

Tree Condition & Management Report

Site: Pleasure Bit Playing Field
Writtle
Chelmsford

Client: Writtle Parish Council

Report Reference: UTC-0587-06-02-TCR

28 June 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

INSTRUCTION & BRIEF

- 1.1 Underhill Tree Consultancy is instructed by Writtle Parish Council to assess trees at six sites under their control and report on their condition and management requirements. It has been carried out by Graham Underhill, Chartered Arboriculturist and registered consultant with the Institute of Chartered Foresters. Details of qualifications and experience can be found at <http://www.underhilltc.co.uk/about-us>.
- 1.2 This report relates to trees on Pleasure Bit Playing Field.

DOCUMENTS & INFORMATION PROVIDED

- 1.3 A previous condition report and plan of the site was supplied.

PREVIOUS INPUT

- 1.4 A previous survey and report was produced by UTC in August 2021.

PURPOSE & SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.5 This report's purpose is to assess the condition of trees from a safety perspective, specifically in respect to the management of the risk from falling trees or branches. Hazards and risks have been assessed and recorded and recommendations made to reduce risk to acceptable levels.
- 1.6 It follows current best practice on tree risk, including guidance given by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in a SIM 01/2007/05, *Management of the Risk from Falling Trees or Branches*, and in the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) publication, *Common Sense Risk management of Trees* (2011).
- 1.7 Tree owners and managers have a duty of care to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that cause a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury to persons or property.
- 1.8 Works are also recommended for sound arboricultural management reasons where appropriate.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY & REPORT LIMITATIONS

- 1.9 The survey was carried out from ground level only and using Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)¹. No specialist decay detection equipment was used. Where necessary, basic, non-invasive sounding and probing tools, such as a mallet and/or metal probe were used. No soil samples or investigations were carried out. Recommendations to undertake an aerial inspection or more detailed investigation of internal parts of a tree are given if required.
- 1.10 Trees are dynamic, living organisms and it is not possible to maintain them totally free of risk. Some level of risk must be accepted in order to experience the full range of benefits that trees provide. Their condition can change rapidly as the trees grow and can be affected by external conditions and therefore this report is valid until the next recommended assessment, which is in 3 years' time. This period may be reduced if significant changes occur to the trees or the ground conditions close to them.

¹ Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) - In addition to the literal meaning, a system expounded by Mattheck and Breloer (1995) to aid the diagnosis of potential defects through visual signs and the application of mechanical criteria.

- 1.11 Trees are sometimes divided into two risk zones: one zone where there is frequent public access to trees (e.g., in and around picnic areas, schools, children's playgrounds, popular foot paths, car parks, or at the side of busy roads); and a second zone where trees are not subject to frequent public access. As a rough guide 'trees subject to frequent public access' are those that are closely approached by many people every day. Recommendations for management and the priority of such, are based upon the zone and target combined with the severity of the defects possessed by the tree. On this site, all trees are subject to frequent public access, therefore, the priority given to proposed works is based on the most used areas of the site or the likelihood of failure.
- 1.12 This report takes no account of whether trees could affect the soil in the area in such a way as to cause tree-related damage such as subsidence or heave, to buildings or other structures.
- 1.13 On-going normal maintenance such as pruning vegetation away from paths etc., or hedge-cutting, are not dealt with within this report unless there is a significant risk associated.

PLANS & TREE POSITIONS

- 1.14 The position of trees shown on our plans is based on the supplied plans, or plotted using measurements taken on site, therefore the position of trees on our plans may not be plotted accurately but are close enough for the purposes of the report.

2.0 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER (TPO) STATUS

- 2.1 A check on the council's online TPO Register did not identify any of the subject trees as being covered by a TPO, however, the register is searched via an address, and the nature of the site means it is possible that a TPO is in force which did not show up. Therefore, it is recommended that a check is made with the council for any works to the trees which would ordinarily require council permission.

