Sylva Consultancy

expert arboricultural advice

ARBORICULTURAL REPORT

The Gibson & Harkness Buildings
Walton Street
Oxford
Oxfordshire

March 2024

Ref: 24006

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Instructions

1.1.1 Instructions have been received to undertake an arboricultural impact assessment on land at The Gibson & Harkness Buildings, Oxford (Site Location Plan Appendix 1).

1.1.2 This arboricultural impact assessment has been prepared to assess the likely impact and effect regarding the proposal to external and internal alterations to the existing building. This appraisal assesses the impact of the proposal in relation to the trees surveyed and discusses mitigation measures that may have to be adopted.

1.2 Arboricultural Survey

1.2.1 During December 2023 a tree survey was carried out in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction-Recommendations' and good arboricultural practice. This is a basic data collection exercise and a record of the trees condition at the time of surveying. The tree survey data, tree survey plan and arboricultural constraints plan are included in a separate document call the 'Arboricultural Survey' and has been forwarded to the client.

2. TREE PROTECTION

2.1 A desktop study of information posted on Oxford City Council (OCC) website details that the site is located adjacent to North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area and Walton Manor Conservation Area. In addition, the website reveals that no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) are present on trees located within or adjacent to the site.

2.2 It has been assessed that trees T1, T2, T3, T4 & G1 are subject to the provisions of the Conservation Area Legislation.

2.3 Trees in a Conservation Area that are not protected by a TPO are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Anyone who ***cuts down, uproots, tops, lops, wilfully destroys or wilfully damages a tree*** in a Conservation Area (if that tree is not already protected by a Tree Preservation Order), or causes or permits such work, without giving a section 211 notice (or otherwise contravenes section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is guilty of an offence, unless an exception applies.

3. ARBORICULTURAL SURVEY

3.1 Four trees, three groups and one hedge have been recorded within this assessment. The tree quality is assessed as follows:

U: Trees that are considered to be of such condition that any existing value would be lost within 10 years, and which should, in the current context, be removed for reasons of sound arboriculture management. However, if category 'U' trees are placed in an inaccessible location such that concerns over public safety are reduced to an acceptable level, it may be preferable or possible to defer this recommendation.

A: Trees of the highest quality and value and are considered to be of such a condition as to be able to make a substantial contribution (e.g., 40 years +).

B: Trees of moderate to high value and are considered to be of such a condition as to be able to make a significant contribution (e.g., 20 years +).

C: Trees of low quality with an estimated life expectancy of at least 10 years. Unremarkable trees of very limited merit or such impaired condition that they do not qualify in higher categories. Young trees with a stem diameter of less that 150mm should be considered for relocation or replacement through mitigation (e.g., 10 years).

Category A, B & C trees are further divided into the following sub-categories. These sub-categories carry equal weight and are selected for either arboricultural values, landscape values or cultural values, including conservation:

1: Mainly arboricultural qualities.
2: Mainly landscape qualities.
3: Mainly cultural values, including conservation.

The British Standard 5837:2012 also recommends recording hedges and shrub masses, however in the context of the standard it is not necessary to assess the quality of these or to provide a category classification.

The numbers of trees falling under each classification within the arboricultural survey are as follows:

A summary of the trees in each of the four categories is provided below:

BS 5837 (2012) Category	No. of Trees	No. of Groups	No. of Hedges	Tree Number
U	**0**	**0**	**0**	
A	**0**	**0**	**0**	
B	**4**	**0**	**0**	**T1,T2, T3, T4**
C	**0**	**3**	**1**	**G1, G2, G3, H1**

4. PRINCIPLE ARBORICULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Consideration is given to the significance of the trees identified in the arboricultural tree survey, the constraints that they are likely to pose to any development that may occur, post development implications (if any) and work requirements to trees for reasons of sound arboricultural management in order to facilitate the development (BS5837:2012 Section 5.4).

4.1.2 All tree numbers referred to in this document relate to the tree numbers annotated on the tree constraints plan and arboricultural impact assessment plan (Appendix 2).

4.2 Site Description

4.2.1 The site is located to the south of Observatory Street and occupies a spacious plot with the survey area dominated by the existing Gibson Building. Residential gardens are adjacent to the northern boundary with the grounds of Green Templeton College to the east.

4.3 Trees

4.3.1 The tree stock is confined predominantly to the rear gardens of the residential properties at Observatory Street. One tree (T1) is in the ownership of Green Templeton College with groups G2 & G3 growing in planters around the Gibson Building.

4.3.2 The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, provides statutory protection to birds, bats and other species that inhabit trees. These have the potential to pose additional constraints on the use and timings of works that may occur to trees located at the site. Please refer to the ecology appraisal for further information regarding the ecological requirements.

