



advanced:

progressive *adj.*
forward-thinking
forward-looking
unconventional
cutting edge
innovative

higher *adj.*
superior
highly developed
sophisticated
complex

13th October 2021

Mr N Martin
Aluminis Multi Academy Trust
St Helens C of E School
Abbotsham
Bideford
EX39 5AP

Our ref: JW/B091/1021

Dear Nigel

Re: Dolton C of E School EX19 8QF

We visited the above site on the 12th of October 2021 and undertook a ground based visual survey of the all the trees growing at the school and around the playing fields. The purpose of the survey was to assess the health and safety of the trees and to give recommendations for any risk management of the trees that may be required. The site was walked over and the trees assessed from ground level unless otherwise noted. Where we have noted defects associated with an individual tree that could lead to a risk of harm being caused to persons or property, we have undertaken a detailed inspection of that tree. We have then given recommendations for managing the tree so as to reduce any risk of harm to an acceptable level. Details of those trees subject to a detailed inspection are given at Appendix A of this report. Trees within the survey remit but not individually recorded are considered a low enough risk to not require an individual assessment. A site map, showing the approximate location of the inspected trees, is attached at Appendix B. Photographs of selected trees are attached at Appendix C.

Our survey of the trees on this site was undertaken using the principles of Visual Tree Assessment (VTA). VTA is a systematic, non-invasive method of examining the health and structural condition of individual trees. By visually examining a tree, an arboriculturist can gather information on the condition of its roots, trunk and crown in order to make an assessment and draw conclusions about its general condition, health and vitality. If serious disease or mechanical weakness is suspected that cannot be confirmed using VTA techniques, then there may be a need for more detailed investigation, such as using specialist decay detection equipment or climbing techniques. Where necessary we will recommend the use of specialist equipment or other more detailed investigations. If these techniques will not add any significant new information for our consideration then we will not recommend their use.

Accessible cavities or decayed areas within trees may have been probed using a 60cm long thin metal probe to investigate the depth of any decay. Trees may also have been sounded using a rubber mallet to help detect the presence of internal decay or to assist in the determination of the extent of any suspected decay. Where appropriate the use of these tools will be detailed below.

We have assessed tree risk by relating any observable defects to the likelihood of those defects causing harm, using our knowledge and experience of tree hazard assessment and management, and have used this to inform a hazard rating for each inspected tree as detailed below. In essence we have considered any observed defects and their probability of failure in relation to the nearby land use (or “target”). Whilst any one tree may exhibit significant defects, the likelihood of that tree causing significant harm will be related to the size of the affected part, the probability of failure and the value of the target and/or the likelihood of persons being present within influencing distance of that tree at the time of failure. Risk cannot be reliably quantified in all situations and is therefore viewed in the context of a spectrum, with High and Low representing the extremes and Moderate being everything that falls in between.

In some cases we may advise non safety-critical works to trees where we consider that such works may help prolong the safe useful life expectancy of a tree or where they are in the interests of good arboricultural management. Such works will generally be given a Works Priority 4 within the Table of Recommendations. Appendix A includes a description of the Work Priorities and all the other abbreviations used within the data tables. We have also viewed neighbouring trees (as far as it is realistic to do so) from the site and we will inform you if we consider that any of these neighbouring trees require urgent works to reduce risks to your property or to persons using the site.

Trees are dynamic organisms and their safety cannot be absolutely guaranteed under all weather conditions. This report has been prepared using all reasonable skill and care. Opinions are provided in good faith.

Unless otherwise specified, any other measurements have been estimated from ground level and should be considered as indicative only. Inspected trees have been tagged on site with small metal tree tags affixed at approximately 2 metres above ground level where feasible to do so and their locations have been shown on the attached site map. Above ground inspection only. Soil type has not been ascertained on site. This report is not concerned with tree related subsidence risk issues.

