Tree Survey Report

Rubislaw Park Care Home
Aberdeen

November 2023

Prepared by:

Struan Dalgleish Arboriculture
The Bothy
Drumoak
Aberdeenshire
AB31 5EP

struan@sdarbor.com

For:

Rubislaw Park Care Home
Rubislaw Park Road
Aberdeen
AB15 8DA

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This survey and report relate to the trees within the grounds of Rubislaw Park Care Home, Aberdeen.

It was commissioned by the Care Home Manager, Gayle Duthie.

Prior to commencement of the survey a meeting was held with the manager to discuss the risk posed by the trees. She reported that the staff and residents were anxious about the trees and the potential damage which could be caused should they fail.

The care home management expressed their desire to reduce the height of very tall trees and increase clearance distances between trees and building. Their concerns have been carefully considered and remedial action made as appropriate.

The survey and report sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To undertake a detailed visual inspection and assessment of the condition of the trees within the property boundaries.

2. To make recommendations for tree management necessary for reasons of safety and good arboricultural practice.

The trees were inspected from ground level by Arboricultural Consultant, Struan Dalgleish on the 9th November 2023. Weather conditions at the time were bright and sunny.

The survey up-dates and superseded previous tree surveys undertaken by this author.

Eight-six (86) substantial trees or small groups of trees recorded by the survey as illustrated on the Tree Survey Drawing in Appendix 1. Very small trees and shrubs were not included.

A description of the trees and recommendation for tree works are provided in spreadsheet format in the Tree Survey Schedule in Appendix 2.

This report provides further explanation of findings and recommendations.

Author's qualifications: Struan Dalgleish is a Chartered Forester (MICFor) and Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv). He holds an Honours Degree in Forestry and is a Professional Member of the Arboricultural Association. He has over 24 years' experience of arboriculture at a professional level.

1.1 Limitations

- The findings and recommendations contained within this report are valid for a period of twelve months from the date of survey (i.e. until 9th November 2024). Trees are living organisms subject to change – it is strongly recommended that they are inspected on an annual basis for reasons of safety.

- The recommendations relate to the site as it exists at present, and to the current level and patterns of land use. The degree of risk and hazard may alter if the site or its surroundings are developed or changed, and as such may require re-inspection and re-appraisal.

- Where dense basal shoots, ivy or shrub growth obscures parts of the tree full and thorough detailed inspection may not be possible. Tree condition assessment is based on the visible parts of the trees only. Further assessment may be required following the cutting back or removal of basal shoots or shrub growth as specified.

- Whilst every effort has been made to detect defects within the trees inspected, no guarantee can be given as to the absolute safety or otherwise of any individual tree. Extreme climatic conditions can cause damage to even apparently healthy trees.

- Only trees shown on the drawing in Appendix 1 have been included by the survey. Trees elsewhere were not inspected.

- This report has been prepared for the sole use of Rubislaw Park Care Home and their appointed agents. Any third party referring to this report or relying on the information contained herein does so entirely at their own risk.

2.0 TREE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The trees recorded by the survey have each been subject to detailed visual inspection undertaken from ground level. A risk assessment of each tree has been carried out.

To inform risk the surrounding land use intensity has been evaluated and the likelihood for tree failure and the potential this would have to cause harm or damage have been evaluated.

The process aims to achieve a balanced and proportionate approach by considering the risk posed and the benefits provided by the tree.

Recommendations and a timescale for completing the work are provided for reasons of safety and good arboricultural practice with the surrounding land use intensity in mind.

The trees are identified by uniquely numbered aluminium discs, nailed to the lower trunk. The tags were attached for the purpose of previous surveys.

Not all tags in the sequence are currently present as some trees have been removed. On occasion a single tag refers to 2 or more adjacent, similar trees.

Tag numbers are shown on the Tree Survey Drawing and Schedule.

Where tree removal is recommended, recommendations for replacement planting have been provided as appropriate.

3.0 TREE SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 General Description

The trees occur as a relatively small area of dense woodland to the east, west and south of the Care Home.

Trees lining the western site boundary overhanging or occur within falling distance the gardens of neighbouring properties along Springfield Road.

Several of the oldest and largest trees within the site occur along the southern part of this western boundary.

The woodland area widens at a lower ground level, along the southern site boundary where edge trees overhang the West Burn of Rubislaw.

Recent works to add gabions to the embankment of the Burn close to mature trees have been carried out.

