Weston on the Green Parish Council

Tree Management Plan

April 2024

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Instruction

Bicester Tree Services Ltd has been instructed by Jane Mullane on behalf of Weston on the Green Parish Council to undertake a tree safety survey and create a tree management plan for the trees under the management of the Parish Council in compliance with their 'Duty of Care' under the Occupiers Liability Act 1984. The aim of the survey is to reduce risk and long term cost of tree and vegetation management, recommendations within the report will often exceed the legal minimum requirement.

A map of the areas which required inspection were provided by the client or their representative in the form of a digital map. No trees outside of this area were inspected. It is the client's responsibility to ensure that the boundaries marked on the digital maps which they have provided are accurate and include all areas which should be included within the survey.

In areas where public access is occasional or less frequent we have been instructed to undertake a negative tree survey of all trees over 20cms DBH. Where there is a reasonable expectation of public access any tree with a significant defect will be plotted and detailed within the report.

In areas of frequent or constant public access a complete tree survey will be undertaken, this will also include all significant trees over 20cms DBH, all trees will be plotted and detailed including those with no significant defects.

Survey specification and methodology

Survey Dates. The Survey was undertaken in April 2024.

Site Description. Weston on the Green Parish Council have four areas under their management where trees are present and required inspection. On North Lane there is Duck Pond and Oak Tree Pond, which as the name suggests has a pond with small trees surrounding Duck Pond and a large Weeping Willow adjacent to Oak Tree Pond. On Church Lane, there are The Stocks which have two mature Sycamore within an area of short cut grass and The Spinney, which is west of Jubilee Playing Field and is an area of approximately 1 acre of mature Ash with occasional semi-mature Oak.

The frequency of access is slightly complicated by areas of restricted access and the proximity of the highway, North Lane has occasional foot traffic with frequent vehicular access, the area beneath the crowns of the trees which are accessible would be generally infrequent, with the exception of those trees overhanging the highway. Church Lane has infrequent to occasional foot traffic with frequent to constant vehicular access at peak times, again as with North Lane, access beneath the crowns of the trees next to the stocks would be infrequent. Many of the trees within The Spinney have the potential to fall into areas of occasional to frequent access however, with the exception of those trees overhanging the informal paths and highway, a large proportion of the area has restricted access with a high water table and course vegetation. The informal paths can have occasional to frequent access during warm summer days, however the footpaths become difficult to navigate during winter and spring as the ground becomes saturated.

As such the recommendations made within the schedule reflect the likelihood of failure and the risk of injury or damage which might result from the failure of the defect. If the frequency of use within an area is altered significantly a resurvey of the trees in proximity to the particular area is recommended.

The system of tree surveying which has been employed is the Visual Tree Assessment or VTA introduced by Claus Mattheck, a biomechanically based system which is the identification of symptoms produced by a tree in reaction to a weak spot, or area of mechanical stress. VTA is a non-invasive method of examining the health and structural condition of individual trees and as such no internal measurements have been taken.

Tree Tagging. Every significant tree which has been highlighted within the survey is uniquely identifiable with a blue plastic tag with sequential numbers. This number is used to identify the tree within the tree schedule and determine any necessary remedial action recommended. A single aluminium 65mm nail has been used to attach the tree tag, the length of the nail permits further increases in timber diameter prior to the bark being in contact with the tree tag.

Tree location. Every tree or group of trees included within the schedule will wherever possible be plotted within the aerial imagery, the crown spread will be identified and the tree tag number will where space allows be located within the canopy area. Where tree density and scale do not permit the plotting of every tree, directional arrows will be used between trees which have been located.

Areas surveyed, within the aerial imagery or site plan, all areas included within the survey will be outlined in blue, areas which have been specifically excluded will be labelled as such and will be outlined in red. If any of the areas which fall under your responsibility have not been included and outlined within the report, this would indicate that the area has not been surveyed, this should be brought to our attention immediately. We do not accept any liability for incidence occurring as a result of areas which have been omitted from the survey, unless we have been made aware of the oversight and agree that we are obligated to survey the area prior to an incident occurring.

Species. The name of the tree is generally the common English name of the tree or the Latin name where this is commonly used.

Diameter. The stem diameter is estimated at approximately 1.5m above ground level or where a more fair reflection of the stem diameter can be achieved, the estimate is for identification purposes only and is not accurate.

Height. The height of the tree is estimated in metres and is for identification purposes only.

A brief description of the condition of the tree is often included to aid identification and direct the team undertaking the remedial works. This may be omitted where no significant features have been noted.