A check with Torridge District Council's planning department revealed that none of the trees on the two sites are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. The school site falls within the Dolton Village Conservation Area, but the playing fields fall just outside of the Conservation Area. The boundary of the Conservation Area follows the boundary of the churchyard where it runs adjacent to the playing fields. Trees growing on this boundary may therefore be subject to Conservation Area controls. The effect of these local authority controls on trees is that most works will require the prior permission of the local authority. Where trees fall within a Conservation Area then most works require that a notification be submitted to the Torridge district Council (LPA). They then have 6 weeks in which to decide the notification. Within that time they can only allow the notified works or, alternatively, serve a TPO on the subject trees. If the LPA does not respond within the 6 week period then the works can proceed as per the notification. We will advise where an application or notification is required to enable any work recommended within this report.

The site was last inspected by my colleague Graham Joyce on the 17th of the August 2020. At that time he advised the Ash on site should be monitored.

Observations and Conclusions

Ash Dieback Disease (ADD) is now widespread throughout Devon and surrounding counties, though specific symptoms are not always obvious on more mature trees. The rate of decline of infected trees and the long-term prognosis for the health of Ash trees generally is currently uncertain. Some sources suggest that the UK may experience losses of up to 90% or more of its Ash trees in some areas. Woodland trees, in particular, appear to be particularly prone to decline. Once infected, trees can decline rapidly and quickly lose their structural integrity. On reaching less than 50% of their normal foliar density, they are likely to require removal where they pose a threat to persons or property. Such trees can become unpredictable and dangerous to fell, or to dismantle using normal rope access techniques, and may thus require removal using a Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWP) or other machinery. Hence, where trees are in an early stage of infection, are in locations that are inaccessible to machinery and would pose a risk to persons or property if they declined further, it may be appropriate to consider the pre-emptive removal of such trees while it is still possible to deal with them safely using conventional techniques. Each site will need to be considered on its own merits, but the removal of good quality trees, as a precautionary measure, is unlikely to be recommended at this stage.

I note that on the western boundary of the playing fields is a group of Ash (G556). I did not note the presence of any other Ash on site. This group includes two large multi-stem trees, both exhibiting signs of Ash Dieback Disease. The loss in foliar density is estimated to be approximately 30%. The group stands within falling distance to the football field and a caravan plot, in the neighbouring property. The amenity value of the group is low. The risk of harm from the group is low, however I recommend felling the group within the next 6 months while it is still possible to deal with them safely using conventional techniques. The removal of G556 at an advanced state of decline from ADD, is likely to be far more technically challenging, and hence more expensive, than its removal at an early stage of decline.

I note the presence of a hanging branch within T554, an Oak on the western boundary of the playing fields. The medium size lateral branch is partially attached and is suspended over the goalkeepers area on the football field. Although risk of harm from the branch falling is low I suggest removing this branch at the same time as Ash G556 are dealt with.

I note the presence of a small amount of deadwood within some of the other trees in the playing fields. Some breakage of this deadwood is possible during stormy weather but I consider that this poses a low risk of causing harm. I would encourage the retention of deadwood, where safe to do so, for its wildlife and biodiversity values. Therefore, I do not advise any works to remove this deadwood at present. If you would prefer this deadwood to be removed, then such works are likely to be considered as exempt works, as defined within the Town & Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012, and thus will require a five day notification rather than a formal application.

I note that branches from the Beech tree (T555) within the immediate grounds of the school are rubbing on the school building roof. Should this be allowed to continue there is a risk they will cause damage to the roof.

When time and finances permit, I recommend crown raising the north-eastern aspect to achieve a clearance of 1.5m over the roof. This can be achieved through the removal of four branches no greater than 50mm in diameter.

Recommendations

Table of recommendations and works priorities

Tree No	Species	Recommendations	WP
G556	Ash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fell 	3
T555	Beech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crown raise north-eastern aspect with max cut diameter of 50mm to achieve 1.5m clearance from roof. 	4
T554	Oak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove (75mm dia.) hanging branch over goalkeeper area 	3

See Appendix A for a list of abbreviations used

Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 & Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 it is an offence to recklessly damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird whilst in use or being built. Trees and shrubs on this site may contain nesting birds between early March and late August. It is recommended that vegetation clearance works are avoided between these dates if there is a reasonable potential for the disruption of nesting birds. If works need to be undertaken during the nesting season then it is advisable that a survey of the site be undertaken by a competent person before commencing any tree or shrub removal, to ensure that no nesting birds are present. Other species, including bats, are also protected under this legislation.

