



## Tree condition survey of trees

at

## Windmill Hill Common, Stratfield Mortimer

*Surveyed by*  
Ben Abbatt

Dip. Arb. (RFS), BA (Hons), MICFor, MRICS, CEnv  
Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant

*Report date*  
24<sup>th</sup> April 2023

*Client*  
Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council  
27 Victoria Road  
Mortimer  
Reading  
RG7 3SH  
[www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](http://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk)

*Report reference*  
J719.05

© Sapling Arboriculture Limited 2023



Institute of  
Chartered Foresters



**CEnv**  
Chartered  
Environmentalist

Sapling Arboriculture Ltd

Holbache, Mount Pleasant Road, Alton, Hants,  
GU34 2RS

T: 01420 550 160

E: [enquiries@saplingarboriculture.com](mailto:enquiries@saplingarboriculture.com)

W: [www.saplingarboriculture.com](http://www.saplingarboriculture.com)

## Table of Contents

1. INSTRUCTION .....	3
2. INTRODUCTION .....	4
3. STATUTORY CONTROLS .....	5
4. LIMITATIONS .....	7
5. TREE SURVEY FINDINGS .....	8
6. DISCUSSION .....	9
7. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	10
APPENDICES .....	11
<i>Appendix 1: tree survey data</i> .....	12
<i>Appendix 2: tree survey plan</i> .....	15
<i>Appendix 3: general notes</i> .....	16
<i>Appendix 4: key to tree survey data</i> .....	17
<i>Appendix 5: surveyor qualifications and experience</i> .....	18

## 1. Instruction

- 1.1 I was instructed by Bernise O'Reilly, Assistant to the Clerk, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, to carry out a tree condition survey of trees at Windmill Hill Common, paying particular attention to any features that may pose a significant hazard to persons or property, and to produce a tree survey report including the provision of management recommendations with priorities.
- 1.2 The tree condition assessment is to be carried out in relation to the landowner's duty under the Occupier's Liability Act 1984 and common law. Presumption for tree management will be in favour of retention of the tree(s) where appropriate.
- 1.3 The client has raised concerns relating to the trees including their condition, proximity to the playground, structures, dwellings and highway.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Windmill Hill common is to the north of Mortimer Common settlement with Longmoor Lane to the east, Windmill Hill to the south, Spring Lane to the west and fields to the north.
- 2.2 The site is reasonably flat, although with a slight southerly aspect. There are levels changes within the site and possible historic field boundary embankments within the woodland.
- 2.3 To the north is principally mature Scots pine and oak high canopy. To the east and west there is a high canopy of oak. To the south there is holly and birch with occasional mature trees. Holly understory is throughout suppressing the mid canopy and herbaceous layer.
- 2.4 There is a track from Longmoor Lane which turns into a public footpath STRA/26/6 along the northern edge of the common. STRA/21A/1, 2 & 3 run through the centre of the site. STRA/27/4 arises from the southern centre of the site and goes through the common to the northwest. ASTRA/26/2 arises adjacent to 27 Windmill Road and goes through the common to the northwest. There are various other informal paths that develop of time and use through the common area.

### 3. Statutory controls

- 3.1 The online mapping tool provided by West Berkshire Council, accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 identifies that the site is not subject to Conservation Area controls but is subject to Tree Preservation Order; see image SAL1:



SAL1 Data provided by the council website<sup>1</sup>.

- 3.2 As the site is subject to TPO, a Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 s16 Tree Works Application<sup>2</sup> will need to be issued to the planning authority and 'Consent' received prior to tree works commencing relating to these trees. Such tree works identified within any Consent will normally need to be complete before a 2 year period from the date of the Consent. Additional information on the process can be found at the government website<sup>3</sup>. This tree condition survey can be used to inform such a Tree Works Application. Please let me know if you would like me to be your agent for such an Application.
- 3.3 Alternatively, works may be exempt from notice as detailed in The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 sections 14 (exceptions)<sup>4</sup>. Such exceptions are given as a s14 'Notice of Intent' and a 5 working day period for the planning authority to consider the matter and relate to the imminent threat of harm or damage. This tree condition survey can be used to inform such a s14 (5 day) Notice of Intent. On this occasion, no imminent threats were found.
- 3.3 The Forestry Act 1967 may apply as the trees grow on common land. To implement felling works on land subject to the Forestry Act, a felling licence may be necessary<sup>5</sup>. Additional information on the process can be found at the government website<sup>6</sup>. This tree condition

<sup>1</sup> <https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap/?vln=TREE%20PRESERVATION%20ORDERS>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/605/regulation/16/made>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#making-applications-tpo>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/605/regulation/14/made>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/10/section/9>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-online-for-a-felling-licence>

survey can be used to inform such a Felling Licence Application. Please let me know if you would like me to be your agent for such an Application.

