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SURVEYS, INSPECTIONS, REPORTS



**PAT'S COACHES
DERWEN HOUSE
SOUTHSEA ROAD
SOUTHSEA
WREXHAM
LL11 6PP**

TREE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Report by:

Stephen Cutmore BSc (Hons), MICFor, MArborA
Chartered Arboriculturist

Client	██████████
Planning Authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Grid Reference	SJ30655148
Date of Survey	16 August 2023
Reference	082023/TAR/KD



PRO3755



Veteran tree specialist
– Consulting level

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1.0 SUMMARY

The client carried out works to extend the parking area for coaches to the rear of the depot, without the necessary planning consent. Following consultation with the planners at Wrexham County Borough Council, a retrospective planning application has been submitted. To support the application, the Tree Officer requested a report to assess the impact of the development on the condition of the trees.

A visual inspection of the trees on the edge of the woodland was made, details of the recent development recorded and photographs taken.

The existing hardstanding parking area for coaches, to the rear of the coach depot has been extended to the South, by infilling an area of rough vegetation on the former railway line, with hardcore and soil. The surface of the infill has been levelled and compacted. The infill has increased the existing grade by circa 4-5m depth and the material has spilled to create an uncompacted bank down into the edge of the woodland.

Some of the mature Sycamore and Common Alder trees (circa 4-5 trees) located on the woodland edge have material piled up against the trunks. Some branches and stems have been broken, with resulting torn and split stubs.

As I did not view the site prior to the recent works, it is not possible to determine exactly how many trees were removed, but in looking at the Google Earth imagery before and after the works (see *Appendix 1*) it appears that a small number of trees in the Southeast of the site were removed.

The affected trees are likely to decline in condition over a period of years due to compaction and possible decay.

As the woodland area is located at the rear of the coach depot, the small number of trees removed and the trees at the edge of the woodland that have been damaged are not clearly visible from the public road, so there is no significant visual impact in the wider setting beyond the short term. Whilst the woodland as a whole is significant, the individual trees impacted will have little significance in landscape terms and there will be little impact on the overall character of the area.

In order to provide mitigation in the form of compensation for the loss of a small number of trees and to provide a biodiversity enhancement to the site, it is recommended that tree, shrub and hedge planting is carried out in a post-development landscaping plan.



2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Brief

Stephen Cutmore BSc (Hons), MICFor, MArborA, was instructed by [REDACTED] to carry out an assessment of the trees at the site at Pat's Coaches, Southsea Road, Southsea, Wrexham, LL11 6PP [OS Grid Ref SJ30655148].

The definition of the assignment was to:

1. Carry out a visual assessment of the trees on the woodland edge.
2. Assess the condition of the trees and the likely impact of the recent development works.
3. Provide a report with management recommendations.

2.2 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to advise you of the results of the parts 1 and 2 of the assignment. These results are set forth in the *Conclusions* section, following. This report describes the field conditions as found and interpreted.

2.3 Scope of report

Date of consultation.

The field examination was made on 16 August 2023, and observations and conclusions are as of that date.

Limit of scope.

This is solely an *Arboricultural Report* and cannot comment on topics outside this discipline. If additional advice is required, it is strongly recommended that other professionals are consulted e.g. Structural Engineers or Surveyors.

Unless stated otherwise:

- 1) Information contained in this report covers only those trees that were examined and reflects the condition of those trees at the time of the inspection.
- 2) The inspection is limited to visual examination of the subject trees from ground level and an advanced inspection, utilising decay detection equipment, to assess the internal condition of the trunks.
- 3) There is no warranty or guarantee, expressed or implied, that problems or deficiencies of the subject trees may not arise in the future.
- 4) This report has been prepared for the sole use and benefit of the client. Any liability of Stephen Cutmore Arboricultural & Ecological Services shall not be extended to any third party.



2.0 INTRODUCTION (continued)

2.4 Relevant background information

The client carried out works to extend the parking area for coaches to the rear of the depot, without the necessary planning consent. Following consultation with the planners at Wrexham County Borough Council, a retrospective planning application has been submitted. To support the application, the Tree Officer requested a report to assess the impact of the development on the condition of the trees.

