

# MGL DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Redevelopment of the Glebe Hotel,  
Church Street, Barford, CV35 8BS

## BRIEF REPORT ON THE EXISTING CEDAR TREE

NOVEMBER 2021



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A significant part of the view from Church St is the large Cedar Tree (*Cedrus Libani*) which had been planted to frame the late Georgian/Regency addition to the Barford Rectory complex.

The Cedar of Lebanon was introduced into Britain around 400 years ago and was fashionably planted in many parks and estates.

The tree was introduced to Britain in 1638 and the oldest one still in existence was planted in 1646 by Dr Edward Pococke in the grounds of a Rectory near Wantage in Oxfordshire.

It was not until 1730 when the first tree apparently produced its egg shaped cones which take two years to mature that the craze for Cedars began.

From then on the trees were planted on a huge scale, and remained the favourite tree for grand estates and large houses until the 1840s when other new giant evergreens began to take their place.

It is unclear when the Barford Cedar was first planted but if it was planted alongside the completion of what is now the remaining Grade 2 Listed Rectory building it is probably around 200 years old.

When the Regency building was constructed the current hotel access did not exist. There was a long gravel drive with entrance gates set closer to High St. which then split into a separate carriage drive leading to a turning area in front of the main Rectory entrance and the other section running around the back of the site serving the kitchen yard, stables, walled garden etc.

The Cedar tree would have been located in a lawned parkland style garden and was designed to frame the three storey building which was also seen adjacent to St Peters Church. From a public view point it would have marked the Rectory as a grand country house which of course it was.

From 1948 the Glebe was used for bed and breakfast accommodation and eventually became the Glebe Hotel. Progressively the front garden area facing Church Street became a gravel car park serving the expanding hotel. Eventually, apart from a retained area of landscape adjacent to the Church Yard, the whole front space became a gravel car park which by all accounts went right up to the Cedar tree trunk.

By this time the Cedar tree started to deteriorate and it is understood a number of branches looked sickly and there were concerns from the village and the hotel about the health of the tree. The Parish Council and hotel owners jointly took advice from a specialist from the Department of Botany at the University of Nottingham. That team was led by a Professor of Arboriculture and he and his team carried out various investigations to check if the tree was healthy or not and what was causing its condition to deteriorate.

It is understood they found the structure of the tree to be sound and by injecting a coloured dye into the tree found the water and nutrients were reaching all parts of the tree. The problem it seems was a lack of oxygen in the tree caused by compression of the ground containing the roots of the tree.

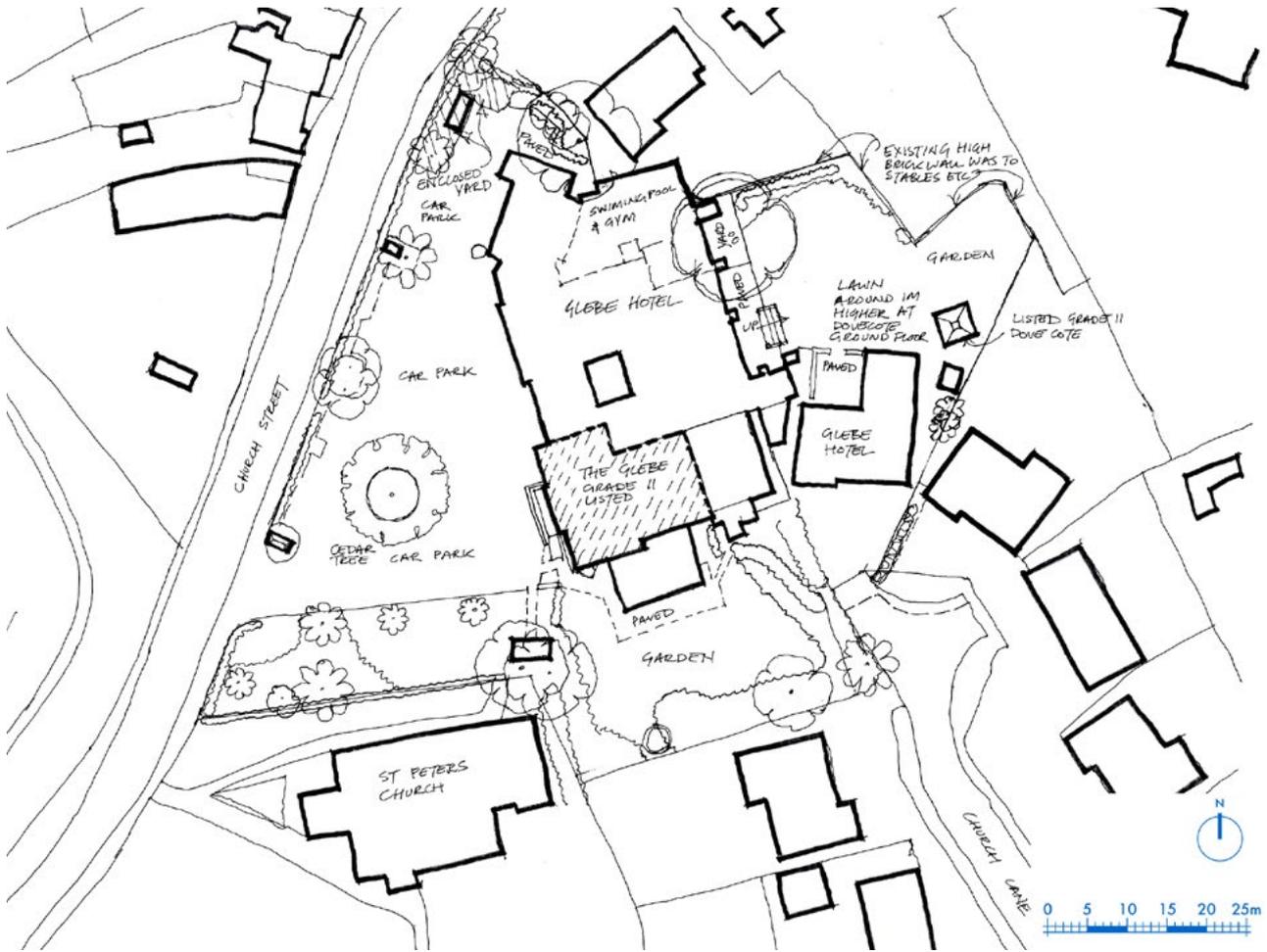
The solution adopted to solve this problem was to inject microorganisms into the tree/roots and to introduce some ventilation to improve the oxygen around the trunk at ground level. This vent arrangement was protected by building the low wall around the base of the tree which also served to prevent people from driving and parking immediately next to the trunk. Some of the branches showing signs of stress were removed and now, a few years later, the health of the tree is appears greatly improved.