CONSERVATION AREA (CA) STATUS

- 2.2 The site is not within a conservation area.
- 2.3 The tree protection status is correct at the time of report production but can be subject to change. It is therefore the responsibility of any persons undertaking tree works operations to the trees which are the subject of this report and in accordance with our recommendations, to undertake their own statutory tree protection checks with the local planning authority, to include TPO, conservation area and planning conditions prior to works commencing. Tree work agreed as part of full planning consent overrides the need to apply separately although pre-commencement planning conditions may need to be discharged first. Wilful damage or destruction of TPO/Conservation Area trees can result in prosecutions for companies or individuals and fines can be up to £20,000 (County Court fines are unlimited).

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.4 Although outside the specific scope of this report, tree removal and tree works have the potential to cause harm to wildlife, and this should be considered at the planning stage. Additionally, some wildlife which uses trees is legally protected: the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, provide statutory protection to species of flora and fauna including birds, bats and other species that are associated with trees. These could impose significant constraints on the use and timing of access to the site. It is the responsibility of the main contractor and tree surgery contractor to ensure that no protected species are harmed whilst carrying out site clearance or tree surgery works. Unless competent to do so,

the advice of an ecologist must be sought. It is generally considered that birds nest between March and August but it must be understood that birds and active nests are protected irrespective of the time of year and some species can nest in any month. Therefore, due diligence must be observed towards nesting birds whenever tree works are carried out.

3.0 THE SITE

SITE VISIT

- 3.1 A site visit was carried out during June 2024. All observations were made from ground level without detailed investigations. Dimensions were estimated unless otherwise indicated. The weather was clear and dry, so visibility was not impeded.
- 3.2 Many of the trees are numbered using metal tags from previous surveys. Where these are present, the same numbering system has been used for consistency.

SITE DESCRIPTION & RECENT HISTORY

- 3.3 The site is a relatively small recreation ground, with a separate child's play area, the rest of the site being playing fields.
- 3.4 A survey of the trees has been carried out every three years, followed by tree works where necessary. This has resulted in a generally well-managed tree population.

4.0 THE SUBJECT TREES

POPULATION ANALYSIS

- 4.1 All the trees are of one species which is not ideal from the perspective of sustainability. Populations of trees with a greater diversity of species are generally more robust than those with a limited range of species, as the impact of species-specific pathogens² is greatly reduced. In recent years, several new, potentially very damaging pathogens have arrived in the UK with others forecast to arrive in the coming years.
- 4.2 Ideally, new trees of more diverse species would be planted to ensure continued tree cover if the lime trees were to succumb to a pathogen. Due to the use of the space on the site, however, there are few obvious areas for new tree planting.

AGE-CLASS DISTRIBUTION

- 4.3 The trees have clearly been planted as a boundary feature and are therefore all a similar age. Populations that consist of predominantly mature and late-mature trees are likely to decline at a similar rate, therefore, leaving a gap of many years before the benefits that they provide are replaced by those that are newly established.

HEALTH

- 4.4 Most of the trees across the site are of normal/high vitality. Trees with reduced vitality are more likely to be susceptible to pathogens, which may lessen their life expectancy and compromise their structural integrity.

² Pathogen - A micro-organism that causes disease in another organism.

ISSUES & PROPOSED TREE WORKS

- 4.5 All the work required is for the removal of dead branches. Deadwood³ has high ecological value and should not be removed routinely but only where there is a risk of it falling on to a target below, therefore, removal is only specified where this has been identified. This is purely from a safety perspective and is therefore only recommended for trees where there is frequent pedestrian or vehicular activity below.
- 4.6 Within the Tree Schedule, a priority is given against each work specification. This is decided by either the severity of the fault, the location, or both. Where a longer timescale is given, this is for budgeting or management purposes. All proposed works could be carried out as one operation if this is preferable.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The recommended tree works are specified in the Tree Schedule in Appendix A below.
- 5.2 Any tree surgery works should be carried out by a suitably qualified and insured arborist and undertaken in accordance with BS 3998: 2010 Tree Work – recommendations.
- 5.3 Due to the proximity of many of the trees to roads, parked cars, footpaths, public open space, and other areas in high public use, it is advised that the trees be re-assessed at every two to three years. This should be by a suitably qualified, experienced and insured arboriculturist.

