



Consultancy Services

Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, Bradbourne Vale
Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3DH

SSSI Boundary Fencing: Preliminary Arboricultural
Scoping Survey



KWT Consultancy Services



Head Office: Kent Wildlife Trust, Tyland Barn, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3BD

Tel: 01622 662012

info@kentwildlife.org.uk | kentwildlifetrust.org.uk



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Report Verification

Client	Kent Wildlife Trust
Site / job	Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3DH
Central Grid Reference	TQ52185636
Report Title	Preliminary Arboricultural Scoping Survey
Report Reference	ECOSERV003

Quality Assurance

Report Version	Date	Prepared By	Reviewed By	Approved By
Draft	10 March 2021	Neil Coombs, BSc, CEnv, MCIEEM, TechArborA, Land Management Consultant, KWT Consultancy Services		
Final	17 March 2021		Anne Waite BSc, CBiol, MRSB Project Manager, KWT Consultancy Services	Vincent Ganley Managing Director, KWT Consultancy Services

This report has been prepared in accordance with the guidance provided in British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction'.

This report has been prepared by KWT Consultancy Services for the sole use of the client.

All opinions expressed are the true and professional bona fide opinions of K WT Consultancy Services. They do not constitute professional advice and the client may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the relevant wildlife legislation referenced in this report.

Any information provided by third parties and referred to within this report has not been checked or verified by KWT Consultancy Services unless otherwise expressly stated within this document.

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1 SUMMARY

Kent Wildlife Trust is seeking to obtain planning permission for a new 2m high security fence to be installed adjacent to a public highway along the western boundary of Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve SSSI.

In connection with the proposed works, KWT Consultancy Services was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Arboricultural Scoping Survey to establish whether more detailed tree survey work should be undertaken prior to commencement of work.

The survey area was found to support a varied number of tree species and age classes, with a number of trees being recorded within the area of likely construction of the new fence-line.

At the time of writing this report it has not been established which, if any, trees would require to be felled or pruned during the installation of the new fence-line. However, given the close proximity of many of the trees to the fence-line, the proposals have the potential to involve excavating in areas very close to trees and within the area most likely to be supporting root systems. Such works have the potential to affect the condition of trees such as where roots might be severed or soils compacted. Any felling or pruning may also alter the environmental situation of trees growing in companionship.

It is strongly recommended that an arboricultural consultant should be commissioned to:

- Provide a Tree Survey according to the requirements set out in BS 5837: 2012.
- Provide an Arboricultural Method Statement covering the works that have the potential to affect trees in accordance with the recommendations set out in BS 5837: 2012.
- Obtain any necessary licences for the felling or pruning of trees.
- Provide advice as to appropriate mitigation for any trees to be removed.

It is recommended that one tree with bracket fungi located at TQ 5166 5665 should be referred for inspection by a qualified arboriculturalist.

It is recommended that the attention of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve site warden should be drawn to the Health and Safety risk posed by the presence of broken, dead and partially attached branches on trees located in the vicinity of the of the informal pedestrian path running along the West Lake shoreline.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Kent Wildlife Trust is seeking to obtain planning permission for a new 2m high security fence to be installed adjacent to a public highway along the western boundary of Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve SSSI. The fencing installation may involve the felling and pruning of trees as well as excavation within the root plate area of trees in the vicinity of the fence-line.

2.2 Scope of work

In connection with the above proposals, KWT Consultancy Services was commissioned to:

- Write a Method Statement for the proposed fence installation, to include recommendations for the avoidance or mitigation of impacts on the protected species which are likely to be present within the area based on the habitats present and existing survey data for Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, namely reptiles, breeding birds, Roman snails and tree-roosting bat species.
- Undertake a preliminary arboricultural scoping survey to determine the need for additional surveys and specifically a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement.

This report presents the findings of the Preliminary Arboricultural Scoping Survey only. It is recommended that it is read alongside the associated Method Statement (KWT Consultancy Services, March 2021) to ensure issues relating to protected species / trees are fully addressed.

2.3 Survey Area

The fencing is proposed for the western boundary of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve SSSI. The reserve is situated on the northern periphery of Sevenoaks town (see Figure 1). The village of Dunton Green is located to the west, the A25 to the South, residential and commercial areas to the west and open agricultural land to the north. It is accessed from Bradbourne Vale Road at OS grid reference TQ5218 5636.

The Reserve is owned and managed by Kent Wildlife Trust and comprises a 73ha area including five lakes and surrounding areas of broadleaved woodland with dense scrub, numerous smaller ponds, wet woodland and reedbed, with a number of bird hides and trails for public use. The River Darent flows through the north of the site. The reserve is all designated as SSSI for its breeding wetland bird assemblage and Downy Emerald dragonfly. The reserve also sits in an area identified in the Sevenoaks District Plan as: Area of Archaeological Potential, and Metro Greenbelt.

The OS grid references for the start and end of the proposed fencing are TQ 51685 56525 and TQ 51736 57239 respectively. Figure 1 shows the proposed location and extent for the new SSSI boundary fence.

2.4 Limitations

The survey was limited to a single site walkover and rapid assessment. It should not be considered as forming in any way a tree survey or the advice of an arboricultural consultant.

The work undertaken does not constitute a tree safety survey and should not under any circumstances be considered as such.

The trees within the survey area have not been surveyed in any detail. However, where the surveyor has noticed obvious features that may constitute defects these have been noted and recommendations made. These recommendations are made on the understanding that the surveyor is not qualified to provide an opinion as to the importance of these features. They should be referred to a qualified arboricultural consultant for detailed assessment.

