

6 Oaker Avenue, West Didsbury M20 2XH - Drs Jean and Stephen Wells - REPORT

From: Sarah Rycroft <sarah@rycroftassociates.co.uk>

To: Jean Galloway and Stephen Wells CC: Jon Hart Date: 06/07/2021 14:34

Dear Jean and Stephen

It was lovely to meet you both yesterday and to have the opportunity to look at and talk about the possibilities for the garden and terrace. The new building will clearly be a lovely new space with great views of the garden, so the treatment of the outdoor spaces are important to complement the design and to provide you with a variety of places for you to sit and enjoy the garden for many years to come.

As agreed I am summarising what we discussed relating to your needs and my suggestions on where improvements could be made to the garden.

1. VEGETATION Existing conifer to front of house, becoming over mature and overshadowing bay window, remove.

2 Existing shrubs throughout garden these are nearing 30 years old and many are beyond renovation. I suggest that I should prepare a management plan identifying which can be pruned/cut hard back and which have reached the end of their useful life. Rather than a plan I think the best bet would be for me to revisit the site and carefully make a schedule of works and to spray mark those to go and those to be pruned. I could then meet with your gardener or more likely one to be appointed for the landscape works and identify what should be done by them (I could also bring along my own loppers for minor works).

3 After clearance we can then identify priority areas for replanting and I can either do a plan or give a list of suitable species for what could go where, with the aim of creating a more varied edge to the lawn with lower shrubs and herbaceous plants that require minimal maintenance and identify where new areas of planting can be sited.

4 Existing Trees as we observed the garden is densely surrounded by mature trees and these have had an adverse effect on the newer specimens that you have planted. I strongly recommend that you consider the removal of the mature sycamore on the NW corner of the garden, or at least carry out a very heavy crown reduction and pruning, to allow more light into the garden and to reduce the overcrowding and suppression of the smaller ornamental specimens you love so much. If you removed this tree which is very close to the beautiful copper beech you would not be exposing yourself to extensive overlooking, but you would bring more sunlight into the garden and open up a huge area of the garden which is currently wasted being in heavy shade. It will also allow you the opportunity to plant new specimen trees and shrubs.

I would suggest that you call in Chris Frankland and he and I could discuss in more with you detail what works could be carried out by them.

5 Of course if you decide not to proceed with the above I can advise on remedial works to larger shrubs and other trees to improve their form, however the suppression will get worse and specimens such as the Snake Bark maple and the Birch will eventually die back completely.

6 PAVED AREAS – As you are losing the majority of the existing terrace area I think that it is important to capitalise on what room can be made immediately accessible from the orangery and this may involve reviewing the location and layout of the ramp. After talking with the builder (Maurice?) we thought that the ramp could be relocated and perhaps it didn't need to be so dominant or so long, a decision can be made relating to your accessibility requirements and where steps are actually needed. I will need to chat through the possibilities with John and would be happy to prepare some quick sketch options on how you can access the different outdoor spaces.

7 Existing water features – sadly these will be lost to enable the terrace , ramp and access into the garage. I would suggest that this should take place soon to assist with the building operations. The adjacent Maple and Magnolia may be able to be retained although there will need to be some heavy pruning to allow the terrace to be built. The trees can be protected during the works.

8 Area adjacent to cellar steps – this is a sunny spot and I suggest removing the raised slab area to create a bigger paved space close to the house and removing the mature conifers. This sunny area can be recreated in the Mediterranean style as it was before.

9 Existing sitting area on RH side of garden, needs refurbishing and surrounding vegetation (i.e. Holly) cut back to make more space.

I can see enormous potential for the garden and suggest that you review my comments and decide which are your priorities and what you would like me to take forward. I would love to help you restore and enhance the garden and hope that you were not too depressed by my comments about the drastic measures which I feel are needed to create a garden that will be practical, accessible , lower maintenance and give you pleasure for the future.

It makes sense to get as much done by the builder and they could carry out the clearance of the pond and other items to give a better idea of the space available outside the new room.

I look forward to speaking to you.

Sarah Rycroft.