³ Deadwood - In the growth and development of a tree, branches compete with each other and weaker branches are eventually suppressed and die. The dead branches, collectively called deadwood, are then liable to fall, particularly if lacking in **durable heartwood**. Deadwood begins to develop naturally, largely in the inner and lower crown, in all trees that are mature and unmanaged. It develops relatively quickly if **vigour** is low. Deadwood in the outer crown of a mature tree signifies a **decline** that might either be progressive or due to some prejudicial episode in the past (root damage, summer drought, pest or disease etc.) from which the tree has since recovered. Deadwood is a vital component of a properly functioning woodland or forest **ecosystem**. It plays an important role in sustaining biodiversity and in delivering ecosystem services such as soil formation and nutrient cycling. In the UK, up to a fifth of woodland species depend on dead or dying trees for all or part of their life cycle and many of these species are rare or threatened.

APPENDIX A – TREE SURVEY SCHEDULE, EXPLANATORY NOTES & PLANS

Methodology A ground level only survey was undertaken. No specialist decay detection equipment was used with basic sounding and probing tools used where necessary. No soil samples or investigations were carried out. Access to trees outside the site boundaries may not have been possible, thus observations are confined to what was visible from within the site and any surrounding public areas. Where heavy ivy, or other vegetation is present, trees are assessed from what can be seen. Where there are concerns but close access is not possible, recommendations may be made to clear vegetation and reinspect. Tree No. T: Tree; G: Group; W: Woodland; H: Hedge; S: Shrub mass Species Common names are used with the scientific name given the first time of use. Height Estimated or measured with the use of a Disto laser measurer, given in metres. Trunk Diameter Measured at approximately 1.5m above ground level and given in millimetres. Radial Crown Spread Measured by Disto laser measurer at the main cardinal points and given in metres. For trees with reasonably symmetrical crowns, a single averaged figure is given. Life Stage NP: Newly planted. Y: Young - an establishing tree that could be easily transplanted. SM: Semi-mature - an established tree still to reach its ultimate height and spread and with considerable growth potential. EM: Early mature - a tree reaching its ultimate height and whose growth is slowing, however, it will still increase considerably in stem diameter and crown spread. M: Mature - a tree with limited potential for further significant increase in size although likely to have a considerable safe useful life expectancy.	LM: Late mature - a senescent tree, in decline, although may still have a useful life expectancy. V: Veteran - has features associated with advanced age for its species but not necessarily very old chronologically. A: Ancient - a tree older than typical for the species and of great ecological, cultural or aesthetic value. Physiology/Vitality Health, condition and function of the tree, in comparison to a normal specimen of its species and age. Structure Structural condition of the tree, based on both the structure of its roots, trunk, major stems and branches, and on the presence of any structural defects or decay. Given as Good, Fair, Poor or Hazardous Target & Site Features A 'target' refers to the likelihood of people being present within falling distance, or property of value. Comments Where appropriate, comments could expand on tree condition and health, features within the rooting zone, safety concerns etc. Recommended Works Primarily, proposed works are for safety reasons although some works may be recommended for arboricultural reasons or to reduce the likelihood of a future hazard developing. (W) Works Priority 1: urgent attention required (as soon as practically possible). 2: Works required within 30 days. 3: works required as part of scheduled maintenance during the 12 months following the relevant inspection date. 4: Works required are of the lowest priority and may be done if budget allows. 5: N/A: No work required. Inspection Frequency 1: carry out an aerial inspection and/or use of decay detection, or other technical equipment. 2: 12-month inspection. 3: 18-month inspection (to allow for inspection in different seasons). 4: 3-year inspection	Wildlife Many wild animals and birds are protected by law and many use trees for part or all of their lifecycles. Therefore, tree work always has the potential to cause harm. All wild birds, their eggs and nests are protected by law. Although birds generally nest between March and September, some species can nest at any time of year. A visual check for nests must be made by a competent person before tree works are carried out. Bats have greater protection, including their roosts whether they are occupied or not. Bats use different roosts at different times of year, therefore potential roost features (PBRs) are noted and must be checked by an appropriately qualified person, if it is to be disturbed during tree works.
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No.	Species	Height	Trunk Dia.	Radial Crown Spread	Life Stage	Physiology	Structure	Target	Target Use (risk)	Failure (risk)	Consequence (risk)	Comments	Works	Works Priority
T64	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	750mm	5m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T65	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	750mm	5m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T66	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	750mm	5m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T67	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	750mm	5m	M	Good	Fair	Playground, playing fields and bench	High	Possible	Severe	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	<u>3 Months</u>
T68	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m		5m	M	Good	Fair	Playground, playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Severe	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	<u>3 Months</u>

