



**Tree condition and hazard survey of trees
at**

Hill House, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, RG7 1AL

Surveyed by

Ben Abbatt

Client

J Cook

Dip. Arb. (RFS), BA (Hons), MICFor, MRICS
Lantra Basic and Professional Tree Inspection Instructor

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30th October 2025

Report reference

J1643

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1. Instruction

- 1.1 I was instructed by J Cook to carry out a tree condition survey of 8 no. trees, paying particular attention to any features that may pose a significant hazard to persons or property, and to produce a tree survey report including the provision of management recommendations with priorities.
- 1.2 The tree condition assessment is to be carried out in relation to the landowner's duty under the Occupier's Liability Act 1984 and common law. Presumption for tree management will be in favour of retention of the tree(s) where appropriate.
- 1.3 The client has raised concerns relating to the trees including their condition, proximity to the highway and dwelling.

2. Site details

- 2.1 Hill House is on the west side of Basingstoke Road, with Pursers Farm to the north and west, and residential development to the south and west. The site has a northeasterly aspect¹, although with manmade levels changes due to the residential use of the site. Bedrock geology is recorded² as London Clay Formation. Hill House is listed as Grade II³; trees are not detailed in the listing.
- 2.2 The trees subject to the survey stand on the east side of the property adjacent to Basingstoke Road.

3. Statutory controls

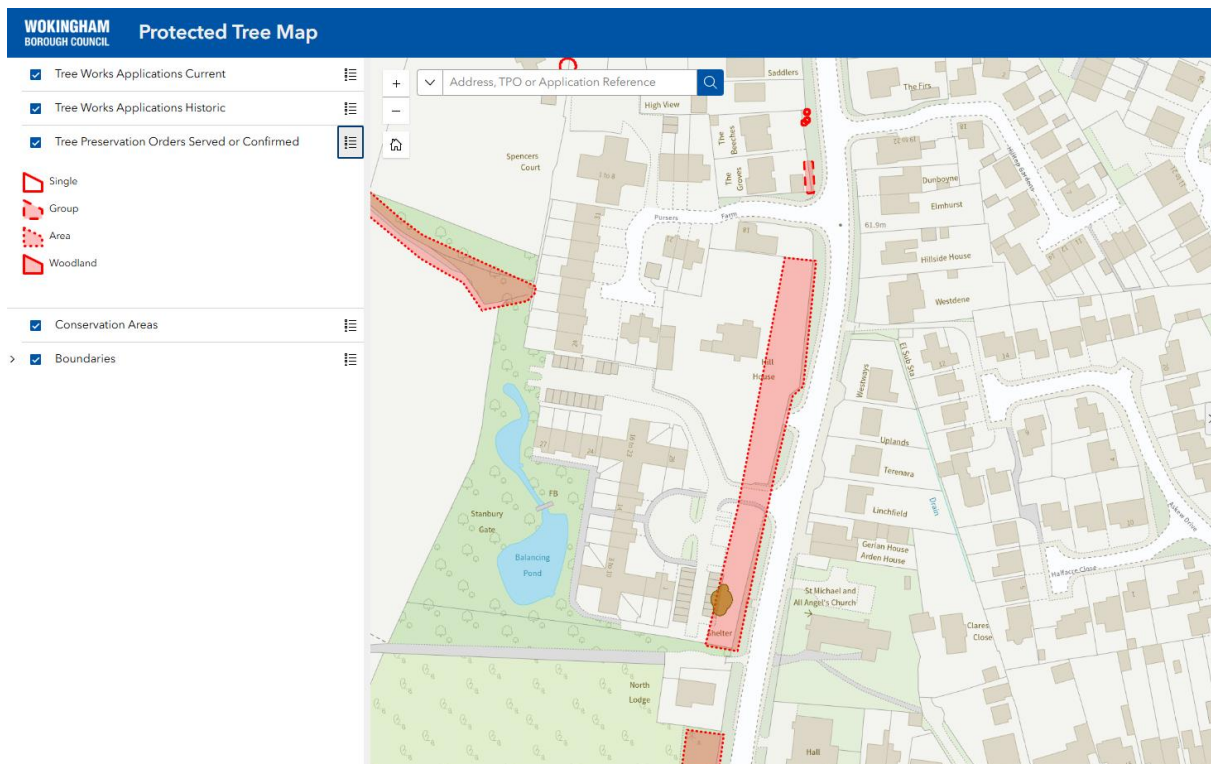
- 3.1 The online mapping tool⁴ provided by Wokingham Borough Council, accessed on 30th October 2025 identifies that the site is not subject to Conservation Area controls. However, the eastern edge of the property is shown as subject to Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 0021-1970, Area designation A2. See image SAL1:

¹ <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/map-cgt/United-Kingdom/?zoom=18¢er=51.39897%2C-0.97337>

² https://geologyviewer.bgs.ac.uk/?_ga=2.51865583.73021289.1749808043-2123672543.1749808043

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1319123>

⁴ https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c0ad4ce95f8e46cfb28bb8cb126eaec0#data_s=id%3AdataSource_1-190ca921dfb-layer-9%3A159



SAL1 Image from council website.

3.2 The informative text on the council's website states,

“Area - The area category is one way of protecting individual trees dispersed over an area. It can protect all trees within an area defined on the Order's map or only those species which it is expedient to protect in the interests of amenity. The Order will protect only those trees standing at the time it was made.”

Underling is my emphasis. Area orders do not consider the specific merits of individual trees. On this basis, it is not clear from the planning authority whether each individual tree merits the special protection afforded by a Tree Preservation Order. In fact, current government advice⁵ in paragraph 029 Reference ID:36-029-20140306 states,

“The area category is intended for short-term protection in an emergency and may not be capable of providing appropriate long-term protection. The Order will protect only those trees standing at the time it was made, so it may over time become difficult to be certain which trees are protected. Authorities are advised to only use this category as a temporary measure until they can fully assess and reclassify the trees in the area. In addition, authorities are encouraged to resurvey existing Orders which include the area category.”

The planning authority has not followed current government advice and therefore the value of the trees surveyed is not currently understood by the planning authority. In my view, the trees surveyed do not merit being subject to TPO due to their condition.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#making-tree-preservation-orders>

- 3.3 I believe that the trees surveyed were present in 1970 and therefore I have treated all 8 trees as being subject to TPO. As these 8 trees are likely to be subject to TPO, a Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 s16 Tree Works Application⁶ will need to be issued to the planning authority and 'Consent' received prior to tree works commencing relating to these trees. Such tree works identified within any Consent will normally need to be complete before a 2 year period from the date of the Consent. Additional information on the process can be found at the government website⁷. This tree condition survey can be used to inform such a Tree Works Application.
- 3.4 Alternatively, works may be exempt from notice as detailed in The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 sections 14 (exceptions)⁸. Such exceptions are given as a s14 'Notice of Intent' and a 5 working day period for the planning authority to consider the matter and relate to the imminent threat of harm or damage. This tree condition survey can be used to inform such a s14 (5 day) Notice of Intent. On this occasion, the works relating to 2190 could be, in my view, implemented within this exception.
- 3.5 Works in accordance with the Highways Act 1980, section 154⁹, overrides the town and Country Planning Act and can be implemented without reference to the planning authority. However, it is appropriate to inform the planning authority to avoid unnecessary waste of officer time investigating whether the works are exempt. On this occasion, the works relating to 2190 could be, in my view, implemented within this exception.
- 3.6 The Forestry Act 1967¹⁰ does not apply as the trees grow within the residential garden.
- 3.7 This document does not consider specific covenants.

4. Limitations

- 4.1 The tree survey was carried out from ground level, with the aid of binoculars where appropriate, using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) process. The VTA process is used to identify significant tree features that may have significant bearing upon the condition (physiological and structural) and management of the tree.
- 4.2 Typical significant defects that are identified are referred to in Lonsdale, D., "Hazards from Trees, a general guide" (FCPG13) published in 2000 by the Forestry Commission, Lonsdale, D., "Principles of tree hazard assessment and management" published in 1999 and 2001 and reprinted in 2013 by the Forestry Commission, and Mattheck, C., "The body language of trees" published in 1994 by the Department of the Environment and 2015 by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology.

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/605/regulation/16/made>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#making-applications-tpo>

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/605/regulation/14/made>

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/154>

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/10/section/9>

- 4.3 Reasonable access around the base of the tree is required to carry out a tree survey. Where this is not feasible, these parts of the tree may not be fully assessed. If a view of the entire structure of the tree(s) is limited, for instance by the properties in private ownership or obscured by vegetation, this is a limitation to the tree survey and some parts of the tree may not be able to be fully surveyed. In this instance access was available.
- 4.4 Trees are dynamic structures and as such their condition and health may change in a short period of time, particularly in relation to changes in their immediate environment and circumstances, and as such the survey relates only to the visible condition found on the day of the survey. Tree(s) should be re-surveyed on a regular basis so that the change in condition can be identified. An appropriate time period between surveys may be up to 5 years depending upon the species, condition of the trees, their maturity / size and the context within which the tree(s) grow. Recommendations for the period between surveys are given.
- 4.6 No soil investigations have been carried out. This survey does not consider the risk of potential damage caused through tree related soil movement.

