

# Tree Management Report

**Littlewood, Ballater Road, Aboyne  
Aberdeenshire AB34 5HY**

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Prepared by:

Julian Barclay Ltd.,  
8, Parkhouse Close,  
Tarland,  
Aberdeenshire  
AB34 4UZ

[office@julianbarclay.com](mailto:office@julianbarclay.com)

For:

Mrs. J. Rotheram,  
Littlewood,  
Ballater Road,  
Aboyne  
AB34 5HY

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report relates to the tall Scots Pine trees within the front, side and rear gardens of Littlewood, Ballater Road, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire AB34 5HY

It was commissioned by Mrs J. Rotheram who is the owner of the property and has responsibility for the management of the trees and grounds.

The report sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To observe past care and treatments to the primary trees on the site and note and record previous management techniques.
2. To make recommendations for the future management of the primary trees within the grounds of the property based on good arboricultural practice.

This report does not constitute a full tree survey in terms of assessment of each tree on an individual basis.

The site was subject to visual inspection undertaken from the ground by Julian Barclay Ltd. on the 16 November 2023. Weather conditions at the time were overcast and wet.

## 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 ivy, basal shoots 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 ivy, basal shoots or shrub growth. A decay detection device to assess the internal condition of wood has not been used.
  
- 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.
  
- The site has been treated as a whole for the purposes of this management report. This does not constitute a full tree survey report for each individual tree.
  
- This report has been prepared for the sole use of Mrs J. Rotheram and 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 were assessed to achieve a balanced and proportionate approach to future management. This report does not consider the risk posed and the benefits provided by each tree on an individual basis.

Recommendations are provided for reasons of good arboricultural practice and public safety in mind.

## **3.0 TREE OBSERVATIONS**

### **3.1 Tree identity and site location**

These primary tall Scots Pine trees occur as a row along the Southern boundary (front) of the property. There is a tight bunch of spindly tall pines located in the South-East corner of the front garden, then isolated, individual specimens throughout the side and rear garden. The trees in all cases are estimated to be between 25m to 35m in height.

The South boundary of the property runs parallel to Ballater Road (main A93), Aboyne, whilst the rear (Northern) boundary runs parallel to the Deeside way public footpath.

(See Appendix 1 for primary tree location plan).

### **3.2 Tree Condition - general**

The primary trees are all very mature and make large and impressive specimens.

The maximum life expectancy for these species within the local area is often considered to be 60-70 years.

Very mature trees can be at risk of failure or shedding branches which could have severe consequences due to their considerable size. Where they occur within built-up areas management intervention is often required to ensure safety.

### **3.3 Management of site to date – to November 2023**

Upon site visit, evidence of any past management techniques could not be identified. The trees have been left unmanaged, hence their substantial height and shape exhibited now.

## **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

With respect to tree condition and the surrounding land use intensity the following recommendations for tree works have been made.

### **4.1 Deadwood**

Deadwood is a natural feature of mature trees, associated with the aging process and excessive shade within the lower parts of the canopy.

Where deadwood occurs at the tips of branches in the upper crown it may however be associated with low vigour and general decline relating to poor tree health. Such symptoms often progress, leading to dieback of the tips and tops eventually dying and becoming 'stag-headed'.

Generally, the primary trees observed within the site display a reasonable degree of vigour and no severe crown dieback was noted.

Where large pieces of deadwood are present, it can be poorly attached and should be removed where potentially hazardous.

Deadwood, particularly large standing pieces, is however of significant wildlife benefit and where it doesn't threaten safety or property it should be retained for this reason.

It may be possible to safely retain severely decayed trees as valuable standing deadwood following pruning.

### **4.2 Removal of potentially hazardous trees**

There are 10 particularly tall specimens on the Southern aspect of the property. The trees tower above the height of the eaves of the house and cause substantial shading of the house and front garden, so much so that it is impossible for the owners to plant anything out in the garden. The trees are also causing considerable damage to the house in terms of rot and damp issues as the trees block out nearly all of the natural sunlight. The owners are also concerned that they have noticed extreme swaying of the trees in recent storms and are very worried about their property being in such close proximity. Evidence of ground heave was observed upon site visit.

Due to the growth habit of Scots Pine trees, it would be impossible to reduce some of the trees by any significant amount to make any difference to the hazard and risk of falling or collapse of the trees. Such work would spoil the trees and make them very unaesthetically pleasing. Significant reduction works could also create a weak structure to the remaining trees and indeed could cause decay or death of the specimens.

It is therefore recommended that 5 of the trees located on the South (front) boundary are removed completely to stump level to eradicate the risk of falling or collapse. These trees are identified as being poor specimens in terms of aesthetics (with growth only in the upper canopy), and one tree in particular (tree 1 – see photographs later) that has a substantial lean over the A93 trunk road. Their removal will also enable the owners to replant with more aesthetical varieties of broad-leaved trees being a more natural and uniform fit with other properties in the immediate area. There is a well-established mixed species hedge (mainly consisting of Beech and Cypress) that has suffered due to the shading caused by all the trees along this boundary and opening up the canopy can only be beneficial to the hedge. Indeed, the selective removal of the 5 trees will also enable the remaining Scots Pines to flourish and encourage new growth from the previously shaded parts of each tree.