4.4 Overview

4.4.1 The appended arboricultural impact plan illustrates the proposals in relation to the tree stock. In addition to pre-development concerns, post development concerns such as debris and concerns of the trees' proximity and juxtaposition to the proposal have also been considered during the design process.

4.4.2 An assessment of the design on the tree stock reveal that two category 'C' groups require removal to implement the scheme.

4.4.3 The scheme has undergone a careful design process to ensure an efficient use of the site, whilst safeguarding the continued contribution to the greening of the immediate landscape. On the bases of the appraisal, it is considered that the arboricultural impact of the scheme on the tree stock will not result in an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the site or wider landscape.

4.5 Impact of the proposal on the tree stock

Overview

4.5.1 Whilst trees in categories ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ are all a material consideration in the development process, the retention of category ‘C’ trees, being of low quality or of only limited or short-term potential, will not normally be considered necessary where they impose a significant constraint on development. Furthermore, BS 5837:2012 makes it clear that young trees, even those of good form and vitality, which have the potential to develop into quality specimens when mature “*need not necessarily be a significant constraint on the site’s potential*”.

4.5.2 The BS5837:2012 recommends that the root protection areas (RPA’s) for trees should initially be plotted as a circle centered on the base of the stem. Where pre-existing site conditions or other factors indicate that rooting has occurred asymmetrically, a polygon of equivalent area should be produced.

4.5.3 The arboricultural survey has identified that existing site constraints have influenced the root protection areas of trees T2, T3, T4 & G1. As such the rooting area of these trees have been adjusted. The modified RPA’s has considered the expected morphology and disposition of roots, site topography, including levels, drainage and the likely tolerance of the trees to root disturbance based on factors such as age, condition and past management (BS5837:2012 Section 4.6.3).

4.6 Proposed Development

4.6.1 The scheme comprises of external alterations, internal refurbishment, enclosure of courtyard, infill extensions, roof alterations, replacement windows, landscaping works and other associated works to create the Oxford Institute of Digital Health (Use Class F1).

4.6.2 To implement the scheme two category ‘C’ groups (G2 & G3) will be removed to implement the scheme. The British Standard 5837:2012 documents that category 'C' trees are assessed as being either of low quality, limited merit, low landscape benefits, no material cultural or conservation value, or only limited or short-term potential; or young trees with trunk diameter below 150mm; or a combination of these. As such these trees should not be considered as a significant constraint to the development of the site.

4.7 Proposed Landscaping

4.7.1 A comprehensive landscape plan has been developed which provides an enhanced environment and compliments the development of the site. Please refer to the Oxford Institute of Digital Health Landscape Stage 3 report Ref: LP2348-FIR-ZZ-ZZ-RP-L8004.P01.09.02.24 for detailed information on the proposed hard and soft landscape proposals.

4.8 Construction

4.8.1 Careful consideration has been given regarding the buildability of the proposals. The arboricultural impact plan illustrates that sufficient room exists to locate the site compound and contractor parking outside the RPA’s of the retained trees.

4.8.2 The existing boundary wall will act as fence protection for the duration of the work.

4.8.3 A tree pruning works schedule to facilitate the proposal has not yet been finalised, however it is not anticipated that tree pruning will be required. In event pruning works to trees are required it is judged that trees can be pruned to acceptable standards in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 'Tree Works - Recommendations'.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 The British Standard 5837:2012 states that there is the need to avoid misplaced tree retention; for example, to attempt to retain too many unsuitable trees on a site may result in excessive pressure on the trees during the development work and subsequent demands for their removal post development. To facilitate the proposal two category 'C' groups will be removed. The scheme enables four category 'B' trees, one category 'C' group and one category 'C' hedge to be retained.

5.1.2 Consideration for both the direct impact and indirect impact of a development with respect to retained trees needs to be assessed. With respect to the retained tree stock, it is considered that their successful integration into the layout can been achieved.

5.2 Post development tree management.

5.2.1 Section 8.8.2 of the British Standard 5837:2012 recommends post development aftercare of trees following the completion of development works. It is recommended the following is considered with regard to post development inspection of retained trees:

