



Fulford-Dobson Associates Ltd
ARBORICULTURAL CONSULTANCY

TREE INSPECTION RECORD & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

9 Wychcotes
Caversham
Berkshire
RG4 7DA

November 2024

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Client	Chris Ball
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1. Introduction

1.1 Instruction and project brief

I have been instructed by Chris Ball to carry out an inspection of his large mature cedar tree at 9 Wychcotes in the interests of his duty of care and the continued preservation of the tree, which is protected by Tree Preservation Order no. T6 of TPO 63/6 (Reading Borough Council). I have previously inspected this the tree in 2021 and 2023.

1.2 Limitations

The copyright of this document resides with Fulford-Dobson Associates 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.

Trees are living organisms subject to continual change by a host of biotic and abiotic factors. This report is based on the condition of the subject tree at the time of the assessment and its authority ceases when any site conditions change or pruning or other works unspecified in the report 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 vandalism or accident, whether physical, chemical or fire. I 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.

1.3 The author

I am a Fellow and Registered Consultant of the Arboricultural Association and a Chartered Environmentalist with over 32 years' experience of working with trees and wooded landscapes. I hold the BTEC National Diploma in Arboriculture (1998), the Arboricultural Association Technician's Certificate (2005), the Bond Solon (Cardiff University) Expert Witness certificate (2016) and the LANTRA Professional Tree Inspection certificate (2013 - updated 2022). My experience includes fifteen years as English Heritage's appointed tree and woodland inspector (Eastern, London and Southern regions), over four years as a local government tree officer and eight years as a hands-on practitioner in commercial contracting (tree surgery and woodland operations).

2. The inspection

2.1 Methodology

I carried out this years inspection on Friday 1st November 2024 in fair dry weather with good visibility using visual tree assessment techniques from ground level with the aid of a monocular and a nylon sounding hammer.

Tree height was measured with a clinometer (accurate to within +/- 1-2m), trunk diameter was measured with a special tape and the radial crown spread was paced out (estimated and accurate to within 1-2m).

This was followed by a desk-top risk assessment using Quantified Tree Risk Assessment ¹, of which I am a trained and licenced user (since 2017).

2.2 Survey information

Species	Height	Trunk diameter at 1.5m	Est. radial crown spread	Age class	Vigour	Est. remaining safe useful life ² .	Landscape quality
Deodar cedar	20m	111cm	N = 4.5m E = 8.5m S = 7.5m W = 5.5m	Late-mature	Fair	5-40	High

1. Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (see description of risk thresholds in appendix 2)

2. Estimated remaining safe useful life expectancy is categorised as less than 2 years, 2-5 years, 5-40 years, 40-100 years or 100+ years. Taken from Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 4: - *Visual Amenity Valuation of Trees and Woodlands* (The Helliwell System) 2008.

Figure 1: aerial photograph of the tree (marked in red). Image courtesy of Google & partners.



2.3 General overview and recent history of management

This large exotic conifer forms the southern end of a line of similar aged/sized deodar cedars running between numbers 8 (east) and 9 (west) Wychcote. There are other large mature cedars further up the hill in Wychcotes and together these trees form a valued landscape feature that can be seen in part from the Thames path in the valley below. History of past management on the subject tree includes the removal of lower branches (there are no branches below c8-10m); sensitive tip-reduction of lateral branches in the mid-canopy where they grow over the roof of both houses; and (over) thinning of the inner crown. Response to past pruning appears normal with callus wood forming and no obvious decay, cavities or hollowing around old pruning wounds at this time.

Pre 2017

A few years prior to 2017 Mr Ball applied to remove three major lower branches, this was refused by Reading Borough Council's tree officer.

2017 - 2019

In 2017 a large primary order branch on the east side at c4m snapped off during high winds and a further application to remove or reduce the two remaining major lower branches was refused. However, the Council granted consent for an all over crown reduction of 2m and the removal of one low limb overhanging the roof of no. 9. They also suggested consideration of a cable brace system, which whilst it does not require their consent they requested to be informed should it be pursued.

The pruning work was undertaken by Foremost Tree Surgeons Ltd on 16th October 2017. No cable bracing was installed.

Tamla Trees (arboricultural consultancy) undertook inspections of the tree in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Each year they recommended complete removal of the tree and each time it was refused by the Council's tree officer.

2021

I undertook an inspection in November 2021. I found the tree's overall physiological condition to be fair for its age and species characteristics, exhibiting foliage of normal colour with even density throughout the canopy framework. Acknowledging that the tree is late mature and will probably need to be removed at some point in the next 5-40 years, I also suggested a new tree should be planted in the rear garden further to the south of the subject tree in the next few years to act as its ultimate replacement in the interests of continuous canopy cover.

Past storm damage (as described above) was noted, as too the species characteristic of being susceptible to branch failure in gale force winds. My QTRA assessment resulted in a 1:10,000 risk of harm, described by QTRA as “*tolerable (where imposed on others)*”. QTRA’s recommended actions for such a risk threshold include: -

- Assess costs and benefits of risk control
- Control the risk only where a significant benefit might be achieved at reasonable cost
- Review the risk

In considering risk control options, I am aware that the homeowner and/or residents of number 8 Wychcote suffer from a sense of threat and dominance from the tree, especially during high winds, which will only increase as the tree further ages and the frequency of inclement weather increases with climate change. I considered the pruning work carried out in 2017 to be sufficient for the time being but recommended the installation of a couple of cable restraints between the main stem and the two large subsidiary stems (east and west) to act as a catch system in the potential eventuality of further failure and thus provide some welcome peace of mind. This was initiated and completed satisfactorily using two 8T Cobra braces in 2022. I also recommended that some further light tip-reduction of the lateral branches would probably be necessary within the next few years.

