



TREE HAZARD SURVEY

**Geoffrey Field Junior School
Exbourne Road
Reading
RG2 8RH**

June 2024

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Survey date(s)	27.06.24
Report submission date	04.07.24

1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction

Beechwood Tree Care have been instructed to undertake a hazard survey of trees at Geoffrey Field Junior School and provide recommendations for risk mitigation in the interests of the school's duty of care.

Three areas of concern have been raised by the school: -

- i) Overhanging branches of limes along the back fence
- ii) Maple saplings in the wooded area at the side of the grounds
- iii) Cypress tree thought by the school to be causing damage to the fabric of the main school building (front elevation)

1.2 Limitations

The copyright of this document resides with Beechwood Tree Care Ltd unless assigned in writing by the company. It is for the sole use of the named client and relates only to the defined scope, survey area and trees therein.

This survey does not include formal assessment of topography, soil conditions, building damage, drainage or service runs. Nor does it include any form of vegetation-induced subsidence assessment, or comment/advice in relation to structural damage relating to tree roots. These are all beyond the scope of a tree hazard survey.

Trees are living organisms subject to change by age, environmental conditions and human activity. This report is based on the condition of the subject tree(s) at the time of the assessment. Trees considered to be reasonably safe at the time of the survey could still fail in inclement weather conditions. However, in the absence of significant defects on the subject tree(s), Beechwood Tree Care cannot be held liable for such unpredictable failures.

This report is valid for one year and its authority ceases when any site conditions change, or pruning or other works unspecified within it are carried out to, or affecting, the subject tree(s), whichever is the sooner.

The statements made in this report do not take account of the effects of extremes of climate, vandalism or accident, whether physical, chemical or fire. Beechwood Tree Care cannot therefore accept any liability in connection with these factors, nor where prescribed work is not carried out in a correct and professional manner in accordance with current good practice.

2. The survey

2.1 The survey area

The survey area is defined by the red dashed line on the plan on page 8. The trees are predominantly around the perimeter of the site and contribute to the amenity value of the school and its wider landscape setting. The trees along the southern and western edges of the site do overhang back gardens of the neighbouring residential properties and may therefore (understandably) be of some concern for neighbours regarding “safety”, overhanging branches and a sense of over-bearing dominance. Any complaints about the trees along the southern edge casting shade should be largely disregarded since they are directly north of the gardens and associated houses.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The survey was carried out as a basic visual inspection from ground level and all dimensions have been estimated. No trees were climbed, no samples were analysed and no detailed wood decay assessments were undertaken (such as ultrasound tomography or resistance microdrilling). Where reasonably practical, ivy and undergrowth was pushed aside to enable close-up inspection of trunk bases.

2.2.2 It was not possible to view all trees from all angles and where access was obstructed by dense undergrowth, it was not possible to undertake a close up inspection of the trunk base and/or buttresses. In these cases judgements have been made according to what could be seen of the tree at the time.

2.2.3 Deadwood provides a valuable niche habitat for a host for lichens, fungi, epiphytes, invertebrates, birds and mammals and is a typical feature of veteran and ancient trees. However, it can also be a hazard where there is a target present. In the interests of being selective with work it has been loosely categorised as follows:

- Minor (approx' <50mm diameter and/or <1m long) – (insignificant injury or damage)
- Moderate (approx' 50-100mm diameter and/or 1-3m long – (recoverable injury or moderate damage)
- Major (>100mm diameter and/or >3m long) – (significant injury or damage)

2.2.4 The risk assessment process has followed that set out in *Tree Hazard - risk evaluation and treatment system* (THREATS), by Forbes-Laird 2019. This uses a methodical, consistent and quantified approach whereby each tree considered by the surveyor to warrant special note has been assigned a level of risk between 1 (insignificant) up to 7 (extreme), and where the level of risk also drives a suitable response and priority for completion. Further information is given in the key to the survey schedule.