5. Tree survey findings

- 5.1 The survey was carried out on 23rd October 2025. J Cook accompanied me during the site visit. The weather on the day of the site visit was clear, light rain occasionally with low wind speeds.
- 5.2 The table of findings of the tree survey can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.3 I have plotted the approximate tree position on Ordnance Survey data, Ordnance Survey data (licence AC0000849896), to correlate between the tree condition survey (Appendix 1), the tree survey plan (Appendix 2), and the specific trees surveyed on site. Position of the trees plotted are approximate on the tree survey plan and the specific trees will need to be identified through their approximate position shown on the tree survey plan, condition notes given in the tree survey text and the photographs in Appendix 3.

6. Discussion

- 6.1 This survey is intended to aid my client comply with their duty of care with regards the ownership of trees. This survey has identified a number of features requiring remedial works. To aid consideration of the features identified I have provided below additional information on the features in order of the first occasion of their occurrence.
- 6.2 An asymmetrical canopy predisposes the tree to fail in the direction of the asymmetrical canopy. The greater the asymmetry, the greater the potential for failure. Remedial works to rebalance and reshape the form of the tree to a more even canopy shape and balance will reduce concerns of an unbalanced canopy. Such rebalancing or crown reduction works may also improve the aesthetic form of the tree and aid the retention of the tree in the landscape for longer.

- 6.3 Where trees are showing significant decline (reduced leaf density, yellowing foliage, small sized foliage, reduced foliage volume) then this is an indication that the physiology of the tree is in decline. Causes for such decline is numerous. Diminished physiology means that there is less energy available for defence of the tree system which means secondary colonisers (for instance insects, decay fungi, etc.) are more able to colonise the tree and have further influence upon tree physiology and structure. Canopy decline is an indicator that the structure of the tree is more likely to be compromised and there is an increase potential for root-plate failure, stem failure, and branch failure. In the instance of 2189, whilst the canopy looks sparse directly below the tree, from a distance the vitality looks normal.
- 6.4 Narrow or included bark / compression unions are typically 'v' shaped with an angle of less than 25 degrees. These unions are usually weaker than more normal 'u' shaped tensile unions. The greater the adaptive growth either side of the union, the greater the potential for failure. To reduce the risk of failure of the union, the weight and wind loading of the canopy can be reduced to aid the retention of the tree in the landscape. Additionally, installation of a flexible cable bracing system to reduce movement at the union and thereby reduce the risk of failure is also applicable. Such cable bracing is to be inspected in accordance with the manufacturer's details or in accordance with BS3998:2010 where it states in paragraph 10.9,
- "The default frequencies should be annual for a general ground-based inspection, using binoculars if required, and five-yearly for a detailed aerial inspection."*
- 6.5 Dead branches or stems (deadwood) deteriorates over time. The longer such wood is within the trees, the greater the potential for it to fall from the tree canopy. Additionally, the larger the deadwood, the greater the potential outcome if the failure falls on to an individual or property. It is appropriate to remove deadwood where such outcomes are likely and / or foreseeable. It is also appropriate to retain deadwood, in particular large deadwood more than 150mm diameter, in the canopy where there is a low risk of harm or damage as such deadwood can provide habitat. Due to the circumstances of the site, I do not recommend the retention of deadwood.
- 6.6 Cavities or visible splits can indicate that decay of the wood has occurred. This is a normal process and may not be of particular concern depending upon the extent of decayed stem. However, if the cavity / extent of decay is advanced or significant, then failure may occur and remedial pruning or removal may be appropriate prior to such failure(s).
- 6.7 The greater the amount of pruning work carried out, the greater the potential for undesirable physiological and structural impacts upon the retained trees (refer to British Standard 3998:2010 Recommendation for tree works paragraph 7.2.4 extent of pruning works). Therefore, works recommendations given seek to reasonably control the risks identified whilst minimising the potential impact upon retained trees to aid their retention in the landscape for as long as reasonably practicable. Additionally, tree works recommendations are kept to a minimum to minimise the potential aesthetic impacts that can occur through excessive tree works.