2.5 Site description

The coach depot is Pat's Coaches, Derwen House, Southsea Road, Southsea, Wrexham, LL11 6PP [OS Grid Ref SJ30655148]. The existing hardstanding parking area to the rear of the coach depot has recently been extended to the South towards the woodland area, by infilling an area of rough vegetation on the former railway line with hardcore and soil.

2.6 Qualification

Stephen Cutmore is a Chartered Arboriculturist (Institute of Chartered Foresters), with over thirty five years' experience in the arboricultural and forestry industry as a contractor and over twenty five years' experience as an arboricultural consultant. Full details of my qualifications and experience entitling me to give expert opinion evidence are in Appendix 4.

2.7 Copyright

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3.0 DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Site visit

A site visit was made on 16 August 2023. The weather was dry and sunny. There were no limiting factors to the inspection.

3.2 Methodology

A visual inspection of the trees on the edge of the woodland was made, details of the recent development recorded and photographs taken.



3.0 DATA COLLECTION (continued)

3.3 Observations

The existing hardstanding parking area for coaches, to the rear of the coach depot has been extended to the South, by infilling an area of rough vegetation on the former railway line, with hardcore and soil. The surface of the infill has been levelled and compacted. The infill has increased the existing grade by circa 4-5m depth and the material has spilled to create an uncompacted bank down into the edge of the woodland.

Some of the mature Sycamore and Common Alder trees (circa 4-5 trees) located on the woodland edge have material piled up against the trunks. Some branches and stems have been broken, with resulting torn and split stubs.

As I did not view the site prior to the recent works, it is not possible to determine exactly how many trees were removed, but in looking at the Google Earth imagery before and after the works (see *Appendix 1*) it appears that a small number of trees in the Southeast of the site were removed. One rootball dumped in the area of rough vegetation to the South of the car park area near the East boundary of the site was identified as a mature Cherry. The client stated that the tree contractor employed to carry out the tree works identified the trees that were removed as Ash, which were showing signs of decline due to Chalara Ash Dieback Disease.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Increasing the grade of the soil within the Root Protection Area of a tree can have a significant negative effect on the tree condition due to compaction. Compaction destroys the large macropores in the soil, reducing the air pockets which impedes the ability of the roots to respire (absorb oxygen and release carbon dioxide). This affects the gaseous exchange at the soil surface, which can result in the roots suffocating and dying. Compaction of the soil limits the ability of the roots to extend and grow, resulting in stunted growth. Compaction also restricts the drainage in the soil, leading to waterlogging. The mature Sycamore and Common Alder trees on the woodland edge with material piled around the trunks are likely to decline in vigour and health. This may take several years for the symptoms to become evident in the crowns.

The impact damage to the trunks has caused bark wounds and the broken branches and stems have resulted in torn and split stubs. These wounds provide entry points for pathogens (fungi, bacteria, insects etc.) which can result in decay developing in the wood tissues.

The affected trees are likely to decline in condition over a period of years due to compaction and possible decay.

As the woodland area is located at the rear of the coach depot, the small number of trees removed and the trees at the edge of the woodland that have been damaged are not clearly visible from the public road, so there is no significant visual impact in the wider setting beyond the short term. Whilst the woodland as a whole is significant, the individual trees impacted will have little significance in landscape terms and there will be little impact on the overall character of the area.



5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to provide mitigation in the form of compensation for the loss of a small number of trees and to provide a biodiversity enhancement to the site, it is recommended that tree, shrub and hedge planting is carried out in a post-development landscaping plan.

The existing rough vegetation in the area to the South of the car park, near the East boundary of the site will be trimmed down and a layer of 30cm clean topsoil (to BS3882) will be applied to the surface. Similarly a 30cm layer of clean topsoil will be applied to the surface of the bank of the hardcore infill, to provide a suitable growing medium for the new plants.

It is recommended that the trees on the woodland edge that have been impacted by the rubble and soil piled against the trunks, be coppiced (above level of soil around stems) and allowed to regenerate by the development of new shoots. These trees will then need to be managed in the future as coppice stools, by re-cutting on a 7-year cycle. Coppicing these trees will enable additional light to reach the new trees to be planted.

