Urban Tree Experts

BS5837 – Tree Surveys – Ecological Consulting

VISUAL TREE ASSESSMENT
AT
40 HORATIO AVENUE
WARFIELD

Prepared for:
Mrs J Biggs
40 Horatio Avenue
Warfield
Bracknell
RG42 3TX

Ref: SN/VTA-23/22.10

11 December 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Instructions.

1.1.1 Urban Tree Experts are instructed by Mrs J Biggs to visit and assess one oak tree located within the curtilage of 40 Horatio Avenue, Warfield, Bracknell, RG42 3TX.

1.1.2 We are further instructed to provide a report commenting upon the structural and physiological condition, health and safety of the tree and to produce a schedule identifying works required as a result of our investigations.

1.2 Background information.

1.2.1 This is our first survey of the tree. We have no connections with any of the parties involved in this case that could influence the opinions expressed in this report.

1.3 Scope.

1.3.1 This report is concerned specifically with the structural characteristics and physiological condition of the tree we inspected. The primary purpose of this report is to confirm the physiological and structural condition of the tree and formulate management proposals in line with industry best practice.

1.3.2 The basic visual tree survey process is a simple data collection process; it followed procedures comparable to those prescribed by Lonsdale, 1999[1], Mattheck and Breloer, 1994[2] and National Tree Safety Group 2011[3] gathering visual information, for trees and groups, on such things as:

- Tree size, age and health
- Tree species
- External Biomechanical signs
- Previous history of pruning
- External signs of decay
- Field identification of fungi.

1.3.3 Where appropriate the process may then require data from further diagnostic tests for example:

- Maps of decay or cracking
- Vitality testing
- Pathogen identification

1.3.4 Recommendations or options are then drawn up taking into account the type of site usage and the target area.

1.3.5 The information contained in this report covers only the tree that we examined and reflects the condition of the specimen at the time of inspection.

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[1] Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management, DoE booklet Research for Amenity Trees No. 7, 1999

[2] The Body Language of Trees, DoE booklet Research for Amenity Trees No. 4, 1994

[3] Common Sense Risk Management of Trees. National Tree Safety Group, The Forestry Commission 2011

1.3.6 The visual tree inspection offers no guarantee, either expressed or implied, of the internal condition of the stem, furthermore, no warranty that problems or deficiencies may not arise in the future can be given.

1.3.7 Care has been taken to obtain all information from reliable sources, and all data has been verified where possible. However, no guarantee can be given of the accuracy of information provided by others.

1.3.8 Please note: all abbreviations introduced in brackets are used throughout the report.

1.4 Legal Status

1.4.1 A search of the Bracknell Forest Borough Council online Tree Preservation Order map was undertaken on 23 November 2023. It revealed that the tree inspected is covered by TPO 393 therefore, before any work is carried out to the tree consent must be granted by the local planning authority.

1.5 Plans and documents.

1.5.1 We have not prepared a tree location plan as the tree is easily identifiable on site.

1.6 Site visit.

1.6.1 The site visit was undertaken by Steve Noble of Urban Tree Experts on the 22 November 2023. The weather was dry and bright.

1.6.2 The tree was inspected from the ground with the aid of binoculars, no climbing inspection was conducted.

2. THE SITE.

2.1 Site description.

2.1.1 The tree is located within a small garden to the west of the building that contains 4 separate properties. The garden slopes slightly west to east. The tree is a significant component within the wider environment. Due to its size, location and the occupancy rate of the local area it is considered to be medium risk.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS AND OPINION.

3.1 General.

3.1.1 The tree dimensions were recorded with the aid of a Nikon™ laser hypsometer and the diameter with a rounded down diameter tape. The results are set out in the schedule below.

Tree Number	Tree Species	Height (m)	Diameter (mm) @ 1.5m AGL	Crown Spread Av	Age Class
T1	Oak	18	1280	10	Mature

