EVOLVE

TREE MANAGEMENT

Tree Risk Report and Preliminary Woodland Management Considerations

for

Eden Bridge

Prepared for

Kirkby Stephen Town Council

Prepared by

Josh Ledbury

Date:

12/10/2026

Reference:

ETM/RISK/EB/10-26

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1. Introduction

1.1 This inspection was undertaken by Josh Ledbury on 15 September 2026.

1.2 The inspection relates to trees located on public land adjacent to Eden Bridge, Kirkby Stephen.

1.3 The site comprises areas of young establishing woodland, public footpaths, more established trees along the River Eden and a small number of mature trees adjacent to the roadside.

2. Instructions

2.1 The survey was instructed by Christian Barnes, Clerk to Kirkby Stephen Town Council, via email on 22 July 2026.

2.2 The instruction was to undertake a ground-level visual tree risk inspection alongside a preliminary woodland management survey, with particular focus on the selection and marking of individual trees within the establishing woodland for removal as part of an initial thinning intervention.

2.3 The purpose of the inspection and report is to:

- Carry out a visual assessment of trees within the defined survey area and individually record trees where specific risk management, remedial work or monitoring is recommended.
- Assess the young establishing woodland and identify and mark trees for removal as part of the initial thinning intervention, with the aim of progressively developing a lower number of high-quality, well-formed trees with sufficient growing space.
- Establish a preliminary longer-term management concept for the developing woodland, considering future tree form, spacing, species, age and structural diversity.
- Undertake preliminary selection of trees along the River Eden for management, with the aim of progressively developing a well-managed riverside tree population containing greater variation in age, size and canopy height while retaining existing species diversity.

3. Report Limitations

3.1 The inspection was undertaken from ground level. No climbing, aerial inspection, excavation, drilling or other detailed diagnostic investigation was undertaken unless otherwise stated. Where further investigation is considered necessary, this is identified in the recommendations.

3.2 Trees are dynamic biological structures whose condition may change rapidly. Whilst all reasonable care has been taken to identify visible defects, no guarantee can be given that any tree is completely safe, due to the unpredictable nature of natural forces.

3.3 Recommended works are intended to reduce the assessed risk. They do not guarantee against the subsequent failure of the tree or tree part concerned.

3.4 The trees were assessed having regard to the prevailing weather conditions at the time of inspection. It is not possible to predict the effects of extreme or exceptional weather events.

3.5 The findings and assessments within this report relate to the conditions observed on the inspection date. Subject to recommended works and monitoring being undertaken within the stated timescales, and in the absence of any material change, the assessment may

reasonably be relied upon until the next scheduled inspection stated in Section 9. It should not be relied upon as representing current tree condition beyond that date without reassessment. Earlier reassessment may be appropriate following significant storms, observable deterioration or damage, changes in site use or occupancy, works affecting the trees or their rooting environment, or another material change. Any tree-specific monitoring or reassessment period stated within the report takes precedence.

3.6 Responsibility for arranging the recommended works and ongoing tree management rests with the person or organisation having control of the trees and site.

3.7 The inspection was undertaken whilst the trees were in leaf. The presence of foliage assists the assessment of physiological condition and vitality but restricts visibility of upper crown structure and may obscure defects such as cavities, deadwood, weak unions, fungal fruiting bodies and other structural abnormalities.

3.8 Dense ivy growth and/or other vegetation may obscure parts of the stem, buttress roots and lower crown. Where present, this may restrict the ability to identify defects and signs of decay. Significant ivy-covered trees have been noted where relevant and may require reassessment following clearance.

4. Method of Survey

4.1 The inspection was carried out from ground level using Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) techniques supported by binoculars, a probe and a sounding mallet.

4.2 Professional arboricultural judgement underpins the assessment, supported where appropriate by the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) method. QTRA considers three components: the likelihood of failure, the size of the tree or tree part concerned, and exposure of people or property. The assessment therefore concerns the overall risk of harm, not simply whether failure is considered likely.

