



# **Arboricultural Report:**

## **Tree Condition Survey: Summer 2024**

### **School Grounds**

**Reading Blue Coat School,**  
Holme Park, Sonning Lane,  
Sonning-on-Thames, Berks RG4 6SU

**Client:** Reading Blue Coat School

**Dated:** 21/10/2024

**Report Author:**

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BSc (Hons) Arb, N. Dip Arb, AA Tec Cert.

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## **Executive Summary**

This arboricultural report presents the findings and recommendations of a Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) survey at Reading Blue Coat School. The survey is a Negative Reporting type. It has been carried out in summer, as opposed to the usual 3 yearly winter scheduled surveys, so that differences in tree vitality can be observed.

The survey identified 27 trees recommended for remedial works or other management; these items and other tree stock data is recorded in the tree survey schedule at Appendix 4. The recommendations of the report should be carried out within the timescales specified.

Some of the works listed in this survey are items which have already been identified as requiring work in previous surveys. This indicates that there needs to be greater quality control of the job bundles that are signed off by the school as completed.

The school is in the administrative area of Wokingham District Council (WDC). The school site is in the Sonning Conservation Area and subject to a woodland Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Therefore, tree works, other than those that are exempt under regulations, will require a Section 211 Notice or TPO application. The legal protection status of all trees identified for works are identified in Appendix 4.

## **1.0 Instruction**

- 1.1 Chris Leyland (T/A *Reliance Arboriculture*) was instructed by Matthew Wharton, Head of Grounds at Reading Blue Coat School. The brief was to provide tree safety survey of the school grounds; providing findings and recommendations in a written report.
- 1.2 The author is a professional member of the Arboricultural Association (M. Arb. A.) and associate member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, with over 30 years of industry experience. The author's academic qualifications and professional credentials are summarised at Appendix 1.

## **2.0 Primary Objectives**

- 2.1 To carry out a site-wide arboricultural survey of all significant trees to identify any defect-hazards, which pose a reasonably foreseeable risk of causing injury or damage to people or property.
- 2.2 To recommend tree works necessary to reduce any reasonably foreseeable risks to an acceptable level; i.e. to the inherently 'extremely low' risk level associated with trees in general [Ref.1].

## **3.0 Methodology**

- 3.1 The tree survey was conducted through the summer of 2024. The survey was carried out only on days when visibility was good for the task.
- 3.2 The tree stock was surveyed using Negative Reporting, irrespective of their location within the relative 'Target' Risk Zones (HRZ) and Low Risk Zones (LRZ) identified on site. A new survey area (Als Pond) has been added to the Target Risk Map; this has been identified as a Low Risk Area. The zones are depicted on plan at Appendix 5.
- 3.3 Ordinarily, in the Lower Risk Zones only those trees which require any intervention have been recorded. All trees in the Higher Risk Zones (that are more than 5m tall with stem diameters above 250mm) are 'positively' recorded irrespective of whether any remedial work was recommended.
- 3.4 Stem diameters were taken at 1.5m above ground level (AGL); stem diameters were generally estimated and checked against every 10th tree by a control measurement using a calibrated diameter tape. Tree heights were similarly estimated; control checks were measured using a 'Hagloff' electronic clinometers. All other values are estimated, unless otherwise stated.

- 3.5 PT-Pro Mapper GIS software was used to plot the subject trees' approximate locations onto a digital Ordinance Survey based map (Appendix 3). Surveyed trees are identified by existing or new metal tags with a unique series numbers.
- 3.6 Trees were evaluated by the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) Method (Mattheck and Breloer (1994) [Ref.3]); and developed by Lonsdale [Ref.4], and Matheny & Clark [Ref. 5]. The tree survey schedule is presented at Appendix 4. The survey headings, abbreviations and symbols are defined at Appendix 2.

