TREE KING
CONSULTING
arboricultural consultancy
38 Mead Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL53 7DT
T 01242 522051
M 07860 790024
E info@treeking.co.uk
W treeking.co.uk

Report on land adjacent to Manor Road

Swindon, Cheltenham

For: Swindon Parish Council

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TKC Ref: 31.74

Company Registration No: 05934386
VAT No: 720 8066 54

Inspection of trees on land adjacent to Manor Road, Swindon, Cheltenham

1. Introduction

1.1 Instructions were received from Swindon Parish Council to report on the condition and management of trees on land adjacent to Manor Road. A public footpath runs eastwards from Manor Road alongside the River Swilgate and to the north of the Spirax Sarco site. It is assumed that the river forms the southern boundary of the area, and the northern boundary is formed by the fences of the rear gardens of the houses on the south side of Manor Court.

1.2 I made the inspection on 18th July 2013. I am an independent Arboricultural Consultant with over 30 years experience in the industry, I hold the Professional Diploma of Arboriculture and I am a Fellow of the Arboricultural Association.

1.3 The risks which were considered are those of damage or injury which might be caused if trees or branches were to fail. No consideration has been given to damage which tree roots might cause to any structures.

2. Methodology

2.1 Each tree was inspected but only those trees where tree surgery works are required, or where the tree's condition needs to be commented upon, are scheduled below. Recommended works priorities are included in the recommendations.

2.2 Some of the trees can be identified on site by a round, numbered, aluminium tag affixed to the tree. Others have been marked with spots of blue paint on the back of the tree. Tags can be removed and paint marks can be unsightly; for these reasons, where the identity of the trees is unmistakable (eg. Horse Chestnuts T5 & T6), no mark was used.

2.3 A sketch plan of the site is appended on which are shown the approximate locations of the trees.

2.4 In accordance with normal best practice, the trees were inspected from the ground. In no instance was a need for any more detailed inspection (eg. by climber) identified.

3. Site description and Discussion

3.1 That part of the site adjacent to Manor Road is an area open for public recreation and includes areas of mown grass, banks where mowing is not practical, dense undergrowth and riverside vegetation. It is of high landscape and wildlife value.

3.2 As the footpath progresses to the east, the area narrows and passes more closely to the river. Towards the eastern end the footpath broadens briefly and two large mature Horse Chestnut trees are present on the northern side of the path. Beyond the Horse Chestnuts there is a junction in the footpath(s) which marks the eastern end of the site.

3.3 The trees are all broadleaved and include native species such as Willow, Alder and Ash, and trees which it is evident have been planted such as Norway Maple, Rowan and Cherry. A wide age range is represented.

3.4 The Horse Chestnut trees T5 & T6 are moderately (T5) and severely (T6) affected by Bleeding Canker Disease. This is evident as strips of dead bark progressing upwards into the crown of the tree. As time passes, the exposed bark becomes increasingly susceptible to decay and eventually large parts of the crown may senesce and die.

3.5 The upper crown of T6 is now in poor condition and it is likely that it will not be possible to retain this tree for more than a few years. Where trees grow close together they rely on each other for shelter[1] and their combined form becomes "moulded" to the accustomed wind forces. If Horse Chestnut T6 were to be lost, Horse Chestnut T5 would be at risk of wind damage.

3.6 I am not aware of Chalara Dieback Disease of Ash being present in the area yet. It is inevitable that it will occur, probably within a few years, and the retention of Ash trees in the middle- to long-term is unlikely to be possible. Ash is not a significant component of the tree population on the site.

3.7 In general terms there are plenty of trees on the site, and the value of open, sunny spaces should not be overlooked. A patchwork of light and shade is usually best for wildlife and most popular with people. In some places the trees are now overcrowded. The recommendations include the removal of various trees (G2 & G3) where this would be anadvantage to adjacent trees.

3.8 No English Oak trees are present; were tree planting to be considered in the future, English Oak is very appropriate in the landscape and has a particularly high wildlife value.

[1] Roots develop in response to the prevailing winds. Removing a tree close to another may expose it to forces to which it is no longer adapted.

4. General considerations

4.1 Trees and shrubs are living organisms whose health and condition can change rapidly. The health condition and safety of trees should be checked regularly by a suitably qualified person, preferably at least once a year, and the conclusions and recommendations herein are valid for two year. However, the condition of the Horse Chestnuts T5 & T6 should be checked annually.

4.2 The most satisfactory time of the year to carry out work on most species of trees is when they are in leaf, but not during the few weeks in the spring when the new leaves are being formed and are hardening-off. Trees may also be pruned in winter, but the period of leaf fall and the few weeks thereafter should also be avoided.

4.3 Tree work should be carried out by skilled specialist contractors who should be covered by at least £5 million of public liability insurance. Work should be carried out in accordance with BS 3998: 2010 Recommendations. When carrying out works, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) and all other legislation covering the protection of wildlife must be observed.