- 6.8 To conclude, in my consideration of the site, its location, use, frequency of occupation, the potential hazards that the trees present, the condition of the trees and potential for failure, and the potential size of the failure parts, I have provided tree works recommendations with priorities to aid the retention of the trees in the landscape where feasible and these works are detailed in section 7 and Appendix 1.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 I have considered the findings of the tree survey within the context of the health and vitality of the trees and the circumstances within which they are located.
- 7.2 Recommended works are detailed in Appendix 1 for each tree or group with associated priorities. The priorities mean that the recommended works should be carried out within specified timescales detailed in Appendix 3 key to tree survey data.
- 7.3 Works are considered a 'High' priority and should be complete within 1 month from the date of this survey. The priority is considered based on the condition of the tree and its position and context. One trees were identified as being subject to a high priority.
- 7.4 Works are considered a 'Moderate' priority and should be complete within 3 months from the date of this survey. The priority is considered based on the condition of the tree and its position and context. Five trees were identified as being subject to a moderate priority.
- 7.5 Works are considered a 'Low' priority and should be complete within 12 months from the date of this survey. The priority is considered based on the condition of the tree and its position and context. The remaining trees were identified as being subject to a low priority or no works were required.
- 7.6 Tree works should be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 Recommendations for Tree Works and in particular biosecurity / avoidance of transmission of disease and pathogens (4.3), extent of pruning works (7.2.4), and natural target pruning (7.2.5). A tree contractor ought to carry out works in accordance with this British Standard and be aware of these specific elements.
- 7.7 Works recommended are in accordance with BS3998:2010 Recommendations for Tree Works, Table B.1 where the works are "*To protect people or property from*" "*tree failure*" and "*storm damaged branches*" and "*To maintain health or longevity by means of*" "*good structural integrity*" and "*disease or pest control*".
- 7.8 Tree works, except high priority and felling works, ideally to be carried out ideally in the late summer (September) or mid winter (December to February) to aid the trees to respond to the pruning wounds in the most effective manner. The worst times to implement tree works to retained trees is in spring (particularly bud burst) and secondly autumn (around leaf fall) and, therefore, these time periods (spring / bud burst and autumn / leaf fall) ought to be avoided where possible to reduce the physiological impact upon retained trees.
- 7.9 Resurvey of the trees ought to be complete by the 1st November 2028. Resurvey dates assume implementation of the tree works recommended within the timescales given. Resurvey is important as the condition of trees alters over time. Resurvey assumes the entirety of tree works recommended to be complete within the timescales given.

- 7.10 If the condition of the trees alters from their current recorded condition, this should be brought to the attention of an Arboricultural Consultant.

Appendix 1: tree survey data

Tree Condition Survey

Site Hill House
 Date of survey 23rd October 2025
 Job reference J1643
 Surveyor Ben Abbatt
 Resurvey To be complete by the 1st November 2028



Designation	Reference number	Species	Height (m)	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	2188	Cedar <i>Cedrus</i>	17	Mature	Good	Fair	Asymmetrical canopy towards the east and highway.	Tip reduction of lateral branches to an even horizontal radial canopy spread of 7m with tapering of branch length with height to produce a dome shaped canopy. Reason: to reduce potential for branch, stem, and root failure and to aid retention of the tree in the landscape.	Low
T	2189	Black pine <i>Pinus nigra</i>	23	Mature	Fair	Fair	Slightly sparse canopy typical of the species. Two stems from 4m with narrow angle between stems. Occasional moderate deadwood.	Tip reduction of lateral branches to an even horizontal radial canopy spread of 6m. Reason: to reduce potential for branch, stem, and root failure and to aid retention of the tree in the landscape. Install cable bracing between the two stems. Reason: to reduce the potential for stem and union failure. Remove deadwood more than 25mm diameter. Reason: to remove the potential for harm from failing deadwood.	Low
T	2190	Monterey cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	25	Mature	Good	Poor	Typical series of branch failures throughout. Two stems from base with significant decay at the union.	Crown reduction from 25m to a final height of 18m with a horizontal radial canopy spread of 8m. Reason: to reduce the potential for structural failure. Install flexible cable bracing. Reason to reduce the potential for structural failure.	High