#### 4.0 Limitations

- 4.1 The report is based on site conditions at the time of survey. Subsequent alterations to the site including after severe storms may invalidate the report's findings and recommendations.
- 4.2 The PT-Pro Mapper GIS software used to plot the trees' approximate locations on a digital OS based map has an accuracy of 3-5m depending on atmospheric conditions, canopy density and satellite coverage at the time of survey.
- 4.3 Subject to the caveat at 4.1, the recommendations of this report are valid for a maximum period of 3 years. The responsibility for implementation of any of the report's recommendations resides solely with the client.
- 4.4 The statistical risk of death resulting from tree related accidents resides within the '*extremely low*' risk category defined by the Health and Safety Executive [Refs.1, 2]. Nevertheless, trees are living structures subject to factors of environmental flux; large trees adjacent to 'Targets'\* (\*people or property proximate to a tree) can never be considered entirely 'safe', i.e. risk free.

#### 5.0 Site Information

- 5.1 The school site is located in the local authority (LPA) area of Wokingham District Council. The entire site falls within the Sonning Conservation Area (Appendix 6). A Tree Preservation Order (1951) includes both a Woodland designation (on the western boundary slope to the River Thames), and a Group designation (along the Sonning Road). A 'Group' designation covers only those trees extant when the order was created, whereas a Woodland designation covers all subsequent regeneration or plantings. The relevant map area from the Tree Preservation Order' is reproduced (Appendix 5) (Reference: TPO 2/1951). The TPO takes primacy as a planning constraint over the Conservation Area designation; works to trees subject of a TPO generally require an application to be approved by the LPA unless the tree or a part of it is dead or dangerous. Works carried out under the woodland management plan approved by the Forestry Commission are also exempt from Tree Preservation Order regulations.

## 6.0 Tree Survey Findings

- 6.1 The tree survey schedule is presented at Appendix 3. A synopsis of tree works recommended for implementation according to priority timescales (Action Period) is presented below at Table 1 (below).

| Action Period               | Colour Code | Trees     |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Urgent- As soon as possible |             | 0         |
| 3 Month                     |             | 0         |
| 6 Months                    |             | 25        |
| 1 Year                      |             | 1         |
| 3 Years                     |             | 0         |
| Recommended (optional)      |             | 1         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                |             | <b>27</b> |

Table. 1

- 6.2 Table 2 (below) presents a synopsis of any recommendations for further more detailed investigations to inform management decisions for the subject trees.

| Tag # | Recommendations                  | Priority |
|-------|----------------------------------|----------|
|       | Root-plate investigation (T.541) | 6 Months |
|       |                                  |          |

Table. 2

- 6.3 Ash Die Back Disease (ADBDB) is increasingly prevalent in the woodland where the species is locally high in density. Only monitoring and removal are feasible management options. The woodland should be managed in accordance with the approved Woodland Management Plan, which indicates for ash to be selectively felling according to the schedule of works for each compartment. This will be a more cost-effective strategy in the long term, over ad hoc felling of ADBDB trees.
- 6.4 A very large mature oak (T541) is recommended for a ground investigation of its root plate area; this area has been disturbed by recent excavations associated with the formation of a hard-core surface car parking area.
- 6.5 Some of the works listed in this survey are items which have already been identified as requiring work in previous surveys. This indicates that there needs to be greater quality control of the job bundles that are signed off by the school as completed; e.g. T4185-Yew.
- 6.6 A significant number of saplings in the woodland areas are growing in close proximity, or indeed through, the iron railings that provide the means of boundary security for the much of the site. It would be within the capability of school staff to carry out work if a narrow buffer were to be maintained, to pre-empt more expensive future large tree removals (and damage to railings). This would require an annual task to check the boundaries and cut down, or pull up seedlings according to their size.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 This report should be kept on record and its recommendations should be carried out within the timescales specified. All works should be carried out in accordance with BS.3998:2010- Tree Work- Recommendations.
- 7.2 The summer survey should be repeated in 3 years (summer 2027) as a maximum. Any significant concerns that arise in the meantime should be referred to an arboriculturalist for specialist assessment.
- 7.3 Recommendations for further investigation work should be instructed; this will require a more detailed specification.