5. Work Categories & Timescales

5.1 Each recorded tree or group is assigned a work category indicating the purpose and recommended timescale of any management action. Categories are colour-coded on the site plan. Unless a tree-specific timescale is stated in the survey table, the following standard timescales apply:

1 (Red): **Safety – Immediate**
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

2 (Orange): **Safety – High**
Work must be completed within 3 months.

3 (Yellow): **Safety – Medium**
Work must be completed within 12 months.

4 (Green): **Safety – Low**
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

5 (Red): **Damage to Property – Immediate**
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

6 (Orange): **Damage to Property – High**
Work must be completed within 3 months.

7 (Yellow): **Damage to Property – Medium**
Work must be completed within 12 months.

8 (Green): **Damage to Property – Low**
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

9 (Blue): **General Management**
Desirable works which may be undertaken subject to budget and management objectives.

10 (White): **No Work Recommended**
No work has been recommended.

Any tree-specific timescale stated in the survey table takes precedence over the standard timescales above.

6. Findings of the Survey

6.1 The survey table (Appendix 2) contains records for 1 individual trees, T001.

6.2 T001 is assigned **Category 3 – Safety Medium**, with works recommended within 12 months.

6.3 The location of T001 is shown in Appendix 1: Map.

6.4 The individual survey record is provided in Appendix 2: Tree Survey Data Table.

7. Statutory Tree Controls

7.1 Tree Preservation Orders

7.1.1 Tree Preservation Order status has not been confirmed as part of this inspection. The available online mapping information is not considered sufficiently reliable to confirm whether any trees within the site are protected.

7.1.2 Tree Preservation Order status should therefore be confirmed with Westmorland and Furness Council before undertaking the recommended tree works.

7.2 Conservation Areas

7.2.1 The online mapping records of Westmorland and Furness Council were checked on 12 October 2026. The site is not shown as being within a Conservation Area.

7.2.2 No Section 211 notice is required in relation to conservation-area controls.

7.3 Felling Licence

7.3.1 In England, a Forestry Commission felling licence may be required before felling growing trees unless a statutory exception applies. Up to 5 cubic metres of timber may normally be felled in each calendar quarter without a licence, provided that no more than 2 cubic metres is sold. Other exceptions may apply depending on the tree size, location and circumstances of the work.

7.3.2 The recommended felling may require a Forestry Commission felling licence. The requirement should be confirmed and, where necessary, a licence obtained before felling begins.

7.4 Statutory Designations

7.4.1 The site adjoins the River Eden and Tributaries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The precise SSSI boundary may extend into parts of the woodland.

7.4.2 The trees currently recommended for tree works are considered to lie outside the SSSI boundary; however, this should be confirmed with Natural England before the recommended works are undertaken.

7.4.3 Future tree management within the woodland and along the riverbank should have regard to the SSSI designation and its precise boundary. Consultation with Natural England should therefore form part of the consideration of future works where these may affect the designated site.

8. Management Considerations and Discussion

8.1 Woodland Management Concept

8.1.1 The woodland should be managed as a developing population rather than through a single thinning intervention. The long-term concept is to establish a well-structured woodland containing trees with sufficient growing space to develop good individual form, well-developed crowns and appropriate independent stability.

8.1.2 The existing oak species are intended to form the primary basis of the future upper canopy. Successive thinning interventions should favour the better individuals and provide sufficient space for them to develop as substantial, well-formed trees, avoiding the development of an overly dense and uniform woodland containing tall, slender trees with restricted crown development.

8.1.3 The upper canopy should progressively be supplemented by a varied mid-canopy and lower-canopy/shrub layer. Potential mid-canopy species include birch, alder and wild cherry, while the lower canopy and shrub layer may include hazel, rowan and hawthorn. Species selection and positioning should remain responsive to the developing woodland and should avoid introducing unnecessary competition with the selected oaks.

8.1.4 The overall objective is to develop diversity of species, age and canopy height, while also allowing selected individual trees to develop good form and crown structure.