Figure 1: Proposed route for new SSSI boundary fencing (green line)
The line shown is for indicative purposes only. Do not scale



3 TREES, DEVELOPMENT, LEGISLATION AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM

3.1 General

In order to receive planning approval, development proposals where trees are present must comply with relevant UK legislation and planning policies. These include but may not be limited to:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Local Plans
- Felling Licences and Woodland Grant Schemes
- Legislation with regard to wildlife

Information on the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plans and Tree Policy is provided below. Legislation with regard to wildlife is covered within the associated KWT Consultancy report (SSSI Boundary Fencing Method Statement) and is not repeated here.

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in the planning process, promoting a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In terms of the natural environment, development should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity (where possible)

As such trees are a material consideration in terms of the consideration of planning applications.

3.3 Local Plans

Local plans are prepared by the Local Authority with responsibility for planning and provide a framework for addressing housing, economic, social and environmental policies within the relevant area.

Where necessary the impact of these policies on trees and woodlands are considered within Local Plans.

3.4 Felling Licences and Woodland Grant Schemes

Applications for felling licences and grants for woodland planting and management are administered by the Forestry Commission.

Under felling licence regulations a licence is required to fell more than a certain amount, such as five cubic metres in any one quarter of a year.

The Forestry Commission may consult with the relevant local planning authority on grant and felling applications, with particular reference to the effects of proposals on amenity and landscape factors.

4 METHODOLOGY

The survey method involved a walkover and rapid assessment of the fence-line route and immediate surrounding area.

The extent of the survey area was informed by reference to BS 5837: 2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction', which recommends that trees within a distance of twelve times their diameter at 1.5m from the boundary of the construction area are considered.

A series of photographs taken during the survey are attached at Appendix 1.

The walkover / assessment was carried out by Neil Coombs, BSc, CEnv, MCIEEM, TechArborA, Ecologist and Land Management Consultant at KWT Consultancy Services with over 30 years' experience of ecological survey work and land management.

5 RESULTS

The survey area followed the existing fence-line which extends along the western boundary of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, bordering the West Lake and an area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

An informal pedestrian path runs along much of the shoreline of West Lake, immediately to the eastern side of a chestnut paling / palisade fence approximately one-metre-high and supported by 120mm posts at regular intervals. To the western side of the existing fence is a public footpath and beyond the public footpath to the west is variously woodland, light industrial buildings and residential development.

During the survey visit both the public footpath and informal pedestrian path were in frequent use. It was noted that a number of trees lie very close to existing / proposed new fence-line.

The tree resource was found to be varied with a number of species and age classes represented and consisted of mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and birch *Betula* sp. together with mature, probably hybrid poplars *Populus* sp., hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and acers. Many of the trees are covered with ivy *Hedera helix*, which would make detailed inspection difficult. There are also a number of maturing oaks *Quercus* sp. and, towards the lakeside, groups of mature alders *Alnus* sp.. Mature willows *Salix* sp. were present along the western side of the footpath.

During the course of this survey a poplar tree at TQ 5166 5665 was observed with bracket fungus present (possibly *Ganoderma applanatum / austral*) to the west of the trunk and approximately 30cms from the ground (Appendix 1, photograph 1). In addition, a number of broken, dead and partially attached branches were noted in the vicinity of the informal pedestrian path running along the West Lake shoreline.

6 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Discussion

The survey area supported a varied number of tree species and age classes, with a number of trees being recorded within the area of likely construction of the new fence-line.

At the time of writing this report it has not been established which, if any, trees would require to be felled or pruned during the installation of the new fence-line. However, the Root Protection Area of trees is generally considered to be a circle with a radius of 12 times the diameter of the tree when measured at 1.5m above ground level (BS 5837: 2012). Given the close proximity of many of the trees to the fence-line, the proposal to install new fencing has the potential to involve excavating in areas very close to trees and within the area most likely to be supporting root systems. Such works have the potential to affect the condition of trees such as where roots might be severed or soils compacted. Any felling or pruning may also alter the environmental situation of trees growing in companionship.

6.2 Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that an arboricultural consultant should be commissioned to:

- Provide a Tree Survey according to the requirements set out in BS 5837: 2012
- Provide an Arboricultural Method Statement covering the works that have the potential to affect trees in accordance with the recommendations set out in BS 5837: 2012.
- Obtain any necessary licences for the felling or pruning of trees.
- Provide advice as to appropriate mitigation for any trees to be removed.

It is recommended that the tree with bracket fungi located at TQ 5166 5665 should be referred for inspection by a qualified arboriculturalist.

It is recommended that the attention of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve site warden should be drawn to the Health and Safety risk posed by the presence of broken, dead and partially attached branches on trees located in the vicinity of the of the informal pedestrian path running along the West Lake shoreline.

7 REFERENCES

BS 5837: 2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. Recommendations.* British Standards Institution

Fay, Neville, Dowson, D and Helliwell, R. 2016. *Tree Surveys: A Guide to Good Practice. Guidance Note 7.* The Arboricultural Association

KWT Consultancy Services. March 2021. *SSSI Boundary Fencing Method Statement*

Mattheck, C, Bethge, K, and Weber, K. 2015. *The Body Language of Trees.* Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Lonsdale, D. 1999. *Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management.* Arboricultural Association

Watson, G, Green, T. 2011. *Fungi on Trees: An Arborists' Field Guide.* Arboricultural Association

Appendix 1: Annotated Site Photographs



Photograph 1. Tree with bracket fungus. TQ 5166 5665



Photograph 2. General view of survey area



Photograph 3. Example of mature tree directly in fence-line



Photograph 4. General view of trees in survey area



Photograph 5. Mature tree with roots exposed and proximity of fence-line