## **8.0 Protected Species:**

It is advised that tree work contractors should carry out a risk assessment and checks for protected species (most notably bats and nesting birds) before carrying out work on trees. Bat roosts are particularly difficult to identify in trees, but under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010) it is an offence to damage or destroy a bat roost (an absolute offence), or intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost.

## **9.0 References**

- (1) **Health and Safety Executive (2007).** *Management of the Risk from Falling Trees.* Sector Information Minute
- (2) **Health and Safety Executive (2001).** *Reducing Risks Protecting People: HSE's Decision Making Process.*
- (3) **Mattheck, C & Beloer, H (1994).** *The Body Language of Trees: A handbook for Failure Analysis* (Research for Amenity Trees 4) HMSO, London.
- (4) **Lonsdale, D. (1999).** *Principals of tree assessment and management,* HMSO. London.
- (5) **Matheny, N.P. and Clark, J.R. (1994)** *A photographic guide to the evaluation of hazard trees in urban areas,* 2nd Ed. International Society of Arboriculture, Urbana, USA



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Qualifications and Experience**

The author holds a 1st Class Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Arboriculture and is a professional member of the Arboricultural Association and associate member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters. In addition he holds a BTEC National Certificate in Horticulture, a BTEC National Diploma in Arboriculture and the Arboricultural Association's Technical Certificate.

The author has worked in the field of arboriculture for 30 years including 3 years at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew as a botanical arborist and 7 years at the leading firm, Treecare Ltd of west London. In addition the author has 15 years experience as a local government tree officer both in parks and planning departments, at Brighton and Hove Unitary Authority and at Oxford City Council.

The author has wide experience in all aspects of arboricultural consultancy and contracting services. His specialist areas in consultancy include preparing and presenting expert reports for planning and development purposes, also in the field of tree risk assessment and strategic tree and woodland management. The author regularly provides consultancy expertise to a number of private and public body clients including the Environment Agency, and BBOWT.



## APPENDIX 2

### Definition of Terms, Abbreviations and Symbols: Survey Schedule (Appendix 3)

#### Terms

- **Tag No.:** Individual identification number on metal tag nailed to tree.
- **Tree Type:** Common and scientific species names given.
- **Stem No.s:** Number of stems emanating from approximately ground level.
- **Height (m):** Height given in metres.
- **Stem Dia Ø (mm):** [Stem] diameter at breast height (1.5m above ground level).
- **Age Class:** Classification of maturity relative to species longevity potential.
- **Vitality:** Assessment of physiological health based on bud density, intermodal extensions, symptoms of disease or dysfunction.
- **Condition Comments:** Record of any observed significant structural defects, other hazards or site conditions adverse to safety or useful life expectancy.
- **Recommendations:** Works recommended with a rationale of mitigating significant safety risk to Targets; unless otherwise described.
- **Target Rating:** Assessment of location's risk exposure to potential tree hazards; Low/Medium/High
- **Action Period:** Indicates the relative importance of work recommendations and maximum timescale for implementation; Categories as defined below:-

| Priority | Colour Codes |
|----------|--------------|
| Urgent   |              |
| 3 month  |              |
| 6 months |              |
| 1 Year   |              |
| 3 Years  |              |
| Optional |              |
| N/a      |              |

#### Abbreviations and Symbols

|             |                                |             |            |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| <b>AGL</b>  | Above ground level             | <b>Ø</b>    | Diameter   |
| <b>VTA</b>  | Visual Tree Assessment [Ref.3] | <b>N/A</b>  | No Action  |
| <b>N/a</b>  | Not applicable                 | <b>(N)</b>  | North      |
| <b>m</b>    | metres                         | <b>(E)</b>  | East       |
| <b>mm</b>   | millimetres                    | <b>(SE)</b> | South East |
| <b>&gt;</b> | Greater than                   | <b>(S)</b>  | South      |
| <b>&lt;</b> | Less than                      | <b>(SW)</b> | South West |
| <b>≥</b>    | Equal or more than             | <b>(W)</b>  | West       |
| <b>≤</b>    | Equal or less than             | <b>(E)</b>  | East       |