8.2 Woodland Constraints

8.2.1 The woodland occupies a relatively narrow strip, limiting the space available to establish a conventional broad and graduated woodland edge. As the woodland develops, particularly as trees reach approximately 10–15 m and above, management should favour individuals capable of developing broader, well-structured crowns with characteristics approaching those of open-grown trees, while remaining part of a cohesive woodland.

8.2.2 Differences in establishment and growth rates between species are an important management consideration. Wild cherry is currently outcompeting oak in a number of locations but remains an important component of the woodland's species and structural diversity. Cherry should therefore be selectively retained where it can contribute to the developing woodland without materially restricting the better oaks.

8.2.3 Blackthorn provides useful native habitat but its suckering growth habit requires ongoing management to prevent it becoming disproportionately dominant within the lower canopy. No additional blackthorn planting is currently considered necessary.

8.3 Initial Thinning and Tree Selection

8.3.1 Trees selected to be favoured through subsequent management interventions have been marked with green tape. Selection has primarily considered form and future development potential. Single-stem dominance is generally desirable during this establishment phase but is not an absolute requirement.

8.3.2 Green-taped trees would generally be expected to remain through at least the next two thinning interventions, subject to their future condition and development. The marking does not indicate that individual trees are necessarily intended for retention through to maturity.

8.3.3 Trees provisionally selected for removal during the initial thinning intervention have been marked with pink spray dots. Tree size alone has not determined selection; consideration has also been given to form, species, proximity to and competition with neighbouring trees, relative quality, condition and vitality.

8.3.4 The pink markings should be regarded as indicative rather than absolute. The thinning should be reviewed dynamically as works progress. Where removal of the marked trees would result in an area becoming more heavily thinned than intended, the selection should be reassessed and appropriate marked trees retained.

8.3.5 Oak has generally been prioritised over ash where selection between competing individuals has been necessary, having regard to the foreseeable likelihood of ash decline associated with ash dieback.

8.4 Deadwood and Arisings

8.4.1 Trees marked with orange spray dots have been selected for ring-barking and retention as standing deadwood. Standing deadwood is an important component of woodland habitat and its deliberate creation is considered appropriate as part of the developing woodland structure.

8.4.2 Brash arising from thinning should, where appropriate, be retained within the woodland and stacked or windrowed, providing an additional deadwood component.

8.5 Initial Works and Supplementary Planting

8.5.1 It is desirable to commence the initial thinning works during winter 2026/27. The works may be phased across successive winter seasons, with the aim of substantially completing the initial thinning programme by the end of winter 2028/29.

8.5.2 Supplementary planting should be reviewed following completion of the initial thinning intervention, once the resulting woodland structure and available planting opportunities can be assessed.

8.5.3 At this stage, supplementary planting should focus primarily on establishing and maintaining a lower-canopy and shrub layer, ensuring that this remains an integral component of the woodland as the larger canopy trees develop. Suitable species may include hazel, hawthorn and rowan together with other appropriate native species.

8.5.4 The immediate priority for the upper canopy is to provide the selected oak trees with sufficient growing space and time to establish and develop well-formed crowns. Deliberate introduction of additional mid-canopy trees is therefore not currently considered a priority.

8.5.5 At an appropriate stage identified through subsequent reviews, potentially following the second thinning intervention, consideration should be given to introducing additional mid-canopy species such as birch and alder. The timing, species and location of this planting should respond to the structure of the woodland at that time and avoid compromising the development of the selected oaks.

8.6 Woodland Edge

8.6.1 Development of the woodland edge should form part of future management. Due to the restricted width of the site, opportunities to establish a conventional broad and graduated woodland margin are limited.

8.6.2 Management should seek to avoid developing large woodland-edge trees with pronounced outward crown or weight bias. As the woodland develops, this should be considered when selecting trees for retention during subsequent thinning interventions.

8.6.3 Where suitable opportunities arise, the woodland perimeter should be supplemented with lower-canopy trees and shrubs, including species such as hazel, hawthorn and rowan, to provide a more gradual transition between the developing upper canopy and the woodland edge.

