Certhia
consulting ltd

11 Ermin Close, Baydon,
Marlborough, Wiltshire. SN8 2JQ
01672 540833
E: guy@certhia.co.uk

Beechwood Tree Care Ltd.
By e-mail only: neil@beechwoodtreecare.co.uk

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[redacted]

237 London Road, Wokingham RG40 1RB. Inspection of 5no. *Quercus robur*, English Oak.

I refer to my site visit on 22 November 2024, and to my inspection of the Oak adjacent the property.

The trees were inspected from ground level using industry accepted visual tree assessment protocols. The buttress regions were cleared of leaves and debris as far as reasonably practicable to facilitate a clear view. The trees were sounded using a nylon mallet in order to consider any tonal irregularities or changes in the buttress and trunk region. Buttress clefts, i.e. the natural indentations into the buttress between primary root development, were probed for areas of decay.

Only relevant dimensions were recorded to ensure that target potential and structural loading was fully considered.

The trees grow along the footpath, Clay Lane, that runs directly to the east of the property. There are indications of an historic degraded ditch line adjacent the trees and it is likely that these once formed a boundary feature prior to the construction of housing.

I understand from comments made that the land, and hence the trees, were in the ownership of a construction company that has now ceased to trade.

Individual observations and recommendations are made in the following pages.

Yours Sincerely

[redacted]

Guy Watson Director MICFor, CEnv, ND Arb (RFS), F. Arbor. A

The trees run in a line from north to south and are numbered consecutively. The trees are almost equally spaced along Clay Lane. Only trees directly adjacent to the boundary of 237 London Road have been considered. Further trees exist to the south of those considered and have not been part of this work.

T1: The northern most tree considered and grows on the outside corner of the boundary fence.

Quercus robur	Height (m)	Crown Spread (n,s,e,w) (m)
Quercus robur	22	7, 6, 9, 9

The buttresses region has no directly recordable features or fungal fruiting bodies, either attached or detached. The tree has slightly raised vertical buttressing, a response growth that may be in response to initial internal changes, but there are no hammer tone changes or other indicators of any significant concern.

The tree is predominantly upright with typical branch and union architecture of species. There is a “fibre buckle” bulge on the main stem on the eastern aspect. These are a response to a load event and are a one-off historic increase in wood to manage that singular event. All main unions are normally formed.

A moderate limb has recently failed over the drive area and has been removed to a stub. This limb was approximately 100mm diameter. A further rubbing limb exists in a similar location at 10.0m west over the drive. The lateral extent of the western mid-crown limbs extends beyond the normal crown line and increases load on these structures.

There is isolated moderate deadwood in the mid and inner crown. This is typical of a tree that is developing normally and is no indicator of decline. The vitality of this tree is normal for species and time of year. Ivy is beginning to develop into the mid-crown region.

Work Required:

Remove upper small rubbing limb 10.0m West (approximate position circled)

Reduce mid-crown laterals by 2.0m to suitable growing points.

T2: Growing adjacent northern corner of dwelling and immediately adjacent fence line.

Quercus robur	Height (m)	Crown Spread (n,s,e,w) (m)
Quercus robur	22	7.5, 8, 11, 7

The buttresses region has no directly recordable features or fungal fruiting bodies, either attached or detached. This tree also has slightly raised vertical buttressing, a response growth that may be in response to initial internal changes, but there are no hammer tone changes or other indicators of any significant concern.

The tree has a slight lean to the east, not significant and self corrects to an upright form. The tree has the typical branch and union architecture of species. There is a large, historic, fully occluded wound at 2.5m south west. There are no indicators of any significant decay behind this occluded wound, e.g. exudations, increased growth, fruiting body attachments or any changes in hammer tones.

All main unions are normally formed.

The tree has been historically reduced on the western aspect. This was poor reduction work, internodal cuts, with typical regrowth developing from those points. The mid and upper crown has not been reduced and this has left open arching, lion tailed structures above the lower removals/reductions. These limbs have some exposure to prevailing winds and have increased load.

There is isolated moderate deadwood in the mid and inner crown. This is typical of a tree that is developing normally and is no indicator of decline. The vitality of this tree is normal for species and time of year.

Work Required:

Remove lateral over house at 11.5m to source (1)
Reduce height of adjacent stem by 3.0m. (2)
Reduce height of southern upright by 2.5m to alleviate stress on angle change (shown red). (3)
Remove lowest lateral arching over roof to source (main stem) (4)
Remove deadwood greater than 25mm over roofs .

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T3: Growing adjacent northern corner of dwelling and immediately adjacent fence line.

Quercus robur	Height (m)	Crown Spread (n,s,e,w) (m)
Quercus robur	21	7, 7, 12, 8.5

The buttresses region has no directly recordable features or fungal fruiting bodies. It displays the normal formation for age and species.

The tree is predominantly upright with normal architecture for age and species.

There are large historic branch removals from the main stem on the western aspect, fully occluded. There are no indicators of any significant decay behind these occluded wounds, e.g. exudations, increased growth, fruiting body attachments. Smaller more recent reductions have occurred in the mid-crown on the western aspect.

All main unions are normally formed.

The mid and upper crown has not been reduced and this has left open arching, lion tailed structures above the lower removals/reductions. These limbs have some exposure to prevailing winds and have increased load.

Moderate deadwood is within the mid-crown over the roofs and garden with similar sized deadwood over the footpath.

The vitality of this tree is normal for species and time of year.