Designation	Reference number	Species	Height (m)	Age class	Physiological condition	Structural condition	Condition notes	Condition related tree works	Priority
T	2191	Monterey cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	23	Mature	Good	Fair	Suppressed canopy. Asymmetrical canopy towards the west and dwelling. Top previously lost pruned with mature regrowth.	Crown reduction from 23m to a final height of 18m with a horizontal radial canopy spread of 6m. Reason: to reduce the potential for structural failure.	Moderate
T	2192	Monterey cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	23	Mature	Good	Poor	Asymmetrical canopy towards the west and dwelling. Top previously lost pruned with mature regrowth. Series of branch failures throughout with subsequent decay on the tension side.	Crown reduction from 23m to a final height of 18m with a horizontal radial canopy spread of 6m. Reason: to reduce the potential for structural failure.	Moderate
T	2193	Monterey cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	23	Mature	Good	Poor	Asymmetrical canopy towards the east and highway. Top previously lost or pruned with mature regrowth. Series of branch failures throughout with subsequent decay. Cavity at 1.5m with decay extending down towards the roots.	Crown reduction from 23m to a final height of 18m with a horizontal radial canopy spread of 5m. Reason: to reduce the potential for structural failure.	Moderate
T	2194	Monterey cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	23	Mature	Good	Poor	Asymmetrical canopy towards the east and highway. Two stems from 3m with narrow union. Brown rot decay visible at 1m extending downwards towards the roots.	Crown reduction from 23m to a final height of 18m with a horizontal radial canopy spread of 5m. Reason: to reduce the potential for structural failure.	Moderate
T	2195	Monterey cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	23	Mature	Good	Fair	Suppressed canopy. Asymmetrical canopy towards the north and garden. Top previously lost / pruned with mature regrowth.	Crown reduction from 23m to a final height of 18m with a horizontal radial canopy spread of 6m. Reason: to reduce the potential for structural failure.	Moderate



General / Key:

NTM data

Indicative tree position



Site: Hill House

Data: Ordnance survey data provided under licence ©Crown Copyright and database rights 2025 OS Licence no. AC0000849896. ©Bluesky National Tree Map (NTM) data.

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Drawing title:

Tree survey plan

Drawing reference: J1643

Revision: -

Date: 30th October 2025

Scale: 1 to 500 on A4

Sheet: 1 of 1

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Appendix 3: photographs



SAL2 2190 with split on north side and decay between the two stems; red handle of 40cm long series screwdriver identified by red arrow. Full extent of depth not identified.



SAL3 2190 with split on south side and decay between the two stems; red handle of 40cm long series screwdriver identified by red arrow. Full extent of depth not identified.



SAL4 2192 with decay on the upper / tension side of the stem.



SAL5 2193 with decay extending downwards. Full extent of depth not identified.



SAL6 2160 with brown rot evident as shown by red oval.

Appendix 4: general notes

The tree survey can only be an assessment of the tree at the time of the survey and the tree(s) should be re-surveyed on a regular basis. An appropriate time period between surveys may be up to 5 years depending upon the condition of the trees, their maturity and the target(s). Recommendations for the period between surveys will be given.

As trees are dynamic structures their condition and health may change in a short period of time, particularly in relation to changes in their immediate environment and circumstances. Therefore, the survey is an assessment of the trees at the time of the survey only. If there is a significant change in the immediate environment and circumstances, then this should be brought to the attention of the arboriculturalist so that they may advise accordingly.

I have not specifically checked with the planning authority whether the site is within a Conservation Area or whether the trees are under Tree Preservation Order (TPO), but I have relied upon their published map information. Prior to any tree works confirmation of whether these legal restrictions apply to the site or trees ought to be sought from the planning authority. If the trees stand within a Conservation Area designated under the Town and Country Planning Act the LPA will normally require 6 weeks notice of intention to carry out any tree works as detailed in the survey. If the trees are under TPO then the planning authority will normally require an application for any tree works. Some tree works are exempt, for instance if the trees are dead or dangerous, and certain works can be carried out without application. It is necessary to give the planning authority at least five days notice prior to carrying out any of these tree works under these exemptions. This survey, with recommendations, can be used to support any such application or notice.

Wildlife issues are of significant concern to the general public. A balance has to be found between the protection of wildlife and the need for safety when managing trees. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1980) and Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000) give statutory protection to wild birds, bats, mammals, some invertebrates and plants. It is important to ensure that this legislation is properly considered when carrying out any works to trees.