| Tag No    | Tree Type        | Stems | Height (m) | Stem Dia (mm) | Spread Radius (m) | Maturity     | Vitality  | Condition Comments                                                                                                                                                     | Recommendations                                                                                           | Priority | TPO / CA  |
|-----------|------------------|-------|------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 279       | Sycamore         | 1     | 12         | 250           | 3                 | Early-mature | Dead      | Sooty bark disease. N                                                                                                                                                  | Fell to ground level                                                                                      | 6 Months | TPO       |
| 311       | Holly            | 1     | 10         | 400           | 3                 | Mature       | Declining | Small cavity formation at 3m AGL. Stem lean (E).                                                                                                                       | Fell to ground level                                                                                      | 6 Months |           |
| 338       | Holly            | 1     | 9          | 250           | 2                 | Mature       | Declining | Tag missing. Tree moribund.                                                                                                                                            | Fell to ground level                                                                                      | 6 Months |           |
| 512 (65)  | Common Oak       | 1     | 16         | 500           | 5                 | Mature       | Fair      | No significant visible defects. Previously topped; asymetric crown. Large low dead limb (S) at 5m AGL.                                                                 | Implement a 4m radius mulch ring to improve vitality. Remove low dead limb                                | 6 Months | TPO (n/a) |
| 539       | Oak              | 1     | 8          | 800           | 0                 | Dead         | Dead      | Stump/ monolith (within falling range of bin store compound).                                                                                                          | Fell and leave as dead wood habitat                                                                       | 6 Months |           |
| 541       | Oak              | 1     | 25         | 1500          | 10                | Mature       | Fair      | No significant visible defects. Recent disturbance around RPA (N), soil heaping                                                                                        | Conduct root-plate safety inspection by careful hand excavation to investigate potential root damage.     | 1 Year   | TPO (n/a) |
| 546 + 5   | Yew              | 6     | 16         | 500           | 6                 | Mature       | Declining | Scattered Group x 6 trees -x2 nearest new development in very poor health; likely construction root-zone injury.                                                       | Fell to ground level. Also adjacent paint-spotted yew trees Tags, 4978, 546, 5823 )(5823a, 5823b, 5823c)  | 6 Months |           |
| 555       | Lime             | 1     | 21         | 700           | 7                 | Mature       | Fair      | Minor dead wood (50mm). Mistletoe x 40% canopy covering. Minor dead wood (50mm); retrenchment                                                                          | Crown clean by removal of dead wood and mistletoe masses.                                                 | 6 Months |           |
| 559       | Lime             | 1     | 18         | 550           | 4                 | Mature       | Good      | No significant visible defects. Heavy mistletoe covering in canopy; 20%                                                                                                | Crown clean by removal of dead wood and mistletoe masses.                                                 | 6 Months |           |
| 561       | Oak              | 1     | 15         | 800           | 6                 | Mature       | Fair      | Previously heavily crown reduced. Stem bark wound (E) at 1-2m AGL. X 2 large dead wood (≥100mm)                                                                        | Crown clean by removal of dead wood.                                                                      | 6 Months |           |
| 569       | Norway Maple     | 1     | 9          | 500           | 5                 | Early-mature | Declining | Declining, drought or verticillium wilt. Large dead branches in lower canopy.                                                                                          | Crown clean by removal of dead wood.                                                                      | 6 Months |           |
| 570       | Cedar of Lebanon | 1     | 6          | 1000          | 22                | Mature       | Fair      | Tree has subsided (W) from partial root-plate failure. Now resting on x 2 resilient scaffold limbs. Exposed roots (S).                                                 | Add further top soil to root-plate (S) to cover exposed roots to protect them and mitigate trip hazard.   | 6 Months |           |
| 620       | Oak              | 1     | 20         | 800           | 7                 | Mature       | Dead      | Low target risk. Valuable and rare standing deadwood. Very low foreseeable risk of whole tree failure. Low but increasing risk of branch failures with time and decay. | Decrease Target risk further by planting defensive shrub layer, e.g. blackthorn at canopy edge near path. | 6 Months |           |
| 816 (295) | Horse Chestnut   | 1     | 18         | 700           | 6                 | Mature       | Poor      | Bark death (NE): Approx 180' of trunk circumference. Bacterial canker disease; bleeding on stem base. Tight fork with included bark at 1m AGL; stable.                 | Fell to ground level                                                                                      | 6 Months | CA        |
| 829       | Oak              | 1     | 15         | 700           | 8                 | Mature       | Good      | Low dead branch (SW)                                                                                                                                                   | Remove low dead branch                                                                                    | 6 Months |           |