8.6.4 Establishment and subsequent management of this lower vegetation should form part of the wider objective of maintaining variation in species, age and vegetation height throughout the developing woodland.

8.7 Riverbank Management

8.7.1 Selective felling has also been identified along the River Eden, with trees marked with pink spray dots where preliminary removal is considered appropriate, including where individuals are growing in excessively close proximity.

8.7.2 Management of the riverbank has two complementary objectives: to favour better individual specimens and to progressively improve the structure of the existing riverside tree population.

8.7.3 The existing species diversity should be retained while developing greater variation in tree age, size and canopy height. Selective felling, coppicing and subsequent management of natural regrowth should be used to progressively establish this varied structure.

8.7.4 Management should also seek to create greater diversity of riverside habitat. A combination of retained trees, coppiced vegetation, younger regrowth and selectively opened areas should provide variation between full sun, partial shade and shade over the river and its margins.

8.8 Long-term Management and Review

8.8.1 Woodland and riverbank management should be viewed over an approximately 50-year establishment period. This represents a broad direction for development rather than a prescriptive programme of works.

8.8.2 Approximately four to five management interventions may be required during this period, potentially incorporating further thinning, coppicing, supplementary planting, understorey development and continued management of the woodland edge.

8.8.3 A review after approximately five years is recommended. This should provide sufficient time to assess the response of retained canopy trees, coppice and other regrowth, and the general development of the woodland following the initial intervention.

8.8.4 The next substantial management intervention is currently anticipated at approximately 10 years. The five-year review should help guide the developing management approach and identify any beneficial interim works. The nature and extent of the subsequent thinning intervention should then be determined following reassessment of the woodland immediately prior to the works, taking account of its development and response to previous management.

8.8.5 More detailed management planning should therefore be undertaken over successive five- to ten-year periods, allowing the method of achieving the longer-term concept to adapt as the woodland develops.

8.9 Forestry Commission Woodland Management Plan

8.9.1 Consideration should be given to preparing a Forestry Commission-approved Woodland Management Plan to provide a structured framework for the longer-term management and development of the woodland.

8.9.2 The preliminary management considerations within this report could provide a basis for developing a more detailed Woodland Management Plan, incorporating the longer-term woodland concept alongside shorter-term programmes of thinning, planting and review.

8.9.3 Subject to eligibility, an approved Woodland Management Plan may also assist with access to available grant or stewardship opportunities, which could contribute towards the cost of implementing longer-term woodland management.

8.10 Roadside Trees

8.10.1 Ownership and management responsibility for trees adjoining the road is currently unclear. Evidence of vehicle strikes was observed on multiple trees, indicating existing conflict between lower branches and passing vehicles.

8.10.2 Subject to confirmation of ownership and responsibility, roadside trees should be crown raised to provide 5.4 m clearance above the carriageway and 2.4 m above the footpath, together with 2 m clearance from highway signage.

9. Summary & Re-inspection

9.1 Summary

9.1.1 The long-term aim is to establish a structurally diverse woodland, primarily comprising well-spaced, well-formed oaks with sufficient space to develop substantial crowns and appropriate independent stability.

9.1.2 The restricted woodland width and differing species growth rates require an adaptive approach, progressively developing diversity of species, age and canopy height.

9.1.3 Initial thinning should favour the better developing trees, particularly oak. Green tape identifies trees selected for longer-term retention and pink dots indicate provisional removals, subject to review during the works.

9.1.4 Trees marked with orange dots should be ring-barked and retained as standing deadwood, with suitable brash also retained within the woodland.

9.1.5 Initial thinning should commence from winter 2026/27 and be substantially completed by winter 2028/29. Supplementary lower-canopy planting should then be reviewed, with additional mid-canopy planting considered at a later stage.

9.1.6 Woodland-edge management should favour lower-canopy trees and shrubs while avoiding large edge trees developing pronounced outward crown or weight bias.

9.1.7 Riverbank management should favour better individual trees while progressively increasing variation in age, size, canopy height and light conditions.