A native species hedge will be planted adjacent to the South of the car park area and around the top of the bank, using 40/60cm bare-rooted stock (1+1 or 1u1). The species mix [Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Common Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) and Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*)] will be planted in a 45cm spacing double row herringbone pattern and the plants will be protected by quills. It is estimated that circa 615 plants will be required (5 plants/metre).

Trees and shrubs will be planted on the bank using 40/60cm bare-rooted stock (1+1 or 1u1) [Note: Holly is usually supplied as 2l containerised stock]. The species mix [Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*), Hawthorn, Hazel, Holly, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)] will be planted at 2m centres and the plants will be protected with spiral guards or mesh guards as appropriate to the species. It is estimated that 90 plants will be required.

Eight standard size trees will be planted on the area adjacent to the South of the car park, near the East boundary of the site. 2 No. Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), 2 No. Common Alder, 1 No. Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*), 1 No. Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and 2 No. Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) will be planted at 2.5m centres, supported with tree stakes and adjustable tree ties and the stems protected with spiral guards.



5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

5.1 Tree planting specifications

Many planted trees fail to successfully establish in the landscape due to several reasons: lack of uncompacted soil of a sufficient volume, poor planting technique, vandalism (intentional and unintentional), poor drainage, drought (lack of adequate irrigation), wrong tree species selected for the site and infrastructure remediation damage (roots cut to resolve a trip hazard/displacement of kerbs etc.).

For trees to successfully establish and grow to attain their full potential, thus delivering numerous benefits, the two key issues are planting the tree correctly and providing sufficient aftercare.

Planting specifications for the different types of tree stock are detailed below. All newly planted trees must be checked regularly during their first season, especially after windy conditions.

For trees to successfully establish and grow to attain their full potential, thus delivering numerous benefits, two key issues are planting the tree correctly and providing aftercare. Planting specifications for the different types of tree stock are detailed below. All newly planted trees must be checked regularly during their first season, especially after windy conditions.

5.1.1 Timing

- Bare root and rootballed stock - September to April inclusive.
- Container grown stock including “Airpot” material- September to May inclusive.
- Evergreen material – September/November or March/May.
- Preference for planting is during the autumn/early winter period.
- Planting should never be carried out during periods of hard frost or when snow is on the ground.

5.1.2 Pre-planting care

Check the trees on delivery to ensure that the correct species and numbers have been supplied. Carefully check the condition of trees for damage/pests/disease before accepting delivery. Do not accept sub-standard stock which is highly likely to fail when planted out. It is essential that tree stock is properly transported and stored before planting out. The roots of barerooted stock must be kept moist and covered at all times, to prevent the fine root hairs from drying out. Keep the trees in the plastic bag until the moment you are ready for planting. When transporting/storing bags, stack upright in a single layer and keep away from rodents (voles, mice, rabbits etc.). Cover larger sized stock with a tarpaulin when transporting/storing to prevent water loss via transpiration from leaves due to the wind. Water containerised or container grown stock the day before planting.

5.1.3 Notch planting

Forest whips are usually supplied as barerooted stock. A 1+1 has been grown in a nursery bed for a year then transplanted and grown for another year. A 1 u 1 has been grown for a year, then undercut and grown for another year. The reason for transplanting or undercutting is to promote a fibrous, branching root system, which will sustain the tree when it is planted out.



5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

5.1 Tree planting specifications

First clear any vegetation with the spade to create a bare soil planting area. Make a T cut, by pushing the spade into the ground then making a second cut at 90° [see *Figure 1*]. Lever the spade back and twist to one side to open a notch into which the tree can be slid into position and pulled up slightly to spread the roots. Gently firm down the soil with your boot, to close the notch, taking care not to scrape the bark on the stem.

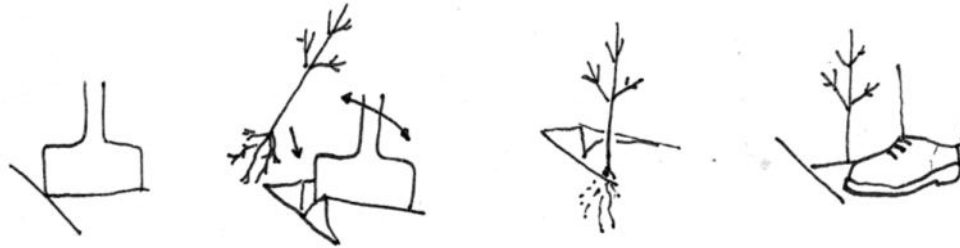


Figure 1: Notch planting technique for forest whips.

