

Tree Condition Assessment

The Old Rectory

Erbistock

Wrexham

Ref:

TCA/ORE/12/22

Date:

5th December 2022

Commissioned by:

Mr P. Goodall

Prepared by

S. Shields

Tree Condition, Risk & Impact Assessment

The Old Rectory

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Instruction

- 1.1 Shields Arboricultural Consultancy received instructions from Mr P. Goodall to undertake a detailed assessment of trees at The Old Rectory, Erbstock. The purpose of the survey was to establish the condition of the trees, assess the level of risk it may pose to property and persons and to make recommendations for work where required.

Introduction

- 2.1 It is recommended that all tree owners should have their trees inspected for safety purposes on a periodic basis. The frequency of these inspections will depend on the location of the tree in relation to roads, footpaths and buildings or structures. This is confirmed by HSE guidance relating to managing the risk of falling trees which states that *'there is the duty to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure that people are not exposed to risk to their health and safety. Doing all that is reasonably practicable does **not** mean that all trees have to be individually examined on a regular basis. A decision has to be taken on what is reasonable in the circumstances and this will include consideration of the risks to which people may be exposed.'*

Scope and Limitations of the Survey

- 3.1 The survey was undertaken on 27th October 2022 by Stephen Shields, principal consultant with Shields Arboricultural Consultancy.
- 3.2 The survey was carried out from the ground in accordance with the principals of tree inspection and assessment described in Lonsdale 1999 and using Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) techniques as described in Mattheck & Breloer 1994. This term describes an approach to tree surveying using visual observation which allows the surveyor to evaluate the stability and structural condition of a tree. The basis behind VTA is the identification of symptoms, which the tree produces in reaction to, for example, a weakness in its structure, or as a result of external stress factors e.g. drought.
- 3.3 A risk assessment was undertaken in accordance with Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) methodology (See appendices for details).

Methodology

- 3.4 The tree was inspected from the ground level using field glasses and basic equipment such as a soft faced hammer and steel probe. Where required an IML Resi F400 micro drill was used to examine the internal quality of the wood. The inspection followed a set procedure; firstly, the site conditions are assessed to establish if any environmental factors are present that could affect the stability of the trees. This includes an evaluation of the soil conditions to establish if there are any aspects that could inhibit root growth, such as water logging or shallow soils. The exposure and elevation of the site are considered along with any changes to the tree's environment that could affect the tree. Next the root plate and area around the tree are visually inspected for signs of instability or decay, followed by a visual examination of the trunk and

branch structure to identify structural defects or decay. Finally the vitality of the tree is assessed and any significant pest and diseases identified. Where defects or health issues were identified these are noted in the report and any required remedial measures recommended. Where no comment is made it can be assumed that no defects were identified.

- 3.5 The findings of the survey are limited to the date of inspection. The seasonal nature of fungal and decay organisms and other symptoms of stress such as late or early leaf emergence or fall means that indicators of disease and decay may not have been present on the date of inspection.
- 3.6 The risk assessment evaluates the risk of failure in all weather conditions up to and including Beaufort Scale Gale Force 8. All trees are at risk of failure through exceptional weather conditions.

Statutory Controls & Obligations

- 4.1 Forestry Act; the felling of trees is controlled under Forestry Act, which requires that a felling licence is obtained prior to cutting down any trees. The Forestry Act does not apply to the felling of trees growing within an orchard, private garden, churchyard or public open space. The Forestry Commission has the responsibility for enforcing the Forestry Act.
- 4.2 Tree Preservation Orders & Conservation Areas; Local Authorities have specific powers to protect trees through the use of Tree Preservation Orders. Where trees are protected under such orders it is a criminal offence to (subject to any exemptions for which provision may be made by the order) undertake, cause or permit the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees except with the consent of the local planning authority. Similar controls apply to all trees growing within a designated Conservation Area.
- 4.3 Bats, wild birds and other protected species; The Wildlife & Countryside Act & the Conservation (Natural Habitats & C.) Regulations make it an offence to disturb or destroy bats and bat roosts and wild birds and their nests. Other species of plant and animal are also protected. These creatures often inhabit trees and sufficient care must be taken to ensure they are not affected during forestry and arboricultural works.

Site Description

- 5.1 The Old Rectory is a large detached residential property set in its own private gardens on the banks of the River Dee, in the hamlet of Erbistock, Wrexham. The property is Grade II listed. The house is central in the plot with a driveway to the north and lawned gardens to the south and east.
- 5.2 The site slopes very slightly down from north to south and has boundaries with a neighbouring property to the north, agricultural land to the east, the river to the south and a road to the west. It is at an elevation of approximately 30m AOD and is reasonably sheltered. Soils appeared to be free draining, but a high water table and periodic seasonal flooding can be expected.