9.1.8 Management should work towards the approximately 50-year woodland concept through successive interventions and review, with the next substantial intervention currently anticipated at approximately 10 years.

9.1.9 Consideration should be given to developing a Forestry Commission-approved Woodland Management Plan to provide a structured framework for longer-term management.

9.1.10 Subject to confirmation of responsibility, roadside trees should be managed to maintain appropriate clearance above the carriageway and footpath and around highway signage.

9.2 Re-inspection

9.2.1 Re-inspection should be scheduled for April 2028 to reassess tree-related risk and review progress with the initial woodland and riverbank management works. Earlier reassessment should be undertaken following significant deterioration, storm damage, changes in site use or other material change.

9.2.2 Following completion of the initial thinning works, a subsequent interim woodland management review should be undertaken no later than five years after completion, to assess progress against the longer-term management objectives and inform subsequent interventions.

END OF MAIN REPORT BODY

APPENDICES FOLLOW

Appendix 1: Map

Eden Bridge

What3words: lightly.grove.holly

Page size: A4

1 : 1,193

0 25 m 50 m

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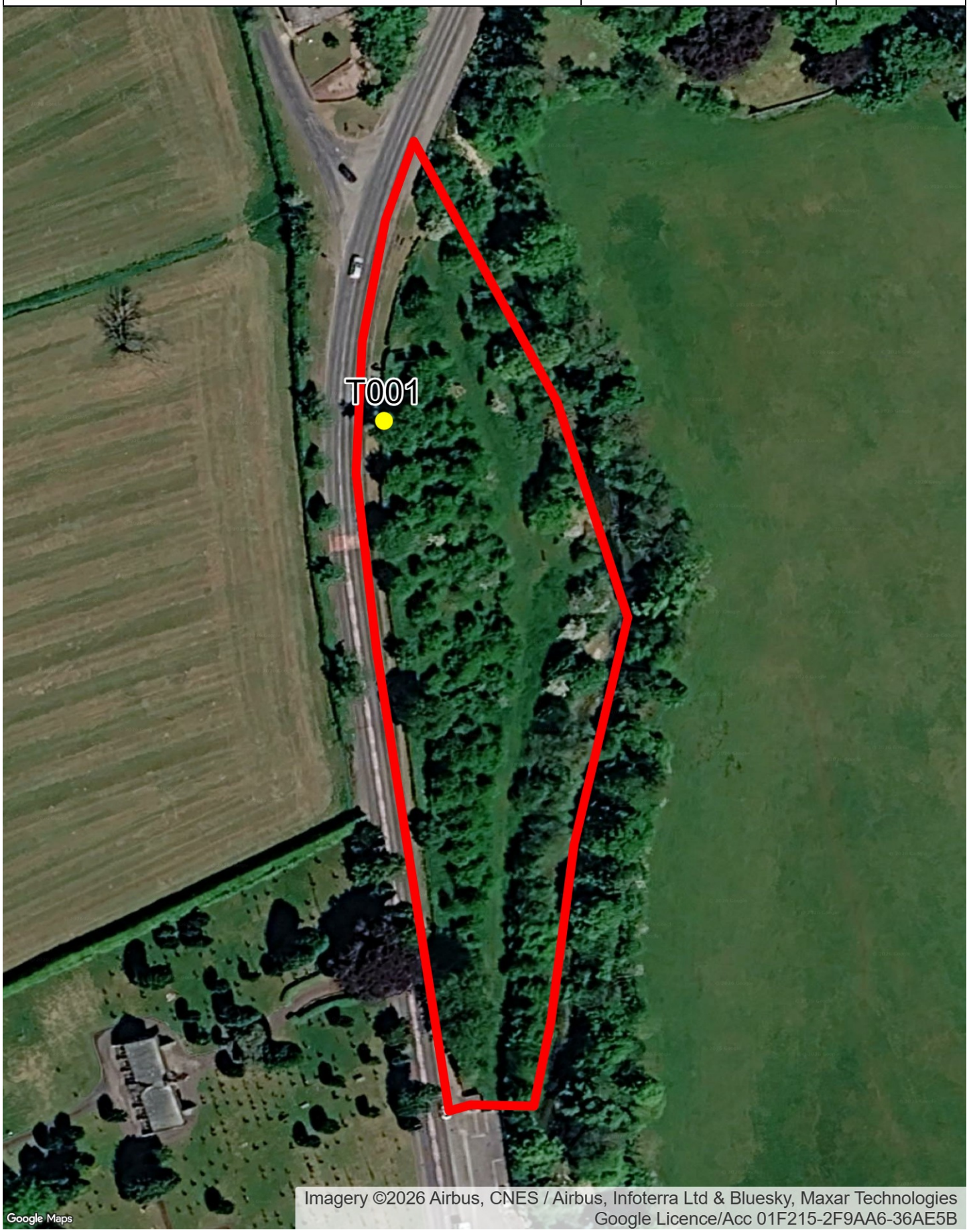
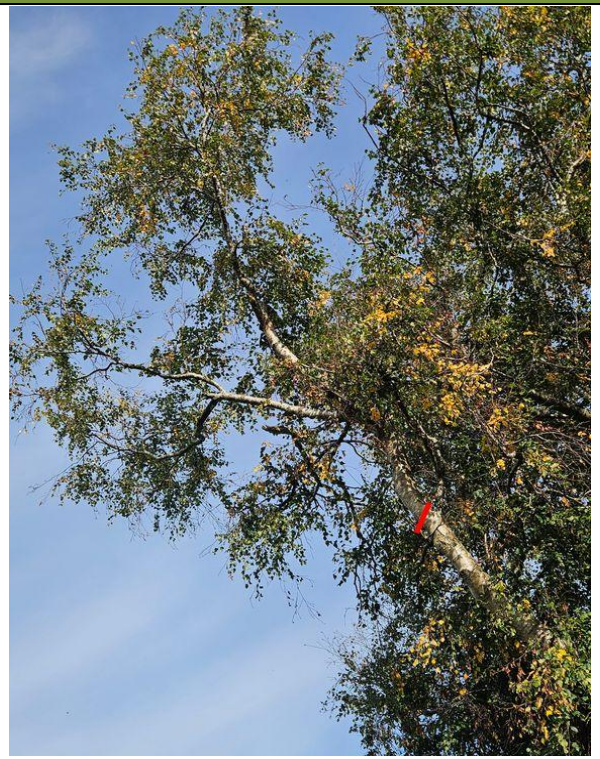