5.1.4 Cell-grown plugs

Cell-grown trees are one-year old seedlings grown in special tall, narrow pots (plugs) which promote good downward growth without spiralling. Once roots start to grow spirally inside a pot they tend to continue growing spirally even when planted out.

An ordinary planting spade can be used, but utilising a specialist ‘spear’ is easier and it makes a correct sized hole for the plug. Clear any vegetation to prepare a bare soil planting area. Insert the spear vertically then push it back and forth slightly, before twisting through 180° and remove [see *Figure 2*]. Carefully position the plug in the hole, making sure the top of the plug is 12mm (1/2”) below the soil surface. Insert the spear 5cm (2”) from the plant and pull the handle towards you, to the spear firms the soil at the base of the plug. Then push the handle away from you to firm the soil at the top of the plug. It is important that there is good contact between the sides of the plug and the soil so the plug does not dry out. Cover the top of the plug with a handful of soil before gently firming the soil with your boot, taking care not to damage the plant.

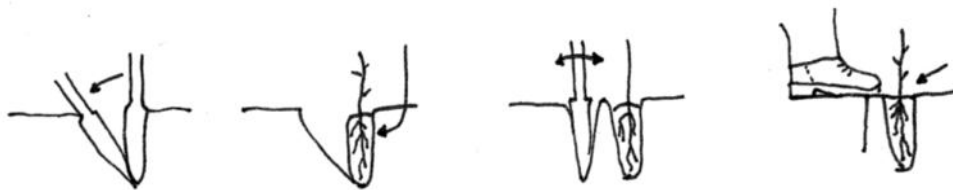


Figure 2: Cell-grown plug planting technique.



5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

5.1 Tree planting specifications

5.1.5 Tree pits

For larger tree stock (rootballed, containerised or container grown), a tree pit should be prepared.

If planting into grass, a circle of turf will be removed, 1.5m diameter, minimum: increase diameter for larger trees. The turf can be placed inverted into the bottom of the tree pit once it is dug. A square hole will be dug within the circle, to a depth of the rootball or a minimum of 300mm, i.e. a spit depth. Research has shown that wide rather than deep planting holes result in better tree establishment, therefore dig the hole twice as wide as the rootball [see *Figures 3 and 4*]. It is also thought that root penetration outside the tree pit is quicker and easier through the corners of a square hole rather than round. For semi-mature trees, the tree circle will be a minimum of 3m diameter and the depth of the rootball. Soil removed from the tree pit will be put back and no new soils will replace the backfill removed.

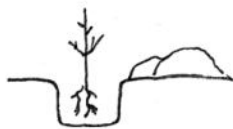


Figure 3: Tree pit for barerooted stock.



Figure 4: Tree pit for containerised or container-grown tree stock.

The tree should be placed upright in the centre of the tree pit and the roots spread out around the hole in order to encourage them to grow out to the corners of the square pit. Where plants have been grown in containers, the container should be removed and the roots should be teased out and encouraged to grow outwards. For rootballed stock the wire netting should be removed and the hessian removed from the top and partway down the sides of the rootball. Planting depth is critical; planting too deep is the cause for a high percentage of tree planting failures. The root collar/hypocotyl should be level with the surrounding ground. By using the shallow planting method, it is unnecessary to allow for settlement. A mycorrhizal inoculant can be added to the area around the roots prior to back filling; the application rates will depend on the product in use at the time and the size of the tree to be planted.

As the pit is backfilled with soil, gently shake barerooted stock, to ensure the soil settles around the roots. The pit should be backfilled in shallow layers and should be firmed evenly around the roots of the tree. Care should be taken not to compact directly on or around the roots. Brittle-rooted plants such as magnolias can be damaged by heavy firming and are best settled by light kneading or watering in. If the site is thought to have poor, dry soil conditions, a water retentive material/agricultural polymer can be incorporated into the backfill at a rate of 160 grammes per planting hole. It is important that any water retentive material is thoroughly mixed before back filling, to avoid swelling and subsequent heave of the plant.