2.3 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Area protection

According to Reading Borough Council's *Tree Preservation Order Directory*, an Order named **7/17 T21** is present at Geoffrey Field Infancy and Junior Schools. Since TPOs can apply to individual trees (“T”), Groups (“G”) or Woodlands (“W”), this implies that there is only one tree (T21) present that forms the TPO. No further information is given so clarity should be requested from planning.naturalenvironment@reading.gov.uk. The site does not appear to be within a Conservation Area.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Out of the all the trees on site (approx' 45 individuals and a wooded area), 13 individual trees have been recorded in this survey as warranting special note and/or action. The work can be summarised as follows: -

- One large mature maple requires removal **within the next 6 weeks** due to significant and advanced basal decay.
- 6 trees along the southern edge require removal of deadwood **within 6 months**.
- Two trees require ivy control **within 6 months**.
- One small suppressed tree that significantly overhangs a private neighbouring garden should probably be removed **within the next 6 months** before it becomes a more significant long-term problem.
- A dying larch tree (85% defoliated) on the northern perimeter overhangs Exbourne Road and requires felling **within the next 6 months**.
- The cypress tree thought by the school to be causing structural damage to the fabric of the main school building is colonised by the common bark killing fungus *Coryneum Canker*, which is slow-spreading but disfiguring and ultimately often fatal. The tree's amenity value is deteriorating and so it should be felled **within the next 6 months**.

Note: This recommendation has nothing to do with the claim of the tree causing damage and commenting on that any further is beyond the scope of this hazard survey.

- The maple saplings in the wooded area on the western edge of the site are not a significant issue in the author's professional opinion. In the absence of any obvious proactive woodland management, it presents a perfect opportunity for continuous canopy cover and the long-term retention of the woodland as a valuable asset for the school. Where the saplings and other understory vegetation are growing into the storage container near the main school building, they should be cut back as part of the normal on-going maintenance of the school's grounds.

3.3 Tree work operations

3.2.1 As a general rule of thumb tree work operations should be carried out in accordance with BS:3998 (2010) *Tree work – Recommendations* by suitably competent and insured contractors.

3.2.2 The recommended work in the main survey table is generally the minimum required to reduce the risk of failure of the defective part of the subject tree(s). Where this might leave the tree visually unbalanced, further work may be suggested to address this. Where hazards have been identified in relatively unremarkable and low value trees, felling may have been suggested as a more pragmatic and cost-effective approach than pruning.

3.3 Special permissions

Written consent may be required from Reading Borough Council before carrying out the prescribed work to the trees. The school's appointed arboricultural contractors may be willing and able to liaise with the Council on their behalf.

4. **Future inspections**

4.1 The HSE SIM 01/2007/05 *Management of risk from falling trees* advises that landowners have a duty to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure that people are not exposed to risk to their health and safety. This does not mean that all trees have to be individually examined every year. The level of risk is largely influenced by the nature of the target and tree risk assessment systems are driven by zoning targets and their frequency of use. It is therefore reasonable that trees in high risk or frequently visited zones should be inspected more regularly than those in low risk or rarely visited zones.

4.2 A balanced and proportionate approach to managing trees considers the significant contribution they make to the environment, biodiversity, human health and the quality of our surroundings. In addition to woodlands, copses, hedgerow trees and garden specimens, those that offer shading from high summer temperatures, filter pollutants and reduce stormwater run-off in cities, towns and villages are especially important for adaptation to our changing climate.

Responses to tree risk must therefore give due regard to these values and benefits in the widest sense.

4.3 The trees at this site should be formally inspected every 2 years. Reports of concerns from staff, neighbours and/or members of the public are an important element of informal observations and should be acted upon. If there is any doubt as to the condition of these or any other trees on the property, please do not hesitate to contact Beechwood Tree Care on 0800 032 3636.