On the Eastern side boundary of the property exists a tall (35m) Scots Pine that dominates the house due to its proximity. Considering the trees' location within a densely planted area of the garden in terms of other trees and large shrubs, the tree has no aesthetical or wildlife value of any importance. Its removal is therefore recommended to encourage more light penetration and remove current adverse effects to the house.

To the rear of the garden (North aspect) exists a very tall and large Scots Pine (tree 7 – see photographs later). The tree is within very close proximity of the electricity overhead cables that run directly beneath the canopy of the tree. Coupled to this problem the tree also obstructs the view from the house of the large and dominant Oak tree, through which the Scots Pine is growing and damaging the development of the Oak tree's crown. Further investigation of the tree also revealed a large crack in the trunk approximately 1m from ground level. Using a measuring and flexible lighting probe it was noticed that rot is evident within the structural wood, extending to  $\frac{3}{4}$  width of the tree trunk. The tree is leaning towards the Deeside Way public footpath quite severely. Should it fail, it would only be the Oak tree that would prevent a potentially serious accident from occurring, and in any case would severely damage the Oak. This Scots Pine has exceeded any beneficial value to the environment in which it is located, in fact that opposite is true. Given the damage to the lower trunk and subsequent internal rotting, this tree is recommended for immediate removal as a matter of urgency.



### 4.3 Reduction

Reduce the height of the spindly Scots Pine trees in the front left-hand corner of the property to reshape and encourage growth lower down the trees' overall heights. The structurally larger Scots Pines in the front garden (numbers 2 & 3 – see photographs) are recommended to be reduced by 15-20% to reduce the weight of the canopy giving the trees greater stability as well as opening up the canopy for enhanced light penetration to the house and front garden beneath. The work will be undertaken with the sympathy of the trees as utmost importance given that they really are the only two trees in the front garden with any aesthetical value. Both of these trees have abundant lower growth meaning that reduction work is possible to the benefit of the trees in their setting.

### 4.4 Protected Species

Bats are subject to a high level of statutory legal protection and disturbing roosts can result in prosecution and fines.

Mature trees can provide ideal bat habitat and where felling or major pruning is required trees should be checked for bats prior to commencement of works.

Confirmation of their presence may require tree works to be amended in accordance with the recommendations of a suitably trained bat ecologist.

To minimize the impact on bird populations it is preferable that tree works are undertaken outside the March to June bird nesting season.

### 4.5 Re-Inspection Frequency

Regarding the condition of the trees and surrounding land use intensity, it is recommended they are inspected on **an annual basis and in the aftermath of severe storms**.

This should be carried out and documented by a suitably qualified and experienced arborist.

If deterioration is noted further action maybe required.

#### **4.6 Arboricultural Standards**

All recommended tree work must be carried out by a competent tree surgeon to British Standard 3998 (2010) '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'.

#### **4.7 Smaller shrubs, bushes and flowers throughout the site**

Due to the dominance of the Scots Pines throughout the property, there are no other significant numbers of smaller plants and shrubs throughout the site and gardens, particularly the front garden. Replanting with more diverse and aesthetically pleasing plants, shrubs and trees will undoubtedly increase the biodiversity of the front garden, encouraging a far wider spectrum of animals, insects and native plants to thrive and flourish.

## 5.0 PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs below illustrate the primary trees at time of site survey:

**Photograph 1** – Southern boundary of front garden bordering Ballater Road. Photograph taken from the front of the house looking South. This photograph clearly shows the size of the trees in terms of width and height.



### **Recommendations from photograph 1:**

**Trees 1:** Remove both trees. Significant lean over A93, poor canopy in neighbouring tree.

**Tree 2:** 15% Crown reduction

**Tree 3:** 15-20% Crown Reduction

**Tree 4:** Remove – damaged crown, no lower growth.

**Photograph 2** – South-East corner of front garden. Photograph taken from the front of the house looking South-East. This photograph shows the thin, spindly growth nature of the trees.



**Recommendations from photograph 2 (treat as a whole - 5):**

- Remove the 2 x tallest, spindly trees from this area.
- Selectively reduce and reshape the remaining trees.

**Photograph 3** – Showing the close proximity of the Scots Pine tree on the Eastern aspect to the house. Note the dominance of moss rather than grass lawn in this area and dampness to the roof of the conservatory and house.



**Recommendations from photograph 3:**

- Remove this tree (6).

**Photo 4 (a)** - Showing the large, tall Scots Pine tree located in the rear garden (North aspect). Note the location of the main power lines and the damage being caused to the Oak Tree.



**Photograph 4 (b):** As photograph 4 (a) but zoomed out to show upper canopy.



**Photograph 4 (c):** Showing the large crack at 1m above ground level at the base of the trunk.



**Recommendations from photographs 4 (a), 4 (b) and 4 (c):**

- Immediate and urgent removal of this tree (7).