Note: If the tree requires supporting with stakes and tree ties, don't completely backfill the hole. Drive the stake into the bottom of the pit on the windward side of the tree, using a fencing mallet or a post-knocker, as close as possible to the rootball without damaging it. The stake should finish at a height no more than one third of the height of the tree.

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5.0 TREE PLANTING (continued)

5.2 Tree support

A stake will only be used where deemed necessary, dependent on nursery stock size. Where small nursery stock requires support, a stout cane and the 'Max Tapener' system or nursery tying tube will be used. Where the root size of a newly planted tree and cane does not provide adequate anchorage or support, the use of a short stake and a single tie will be used wherever possible. The stake will be round and extend to one third of the overall tree height, (see Figure 5). Fit the tree tie loosely around the tree (no more than 30mm from the top of the stake) to form a figure of eight, or have a spacer between the tree and stake to prevent chafing. Most tree ties will need nailing to the stake to stop them slipping. Leave approximately 5mm of the nail protruding to allow for easy adjustment during the growing season. Buckle ends should be against the stake, not the tree. Check the stake and tie frequently, adjusting as required. The tie should be removed at the beginning of the second growing season, by which time the tree should be securely anchored by its roots.

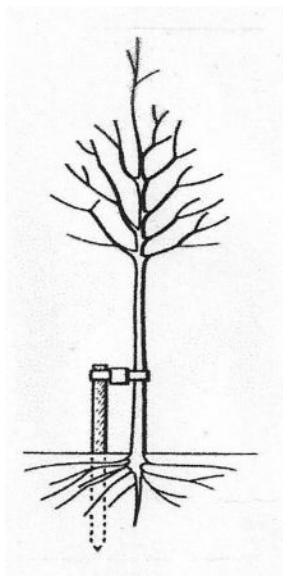


Figure 5: Low short staking technique.

Where it is not possible to use a single stake, i.e. a rootballed tree or bent trunks, oblique stakes or crossbar staking can be used (see Figure 6).

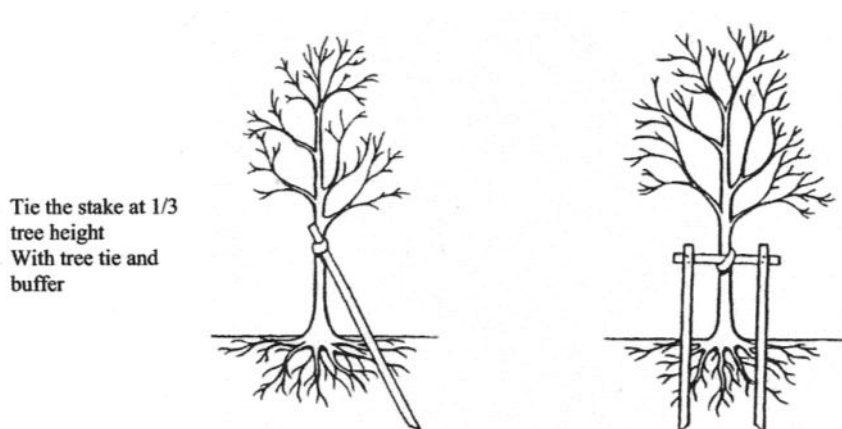


Figure 6: Oblique and crossbar staking techniques.

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5.0 TREE PLANTING (continued)

5.3 Pest Protection

Trees in woodland locations can be fitted with a spiral guard or tree shelter for protection from voles, rabbits, hares and squirrels (see *Figure 7*). Evergreen trees require mesh cages. Hedgerow plants are usually protected with quills. When fitting protection, the base can be gently pushed into the soil, (taking care not to damage the tree) to prevent voles etc. from gaining access to the tree. The tree protection must be checked for expansion regularly and removed or adjusted appropriately.



Figure 7: Tree shelter installed on a forest whip.