No.	Species	Height	Trunk Dia.	Radial Crown Spread	Life Stage	Physiology	Structure	Target	Target Use (risk)	Failure (risk)	Consequence (risk)	Comments	Works	Works Priority
T69	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	700mm	5m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T70	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	700mm	5m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T71	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	750mm	6m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T72	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	800mm	6m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months
T73	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	700mm	6m	LM	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months

No.	Species	Height	Trunk Dia.	Radial Crown Spread	Life Stage	Physiology	Structure	Target	Target Use (risk)	Failure (risk)	Consequence (risk)	Comments	Works	Works Priority
T74	Common lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>)	23m	750mm	6m	M	Good	Fair	Playing fields and bench	Moderate	Possible	Significant	Moderate sized deadwood over areas frequented by the public. Suckers around base and low branches.	Safety: Remove deadwood. Facilitative: Crown lift to 2.5m & remove suckers.	6 Months

Great Oxney Gr

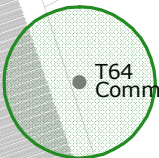
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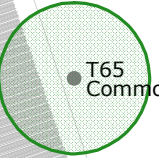
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EAST VIEW

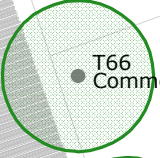
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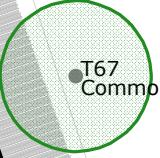
T64
Common lime



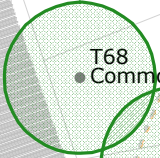
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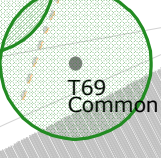
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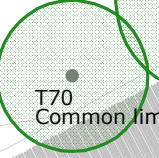
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Common lime



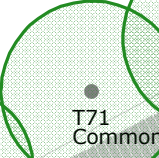
T68
Common lime



T69
Common lime



T70
Common lime



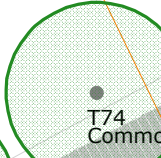
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Common lime



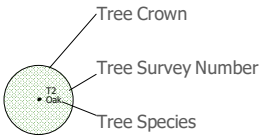
T72
Common lime



T73
Common lime



T74
Common lime



Rev	Description	Date	Drawn
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 **Underhill**
Tree Consultancy
Elizabeth House, 28 Baddow Road, Chelmsford, CM2 0DG
01245 209928 - mail@underhilltc.co.uk - www.underhilltc.co.uk

Project
Oxney Green Playing Fields - Writtle PC

Title
Tree Survey Plan

Drawing Number UTC-0587-P01-TSP	Scale 1:500 @ A3	Date 18.08.2021
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The report covers arboricultural issues; however, non-arboricultural matters may be referred to such as soils, ecology etc. This should be viewed as provisional and the appropriate expert should be consulted where required.

Trees are dynamic living organisms and their condition can change rapidly and therefore this report is valid for a period of 12 months. This period may be reduced if significant changes occur to the trees or the ground conditions close to them.



Underhill Tree Consultancy Ltd
01245 209928

mail@underhilltc.co.uk

www.underhilltc.co.uk

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