Recommendations. The instruction for remedial action included within the report schedule should meet the minimum requirement to reduce the risk of failure to an acceptable level during normal conditions, however this does not ensure that failure cannot occur, it is legally acknowledged that a tree is not or cannot be maintained as 100% structurally safe and failures can occur without external signs or prior warning. Recommendations may be made to undertake works which will reduce the long term cost implication of retaining the tree in its current form or condition, such as reduce an extended limb or fell; these recommendations are often prioritised as MR (management recommendation) . Recommendations prioritised as MR can be excluded by the client from works which are instructed without a significant increase in risk to members of the public.

Frequency of use. Unless otherwise advised the frequency of use is estimated whilst undertaking the survey, the number of people seen whilst undertaking the survey, ground conditions, vegetation, infrastructure and location will all be considered. If the use of an area alters significantly so as to increase the frequency with which it is used, a resurvey of the area is recommended.

Priority. The works are broken down into 6 main categories 1, 3, 6, 12, and 24 months, a contractor should be instructed to proceed within the periods specified unless the works are prioritised as MR. When quotations for the remedial works are being produced, recommendations prioritised as a management recommendation should be itemised by the contractor unless otherwise instructed.

Validity. Trees are living organisms, readily affected by environmental changes, therefore, observations can only be considered as correct at the time of inspection. In the light of this, unless otherwise specified within the re-inspection column of the schedule, the report can only be considered valid for a maximum period of 30 months, provided that all factors remain unchanged. It is strongly recommended that an interim inspection is undertaken after storm strength winds or other extreme weather events. The aim of the report will be to reduce the risk of damage or injury occurring through the failure of an area of the tree, to an acceptable level during normal weather conditions.

Limitation. The survey was undertaken from ground level, no internal investigation was undertaken, no soil samples were taken, no judgement on the condition of the tree below ground level was made, where leaf cover or Ivy obscured areas of the crown judgements on the condition of the tree were made from what was visible at the time of inspection.

Qualifications and Experience: I (Matthew Steele) undertook the tree safety survey on behalf of Bicester Tree Services Ltd. I have worked within the arboricultural industry for over 13 years working at all levels from groundsman to arboricultural manager. As a practicing arborist I have an up to date working knowledge of the implications of defects within the structure of a tree. My academic qualifications include an FDSc in Arboriculture 2008 from Myerscough College and more recently Lantra Level 2 Professional Tree Inspection Qualification 2015.

Site specific management recommendations.

Conservation Areas. An area of significant architectural or historical interest, the character of which is considered worth of preservation or enhancement. Trees within a conservation area are protected and require a section 211 notice or application to the local authority to notify them of your intent to undertake work, the notification period is six weeks.

Felling License. Under the forestry act (1967) a felling license is required to fell more than 5m3 of timber per quarter unless the following exceptions apply. The trees are dead, are felled in the prevention of a danger, are subject to a tree preservation order or are located within a conservation area and have permission from the local authority, the trees are located within an orchard, garden, churchyard or public open space.

Nesting Birds. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) it is an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird, take damage or destroy a nest whilst it is in use or being built, to take or destroy the eggs of any wild bird or intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird. Tree work to coniferous trees or

heavily Ivy clad trees should be scheduled outside of the bird nesting season, ideally works should be undertaken from late November to early February.

Ivy management. Ivy can provide a valuable habitat for a range of insects, small birds or mammals and rarely causes significant damage to a tree. Where ivy obscures areas of the main stem or major scaffold branches a judgement is made which takes into account the likelihood of a significant defect, the frequency of use and target value along with the cost of Ivy removal and the habitat reduction which would result. Where Ivy is retained there is an increase risk that significant defects are missed and as such there is a greater risk of failure. When Ivy encroaches on the outer canopy of the tree it competes with the tree for light, this can result in the death of otherwise healthy trees. When Ivy reaches the upper canopy it is recommended that it is cut near ground level, when it has died and the Ivy leaves fall a visual inspection of the tree can be undertaken. The period between severing the Ivy at the base and re-inspection is usually around 2-3 years.

Badger Setts. Under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992) it is an offence to damage, destroy, disturb or block access to a badger sett. It is not usually necessary to apply for a license to clear vegetation from around a badger sett including felling small trees, as long as the trees are not uprooted and the entrance to the sett is not damaged or blocked. If heavy machinery is to be used to extract timber Natural England should be consulted to consider the possible implications of the timber extraction.