5.4 Mulching

Weed competition can seriously affect the health of newly planted trees. To suppress weeds, a layer of organic mulch can be applied, which will also benefit the tree by helping to retain soil moisture and protecting roots during periods of frost. The organic mulch also encourages soil micro-organisms (e.g. earthworms), which will incorporate the organic matter into the topsoil, aiding soil structure, drainage and release of essential nutrients.

If planting is carried out during a dry period, ensure that the tree is irrigated prior to applying the mulch. [Note: Small forest whips can have plastic mulch mats installed at planting]. For larger sized stock, the tree circle should be mulched with a 7.5cm (3") layer of woodchip mulch, taking care not place it too close to the root collar, or 'volcanoing' around the base as this will cause the bark to rot and invasion by disease. Ensure that a space of a minimum of 100mm is left free of mulch around the root collar to avoid contact of the mulch with the trunk.

5.5 Aftercare

Where tree support was required (stakes/ties), once root anchorage has developed, the stake and tie should be removed. Provided the soil conditions are suitable for root growth, this period should be no more than 18 months, (usually remove at the start of the second growing season after planting). It is important to check tree ties regularly, especially after windy periods and adjust as necessary.

Areas of forest whips should be checked during the second planting season, by 'beating up'. This is a forestry term that refers to checking the new tree planting, removing any dead/diseased/damaged trees and planting replacement trees. This helps ensure a minimum 80% success rate for new tree planting. Any replacement trees should be protected and mulched in the same way as the initial tree planting.

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5.0 TREE PLANTING (continued)

5.5 Aftercare

Adequate irrigation is essential in order for newly planted trees to successfully establish. It is recommended that hydration bags are used (slow release watering over a 3-5 day period), or an irrigation system is installed around the rootball during planting, where water is poured into a coiled perforated drainage pipe, fitted with a lockable cap.



Figure 8: Hydration bag.



Figure 9: RootRain Urban irrigation system.

For agricultural polymers to be of benefit to the survival and growth of newly planted trees, a regular input of water is required in order to ‘recharge’ the product, therefore regular irrigation must be carried out during periods of drought. Young trees will only be fed if needed from their second growing season in-situ every year until their fifth year. Organic fertilizer is used at approx. 40 grammes per tree.

The tree circle will be kept clear of weeds at all times, as competition for moisture and nutrients reduces survival and growth of newly planted trees. Effective weed control must therefore be regularly carried out to free the tree roots from this competition. Woodchip mulches are quite effective, but usually need to be complimented by hand weeding, or spraying with an Approved Label herbicide, by a suitably qualified operator.

From the second growing season after planting, larger tree stock (feathered/half-standard/standard/heavy standard) can begin to be formative pruned [in accordance with BS3998 ‘Recommendations for Tree Work’, 2010] to remove dead/diseased/damaged branches and developing a strong framework of branches.

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5.0 TREE PLANTING (continued)

5.6 Formative pruning

The new hedgerow should be maintained by lightly trimming the sides using a hedgecutter, to encourage a dense hedge to develop. The top should be left until it has reached the desired height, then the top can be lightly trimmed level with a hedgecutter. The new trees planted on the bank and the new standard trees should be formative pruned during the 2nd to 10th year after planting, to remove dead/diseased branches, rubbing/crossing branches etc. to develop a strong framework of branches for the tree to grow into a well formed strong healthy tree.

5.7 Additional information

The tree work should be carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced arborist, and the work should conform to B.S.3998 'Recommendations for Tree Work', (2010).

The tree planting work should be carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced arborist, and the work should conform to B.S.8545 'Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations' (2014). A post-planting maintenance programme should be implemented, to ensure the trees successfully establish (watering, weeding, checking tree ties, formative pruning etc.).

Report written and compiled by



Stephen Cutmore BSc (Hons), MICFor, MArborA,
Chartered Arboriculturist



APPENDIX 1 – Site plan



Google Earth image pre-development works.



Google Earth image post-development works.

