92-42fdec8d67c0.pdf>

Gardens application, shows the extent of the RPAs proposed at the time for the trees growing within the Northern Car Park:³

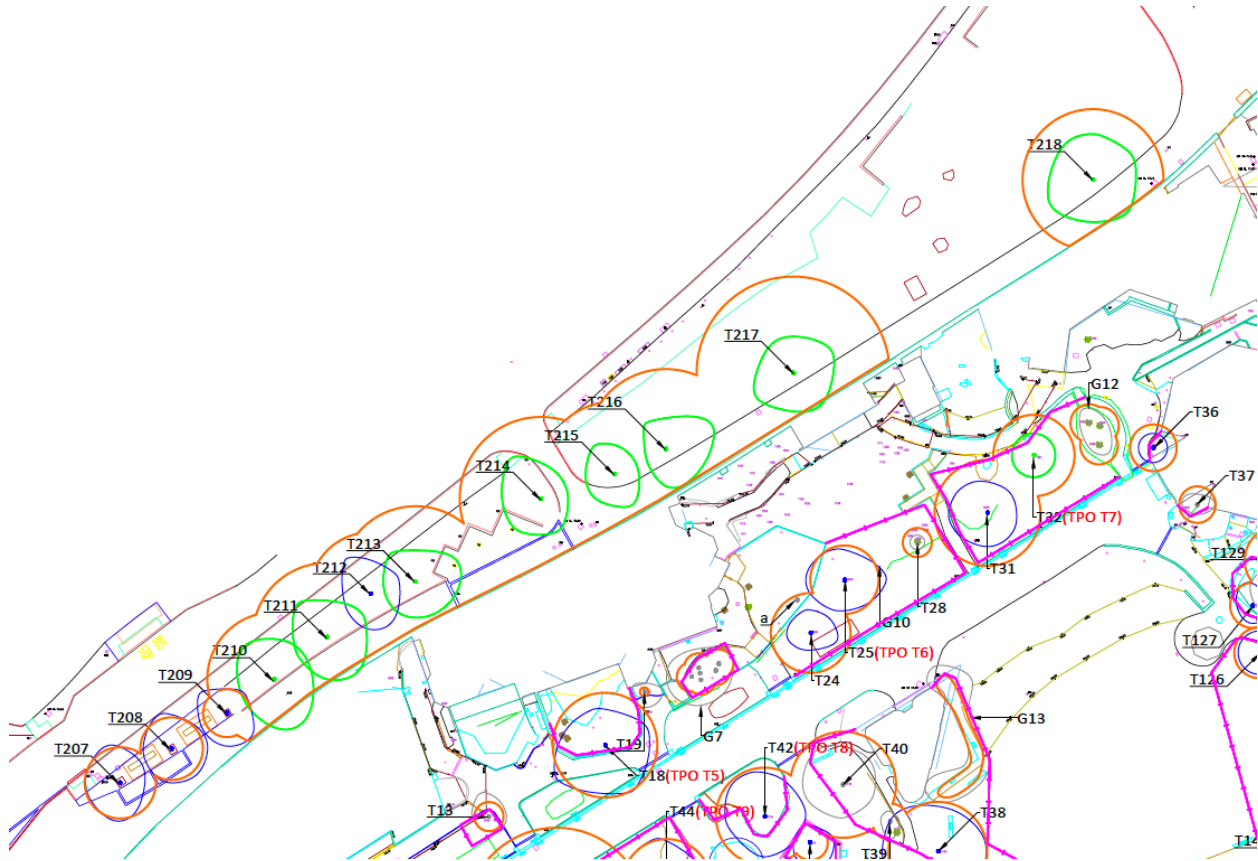


Figure 2 Extract from BZG Arboricultural evidence

As can be seen, large areas within the Northern Car Park fall within the RPAs of the trees growing there, though, not all the trees in the car park are shown - there are more trees growing along Clifton Down which were not included in this survey.

We also wish to point out that the Northern Car Park falls within a designated Important Open Space (IOS) associated with the Downs (Figure 3 below). IOS sites are protected by Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) DM17⁴ of the Local Plan which states that ‘*Development on part, or all, of an Important Open Space as designated on the Policies Map will not be permitted unless the development is ancillary to the open space use.*’ If the proposed parking use is not ‘*ancillary to the open space use*’ then it cannot be permitted.

³ 22/02737/F Bristol Zoo Gardens Guthrie Road Bristol BS8 3HA - Document 22_02737_F-ARBORICULTURAL_REPORT__APPENDIX_4_-3233719

⁴ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/2235-site-allocations-bd5605/file> - page 36.



Figure 3 Detail from the Downs IOS designation (hatched in green)

Bristol Tree Forum
12 September 2023