Work Required:

Reduce lateral and height of 2no. upright stems to north and west by 2.5-3.0m.
Reduce lower north western stem back to established epicormic growth at 5.0m from tips (not BS compliant but best scenario).
Remove deadwood greater than 25mm over roofs.

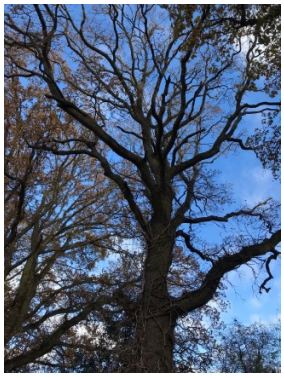
T4: Growing adjacent fence line.

Quercus robur	Height (m)	Crown Spread (n,s,e,w) (m)
Quercus robur	21	4, 7, 9, 6

The buttresses region has no directly recordable features or fungal fruiting bodies. It displays the normal formation for age and species.

The tree has a slight lean to the east, not significant, and self corrects to an upright form. The tree has the typical branch and union architecture of species.

All main unions are normally formed.



The whole tree is in slow decline with major deadwood sections throughout the crown, over footpath and more moderate sections over the garden. There is very limited internal growth within the crown. Vitality is much reduced. However, Oaks tend to decline slowly over a long period of time and this process may have been occurring for many years and will continue for years to come.

Work Required:

Remove deadwood greater than 25mm over garden.

NOTE: This tree has implications for the users of the footpath due to the deadwood within the canopy.

T5: Growing just north of the southern corner of the garden, adjacent fence line.

Quercus robur	Height (m)	Crown Spread (n,s,e,w) (m)
Quercus robur	22	4, 9 6, 6

The buttresses region has no directly recordable features or fungal fruiting bodies, either attached or detached. This tree has slightly pronounced buttressing to the south.

The tree is predominantly upright. The tree has the typical branch and union architecture of species.

All main unions are normally formed.

The tree has been historically reduced on the western aspect in the lower crown leaving the mid and upper sections slightly exposed to increased load.

There is isolated moderate deadwood in the mid-lower crown. This is typical of a tree that is developing normally and is no indicator of decline. The vitality of this tree is normal for species and time of year.

Work Required:

Reduce lateral extent of western mid and upper crown by 2.5m.
Remove deadwood greater than 25mm over garden.

In general the trees are of reasonable condition for age and species. There are typical indicators of changes developing in the buttress regions as a natural function of age, and the trees are responding to this.

The previous historic works have been limited to the lower crown only and may even go back to the time that the houses were built. This has left sections of the mid and upper crowns developing over the roofs and gardens in a way that can increase load and changes in wind patterns. Trees respond to gravity as a constant. However, the up lift of limbs by changing wind patterns, and increased dynamic movement when lower limbs are removed, can precipitate unusual movement. The trees will respond to this over time, through a constantly evolving process of growth, load and movement and response.

In my opinion, it would be prudent to reduce lateral extent and, in some cases, heights of specific sections over and towards the property and garden to alleviate these stresses.

There is some cracking developing on the flank wall of the building between [T2] and [T3]. This starts at the exposed base of the wall and develops in a stepped form via the cement joints. The cracks are generally 1-2m in width. There is no cracking across individual bricks. There is no vertical or lateral displacement that can be seen. The cracking extends vertically to approximately half the height of the wall.

There appears to be no recent movement, i.e. clean exposed cement. The pattern of cracking is not generally consistent with vegetation-induced subsidence movement. This tends to start in the upper corners of a structure and generally at the weaker points, e.g. window or door corners. Cracking is generally wider at the upper points and tapers off to the lower points. The cracks are situated centrally between two of the trees and therefore cannot be attributed to direct action.

A trial pit was dug in the front garden of the property to consider the soil types. The upper horizon was a sandy loam to the depth of the pit (450mm) with gravel appearing in the lower levels. The base of the pit was a hard dense gravel layer preventing further excavation. The British Geological Survey record this area as having a bedrock formation of London Clay with no information relating to any superficial deposits. If there is concern about further movement of the building, crack monitoring to determine any increase in crack widths and locations should be carried out.

The trees were, according to the householders, part of the land holding of a development company that ceased to trade and therefore, under its 'Limited Company' status, it is believed that its land asset reverts to the Crown. Typically, whilst the householders have made reasonable attempts to contact the tree owners, this has proved difficult and fruitless.

Common Law allows for a neighbour to carry out works to those parts of trees that overhang their boundaries without reference to the owner. However, this may mean that poor practice may develop by leaving internodal cuts; or that works on sections to manage a potential issue cannot be achieved. The advice I have given in these recommendations assumes that agreement can be reached between the owner of the trees and the owners of 237 London Road to achieve the best outcome for all, including the trees.

The trees are covered by a Woodland TPO administered by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC). Consent is required to work on the living sections of the trees by application to WBC. The common law right to prune back to the boundary does not supersede this requirement.

The trees remain the responsibility of the owner of the land upon which they stand. Where an owner cannot be located then the Local Authority, WBC, may have to assume some degree of responsibility for those trees where public safety is concerned. This may be applicable to the footpath and any risk posed to the users of that path.

Furthermore, as there appears to be a hiatus in ownership responsibilities, the owners of 237 London Road may feel it is prudent to have the trees adjacent their property inspected periodically to identify any foreseeable risks. If that is the case then, from the species, age, location and current condition of the trees I would recommend that a three year interval is currently appropriate.

[redacted]

Guy Watson
Director
MICFor, CEnv, ND Arb (RFS), F. Arbor. A