Along the eastern site boundary trees overhang a pedestrian path to the rear of properties on Rubislaw Park Crescent.

Edge trees at the base of the embankment at the norther edge of the woodland occur close to the care home building, which was has been extended towards the trees.

The interior of the woodland area is often dense, with shrubs and access appear infrequent.

Recently, a 12m tall Lawson cypress at the woodland edge close to the care home building split at a tight fork due to high winds and has been removed to a stump.

Around 3 years ago a large nearby at the eastern boundary failed during high winds. It is possible the failure of the cypress was associated with the increased exposure following this event.

Mature horse chestnut 658 near the western boundary shed a large limb several years ago, the limbs remains on the ground at the base of the tree.

1. Land Use Intensity

Where trees occur within falling distance of buildings, gardens and paths they are considered to be in areas subject to high levels of land use intensity.

This includes trees along the site boundaries to the east, west and south where trees border neighbouring gardens.

At the northern woodland edge trees occur within falling distance of the Care Home building.

Risk assessment has been carried out with the surrounding land use intensity in mind.

2. Species and Age

A diverse range of broadleaf and coniferous species and ages of trees are present.

The largest and most mature trees are likely to be around 200 years old and include an impressive copper beech *(Fagus sylvatica 'Atropurpurea'*) at the base of the embankment close to the care home.

Several large and mature beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), lime (*Tilia x europaea*) and a large field maple (*Acer campestre*) occur around the woodland boundaries and are also likely to date back to this time. These trees are often very large and overhang neighbouring property at the eastern and western boundaries.

Between and beneath the canopy of mature trees and within the interior of the woodland a number of early mature and semi-mature sycamore, beech, wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), willow (*Salix spp*.), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), cherry (*Prunus avium*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), an ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and a walnut (*Juglans regia*) form a dense area of trees. Elm has been severely impacted by Dutch Elm Disease.

Conifers include Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), western red cedars (*Thuja plicata*) and a larch (*Larix decidua*). A dead larch tree was recently felled, and cross-cut section remain on site.

A dense understory of holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) makes access to the base of trees difficult in places.

3. Previously Recommended Tree Work

Although some of the tree work recommended by the May 2022 Tree Survey Report has been carried out or partially carry out several task remain outstanding.

These have been included in the updated recommendations.

3.2 Tree Condition and Recommendations

Several issues impacting the health and condition of the trees were noted by the survey. In some instance this relates to the close proximity of very large trees to homes and gardens.

A description of the trees and recommendations made are provided in the Tree Survey Schedule and highlighted below.

Recommended remedial tree work should be undertaken within 12 months by a suitably skilled and experienced tree surgeon.

1. Dead Trees

Three (3) Wych elms 630, 4770 and 4794 were noted to have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease within the past 18 months. The standing dead trees retain their branch structure.

Tree 630 occurs close to the building and overhangs the neighbouring garden. Removal has been recommended. Trunk wood could be cross-cut and retained on site. Replacement planting with silver birch (*Betula pendula)* is recommended.

Tree 4770 occurs within the woodland and is infrequently accessed. It is recommended the crown of the tree is removed, allowing the stranding trunk to be retained to provided deadwood habitat for wildlife.

Tree 4794 overhangs the neighbours garden at the southern boundary and removal is recommended. Trunk wood could be cross-cut and retained on site.

Small dead elms present elsewhere pose little threat to safety and could be retained as deadwood habitat.

No elm trees survive within the site.

2. Removal of Trees to Increase Clearance of Buildings

Removal of poor-quality specimens of limited long-term potential has been recommended to increase the distance between the building and trees.

Removing these trees will also provide additional space for the improved developing of neighbouring trees and planting of more appropriate species at the woodland edge.

Larch 2750 is tall and close to the care home. The crown displays lesser form. Removal of the tree will benefit neighbouring beech. Replacement with a yew (*Taxus baccata*) will provide a tree of smaller mature height and long-term potential.

Lawson cypress 2757 has a dense evergreen crown close to the care home building. Its smaller neighbour 2759 has recently split. Removal of the tree and replacement with a yew (*Taxus baccata*) will increase clearance distance and provide a replacement of long-term potential and smaller mature height.

Lawson cypress 4777 is a small tree with potential for significant future growth. It forms a single spread with cypress 2757 (noted above). Removal and replacement with yew (*Taxus baccata*) is recommended.

Lawson cypress 2759 has split and been removed to a tall stump. Replacement planting nearby with a silver birch (*Betula pendula*) is recommended to provide trees of an appropriate mature height and increase the species diversity within the site.