# Reliance Arboriculture

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## APPENDIX 3

SCALE :  
1 : 3500

@ A4

DATE :  
23/10/2024



### Tree Risk Target Zoning Map:

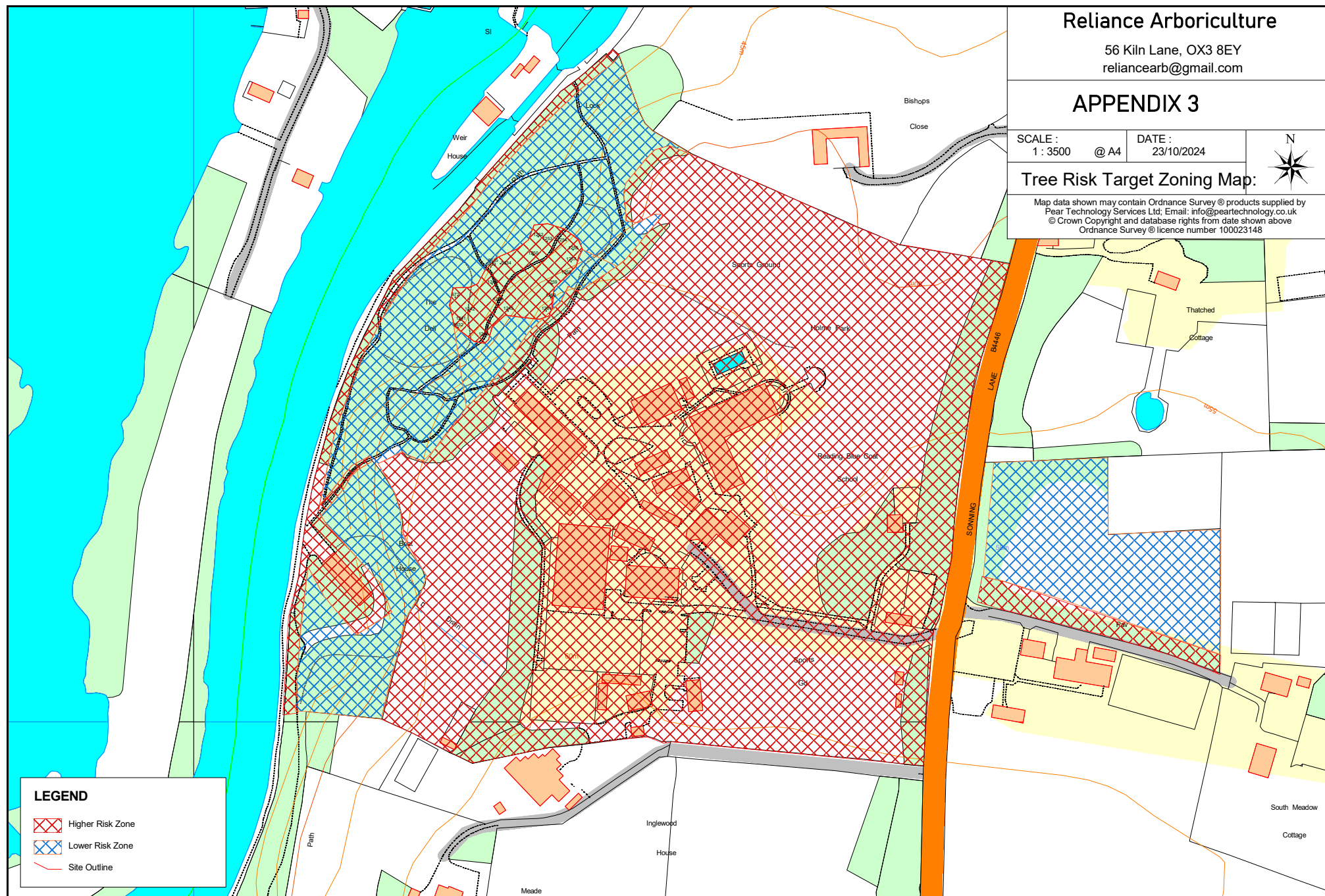