The cost of this work was £16000 of which half was paid by the Parish Council with the other half paid by the owners of the hotel.

Clearly the tree is significant in the Conservation Area and contributes greatly to the setting of the listed part of the former Rectory and the listed St Peters Church. Whilst it is understood the Cedar tree will not live forever it is important to understand its significance, what good works have been done to retain it in its current good condition and to continue to give it a good future.

On a number of other sites we have worked on, the Cedar trees planted in the second half of the 18th Century have all started to fail after about 220 years. Clearly there are examples of trees that

Have survived for a greater period than that but there will come a time in the future when the tree will sadly die and have to be felled.



Site plan as existing



View approaching via Church Street with St Peter's Church on right and The Glebe Hotel with Cedar Tree in distance



*View approaching via Church Street with The Glebe Hotel access*



*Detail of Cedar tree in front The Glebe Hotel*

## 2.0 PROPOSED WORKS TO IMPROVE THE CEDAR TREE SURROUNDINGS AS PART OF THE CURRENT PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING APPLICATIONS.

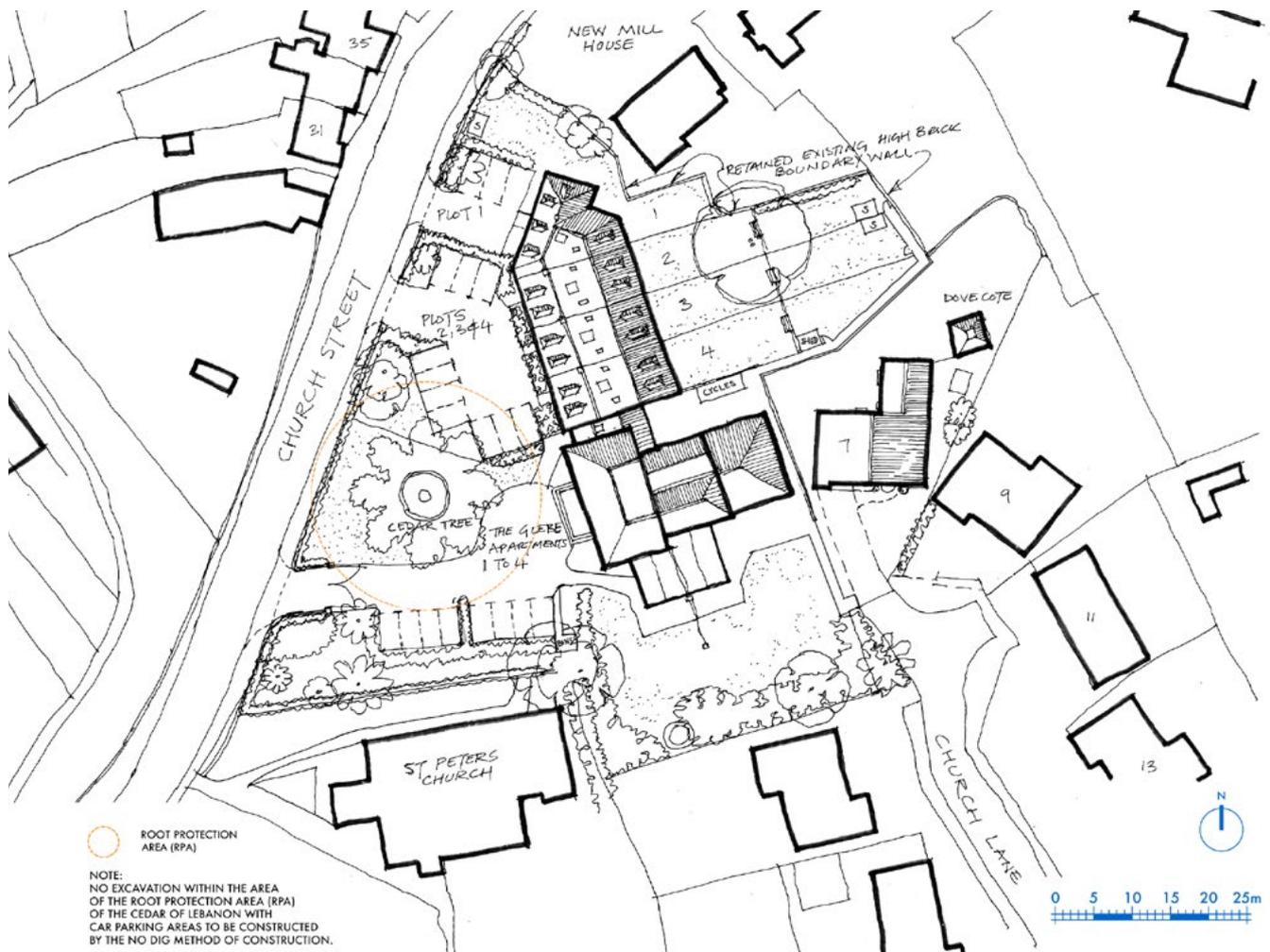
2.1 Recognising the importance of the Cedar tree, we have taken some advice from arboricultural consultants. We made contact again with the Botany Department of Nottingham University. Unfortunately we were told the Professor whose specialism was trees and also previously gave advice which has greatly improved the health of the tree died around three years ago. The University Department were pleased to hear the tree was now in good health but could no longer advise.

Instead we have taken advice from Robert Godwin of Godwin's Arboricultural Ltd who have prepared a report for the whole site and also from Jeff Marlow of Marlow of Marlow Consulting who is a very experienced arboricultural consultant.