Sycamore 4784 has self-seeded very close to the wall. Removal is recommended to avoid damage to the wall in the long-term. The tree occurs at the edge of dense canopy and removal will benefit neighbouring trees.

3. Tree Pruning

A significant amount of pruning is recommended. This is generally required to reduce the height and spread of large trees overhanging the eastern and western site boundaries.

Willow 629 has grown quickly and developed a multi-stemmed for with branches resting on the boundary fence. Pruning to remove these branches at the base is recommended.

Lime 644 displays dense basal shoots which should be pruned to provide access to the lower trunk.

Lime 645 is a larger tree close to the care home. Pruning to reduce the height by around 20%, to that of the neighbouring lime, is recommended. Basal shoots should be pruned to improve access around the base of the tree.

Sycamore 655 has a pronounced bias towards and overhangs the neighbours garden at the western boundary. Pruning to reduce the overhanging branches by around 20% is recommended.

Beech 656 is a large tree bias towards and overhanging neighbouring property at the western boundary. Pruning to reduce the overall height and spread above the neighbours garden by around 20% is recommended.

Sycamore 657 is a large tree bias towards and overhanging neighbouring property at the western boundary. Pruning to reduce the overall height and spread above the neighbours garden by around 20% is recommended.

Horse chestnut 658 is a large tree bias towards and overhanging neighbouring property at the western boundary. Pruning to reduce the overall height and spread above the neighbours garden by around 20% is recommended.

Horse chestnut 662 is a large tree bias towards and overhanging neighbouring property at the western boundary. Pruning to reduce the overall height and spread above the neighbours garden by around 20% is recommended.

Sycamore 663 was previously severely pruned, removing all of the lower branches. The remaining upper crown appears sparse and exposed. The tree is of low vigour and it health may have been impacted by the installation of gabions along the water course at the base. Removal of the crown at the forks is recommended. The lower trunk could be retained and may regenerate. The additional space will benefit the improved development of neighbouring beech 664.

Lime 4783 displays dense basal shoots which should be pruned to improve access to the base of the tree.

Beech 4787 is very large with a spreading crown arising from tight forks. Reductive pruning to reduce the height and spread by around 20% has been recommended to lessen the risk of splitting at the tight fork in high winds.

Lime 4788 is poorly formed beneath the crown of the large neighbouring beech 4787. Pruning of branches and basal shoots to encourage the development of improved form should be undertaken.

Sycamore 4789 and 4790 have developed a pronounced overhang above the lane beyond the site boundary. Pruning to reduce the length of these overhanging branches by around 20%, suitable growth points has been recommended.

4. Ivy and Shrubs

Dense ivy obscures the base of **Field maple 4793**. This notable tree is one of the oldest of the species in the local area. The species do not grow very tall.

The lower trunk is obscured by dense ivy and it is recommended that the ivy is cleared from the lowest 1m of trunk. Ivy above this point will die, break-up and fall off naturally.

The base of **sycamore 2755 and 2756** is obscured and inaccessible due to the presence of dense laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*).

The trees are substantial and occur within falling distance of the care home building. Pruning the laurel to allow access to these trees is recommended and necessary to ensure the base can be inspected.

5. Ash Dieback Disease

Symptoms of the disease, which is common in the local area, include the repeated dieback of the growing tips during the summer months. It can result in the death of trees over a number of years.

Only one **ash 4795**, was recorded by the survey and appeared to be free from infection.

It should be assessed annually during late summer for signs of disease.

3.3 Protected Species

Bats are protected species which may occur within the trees and woodland. It is an offence to disturb or destroy their habitat, even inadvertently.

If bats are to be impacted by tree work, recommendations may require to be modified with input from a bat ecologist.

Where nesting birds are present tree work should be delayed until after the nesting season. Peak bird nesting generally occurs between March and June.

3.4 Arboricultural Consent and Standards

The trees occur within Aberdeen City Councils **Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 197 Rubislaw Park House.**

Tree works should therefore only be carried out following close liaison with and the written consent of Aberdeen City Council Planning Department.

This tree survey and report can be submitted in support of an Application to Undertake Work on Protected Trees.

All tree work must be carried out by a competent tree surgeon to British Standard BS 3998:2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations',* and within the timescale provided.

Re-placement tree planting should be carried out in-accordance with British Standard BS 8545:2014 '*Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations'.*

3.5 Re-Inspection Frequency

Within the site it is recommended that all substantial trees within falling distance of frequently accessed areas are inspected for reasons of safety on an **annual basis**.