2023

I carried out a second inspection in March 2023 and found the foliage on the south side of the canopy to be slightly but noticeably yellowing compared with the other parts of the canopy and concluded this was probably the effects of 2022’s excessive heat wave (temperatures of over 40°), i.e. sun scorch. There was also some minor defoliation/dieback in the same area (c2% of total foliage volume). I had no other concerns but advised to keep a watching brief and (again) expect to schedule some light tip-reduction of the lateral branches within the next few years.

Please refer to photographs of the tree in my previous reports.

2.4 The trees current condition (2024)

The yellowing foliage symptoms have not got any worse, indeed the colour of the foliage in the previously affected parts appear to be more green than yellow. This suggests that there has been recovery from the sun scorch - the summers of 2023 and 2024 did not have any prolonged or excessive heat or drought-like conditions.

Shoot tip extension growth is variable throughout the tree, suggesting that vigour is better in some areas than others (not necessarily unusual for a late-mature tree).

The lowest lateral branch growing in a westerly direction (over towards 9 Whyhcote) is causing some concern (threat and dominance) to Mr Ball. The next main branch up on the west side splits into three smaller secondary branches at approximately 1m out from the main stem. The more dominant of these smaller branches arises from a tight and congested fork, which is a potential weak point where branch failure would be foreseeable in high winds. My QTRA calculation results in a risk threshold of 1:3000, described as “unacceptable (where imposed on others) or tolerable (by agreement)” – see appendix I.

The lateral branches growing out over 8 & 9 Wychcotes have not been reduced for 7 years and I believe they should now be carefully tip-reduced to contain excessive wind-loading over the static inhabited targets.

2.5 Photographs



4 Recommendations

4.1 The following work should be carried out (ideally within the next 6 months): -

- Carry out a careful tip-reduction of the lateral branches (focussing on the east, south and west sides) by no more than 1.5m. Pruning wounds should be no greater than 75mm diameter and the final lateral spread after pruning will be no less than: -
- North = 4m, East = 7m, South = 6m, West = 4.5m.

[This will require the written consent of Reading Borough Council]

- Install a flexible 4T cable brace to support the lowest main branch growing west over 9 Wychcotes. It should be at a 45 degree angle and anchored to the main stem.

4.2 The tree should continue to be informally inspected (“eyeballed”) by Mr Ball regularly (at least every calendar quarter), especially after inclement weather (e.g. gales of force 7+, heavy snowfall and/or prolonged heavy rainfall), looking for obvious signs of significant structural defects and/or ill-health such as partial windthrow, rapid defoliation, major splits or cracks on trunks, stems and branches and/or fungal fruiting bodies (mushrooms or brackets) around the trunk base or on aerial parts of the tree.

4.3 The tree should then be formally inspected by a qualified, experienced and suitably competent arboriculturist between every eighteen months and two years (ideally during a different season each time).

Further advice: -

- Arboricultural Association www.trees.org.uk
- National Tree Safety Groups website <https://ntsgroup.org.uk/>

Appendix I

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment – non-technical summary

What is Quantified Tree Risk Assessment?

A Non-technical Summary

Tree safety management is a matter of limiting the risk harm from tree failure while maintaining the benefits conferred by trees. Although it may seem counter intuitive, the condition of trees should not be the first consideration. Instead, tree managers should first take account of the usage of the land on which the trees stand, which in turn will inform the process of assessing the trees.

The Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) system applies established and accepted risk management principles to tree safety management. Firstly, the targets (people and property) upon which trees could fail are assessed and quantified, thus enabling tree managers to determine whether to assess trees and to what degree of rigour a survey or inspection of the trees is required. Where necessary, the tree is then considered in terms of both size (potential impact) and probability of tree or branch failure. Values derived from the assessment of these three components (target, size and probability of failure) are combined to calculate the probability of significant harm occurring.

The system moves the management of tree safety away from labelling trees as either 'safe' or 'unsafe' and requiring definitive statements of tree safety from either tree surveyors or tree managers. Instead, QTRA quantifies the risk of harm from tree failure in a way that enables tree managers to balance safety with tree value and operate to predetermined risk thresholds.

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QTRA risk threshold	Thresholds	Description	Action
Quantified Tree Risk Assessment advisory risk thresholds, based on scores and calculations of target, impact and probability of failure (that the tree or branch will fail within the coming year).	<1/999	Unacceptable – risk will not ordinarily be tolerated.	Control the risk.
	1/1k	Unacceptable (where imposed on others) – risks will not ordinarily be tolerated.	i) Control the risk ii) Review the risk
		Tolerable (by agreement) – risks may be tolerated if those exposed to the risk accept it, or the tree has exceptional value	i) Control the risk unless there is broad stakeholder agreement to tolerate it, or the tree has exceptional value ii) Review the risk
	1/10k	Tolerable (where imposed on others) – risks are tolerable if “as low as reasonably practicable”.	i) Assess costs and benefits of risk control ii) Control the risk only where a significant benefit might be achieved at reasonable cost iii) Review the risk
	1/1m	Broadly acceptable - risk is already “as low as reasonably practicable”	i) No action currently required ii) Review the risk