Beech (T555) falls within Dolton Village Conservation Area, so the recommended works will require a notification be submitted to Torridge District Council. We consider any works specified above as appropriate management for these trees and this should be acceptable to the local planning authority, however, they may consider alternative management options; they therefore have the option to modify or reject our proposals.

All tree works to be undertaken to BS3998:2010 *Tree Works - Recommendations*. Every effort has been made to ensure that any pruning specifications given above are achievable and specific to individual trees. Where a diameter of finished cuts or a final height and spread are specified this will normally be accurate to $\pm 10\%$. Where a maximum diameter of cuts is recommended then some cuts may be significantly less than this maximum figure. The finished height, where specified, refers to the final crown height and may not necessarily be the height above ground level of the pruning cuts. Some variations may be considered at the discretion of the contracting arborists. Where works have required approval by the local planning authority then the arborists must contact the author of this report before undertaking any significant variations to these works. I recommend that the appointed tree work contractor be Arboricultural Association Approved to ensure high standards.

I recommend that trees inspected for this report be re-inspected by a suitably qualified and experienced arboriculturist within two years of the date of this site inspection. The condition of trees can change following severe weather conditions or due to effects of pests and diseases or other abiotic factors and therefore may

warrant re-inspection of affected trees at a shorter interval than recommended in this report. Where possible I would recommend that re-inspections alternate between summer and winter, so that the trees can be viewed at different stages of their annual growth cycles, allowing a more complete assessment of any given tree's condition.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Worsley', written in a cursive style.

James Worsley
Dip Arb L6

Appendix A

Abbreviations used in the survey are as follows:

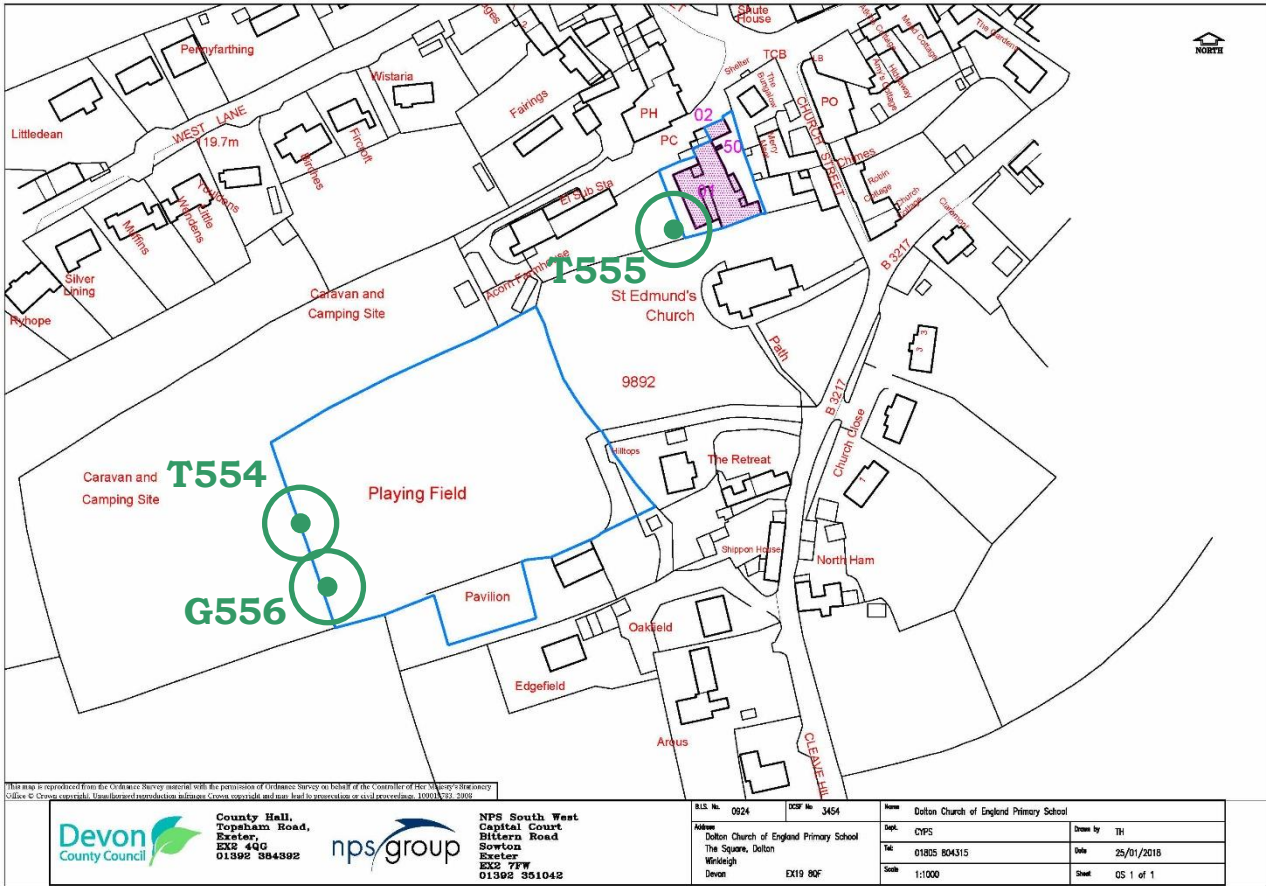
Tree No	Corresponding to tag and/or to number on attached Tree Location Plan. Groups are referred to by the prefix G , and individual trees by T . Groups refer to a collective resource that is, in the main, of one species only.
Species	Common name
Age Class	Y Young (grown to less than one third of life expectancy) MA Middle Aged (grown to between one to two-thirds of life expectancy) M Mature (grown to over two thirds of normal life expectancy) LM Late Mature V Veteran
Ht	Height range measured to nearest metre or estimated as below: L Low (0-10 metres) M Medium (10-20 metres) H High (20-30 metres plus)
LE	Safe Useful Life Expectancy: D Dead S Short (less than 10 years) L Low (10-20 years) M Medium (20-40 years) H High (40+ years)
AE	Amenity Evaluation: L Low M Moderate H High
Struct Cond	Structural Condition: G Good (tree with no significant defects) F Fair (tree with some defects amenable to surgery) P Poor (tree with significant defects)
Phys Cond	Physiological Condition: G Good (trees of good vigour) F Fair (trees of reasonable vigour) P Poor (trees of poor vigour) D Dead
Haz Rate	Hazard Rating: H Higher, significant risk of failure causing damage to persons or property. Risk is unacceptable – reduce hazard or remove target M Moderate risk of failure causing damage to persons or property. Risk falls between extremes of High and Low – reduce risk, taking other factors (amenity, ecological) into account L Lower, insignificant risk of failure. Risk is acceptable
WP	Work Priority 1 1 st Priority, Urgent. 2 2 nd Priority, suggest within 1 month 3 3 rd Priority, suggest within 6 months 4 Advisory. Non safety-critical works to be programmed when time and finances permit

Table of Findings:

Tree No	Species	Age Class	Ht (m)	L/E	AE	Struct Cond	Phys Cond	Comments	Haz Rate
T554	Oak	M	M	H	M	F	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failed branch partially attached at approximately 7m above ground level Branch overhangs the goalmouth of the football pitch Remove branch 	L
T555	Beech	M	M	H	H	G	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree growing very close to school buildings Branches starting to rub on roof 	L
G556	Ash	M	M	L	L	F	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group of 2 multi-stem trees Ash dieback disease present 30% crown loss In falling distance to caravan plot Not worthy of retention Fell whilst still practical 	L

End table.

Appendix B



Site Plan – Dolton C of E School

Appendix C - Photographs



Photograph 1 – Beech T555 rubbing on roof



Photograph 2 – Hanging branch in Oak T554 highlighted



Photograph 3 – Northern member of G556 exhibiting ash dieback disease centre, companion tree to left