4.5 Further advice: -

Arboricultural Association <https://www.trees.org.uk/>

National Tree Safety Group <http://ntsgroup.org.uk/>

TABLE 1

Tree survey schedule

Key to tree schedule

Ref.	Unique identification number for each tree, group or wooded area, matches the tree location plan.
Species	Tree species: common name (followed by botanical name in brackets and italics).
Measurements	Estimated height in metres Estimated average crown radius in metres Estimated trunk diameter in centimetres (measured at 1.5m above ground level) Life stage listed as one of the following: - young, semi-mature, early-mature, mature, late-mature, (veteran*), ancient. Life Expectancy listed as one of the following: - Dead, <10 years, 10+ years, 20+ years, 30+ years, 40+years, 50+ years *All ancient trees are veteran trees, but not all veteran trees are ancient. A veteran tree may not be very old, but it has decay features, such as branch death and hollowing. These features contribute to its biodiversity, cultural and heritage value (NPPF Nov 2018).
Vigour	Vigour (closely related to physiological health) categorised as follows: - Good, Fair, Poor, Declining, Dead.
Survey notes	Only relevant notes are taken in relation to significant safety concerns, actionable defects or reasons for future monitoring, risk control and/or tree work. May also contain a separate tree tag number if different from the tree number on the plan.
THREATS category	Categories of risk, as calculated using <i>Tree Hazard - risk evaluation and treatment system</i> (THREATS), Forbes-Laird 2010 (as amended). Categorised as follows: - 1 (insignificant), 2 (minimal), 3 (slight), 4 (moderate), 5 (significant), 6 (serious), 7 (extreme).
Inspection frequency	Recommended frequency for future inspections (based on a combination of THREATS and the general guidance from the National Tree Safety Group).
Recommendations	Self-explanatory. Work is generally only recommended to address significant hazards (risk management), statutory conflict, significant nuisance and/or to improve the long-term health of the tree(s) where practicable and/or financially viable. Where this cell is blank assume no work is recommended or required. Agreed scope of the survey may include other recommendations such as tree planting, woodland management and general landscape husbandry.
Timescale	Work priority: - recommended timescales for completion of tree work, driven primarily by urgency in relation to public safety but also to help with budgeting and site practicalities: -  Within 1-3 months (urgent work for reasons of significant personal/public safety). Highlighted RED in the schedule.  Within 6 months (moderate-high priority work to abate a personal/public safety issue or damage to important structures, though not considered an immediate risk). Highlighted ORANGE in the schedule.  Within 1 year (low-moderate priority work necessary to abate a personal/public safety issue, damage to structures, nuisance or to improve tree longevity). Highlighted GREEN in the schedule. NOTE: where traffic control is required for roadside tree work, it may be more cost effective to have all this work undertaken at the same time (irrespective of recommended timescale/priorities) to avoid associated costs from multiple visits.

Ref.	Species	Measurements	Vigour	Survey Notes	Threat Category	Recommendations	Photo
T022	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	Est height (m): 16 Est average crown radius (m): 5 Est trunk diameter (cm): 50 Life Stage: Early Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Tag 0728. Approx haf a dozen moderate sized dead branches over neighbouring gardens and school sports pitch.	3: Slight	Remove all deadwood over 50mm diameter and/or 1m long. Timescale: 6 months	
T023	Lime (<i>Tilia sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 20 Est average crown radius (m): 7 Est trunk diameter (cm): 70 Life Stage: Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Tag 0727. Approx haf a dozen moderate sized dead branches over neighbouring gardens and school sports pitch.	3: Slight	Remove all deadwood over 50mm diameter and/or 1m long. Timescale: 6 months	
T026	Lime (<i>Tilia sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 20 Est average crown radius (m): 7 Est trunk diameter (cm): 70 Life Stage: Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Tag 0058. Approx haf a dozen moderate sized dead branches over neighbouring gardens and school sports pitch.	3: Slight	Remove all deadwood over 50mm diameter and/or 1m long. Timescale: 6 months	
T027	Other (<i>Other</i>)	Est height (m): 0 Est average crown radius (m): 0 Est trunk diameter (cm): 25 Life Stage: Dead	Dead	Gone.	n/a	n/a	No Photo
T029	Lime (<i>Tilia sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 20 Est average crown radius (m): 7 Est trunk diameter (cm): 70 Life Stage: Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Tag 0735. Approx haf a dozen moderate sized dead branches over neighbouring gardens and school sports pitch.	3: Slight	Remove all deadwood over 50mm diameter and/or 1m long. Timescale: 6 months	
T030	Maple (<i>Acer sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 15 Est average crown radius (m): 4 Est trunk diameter (cm): 45 Life Stage: Early Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Tag 0059. Moderate deadwood.	3: Slight	Remove all deadwood over 50mm diameter and/or 1m long. Timescale: 6 months	