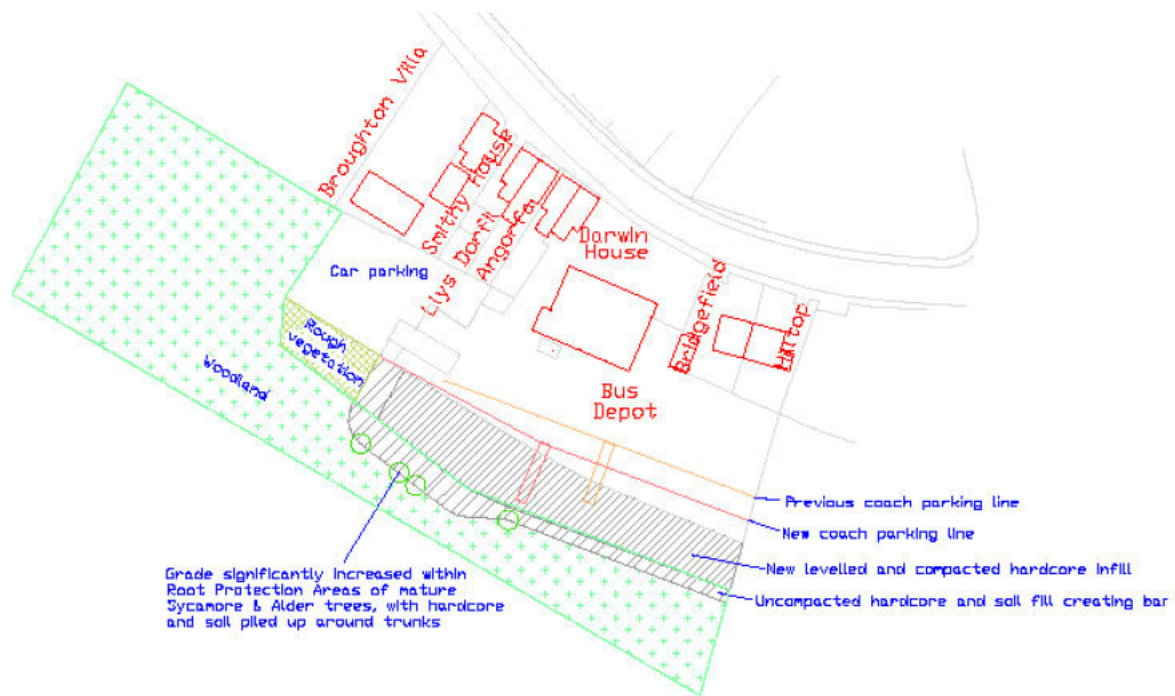
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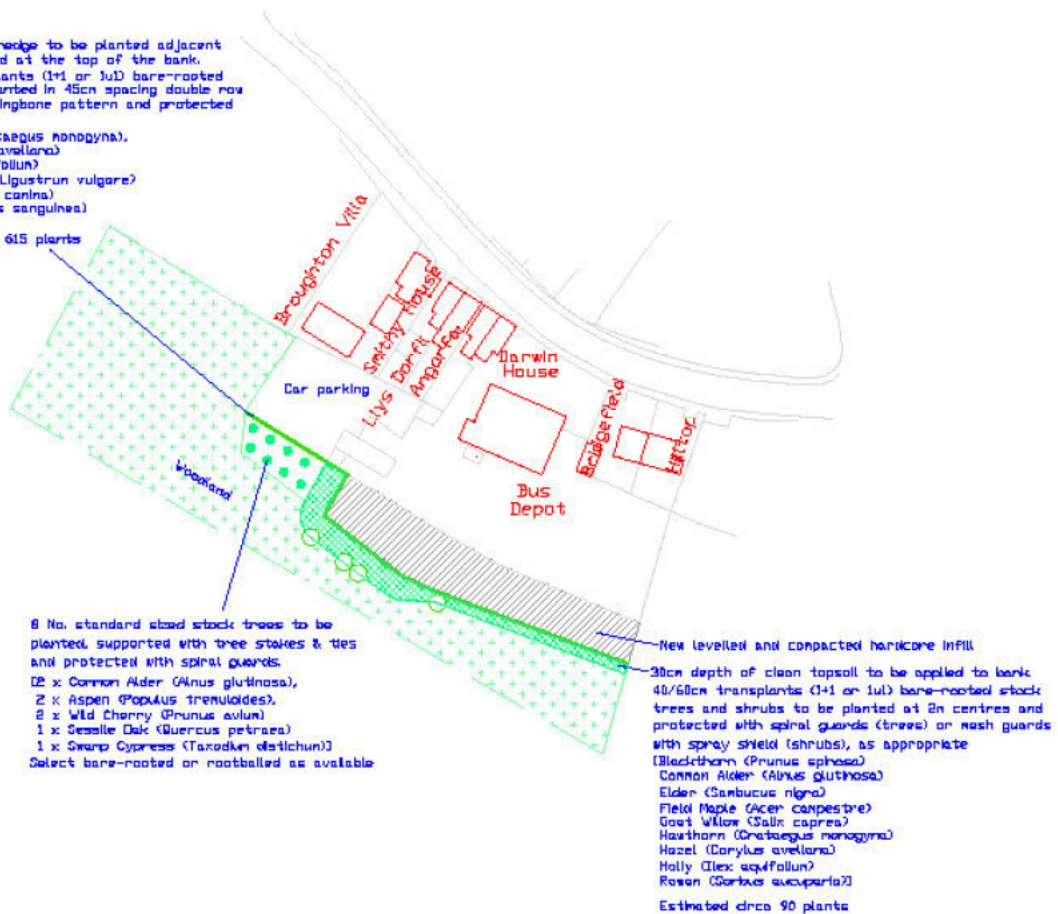