- 3.4 If a Felling Licence is obtained, it may override the need for a s16 Tree Works Application.
- 3.5 This document does not consider specific covenants.

## 4. Limitations

- 4.1 The tree survey was carried out from ground level, with the aid of binoculars where appropriate, using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) process. The VTA process is used to identify significant tree features that may have significant bearing upon the condition (physiological and structural) and management of the tree. The survey has been carried out along the eastern, southern and southwest perimeter, from the woodland footpaths and the road to the east of the site. The trees subject to specific survey have also been marked with a timber crayon (3 horizontal marks in either white or yellow colour). Additionally, in this instance the survey has been carried out on a 'negative return' basis only recording the features which has a significant impact upon the condition of the trees. Where trees are identified as having significant features that have a significant impact upon the condition of the tree or the use of the site then the tree is tagged and works detailed with a priority.
- 4.2 Typical significant defects that are identified are referred to in Lonsdale, D., "Hazards from Trees, a general guide" (FCPG13) published in 2000 by the Forestry Commission, Lonsdale, D., "Principles of tree hazard assessment and management" published in 1999 and 2001 and reprinted in 2013 by the Forestry Commission, and Mattheck, C., "The body language of trees" published in 1994 by the Department of the Environment and 2015 by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology.
- 4.3 Reasonable access around the base of the trees is required to carry out a tree survey. Where this is not feasible, these parts of the tree may not be fully assessed. If a view of the entire structure of the tree(s) is limited, for instance by the properties in private ownership or obscured by vegetation, this is a limitation to the tree survey and some parts of the tree may not be able to be fully surveyed. In this instance, full access was not available on the west side of the site due to vegetation and the canopy overhanging adjacent properties was not able to be fully viewed, although views from within the site, with the benefit of binoculars, provided a reasonable view of the trees. A number of trees are subject to ivy growth, epicormic growth at the base, and / or vegetation (for instance holly) impeding the survey of the tree(s).
- 4.4 Trees are dynamic structures and as such their condition and health may change in a short period of time, particularly in relation to changes in their immediate environment and circumstances, and as such the survey relates only to the visible condition found on the day of the survey. Tree(s) should be re-surveyed on a regular basis so that the change in condition can be identified. An appropriate time period between surveys may be up to 5 years depending upon the species, condition of the trees, their maturity / size and the context within which the tree(s) grow. Recommendations for the period between surveys are given.
- 4.6 No soil investigations have been carried out.

## **5. Tree survey findings**

- 5.1 The survey was carried out on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023. I was unaccompanied during the site visit. The weather on the day of the site visit was clear, dry with low wind speeds.
- 5.2 The table of findings of the tree survey can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.3 I have plotted the approximate new tree positions on the council's Parish Online system to correlate between the tree condition survey (Appendix 1) and the specific trees surveyed on site. Position of the trees plotted is approximate and the specific trees will need to be identified through their approximate position shown on the tree survey plan, condition notes given in the tree survey text and the reference tag number given in the tree survey text.



