

## Tree Condition Survey

St Swithun's Church, Littleham, EX39 EX39 5HR.

Instructed by:	Andrew Tregoning Church Warden St Swithun's Church Littleham EX39 5HR
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Date:	24 <sup>th</sup> November 2022
Report ref:	CTC241122HS

## 1. Instructions

1.1 I have been instructed by Andrew Tregoning to inspect and report by visual inspection on the condition of a mature beech tree growing in the north west corner of St Swithun's Church yard. I am asked to advise on the health and safety of the tree with regards; structure, pest and disease and fungal decay and make recommendations on any works required.

1.2 The tree is protected as T3 of Tree Preservation Order TPO/0003/1978, and this report is to support an application for tree works to Torridge District Council District Council.

## 2. Report Limitations

2.1 Trees and shrubs are living organisms whose health and condition can change rapidly. The health, condition and safety of trees should be checked on a more regular basis, preferably at least once a year. The conclusions and recommendations are only valid for a period of one year. These periods of validity may be reduced in the case of any changes in conditions in the proximity of the trees or built structures.

2.2 We have not carried out an inspection of the drainage or service systems or buildings and foundations.

2.3 The report is of preliminary nature, if further details are required these will be highlighted in the recommendations.

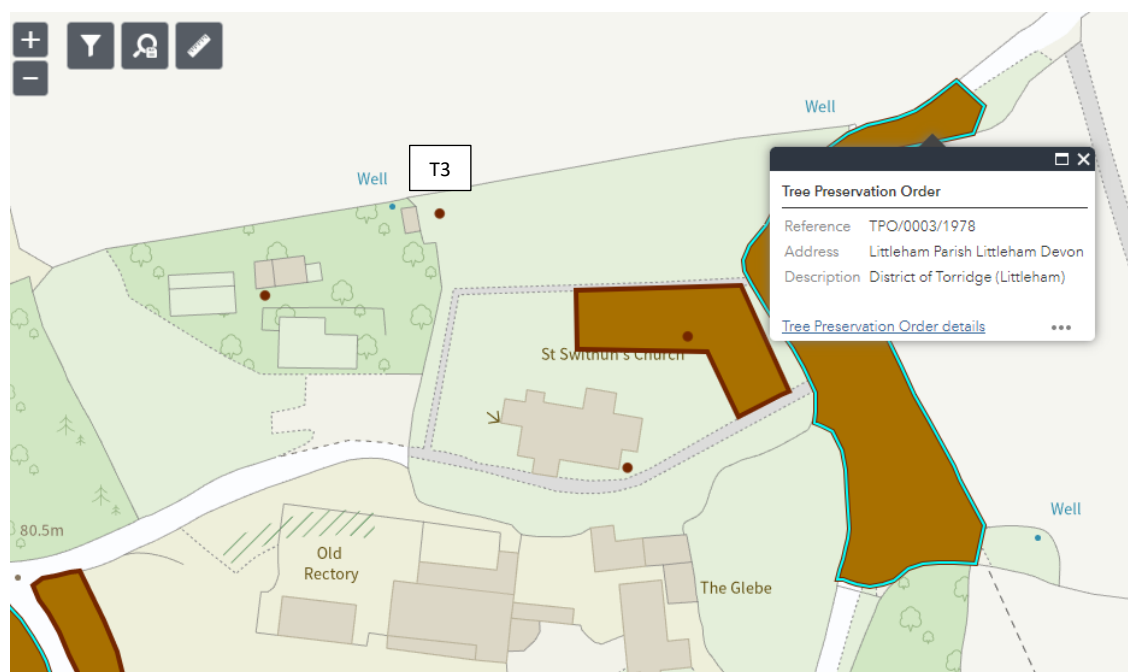
2.4 The trees have been inspected from ground level, should a more detailed climbing inspection be required this will be highlighted in the recommendations.

2.5 We have not examined the soil or removed samples for analysis. If samples are required this will be highlighted in the recommendations.

## 3. Site details

3.1 The tree was inspected on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

*Fig.1: Copy of TPO plan from Torridge District Councils website showing position of T3.*



## 4. Tree Description

4.1 This is a mature beech growing in the northwest corner of the church grave yard, there are gravestones under the tree and there is also a bench under the trees canopy. The tree has an even canopy, but has one heavily weighted long branch on the east side when viewed from the main path to the church.

Photo 1: T3, Beech viewed from the main path to the church.



4.2 When viewing the tree from a distance it appears healthy and in good condition. However, when viewed from the north side of the tree it can be seen that the tree is structurally in poor condition.

4.3 On the western side of the main trunk one quarter of the tree's trunk has split from the top of the main stem to below ground level. When examining the split, the smaller section of the tree can be seen moving in the wind. Only a small section of the main canopy is connected to the split section of trunk and it is weighted away from the church yard so there is minimal risk to visitors to the church.

Photo 2 & 3: Split trunk seen from both sides of the tree



4.4 Also on the north side of the main trunk adjacent to the split is a large area of advanced wood decay. The extensive decay stretches from below ground level up to the main stem union at approximately 1m high, but decay can be seen to have reached into the main branch framework at least 3m high. The decay seems to have started in an old wound in the main trunk and over many years has spread deep into the heartwood of the tree. There is no solid root plate below the main trunk and the decay is likely to have spread into the main root buttresses. There were some fungal fruiting bodies within the trunk cavity belonging to the root decay fungus known as, Honey fungus (*Armillaria* spp.). This is a root and stem decay fungus meaning decay in the main roots is even more likely. Other signs that this is the main decay fungus are white mycelium under the bark, stem bleeding and sheets of black rhizomorphs in the older decayed wood.

Photo 4 & 5: Showing extensive decay and Honey fungus fruiting bodies within the cavity



## 5. Conclusions

5.1 Although from a distance this tree appears to be in good condition the extensive decay and split main trunk means this tree is in an unstable condition and failure of part or all of the tree is highly likely, especially in high autumn winds.

5.2 The church yard receives many visitors and if possible these should be kept away from the tree and the bench under the canopy should be removed.

5.3 The amount of pruning required to retain this tree in a safer condition would be of further detriment to the health of the tree and I recommend this tree is removed at the earliest opportunity. Due to the position of the tree it will require professional dismantling to ensure no damage occurs to the surrounding grave stones.

5.4 All works should be carried out to BS3998:2010, for Tree Work and current industry best practice.

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