4.4 I did not observe any tree requiring tree surgery which is likely to harbour bats. It is an offence to 'intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat' or 'damage, destroy or block access to the resting place of any bat' (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2001 as amended). Where works are being carried out and bats are found to be present, or if the tree is a known roost, consultation must be made with the Statutory Nature Conservancy Organisation (Natural England 0845 600 3078 www.naturalengland.org.uk). A *European Protected Species Habitat Regulations Licence* is required to handle or to undertake works which are known to affect bats. If breeding bats are thought to be present, work is best undertaken between late August and early October, or during March and April.

4.5 Some of the trees may be covered by a Tree Preservation Order or the site may be within a Conservation Area. In the first instance the permission of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must be obtained, or in the case of a Conservation Area, six weeks notice must be given in writing to the Local Planning Authority for work to any trees of minimum 7.5cm diameter at 1.5m high. This includes ground works within the Root Protection Area of any tree. It is advisable that enquiries are made of the Cheltenham Borough Council to ascertain whether either of these controls exists before any works to trees are undertaken.

Graham King MRAC, Dip.Arb.(RFS), F.Arbor.A.
19th July 2013

APPENDIX 1
Risk assessment criteria

"We are at risk every day in our own home, travelling to work and in the workplace. We expect to take risks, and the law requires only that we should be guarded from risks that are unreasonable. Absolute safety or the eradication of all risk is not expected and arguably is neither possible nor desirable. In the context of tree management, such an approach could result in the loss of all tree-associated amenities. By controlling risks from the hazards, owners are meeting natural and ethical duties for the safety of others. They are also meeting the requirements of insurers and of the law." **English Nature** publication *Veteran Trees: a guide to risk and responsibility*:[2]

In assessing the *overall risk* which a tree or a group of trees represents, the management requirements are decided upon after consideration of the *target rating* of what could be hit if part of the tree failed, and the *hazard rating*, or the likelihood that failure might occur.

The *target rating* seeks to balance the vulnerability of the target and the length of time it is exposed to the risk, and to quantify it (low, medium and high). The *target rating* for cows which may sometimes stand beneath a tree in a field would be less than that for vehicles travelling at speed on a highway, or a tree in an urban park where people habitually congregate.

The tree surveyor observes the condition of the tree and uses experience to assess the *hazard rating,* that is, the likelihood that any part of the tree might fail, and combines it with the *target rating*, or what it could hit, to assess the *overall risk*. Management recommendations are then decided upon to reduce risks to an acceptable level. In some circumstances, a tree's exceptionally high visual amenity or its historical or conservation value may mean that a slightly elevated level of risk is acceptable.

References:

- Common sense risk management of trees: National Tree Safety Group. The Tree Council 2013
- Veteran Trees: a guide to risk and responsibility: English Nature

[2] Co-author Charles Mynors QC.

Approximate locations of trees scheduled in the report

Works Priorities:

1: **Work required immediately, within 7 days.**
2: **Work to be carried out without undue delay, preferably within 6 weeks.**
3: **Work necessary but not urgent. Recommended to be completed within 3 months.**
4: **Works required to correct defects, but not urgent. Recommended timescale of 12 months.**
5: **Works required for reasons of long term tree safety.**
6: **Works not required for reasons of tree safety. Usually these works are to improve the growth of individual trees, or of woodland.**

Schedule of individual trees

Tree No.	Tag No.	Species	Principal risk to:	Location and Description	Recommendations	Works Priority
T1	081	**Plum**	Highway	On the upper edge of the roadside group. Extended branch over road.	Reduce extended branch over road back to the outer line of the pavement.	4
T2	082	**Norway Maple**	Highway	Lower edge of roadside group. Dieback of upper crown and/or squirrel damage.	Reduce height by 3m-4m and remove dead and defective wood.	3
T3	083	**Sycamore**	Highway	Basal cavity on east side. On sounding, decay appears not to be extensive. Of somewhat reduced vitality. Dense ivy.	Cut the ivy.	4
T4	084	**Norway Maple**	na	Suppressed tree. Could be removed to benefit growth of the adjacent trees.	Fell	6
T5	no mark	**Horse Chestnut**	Footpath	Large mature tree, moderately affected by Bleeding Canker Disease.	Reduce crown by around 2m-3m and remove dead and defective wood.	3

Tree No.	Tag No.	Species	Principal risk to:	Location and Description	Recommendations	Works Priority
T6	no mark	**Horse Chestnut**	Footpath	Large mature tree, severely affected by Bleeding Canker Disease.	Remove the defective upper part of the crown (approx. 7m) and dead and defective wood.	3

Schedule of tree groups

G1	no mark	**Various**	Highway	Low branches over the pavement.	Lift the crowns to 2.5m over the pavement and 5.3m over the carriageway.	4
G2	blue paint	**Silver Birch, Rowan, Alder**	na	As indicated on sketch. Suppressed trees which could be removed to facilitate mowing and to benefit growth of adjacent trees.	Fell.	6
G3	blue paint	**Various and uncertain**	mown grass areas	As indicated on plan. 4 dead or moribund trees. West to east they are: Norway Maple, Willow, Rowan, Alder. **The Alder was inaccessible and was not marked.**	Fell	3
G4	no mark	**Willow**	Path	4 pollarded trees. Will require re-pollarding in due course. Should be re-pollarded as all together as a group so that light levels to one tree are not reduced by the next. High wildlife value. ?2-3 years.	None	