Bird nests were not identified whilst on site. However, any Arborist carrying out the tree works should ensure that there is no disturbance to nesting birds prior to the works being carried out. Further guidance upon the appropriate timing of the works can be sought from DEFRA, if necessary. Where nesting birds are found, further information should be sought from DEFRA 08459 33 55 77 or helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk. Prior to any works being implemented the tree contractor must identify whether there are any bats or birds using the tree as roost or nest. If such habitation is identified, then the tree contractor must obtain the necessary licence from Natural England (0845 601 4523 www.naturalengland.org.uk) to carry out the works.

A bat survey prior to tree works is not recommended, except where there is a high potential for habitat. During the tree works, the contractor should carry out the tree works with bats as an active consideration and follow the current industry best practice, e.g. Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 1 Bats in the context of tree work operations 2011, BS8596 Micro guide to surveying for bats in trees and woodland <https://shop.bsigroup.com/upload/273444/BSI-Bat-Microguide-UK-EN.pdf> which a competent tree contractor should be familiar with.

Biosecurity measures: To minimise the potential for contamination of the tree from other tree works it is appropriate to sterilise tools to be used before and after the works are implemented. Appropriate disinfectant includes Propellar or Cleankill Sanitizing spray. Loose debris is to be brushed off prior to treating with disinfectant to ensure appropriate application. See [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS028-guidance.pdf/\\$file/FCMS028-guidance.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS028-guidance.pdf/$file/FCMS028-guidance.pdf) for further information on Biosecurity and <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-9fjd2d> for disinfectant information.

Appendix 5: key to tree survey data

Desig	Designation (T is Tree, G is Group, H is Hedge, W is woodland, S is Stump)	
No	Tree number.	
Species	Species of tree.	
Height	Height measured in metres.	
Canopy spread	Canopy spread in metres is taken at the four cardinal points to derive an accurate representation of the crown.	
Height of crown	Height in metres of crown clearance above adjacent ground level.	
Age Class	Young	A tree considered to be less than approximately 20 years old.
	Middle aged	A tree in approximately the first 1/5th of its normal life span with apical dominance (rapidly growing with a clear main leader) and not yet fully at its environmental potential full height.
	Mature	A tree in its 2/5ths to 5/5ths of its normal life span with apical dominance lost and at its environmental potential full height.
Condition (Physiological and Structural)	Good	A tree of typical physiological and structural condition that requires only general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape.
	Fair	A tree of impaired physiological and / or structural condition that may require remedial and general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape.
	Poor	A tree of significantly impaired physiological and / or structural condition that will require remedial and general tree works to facilitate its retention in the landscape if feasible.
Recommendations	As per BS3998: 2010 Recommendations for Tree Works.	
Priority	Immediate	Works should be carried out immediately as the probability of harm or damage occurring is likely.
	High	These works are important to carry out as soon as reasonably possible and any budget available for tree management should be spent upon these trees before the moderate and low categories. Works in this category usually will relate to abatement of risk for harm and or damage to occur. Ideally works in this category are anticipated to be carried out within 1 month.
	Moderate	These works are important to carry out as soon as reasonably possible and any budget available for tree management should be spent upon these trees before the low categories. Works in this category usually will relate to abatement of risk for harm and or damage to occur and for the good arboricultural management of the trees. Ideally works in this category are anticipated to be carried out within 3 months.
	Low	Works in this category usually will relate to the good arboricultural management of the trees. Ideally works in this category are anticipated to be carried out within 12 months.
Re-survey	This is the time period in which it is recommended that the tree is surveyed again. This is based upon the condition of the tree, its location, previous, current and future management. It is normally expressed at a time period from the date of the report / survey, whichever is the sooner. If no time period is noted then the default period is one year.	

Appendix 6: surveyor qualifications and experience

Ben Abbatt has been involved in the arboricultural industry since the mid 1990s and has worked in a variety of roles within the industry, starting as a forestry contractor, progressing to the surveying and management of forestry and arboricultural contracts for a national forestry company and running the arboricultural section of a horticultural business overseas. Additionally, Ben has worked in local Government at Borough and County levels, providing planning related advice and managing Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Areas, as well as managing highways trees and contracts.

Since 2006, Ben has been the Director and Principal Consultant of Sapling Arboriculture Ltd.

Ben is a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

He holds many arboricultural and forestry qualifications including the Professional Diploma in Arboriculture awarded by the Royal Forestry Society, the Technicians' Certificate awarded by the Arboricultural Association and an HNC in Forestry.

Ben is also a freelance instructor for LANTRA, delivering courses in Basic Tree Survey and Inspection and Professional Tree Inspection.



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