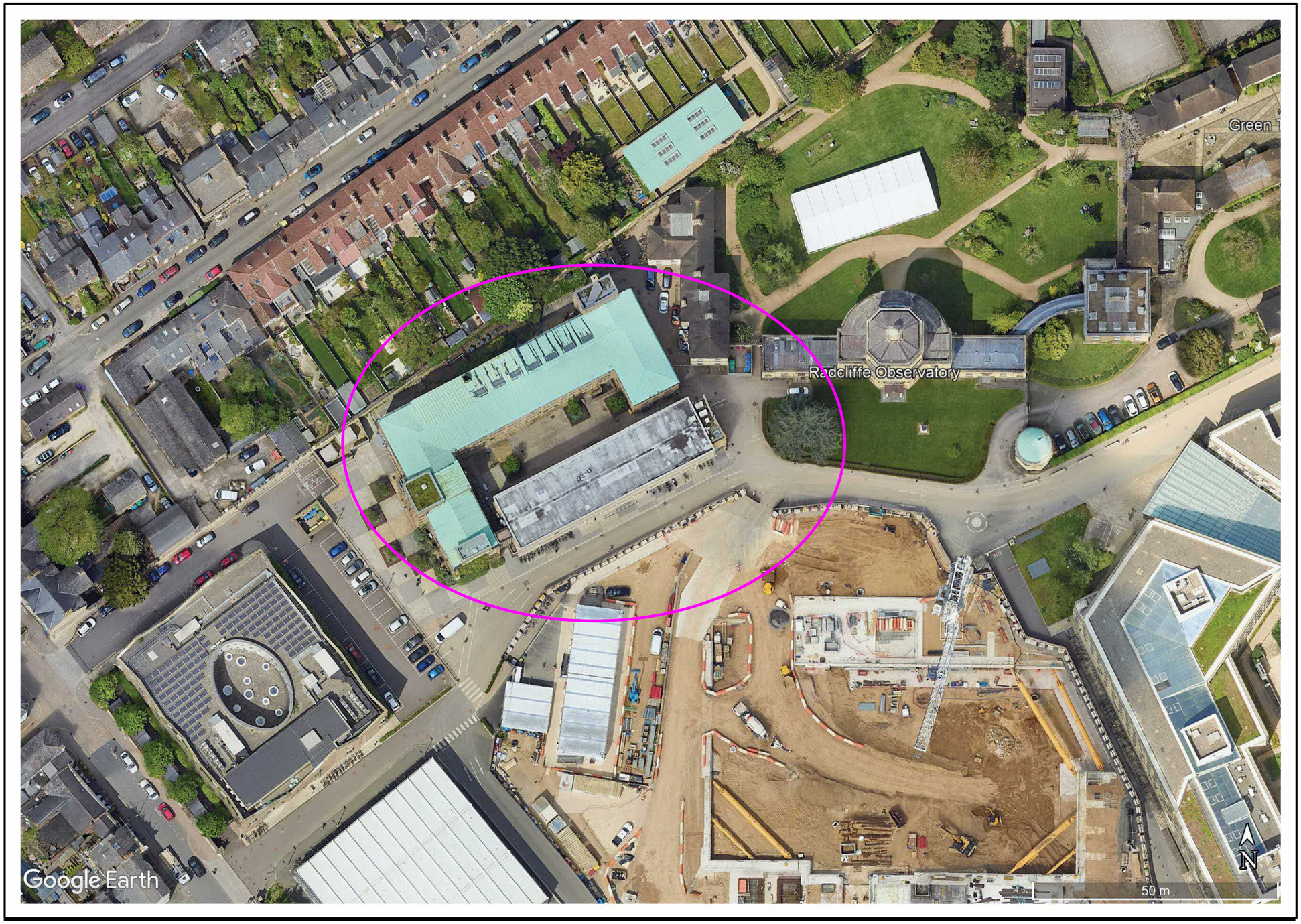
1. Trees that grow on a site prior to development may, if adversely affected, be in decline over a period of several years before they die. This varies due to age, species, condition prior to development, extent of damage during development, soil conditions and climate. It is recommended that regular inspections are undertaken.

2. Where trees are protected by planning controls, it is recommended that the Local Planning Authority is informed, and necessary agreements obtained prior to any remedial works.

3. Following completion of a development it is recommended that the arboricultural consultant inspects the trees for signs of intolerance to the change of conditions and the effect of the development. There may be a need for additional tree works to those originally specified.

APPENDIX 1

SITE LOCATION PLAN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APPENDIX 2

ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PLAN

APPENDIX 3

QUALIFICATIONS

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I have over 25 years' experience of arboriculture and I am the principal consultant at Sylva Consultancy. I hold the Royal Forestry Society's Professional Diploma in Arboriculture and the Arboricultural Associations Technicians Certificate. I am a Fellow member of the Arboricultural Association and a professional member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, of which I am also a registered Consultant.

I have the benefit of both a local authority and private practice background and I am frequently instructed to provide advice and assistance relating to trees and the planning process. I am also experienced at compiling expert reports, providing evidence and also appearing as an expert witness at Public Inquiries.

I am committed to my continued professional development which is reflected in my regular attendance of seminars and workshops.