- 5.3 There is a variety of trees on the site in terms of age and species. These are distributed around the boundaries and within the garden area to the south. Of particular note is the very large copper beech tree to the east of the house.
- 5.4 Target zones have been assessed for the trees and take account of uses of land surrounding the tree and evaluate the risk that a failure of the tree will result in damage and the significance of this damage.
- 5.5 The site is within the Erbistock Conservation Area and tree 28 is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (see 4.2).

Impacts to Residential Amenity & Reasonable Enjoyment of the Property

- 6.1 The juxtaposition between trees and buildings can have a significant effect on the use and enjoyment of a property and the constraints imposed by trees should inform site layout and design to ensure a harmonious relationship between retained trees and adjacent land use. Particularly with residential properties, incoming occupiers will want trees to be in harmony with their surroundings without casting excessive shade or otherwise unreasonably interfering with their prospects of reasonably enjoying their property leading inevitably to requests for consents to fell.

Advice given in BS 5837 notes:

“A realistic assessment of the probable impact of any proposed development on the trees and vice versa should take into account the characteristics and condition of the trees, with due allowance for space for their future growth and maintenance requirements.”

and advises that the following factors are given consideration:

Shading

Privacy and Screening

Direct Damage

Future Pressure for Removal

Seasonal Nuisance

Shading & Obstruction of Daylight

- 6.2 Guidance provided in the British Standard BS 5837: 2012, advises that shading of buildings can be a problem and site should be designed to take account of existing trees, their ultimate size and density of the foliage and that garden areas should be designed to meet the normal requirement for direct sunlight for at least part of the day. Building Research Establishment guide to good practice (BR209) Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight advises that, in order to appear reasonably sunlit a dwelling should have at least one main window wall that faces within 90° of due south and that on this wall, all points on a line 2m above ground level are within 4m of a point which receives at least a quarter of the annual probable sunlight hours. The guide also

advises that for gardens to appear adequately sunlit, at least half the area should receive no less than 2 hrs sunlight on 21st March.

- 6.3 The yew tree, tag 28, is situated in a raised bed on the patio area to the southwest of the house. The tree, which is evergreen in nature, casts significant shade over the house, conservatory and patio during the day and the evening and this impacts the use of these areas.
- 6.4 Natural daylight is also restricted owing to the height and proximity of the tree's canopy to the windows of the house and this factor has a significant impact on interior light levels and solar gain. The evergreen nature of the tree further exacerbates shading issues.

Seasonal Nuisance

- 6.5 Although evergreen, yew trees do drop needles and fruits and the amount of seasonal deposition on to the patio is not inconsiderable. Given the size and spread of the tree, this deposition affects the gutters of the building as well as the surfaces and the extent of maintenance to prevent excessive accumulation of these deposits could be considered somewhat onerous.

Physical and Visual Impact

- 6.6 The tree is a large specimen and dominates the patio area in a way that the residents find imposing and unpleasant. Conversely, the tree has limited visual impact when viewed from publicly accessible areas, as is part obscured by other trees and structures.

Tree Assessment Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.1 Full details of the tree inspections and work recommendations are provided in the Arboricultural Inspection Record at appendix A and are summarised below.

Summary of Tree Work

All works are to be undertaken in accordance with BS 3998: 2010 'Tree Work – Recommendations'.

Tree Tag#	Operation	Priority
24 & 31	Remove and replace. Reason: Significant risk of tree or limb failure caused by extensive decay in structural wood. Trees in poor physiological condition, with reduced vitality.	High
28	Remove and replace. Reason: Impact of the tree on the reasonable enjoyment of the property. The tree is to the south of the house and patio area casts considerable shade over the patio area and also obstructs sunlight and daylight to the conservatory and to	High

	main living rooms of the house. Leaf-litter from the tree falls into guttering and blocks drains of the house and requires regular cleaning (see section 6 above)	
33	Remove and replace Reason: Trees are moving towards late maturity and are reducing in vitality. Removal and replacement will improve age diversity of trees on the eastern side of the property and ensure that robust tree cover is established along the boundary before it becomes necessary to remove the large copper beech tree.	Moderate
36	Remove and replace Reason: Trees are vulnerable to ash die-back and their removal will allow replacement planting along the east boundary of the property.	Moderate
35	Remove deadwood from tree	Moderate

Please note that all trees are subject to statutory controls and no work may commence until written permission has been given by Wrexham County Borough Council

S.J.A. Shields

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Chartered Forester

5th December 2022

Record of Arboricultural Inspection

Location: Old Rectory, Erbistock

QTRA Target Score: 1 - 3

Site Type: Residential

Date: 27th October 2022

Zone: Red

Inspector: S. Shields

Exposure: Sheltered

Weather: Clear, Calm

Soils: Cultivated

Notes:

Tree Tag #	Species	Size Class*	Age Class*	Structural Condition	Health & Vitality	Notes	T	S	RoF	QTRA Score*
24	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)	OM	VL	Poor	Fair	Significant levels of decay in root plate, buttress roots and main stem, fungal brackets visible on main stem. Tree is showing low vitality with major die-back and deadwood formation in the crown, along with a number of damaged branches and large pruning wounds from past tree surgery. Recommendation: Fell tree and replace	2	1	3	4k High
25	Corylus avellana (Hazel)	M	S	Good	Good	No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	2	3	6	>1m V. Low
26	Betula pendula (Silver Birch)	EM	S	Good	Good	Twin stem from base. Close proximity to overhead cables. Recommendation: No work required.	2	3	6	>1m V. Low
27	Acer pseudoplatanus (Sycamore)	EM	M	Good	Good	Ivy growing on stem of tree, close proximity to overhead cables. Recommendation: No work required.	2	3	6	>1m V. Low

28	Taxus baccata (Yew)	M	L	Fair	Good	Tree located within raised bed. Ivy on tree. Decay present on stem, not structurally significant at this time. Stem divides at ground level. Tree is impacting on amenity of the property. Recommendation: Consider felling and replacing as part of long-term management of the arboricultural resource.	2	P	5	300k (Low)
29	Unknown	EM	M	Good	Good	Stem divides at ground level. No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	3	3	7	>1m V. Low
30	Acacia sp (Wattle)	EM	M	Good	Good	No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	3	3	7	>1m V. Low
31	Fraxinus excelsior (Ash)	OM	L	Poor	Poor	Declining. Ash die-back. Decay present on stem. Fungal brackets visible on stem. Cavity on stem. Stem failure. Major bark wounding on stem. Broken branches in crown. Major deadwood in crown. Old Tree Surgery. Recommendation: Fell tree and replace	2	2	2	1k V. High
32	Prunus avium (Wild Cherry)	EM	L	Fair	Good	Stem divides at ground level. No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	3	3	7	>1m V. Low
33	Populus nigra 'Italica' (Lombardy Poplar)	M	L	Fair	Good	Group of four trees. No significant defects but trees are moving towards late maturity with declining vitality and have suffered occasional branch failure. Given relatively short life expectancy of this species along with vulnerability to decay, it may be considered expedient to remove and replace trees along with the group of minor ash trees (36) along the boundary. Recommendation: Consider felling and replacing as part of long-term management of the	2	1	4	40k Mod.

						arboricultural resource.				
34	Quercus robur (Common Oak)	EM	M	Good	Good	No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	3	3	7	>1m V. Low
35	Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea' (Copper Beech)	M	VL	Good	Good	Exposed / Damaged Roots. Major deadwood in crown. Tree is in late maturity but is displaying good vitality for its age and there was no indication of any significant decay or structural defects. Recommendation: Remove deadwood	2	2	4	100k Low
36	Fraxinus excelsior (Ash)	EM	M	Fair	Fair	Group of small self-set trees, predominantly ash, along the boundary between the garden and farmland to the east. Trees have early indications of ash die-back. Recommendation: Consider felling and replacing as part of long-term management of the arboricultural resource.	3	3	5	>1m V. Low
37	Prunus avium (Wild Cherry)	M	M	Good	Good	No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	2	2	6	>1m V. Low
38	Juglans regia (Walnut)	EM	M	Good	Good	No significant defects noted. Recommendation: No work required.	3	2	6	>1m V. Low

KEY

Size Class Stem

- S Less than 5m height and / or 150mm trunk diameter
- M 5m– 15m height and /or 150mm – 500mm trunk diameter
- L 16m – 25m height and / or 501mm -1000mm trunk diameter
- VL Over 26m height and or over 1001mm trunk diameter

Age Class:

- NP - New Planting less than 5 yrs
- Y - Young Trees less than 1/3 life expectancy
- EM - Early Mature 1/3 – 2/3 life expectancy
- M - Mature over 2/3 life expectancy
- OM - Late Mature exceeds normal life expectancy for species
- VET - Veteran Tree has characteristics of veteran tree, see Read (2000)

Health & Vitality:

- Good - No significant health problems
- Fair - Some health problems that will reduce vitality
- Poor - Significant health problems that are affecting the tree's ability to survive
- Dead - Dead

Structural Conditions:

- Good - No significant faults
- Fair - Some faults that can be rectified through surgery or are not significant at this time
- Poor - Major faults that cannot be rectified through surgery

Hazard Rating:

- Green - Very Low
- Yellow - Low
- Amber - Moderate
- Red – High

Numeric rating refers to QTRA score and describes risk of harm. E.g., 1m = 1 in 1 million.