



Tree condition survey of trees

at

Parish Council Cemetery¹, Stratfield Mortimer

Surveyed by
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Client

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council
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¹ <https://what3words.com/blankets.downhill.shifters>
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1. Instruction

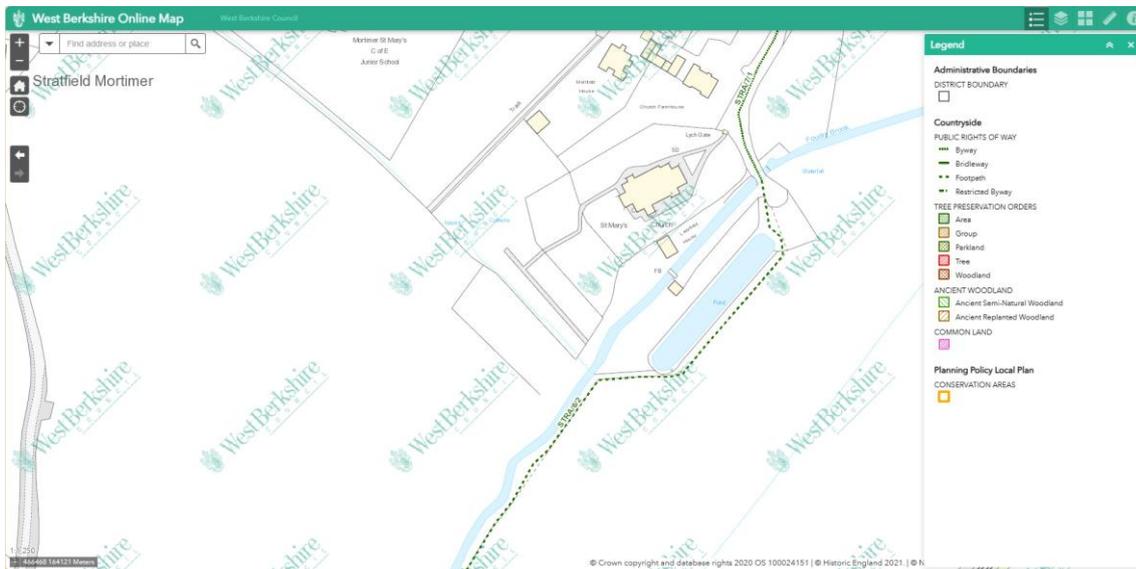
- 1.1 I was instructed by Bernise O'Reilly, Assistant to the Clerk, Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, to carry out a tree condition survey of trees at the Parish Council Cemetery, paying particular attention to any features that may pose a significant hazard to persons or property, and to produce a 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 with respect to the users of the site and adjacent properties.

2. Site details

- 2.1 The Parish Cemetery is to the west of St Mary's Church accessed from Church Lane with junction to The Street. Residential housing is to the south east, Foudry Brook to the south and agricultural fields to the west and north of the cemetery. The site has a southeasterly aspect.

3. Statutory controls

- 3.1 The online mapping tool provided by West Berkshire Council, accessed on 22nd November 2023, identifies that the site is not subject to Conservation Area controls or subject to Tree Preservation Order; see image SAL1:



SAL1 Data provided by the council website².

- 3.2 The site is not adjacent to a highway and therefore the Highways Act 1980³ does not apply.
- 3.3 The site is a cemetery and therefore I believe that the Forestry Act 1967⁴ does not apply.
- 3.3 I believe that there is no legal impediment to the implementation of the remedial works identified.
- 3.4 This document does not consider specific covenants.

² <https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap/?vln=TREE%20PRESERVATION%20ORDERS>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/154>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/10/section/9>

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. 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 for tree outside the site 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 11th October 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 general tree works, for instance the removal of low branches to allow pedestrian and vehicular access, or management of hedge features, or removal of deadwood within the tree canopy. 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 Arisings from tree works can be chipped into the hedge and allowed to rot away over time. This waste material disposal may also reduce the cost of works and improve biosecurity as the arisings do not need to be taken from site.
- 6.4 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.

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. No trees were 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 Resurvey of the trees ought to be complete by the 1st November 2026. Resurvey is important as the condition of trees alters over time.