2.2 The main advice is to leave as much of the existing arrangements in place such as the dwarf wall around the tree and to keep new service installations to a minimum and keep outside the Root Protection Area wherever possible, not dig foundations through the RPA etc.

2.3 At the same time it has been agreed that the proposed works would have the potential to greatly improve the setting for the tree. As shown on the plans, much of the existing gravel car park will be replaced by grass and planting, the existing gravel surface will be carefully removed without any disturbance to the tree roots and then replaced by top soil and seeded with appropriate shade tolerant grass seed or turf.

A new boundary wall from the corner of the new plot four has been added, but it will not come into the root protection area. The ongoing boundary at the point is then marked by estate fencing.



Site plan as proposed



*Access to The Glebe Hotel with Cedar tree on left*

As already noted, the low dwarf wall around the base of the tree will be retained as existing.

The new access drive to the Glebe (main house) will be set on the existing gravel surface which can either be retained and top dressed with a thin layer of gravel or the top layer of gravel can be removed and specialist cellweb curbs and details employed with the gravel or a traditional timber gravel board used instead but all to be agreed with the Council.

Similarly, a small number of car spaces for the apartment building and plot four will overlap into the RPA, but similar methods will be employed as proposed for the Glebe House driveway, which again will be agreed with the Council.

Currently the whole area has been extensively used for hotel car parking and deliveries for 30 to 40 years or more. The proposed Application will be much less intensive with only the traffic for one dwelling and a small number of car parking spaces for the apartments. The vast majority of the Cedar Tree RPA will be returned back to garden area and mainly grass which should further help the long term health of the tree.



*View from inside The Glebe Hotel parking/courtyard*