Inspections should be carried out and documented by a suitably qualified and experienced arborist.
Additional inspections may be required in the aftermath of severe storms.

3.6 New Tree Planting

It is recommended new tree planting is undertaken to re-place those removed with appropriate species.

Proposed planting locations are indicated on the Tree Survey Drawing.

3 x yew (*Taxus baccata*) and 2 x silver birch *(Betula pendula*) have been suggested as appropriate re-placement trees.

These native trees will be well suited to indicated locations and mature to form appropriately sized trees which will integrate well with the surrounding landscape.

Young trees should be obtained from a reputable local nursery as:

Yew trees <1m tall, pot grown.
Silver birch as 1 to 1.5m tall, pot grown.

Planting should be undertaken by a suitably competent and experienced person during a period of frost-free weather in the dormant season (October to March).

The base of newly planted trees should be mulched with a 1m diameter circular area of well composted wood chips.

The mulched area should be protected from grazing rabbits and roe deer by enclosing within a 1.2m wire or plastic mesh netting, as used elsewhere on the site.

The mulched area should be maintained weed free until the trees are well established.

4.0 PHOTOGRAPHS

The pictures below were taken at the time of survey.

Photo 1 – Recently failed Lawson cypress. Cut stump to ground level and replace nearby with silver birch.

Photo 2 – Lawson cypress 2757 close to care home. Removal of this tree and neighbouring cypress 4777 would to provide increased clearance of the care home building. Replacement with yew nearby but at a greater distance from the building is recommended.

Photo 3 – Copper beech 2748 is a good specimen and appears well formed. The adjacent larch 2750 is of lesser form and has potential for significant further growth. Its removal and replacement with yew is recommended to increase clearance of the building.

Photo 4 – Lime 644 and 645 occur at the western site boundary close to the care home. Pruning to reduce the height and spread of tree 645 is recommended. Shoot growth at the base of both trees should be pruned to improve access to the lower trunk.

Photo 5 – Large and old trees 655 to 658, 662 and 663 occur along the southern part of the western boundary. The trees significantly overhang neighbouring property and pruning to reduce height and spread has been recommended.

Photo 6 – Sycamore 663 displays a sparse crown with a pronounced bias overhanging the neighbours garden. The tree is in poor condition and removal of the crown at the low fork has been recommended.

Photo 7 – Recent planting of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) to replace trees removed to accommodate gabion installation.

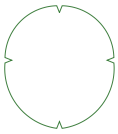
Photo 8 – Willow 629 should be pruned to remove branches resting on the fence. Adjacent dead elm 630 should be removed and replaced with a silver birch (*Betula pendula*)

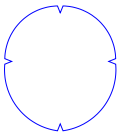
APPENDIX 1 – TREE SURVEY DRAWING

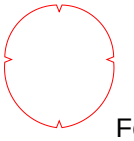
Rubislaw Park Care Home

Scale1:500 approx. at A4

Key -


No recommended tree work.


Pruning recommended.


Felling recommended.

Re-placement planting - 3 x yew (*Taxus baccata*)
2 x silver birch (*Betula pendula*)

APPENDIX 2 – TREE SURVEY SCHEDULE

Explanation of Tree Survey Schedule Terms

Tag No.	Identification number of tree as shown on drawing.
Species	Common name of species.
Ht. (m)	Height of tree estimated in metres.
Dia. (mm)	Diameter estimated in millimetres at 1.5m above ground level.
Crown Radius (m)	Approximate crown radius in N, E, S and W directions.
Age Class	Young, middle aged, mature, over mature, veteran.
Condition	Good, fair, poor, dead. See explanation over page.
Comments	General comments relating to health, structural condition and form, highlighting any defects or areas of concern.
Recommended Tree Work	Recommended tree work required in the interest of safety and good arboricultural management.
Timescale	Period within which recommendation should be completed.

Tree Condition Categories

Good	(1) Healthy trees with no major defects (2) Trees with a considerable life expectancy (3) Trees of good shape and form
Fair	(1) Healthy trees with small or easily remedied defects (2) Trees with a shorter life expectancy (3) Trees of reasonable shape and form
Poor	(1) Trees with significant structural defects and/or decay (2) Trees of low vigour and under stress (3) Trees with a limited life expectancy (4) Trees of inferior shape and form
Dead	(1) Dead trees