Map data shown may contain Ordnance Survey © products supplied by  
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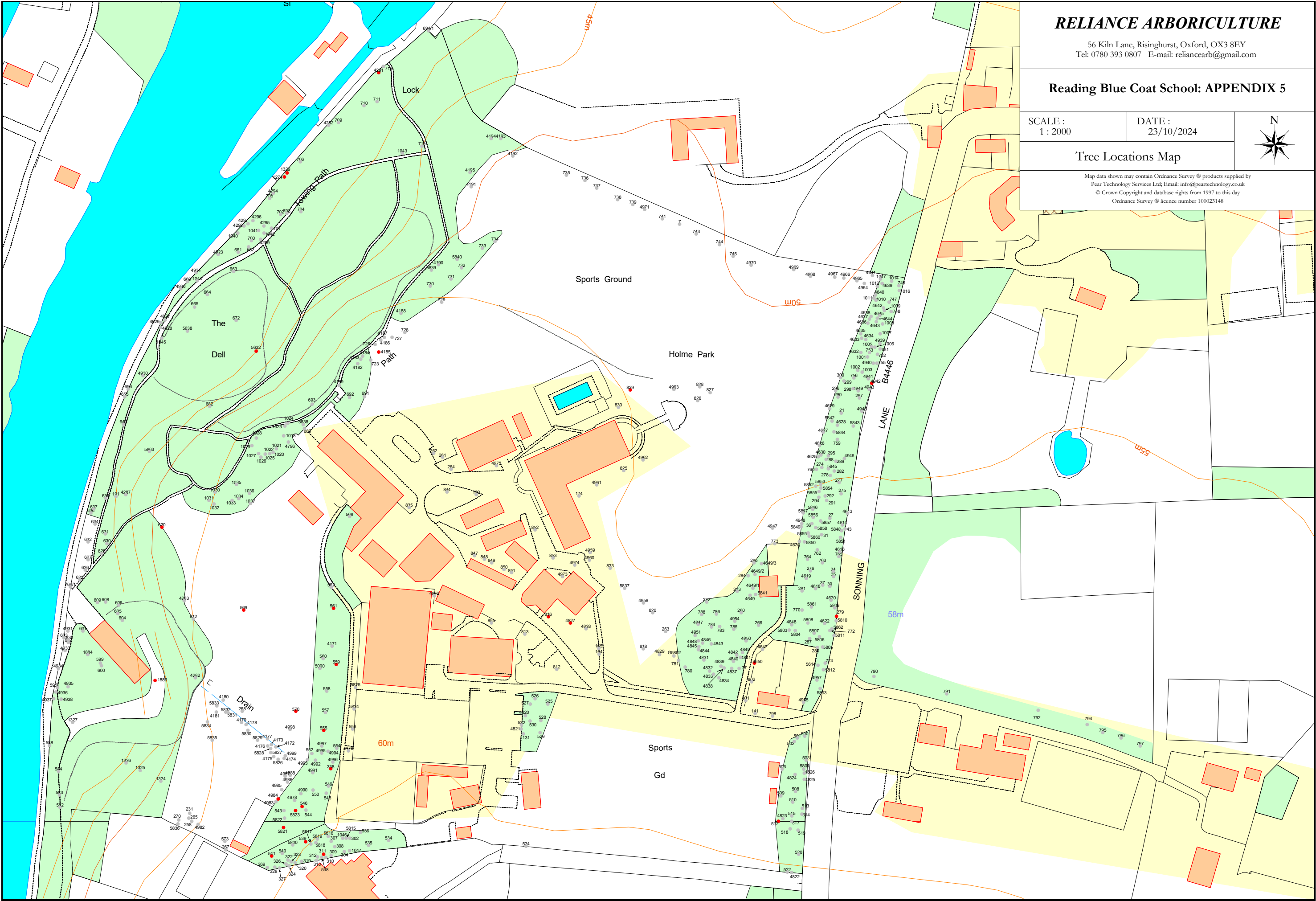
### LEGEND