Appendices

Appendix 1: tree survey data

Tree Condition Survey Data

Site Parish Council Cemetery, Stratfield Mortimer
 Date of survey 11th October 2023
 Job reference J719.06
 Surveyor Ben Abbatt
 Resurvey To be complete by the 1st June 2026



Designation	Reference number	Species	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	825	Sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Mature	Good	Fair	Outside site. Low branches within the site. Ivy impedes survey.	Crown lift (removal of branches in the lower canopy from ground level to the specified height) to 4m within the site. Maximum wound diameter to be 75mm.	Low
H	826	Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> , Hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> , Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Middle aged	Good	Fair	Self set sycamore within the hedge. Hedge outgrowing position.	Remove the sycamore self set trees and treat stumps with appropriate herbicide to prevent regrowth. Maintain as 1.5m high hedge.	Low
T	827	Field Maple <i>Acer campestre</i>	Middle aged	Good	Fair	Low branches. Minor 'v' shaped included bark union (weaker attachment than a normal 'u' shaped tensile union) at 1m.	Crown lift to 4m.	Low
T	828	Sycamore	Mature	Good	Poor	Failed root plate with new growth, now 5m high, on the top side of fallen stem.	Remove and treat stump to prevent regrowth.	Low
T	1433	Sycamore	Mature	Good	Fair	Two stems from near the base with moderate included bark union. Cavity with decay at base to northwest.	No works required at the time of the survey.	~
H	No reference	Sycamore, Lime <i>Tilia</i> , Field maple, Yew <i>Taxus baccata</i> , Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn	Mature	Good	Fair	Field boundary between the existing cemetery and the cemetery extension.	Crown lift to 4m within the site. Bring hedge elements into field hedge management at 1.5m high.	Low

Designation	Reference number	Species	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	833	Cherry <i>Prunus avium</i>	Young	Good	Good	~	No works required at the time of the survey.	~
T	835	Sycamore	Mature	Good	Fair	Asymmetrical canopy to the west. Co-dominant stems from 2m. Minor stem removed at base on the north side. Adjacent to 'bridge' structure. On embankment down to filled in ditch.	Crown lift to 4m.	Low
T	837	Lime <i>Tilia cordata</i>	Mature	Good	Good	~	Crown lift to 4m.	Low
T	838	Sycamore	Mature	Good	Fair	Minor 'v' shaped included bark union at 5.5m. Occasional moderate (25 to 100 mm diameter) deadwood throughout.	Remove deadwood more than 25 mm diameter. Crown lift to 4m.	Low
T	839	Sycamore	Mature	Good	Fair	Co-dominant stems from 3m.	No works required at the time of the survey.	~
T	No reference	Tulip tree <i>Tulipifera liriodendron</i>	Young	Good	Good	New planting.	Formative prune to develop central leader to improve form and allow to develop. Install mower and strimmer protection at base.	Low
T	840	Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Middle aged	Good	Good	~	Crown lift to 4m.	Low
T	841	Lime	Middle aged			Stump.	Remove stump.	Low
G	No reference					Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , Sycamore, Field Maple. Southern boundary to the existing cemetery area with numerous trees overhanging the site from the adjacent land. Fence and vegetation impedes access for complete survey.	Crown lift to 4m within the site.	Low

Designation	Reference number	Species	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	1434	Lime	Mature	Good	Fair	Asymmetrical canopy to the west. Adjacent to 'bridge' structure. On embankment down to filled in ditch.	Crown lift to 4m.	Low
T	1435	Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	Mature	Good	Good	Typical frequent moderate deadwood throughout. Low branches. Ivy and bramble impede survey of the base of the tree. On embankment above water course.	Remove deadwood more than 25 mm diameter. Crown lift to 4m only removing branches less than 75mm diameter. Sever ivy at base and remove to 2m using handtools only and taking care to avoid damage to the bark beneath. Remove brambles within 1m of the base of the tree. Resurvey once the ivy has been removed and the brambles have been cleared from the base.	Low
T	1436	Oak	Middle aged	Good	Good	Asymmetrical canopy to the west. Low branches. On embankment above water course.	Remove deadwood more than 25 mm diameter. Crown lift to 4m only removing branches less than 75mm diameter.	Low
T	1437	Sycamore	Mature	Good	Fair	Asymmetrical canopy to the north. Previously topped at c5m with mature regrowth.	Crown lift to 4m.	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. 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) 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 to 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

Desig	Designation (T is Tree, G is Group, H is Hedge, W is woodland, S is Stump)	
No	Tree number.	
Species	Species of tree.	
Height	Height measured in metres.	
Canopy spread	Canopy spread in metres is taken at the four cardinal points to derive an accurate representation of the crown.	
Height of crown	Height in metres of crown clearance above adjacent ground level.	
Age Class	Young	A tree considered to be less than approximately 20 years old.
	Middle aged	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.
	Mature	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.
Condition (Physiological and Structural)	Good	A tree of typical physiological and structural condition that requires only general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape.
	Fair	A tree of impaired physiological and / or structural condition that may require remedial and general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape.
	Poor	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.
Recommendations	As per BS3998: 2010 Recommendations for Tree Works.	
Priority	Immediate	Works should be carried out immediately as the probability of harm or damage occurring is likely.
	High	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.
	Moderate	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.
	Low	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.
Re-survey	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.



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