## 6. Discussion

- 6.1 The majority of works relates to dead trees. The stability of these trees deteriorates over time and can fall over. Remedial works to help control these risks are given in Appendix 1.
- 6.2 Deadwood is likely to arise regularly from the trees over time and may cause harm or damage when it falls from a tree. The larger the section, the greater the potential harm. It is appropriate to remove the deadwood on a cyclic basis where the risk of harm or damage is unacceptable, for instance over formal footpaths, adjacent gardens, and vehicle access. Remedial works to help control these risks are given in Appendix 1. Retained deadwood can also be a unique habitat, particularly when over 150mm diameter. Therefore, where the risk of harm or damage is particularly low, it is appropriate to retain large deadwood as habitat. Due to the informal nature of the Common, retained deadwood is recommended with the exception of formal footpaths, adjacent gardens, and vehicle access.
- 6.3 Holly is restricting the herbaceous layer and mid canopy of the woodland. Such dominant mid canopy prevents greater woodland biodiversity. Progressive removal of the holly can increase the wildlife, biodiversity and enhance the amenity offered by the woodland. Remedial works to help control this issue is given in Appendix 1.
- 6.4 Arisings from tree works can be used to increase wildlife and biodiversity through the creation of dead hedges<sup>7</sup> and stacks of logs. It may also reduce the cost of works and improve biosecurity as the arisings do not need to be taken from site. Methods of arising management are given in Appendix 1.
- 6.5 To conclude, in my consideration of the site, its location, use, frequency of occupation, the potential hazards that the trees present, the condition of the trees and potential for failure, and the potential size of the failure parts, I have provided tree works recommendations with priorities to aid the retention of the trees in the landscape where feasible and these works are detailed in section 7 and Appendix 1.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/dead-wood-compost-heap-habitats>

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 I have considered the findings of the tree survey within the context of the health and vitality of the trees and the circumstances within which they are located.
- 7.2 Recommended works are detailed in Appendix 1 for each tree with associated priorities. The priorities mean that the recommended works should be carried out within specified timescales detailed in Appendix 3 key to tree survey data.
- 7.3 Works are considered a 'High' priority and should be complete within 1 month from the date of this survey. The priority is considered based on the condition of the tree and its position and context. No trees were identified as being subject to a high priority.
- 7.4 Works are considered a 'Moderate' priority and should be complete within 3 months from the date of this survey. The priority is considered based on the condition of the tree and its position and context. One tree was identified as being subject to a moderate priority.
- 7.5 Works are considered a 'Low' priority and should be complete within 12 months from the date of this survey. The priority is considered based on the condition of the tree and its position and context. The remaining trees are considered low priority.
- 7.6 Tree works should be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 Recommendations for Tree Works and in particular biosecurity / avoidance of transmission of disease and pathogens (4.3), extent of pruning works (7.2.4), and natural target pruning (7.2.5). A tree contractor ought to carry out works in accordance with this British Standard and be aware of these specific elements.
- 7.7 Due to the condition of the trees, there are no physiological reasons to prevent implementation of the works.
- 7.8 Resurvey of the trees ought to be complete by the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026. Resurvey is important as the condition of trees alters over time.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1: tree survey data

## Tree Condition Survey Data

Site Windmill Hill Common, Stratfield Mortimer  
 Date of survey 24th April 2023  
 Job reference J719.05  
 Surveyor Ben Abbatt  
 Resurvey To be complete by the 1st September 2026



Designation	Reference number	Species	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	801	Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	Mature	Good	Fair	Single large deadwood (more than 100mm diameter) over the carriageway. Frontage adjacent to 15 Longmoor Lane.	Remove deadwood more than 25mm diameter.	Low
T	802	Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Middle aged	Good	Poor	Vandalism causing bark loss on lower stem. Adjacent to woodland access adjacent to 15 Longmoor Lane.	Remove.	Low
T	1873	Scots pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Mature	Good	Poor	Second minor stem dead. To northwest of rear garden to 15 Longmoor Lane.	Remove dead minor stem.	Moderate
T	1874	Dead	Young	Dead		Dead. To the west of Windmill Court	Remove.	Low
T	1875	Birch <i>Betula pendula</i>	Middle aged	Dead		Dead. To the west of Windmill Court	Remove.	Low
T	1876	Birch <i>Betula pendula</i>	Middle aged	Dead		Dead. To the west of Windmill Court	Remove.	Low
T	1877	Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	Middle aged	Dead		Dead. North of 27 Windmill Road	Remove.	Low
T	1878	Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	Middle aged	Dead		Dead. North of track from 27 Windmill Road, on route to footpath from north of the common.	Remove.	Low