 Higher Risk Zone

 Lower Risk Zone

 Site Outline





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**Reading Blue Coat School: APPENDIX 5**

SCALE :  
1 : 2000

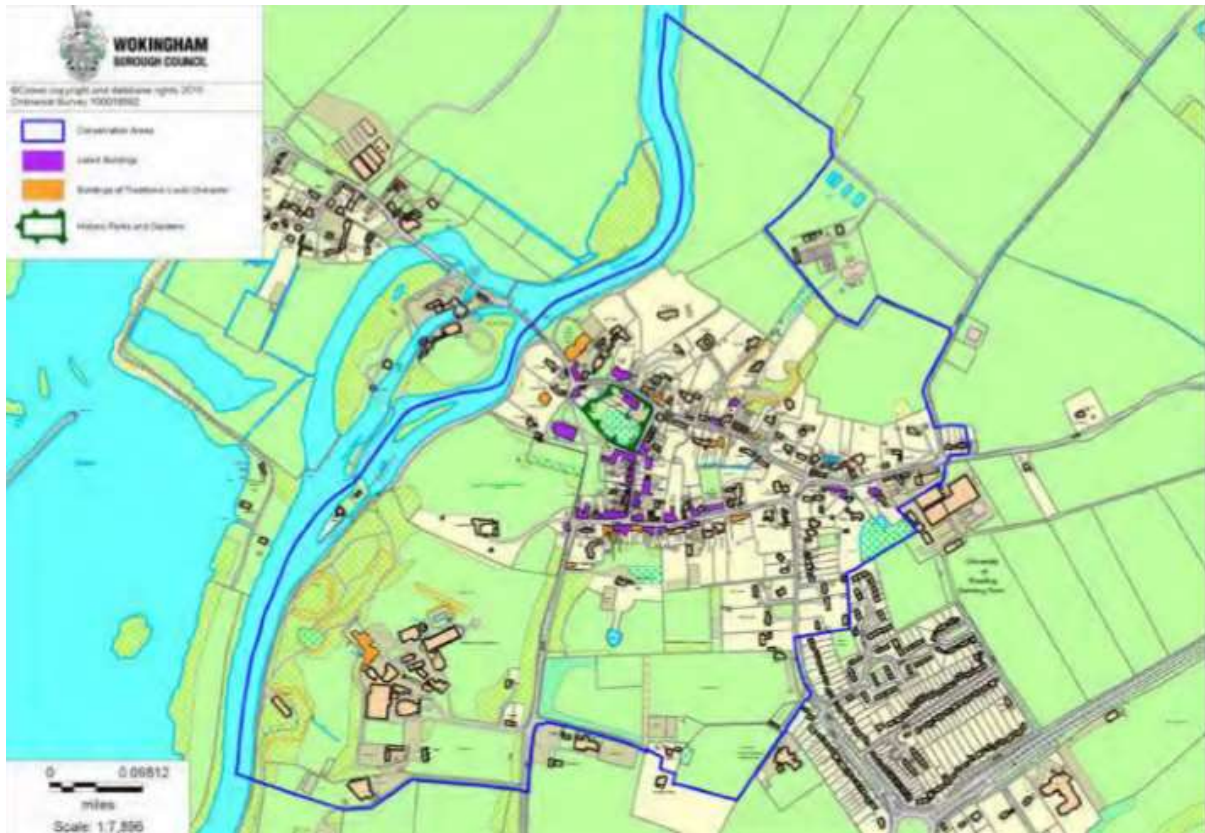
DATE :  
23/10/2024



**Tree Locations Map**

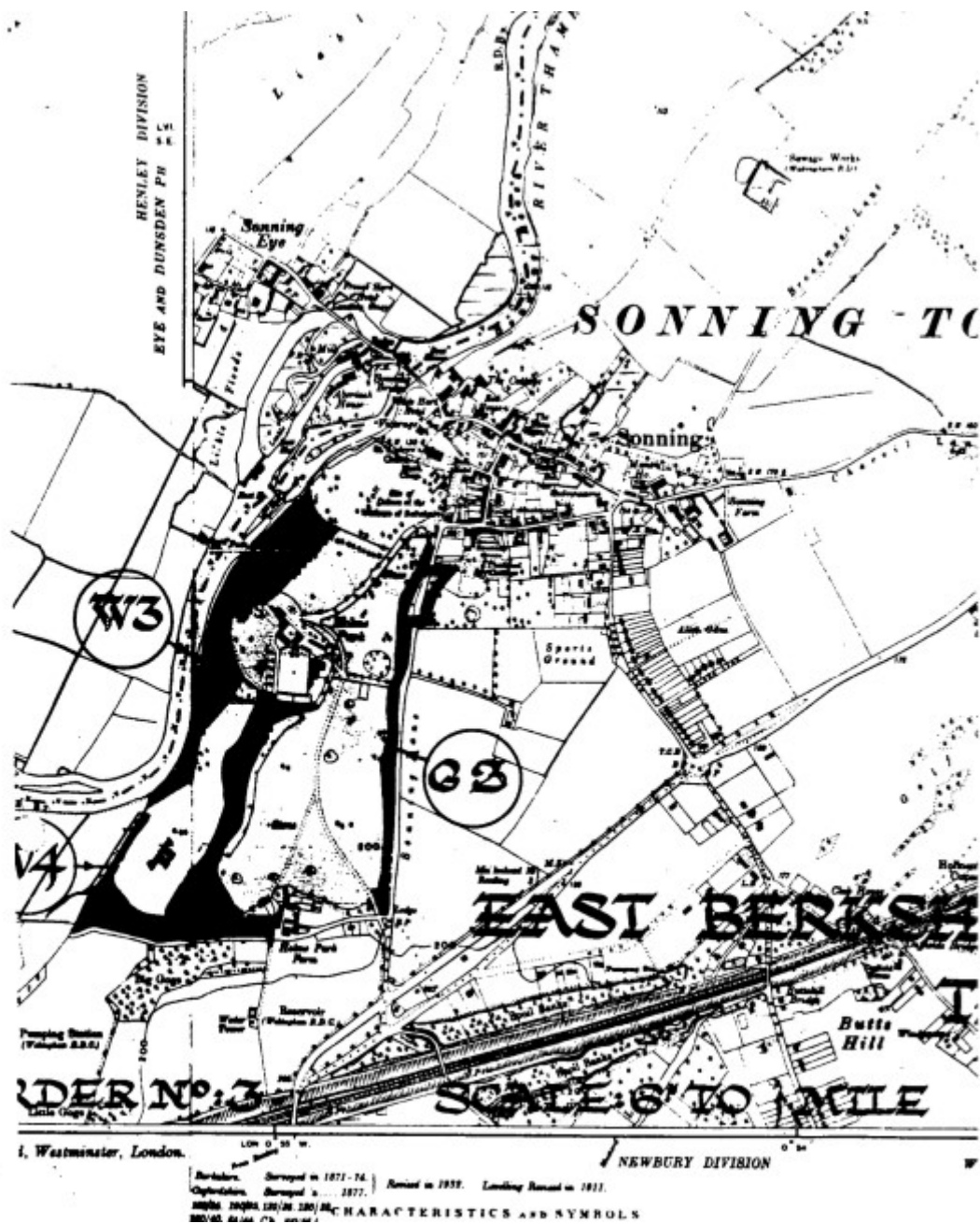
Map data shown may contain Ordnance Survey ® products supplied by  
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## APPENDIX 6



Sonning Conservation Area boundary (blue line)

## APPENDIX 7



### East Berkshire Tree Preservation Order (No2) 1951

W3 Woodland 3  
G3 Group 3