APPENDIX 1 – Site Plan



Native species hedge to be planted adjacent to car park and at the top of the bank.
40/60cm transplants (1+1 or 1+1) bare-rooted stock to be planted in 45cm spacing double row staggered herringbone pattern and protected with GULLS.
Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).
Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
Common Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*)
Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*)

Estimated circa 615 plants



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APPENDIX 2 – Photographs



Photo 1: Soil and rubble on edge of infill.



Photo 2: Sycamore with rubble piled around trunk.



Photo 3: Soil and rubble on edge of infill.

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APPENDIX 2 – Photographs



Photo 4: Sycamore and Alder trees with rubble piled around trunks.



Photo 5: Sycamore with rubble and soil piled against trunk.



Photo 6: Soil and rubble on edge of infill.

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APPENDIX 2 – Photographs



Photo 7: Area of rough vegetation to South of car park area.

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APPENDIX 3 – Bibliography

The following publications were referred to in preparing this report.

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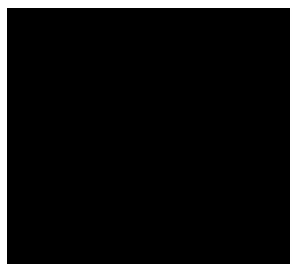
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APPENDIX 4 – Consultant Profile



Stephen Cutmore

BSc (Hons) Arboriculture & Urban Forestry

Chartered Arboriculturist

Member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (Professional 772508)

Institute of Chartered Foresters Registered Consultant

Member of the Arboricultural Association (Professional 3755)

Member of the International Society of Arboriculture (Professional 84047)

Stephen Cutmore has over thirty five years' experience in the arboricultural and forestry industry as a contractor and during this period over twenty five years' experience as an arboricultural consultant.

He has specialist knowledge in advanced inspections of hazard trees, utilising hi-tech specialist equipment (Picus Sonic Tomograph, Picus TreeTronic, IML Resistograph PD400 microdrill, IML Fractometer, Picus Wind Motion Sensors, Fakopp DynaTree/DynaRoot).

Stephen has attended three Masterclasses for the Picus and one Masterclass for the Resistograph, run by the UK distributors, Sorbus International.

He is also Tree Risk Assessment Qualified [TRAQ] (International Society of Arboriculture).

Stephen has attended the AA 'Getting to Grips With Subsidence' and follow-up 'Subsidence Investigation workshop' training courses.

Stephen is a Certified Veteran Tree Specialist (VETcert Consulting Level).

Stephen also has over fifteen years' experience as an ecological consultant. Stephen has held a Bat Licence since 2007 and a GCN Licence since 2011 [current bat licence with NRW (NRW[S091618/1]) and GCN licence with NRW (NRW[S092048/1]). He is a member of Clwyd Bat Group and a member of the Bat Conservation Trust (102994).



Veteran tree specialist
– Consulting level

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