Ref.	Species	Measurements	Vigour	Survey Notes	Threat Category	Recommendations	Photo
T032	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	Est height (m): 19 Est average crown radius (m): 8 Est trunk diameter (cm): 70 Life Stage: Early Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Tag 0060. Tight bark included bark unions at crown break. Stems relatively upright and well balanced crown. Some moderate deadwood. Installation of a cable brace system would be prudent for safety and peace of mind.	3: Slight	Remove all deadwood over 50mm diameter and/or 1m long. Install cable bracing system. Timescale: 6 months	
T034	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	Est height (m): 15 Est average crown radius (m): 7 Est trunk diameter (cm): 65 Life Stage: Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Extensive ivy around trunk up to 5-6m.	2: Minimal	Sever and remove ivy up to 5m clear trunk and main union. Timescale: 6 months	
T035a	Maple (<i>Acer sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 9 Est average crown radius (m): 6 Est trunk diameter (cm): 20 Life Stage: Semi Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Small and unremarkable tree growing right out over neighbouring garden. Future conflict, complaints and regular pruning anticipated. Felling now would cause negligible impact on landscape and provide value in terms of cost/benefit.	2: Minimal	OPTION - Section fell to ground level. Timescale: 6 months	
T036	Maple (<i>Acer sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 18 Est average crown radius (m): 6 Est trunk diameter (cm): 50 Life Stage: Mature Life Exp.: <10 years	Fair/normal	Tag 0742. Extensive basal decay confirmed by manual sounding and 50cm steel rod fully extending into basal cross section. Tree is beyond safe limits.	5: Significant	Carefully section fell to ground level. Brushwood can be chipped in situ and timber stacked neatly in 1.2m lengths. Timescale: 6 weeks	
T037	Lime (<i>Tilia sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 22 Est average crown radius (m): 8 Est trunk diameter (cm): 80 Life Stage: Mature Life Exp.: 40+ Years	Fair/normal	Ivy.	2: Minimal	Sever and remove ivy up to 5m clear trunk and main union. Timescale: 6 months	
T059	Leyland cypress (<i>X Cuprocyparis leylandii</i>)	Est height (m): 16 Est average crown radius (m): 6 Est trunk diameter (cm): 70 Life Stage: Early Mature Life Exp.: <10 years	Poor	Tag 0060. Coryneum canker dieback. Pushing tarmac up on path. Suspected by school of causing cracking to building. Unremarkable and declining tree.	2: Minimal	Carefully section fell to ground level. Grind stump. Timescale: 6 months	

Ref.	Species	Measurements	Vigour	Survey Notes	Threat Category	Recommendations	Photo
T060	Larch (<i>Larix sp.</i>)	Est height (m): 8 Est average crown radius (m): 3 Est trunk diameter (cm): 25 Life Stage: Early Mature Life Exp.: <10 years	Poor	Tag 0760. Terminal decline 85% defoliated.	2: Minimal	Carefully section fell to ground level and grind stump. Timescale: 6 months	

PLAN 1

Tree location plan

Geoffrey Field Junior School
Exbourne Road
Reading
RG2 8RH

Tree hazard survey (June 2024)

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