Designation	Reference number	Species	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	1879	Scots pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Mature	Dead		Dead. To the north west of Windmill Court	Remove.	Low
T	1880	Scots pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Mature	Dead		Dead. To the north west of Windmill Court	Remove.	Low
T	813	Scots pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Mature	Good	Poor	Canker on lower stem: potential for decay and stem failure. Northern part of the common to east of footpath to the north.	Remove.	Low
		Deadwood				Deadwood throughout the site.	Remove deadwood more than 25mm diameter over the public footways through the woodland.	Low
		Holly				Holly: invasive and suppresses the herbaceous layer and mid canopy.	Remove 1/10th of all holly throughout the common on an annual basis. Task may be suitable for competent volunteers. Holly removal to commence from the centre towards the perimeter of the site to leave a 7m buffer around the perimeter of the site. Stumps of cut holly to be treated to prevent regrowth with appropriate herbicide (see HSE Pesticides Guide) (for instance <a href="https://www.progreen.co.uk/ecoplug-max-100-plugs-prevent-tree-stump-regrowth/">https://www.progreen.co.uk/ecoplug-max-100-plugs-prevent-tree-stump-regrowth/</a> ) .	Low
		Arisings				Arisings can be used to create habitat.	Stack all foliage from tree works in 1.5m wide by 1m high for c7m 'dead hedges' for wildlife habitat (for instance <a href="https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/build-a-dead-hedge-for-wildlife/">https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/build-a-dead-hedge-for-wildlife/</a> ).	Low

## **Appendix 2: tree survey plan**

Refer to Parish Online data held by Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council.

### Appendix 3: general notes

The tree survey can only be an assessment of the tree at the time of the survey and the tree(s) should be re-surveyed on a regular basis. An appropriate time period between surveys may be up to 5 years depending upon the condition of the trees, their maturity and the target(s). Recommendations for the period between surveys will be given.

As trees are dynamic structures their condition and health may change in a short period of time, particularly in relation to changes in their immediate environment and circumstances. Therefore, the survey is an assessment of the trees at the time of the survey only. If there is a significant change in the immediate environment and circumstances, then this should be brought to the attention of the arboriculturalist so that they may advise accordingly.

I have not specifically checked with the planning authority whether the site is within a Conservation Area or whether the trees are under Tree Preservation Order (TPO), but I have relied upon their published map information. Prior to any tree works confirmation of whether these legal restrictions apply to the site or trees ought to be sought from the planning authority. If the trees stand within a Conservation Area designated under the Town and Country Planning Act the LPA will normally require 6 weeks notice of intention to carry out any tree works as detailed in the survey. If the trees are under TPO then the planning authority will normally require an application for any tree works. Some tree works are exempt, for instance if the trees are dead or dangerous, and certain works can be carried out without application. It is necessary to give the planning authority at least five days notice prior to carrying out any of these tree works under these exemptions. This survey, with recommendations, can be used to support any such application or notice.

Wildlife issues are of significant concern to the general public. A balance has to be found between the protection of wildlife and the need for safety when managing trees. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1980) and Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000) give statutory protection to wild birds, bats, mammals, some invertebrates and plants. It is important to ensure that this legislation is properly considered when carrying out any works to trees.

Bird nests were not identified whilst on site. However, any Arborist carrying out the tree works should ensure that there is no disturbance to nesting birds prior to the works being carried out. Further guidance upon the appropriate timing of the works can be sought from DEFRA, if necessary. Where nesting birds are found, further information should be sought from DEFRA 08459 33 55 77 or [helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk). Prior to any works being implemented the tree contractor must identify whether there are any bats or birds using the tree as roost or nest. If such habitation is identified, then the tree contractor must obtain the necessary licence from Natural England (0845 601 4523 [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)) to carry out the works.

A bat survey prior to tree works is not recommended, except where there is a high potential for habitat. During the tree works, the contractor should carry out the tree works with bats as an active consideration and follow the current industry best practice, e.g. Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 1 Bats in the context of tree work operations 2011, BS8596 Micro guide to surveying for bats in trees and woodland <https://shop.bsigroup.com/upload/273444/BSI-Bat-Microguide-UK-EN.pdf> which a competent tree contractor should be familiar with.