Sesia apiformis or Hornet Moth. Similar in appearance to a Hornet, the moth emerge from the base of Poplar trees during the early mornings in June/July. The mature moths lay their eggs around the base of the tree and the larvae burrow under the bark of Black and Lombardy Poplar, the damage they cause to the cambium often results in secondary infection by fungi such as Honey Fungus. Extensive damage through larval feeding below the bark can cause areas of necrotic bark and an inability to produce reaction wood in response to changes in internal or external conditions. The secondary infection can spreads rapidly through the timber and cause the tree to fall. The extent of decay present can be difficult to determine from external signs, however dieback of the upper canopy can be an indication of extensive decay.

Glossary of Terminology

Access:

Restricted access: a natural or man-made barrier will restrict access, it would be unlikely that a member of the public will access this area.

Rarely accessed: weekly/monthly.

Infrequent: the area may be accessed over the period of a day.

Occasional: the area may be access hourly.

Frequent: several people will access the area per hour.

Constant access: you are likely to find a member of the public within the area during an average day.

Aerial Inspection: A suitably qualified and experienced arborist should access the canopy of the tree to take a closer visual inspection of major branch unions and potentially significant defects.

Age class:

Young: typically exhibits strong apical growth and has not reached sexual maturity.

Semi Mature: usually exhibits strong apical growth and has reached sexual maturity.

Mature: depending on the species of the tree it will typically exhibit a decurrent form or reduced apical growth in coniferous species and is sexually mature.

Fully Mature: the tree will have reached its full growth potential.

Over Mature: the tree will exhibit a reduction in vitality unrelated to external biological factors.

Veteran: of significance in size, visual or historical importance.

Apical dominance: where the central stem of the tree is dominant over other branches and typically exhibits strong vertical growth.

Chlorotic: a reduction in the quantity of chlorophyll within the leaves of the tree, often resulting from an external stress or decline in the health of the tree.

Co-dominant stem: when more than one stem competes for dominance often resulting in poor attachment between the stems.

Crown raise: to remove low lateral branches to provide clearance above ground level or encourage vertical growth and the development of a good form.

Crown reduce: to decrease the area of the canopy, cutting back to suitably sized side branches.

Crown thin: to remove branches from within the canopy to allow light to reach the ground

DBH: diameter at breast height, the measurement of the main stem at 1.5m or at a level which more accurately reflects the diameter of the tree.

Decurrent: a predominantly spreading habit a reduction in vertical growth in relation to the overall increase in the size of the tree.

Epicormic growth: shoots which arise from something other than a bud, often found on certain species causing dense growth at the base of the tree or on the main stem.

Etiolated: when under extreme competition stress trees will increase in height rapidly, these trees often lack a significant branch structures and are at a higher risk of failure during strong winds.

Exudation: the weeping or bleeding of a tree often caused by localised bacterial or fungal infection.

Highways clearance: a legally required minimum of 5.03m (16ft 6in) vertical clearance should be maintained above the road surface at all times and 2.4m (8ft) above the footpath.

Included union: where bark is present within the union of stem and branch, resulting in a weakness which can lead to failure under normal conditions.

Ivy clad: when Ivy growth extends beyond the main stem and obscures the branch structure of the tree, restricting visual assessment of the condition of the tree.

Ivy removal: An area specified within the report will be cleared of Ivy growth to permit further inspection.

Ivy (sever): The main stems of the Ivy will be cut near ground level so as to kill the Ivy and permit future inspections.

Minor deadwood: typically with a diameter less than 50mm.

Moderate deadwood: typically with a diameter less than 75mm.

Major deadwood: typically with a diameter in excess of 75mm.

Necrotic bark: an area of bark covering dead timber which cannot grow or react to external forces.

Normal conditions: typical weather conditions which would not be considered extreme, strong winds would be included within normal conditions but for example named storms would not.

Primary branches: are attached to the main stem of the tree and are generally lateral i.e. not vertical.

Reaction wood: wood produced in response to an applied force, whether internal or external, the resulting shape of the timber is less uniform, the reaction wood is typically stronger and may be altered on the cellular level to compensate for a weakness or resist decay.

Retrenchment: the die back of the crown of the tree, typically starting at the top of the tree occurring within trees which have lost vitality

Scaffold branches: the framework of largest primary or secondary branches which support the majority of the crown.

Terminal decline: a reduction in the health of the tree to the point where the leaf area is insufficient to ensure continued survival.

Vitality: a measure of the health of the tree, its ability to maintain the canopy in a healthy condition, produce new growth or respond to changes in external conditions.