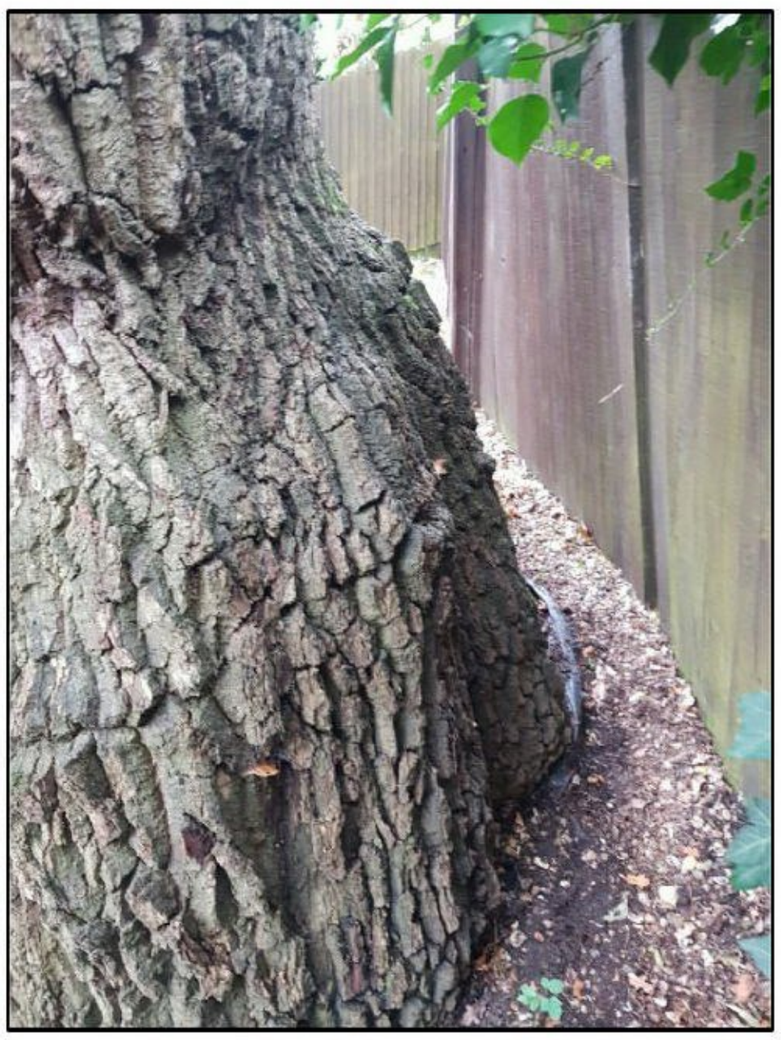
Key: m = metres mm = millimetres AGL = above ground level est = estimated Av = average

3.2 Findings and opinion.

3.2.1 There were no visible signs of movement around the base of the tree inspected, no soil heave, mounding or cracking was observed, and the root zone appeared stable at the time of inspection. Soil was scraped back where possible from around the base of the tree to a depth of approximately 50 millimetres, no biotic or abiotic pathogens were detected.

3.2.2 The base and stem of the tree was sounded with a nylon mallet to a height of approximately 2 metres above ground level (AGL) and no hollow intonations were returned. Some swelling was observed around the base of the tree to the north and western sides, (see Figure 1 below) and the bark is true to form and firmly attached.

Figure 1



3.2.3 The stem leans slightly toward the east with swelling at 4 metres AGL and pruning wounds located up the stem. Fungal fruiting bodies were observed within a pruning wound at approximately 4 metres AGL to the north side, see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

3.2.4 The crown of the tree has been heavily reduced leaving a sparse crown with pruning wounds throughout. Damage on the upper side of a large lateral limb extending eastward at approximately 2.5 metres AGL and hollowing of the limb was also observed. Further damage was observed at approximately 11 metres AGL to the east, see Figure 3 below. Deadwood and fine branch dieback was observed within the crown (see front cover) and evidence of branch failures was observed with a branch measuring approximately 1.5 metres in length being pointed out by the tree owner.

Figure 3

3.2.5 When the foliage was observed through binoculars no biotic or abiotic pathogens were observed.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

4.1 General.

4.1.1 The swelling observed around the base of the tree may be as a result of reaction wood growth due to an internal defect. Although when the area was tested with a nylon mallet no hollow intonations were returned this does not rule out the possibility of hollowing within the stem and this swelling must be investigated further.

4.1.2 The fungal fruiting bodies observed at approximately 4 meters AGL were not readily identifiable due to their position and early stage of development, but it is believed that they are saprophytic in nature and are feeding from deadwood and not actively decaying live wood.

4.1.3 The crown reduction has left numerous pruning wounds and as a result has reduced the photosynthetic cross section. This appears to have had a detrimental effect on the tree resulting in considerable stress with an increase in deadwood, fine branch dieback and a lack of any significant wound wood production evident. Any further reduction of the tree will only exacerbate the stress and we would advise against this at the moment.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1 Works required.

5.1.1 It is recommended that the tree is tested with decay detection equipment to establish the structural stability of the stem. This inspection must be carried out within 3 months from the date of this report.

6. ARBORICULTURAL STANDARDS.

6.1 All tree works recommended should be carried out in accordance with British Standard BS 3998:2010 Tree Work Recommendations and should be undertaken by a properly qualified and experienced tree contracting company. It is advised that they should carry public and products liability insurance of £5 million cover.

6.2 Trees are dynamic structures and therefore subject to many changes. Wind loading, if sufficiently high enough, can blow over the healthiest of trees. Where decay or root structure is compromised there is an increased risk of failure and therefore regular inspection is recommended.

7. QUERIES.

7.1 Any queries regarding this report should be addressed, in the first instance, to Urban Tree Experts:

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[redacted]

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