Biosecurity measures: To minimise the potential for contamination of the tree from other tree works it is appropriate to sterilise tools to be used before and after the works are implemented. Appropriate disinfectant includes Propellar or Cleankill Sanitizing spray. Loose debris is to be brushed off prior to treating with disinfectant to ensure appropriate application. See [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS028-guidance.pdf/\\$file/FCMS028-guidance.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS028-guidance.pdf/$file/FCMS028-guidance.pdf) for further information on Biosecurity and <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-9fjd2d> for disinfectant information.



## Appendix 4: key to tree survey data

<b>Desig</b>	Designation (T is Tree, G is Group, H is Hedge, W is woodland, S is Stump)	
<b>No</b>	Tree number.	
<b>Species</b>	Species of tree.	
<b>Height</b>	Height measured in metres.	
<b>Canopy spread</b>	Canopy spread in metres is taken at the four cardinal points to derive an accurate representation of the crown.	
<b>Height of crown</b>	Height in metres of crown clearance above adjacent ground level.	
<b>Age Class</b>	<b>Young</b>	A tree considered to be less than approximately 20 years old.
	<b>Middle aged</b>	A tree in approximately the first 1/5th of its normal life span with apical dominance (rapidly growing with a clear main leader) and not yet fully at its environmental potential full height.
	<b>Mature</b>	A tree in its 2/5ths to 5/5ths of its normal life span with apical dominance lost and at its environmental potential full height.
<b>Condition</b> (Physiological and Structural)	<b>Good</b>	A tree of typical physiological and structural condition that requires only general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape.
	<b>Fair</b>	A tree of impaired physiological and / or structural condition that may require remedial and general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape.
	<b>Poor</b>	A tree of significantly impaired physiological and / or structural condition that will require remedial and general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape if feasible.
<b>Recommendations</b>	As per BS3998: 2010 Recommendations for Tree Works.	
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Immediate</b>	Works should be carried out immediately as the probability of harm or damage occurring is likely.
	<b>High</b>	These works are important to carry out as soon as reasonably possible and any budget available for tree management should be spent upon these trees before the moderate and low categories. Works in this category usually will relate to abatement of risk for harm and or damage to occur. Ideally works in this category are anticipated to be carried out within 1 month.
	<b>Moderate</b>	These works are important to carry out as soon as reasonably possible and any budget available for tree management should be spent upon these trees before the low categories. Works in this category usually will relate to abatement of risk for harm and or damage to occur and for the good arboricultural management of the trees. Ideally works in this category are anticipated to be carried out within 3 months.
	<b>Low</b>	Works in this category usually will relate to the good arboricultural management of the trees. Ideally works in this category are anticipated to be carried out within 12 months.
<b>Re-survey</b>	This is the time period in which it is recommended that the tree is surveyed again. This is based upon the condition of the tree, its location, previous, current and future management. It is normally expressed at a time period from the date of the report / survey, whichever is the sooner. If no time period is noted then the default period is one year.	

## **Appendix 5: surveyor qualifications and experience**

Ben Abbatt has been involved in the arboricultural industry since the mid 1990s and has worked in a variety of roles within the industry, starting as a forestry contractor, progressing to the surveying and management of forestry and arboricultural contracts for a national forestry company and running the arboricultural section of a horticultural business overseas. Additionally, Ben has worked in local Government at Borough and County levels, providing planning related advice and managing Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Areas, as well as managing highways trees and contracts.

Since 2006, Ben has been the Director and Principal Consultant of Sapling Arboriculture Ltd.

Ben is a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF), Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Society for the Environment (SocEnv) and the Arboricultural Association (AA), having been an Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant since 2006. He is also a member of the International Society of Arboriculture and the Royal Forestry Society.

He holds many arboricultural and forestry qualifications including the Professional Diploma in Arboriculture awarded by the Royal Forestry Society, the Technicians' Certificate awarded by the Arboricultural Association and an HNC in Forestry.

Ben is also a freelance trainer for LANTRA, delivering courses in Basic Tree Survey and Inspection and Professional Tree Inspection.



© 2023

This document was written by, belongs to and is copyright to Sapling Arboriculture Limited. No responsibility or liability is accepted by Sapling Arboriculture Limited towards any person other than the clients named in this document in respect of the use of this document or reliance on the information contained within it, except as may be designated by law for any matter outside the scope of this document.