Appendix 2 : Tree Survey Data Table

Ref.	Species	Description/Tag number	Measurements	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Survey Notes	Recommendations	Category	Comments	Inspect Period
T001	Birch *(Betula sp.)*	Road side tree	Height (m): 15-20 Life Stage: Mature	Early decline	Fair	• Snapped hanging branch present over the road. • Overextended lateral limb growing over the road, with indications of mechanical stress.	• Remove the hanging branch over the road. • Reduce the overextended lateral limb to the point indicated by the red arrow in the accompanying photograph.	3) SAFETY - MEDIUM	•None	18 Months

Appendix 3: Pictures

Ref.	Photo	Photo
T001		

Appendix 4: Tree Survey Data Table Key

Ref

The unique reference used to identify the tree or group in the data table, map and report.

Species

The species of the tree or group. Common names, botanical names or both may be used.

Description / Tag number

A description of the tree's location, tag number, or any other information helpful in identifying the tree.

Measurements

Height - approximate height recorded in 5 m increments.

Life stage - The developmental stage of each tree is recorded as follows:

Newly planted:	Not fully established and capable of being transplanted or easily replaced.
Young:	Establishing, typically with good vigour.
Semi-mature:	Established, typically vigorous and growing taller.
Early-Mature:	An established tree approaching mature dimensions, typically showing continued height and crown development with good vigour.
Mature:	A tree that has attained, or is close to, its typical mature dimensions, with extension growth generally slowing.
Over-mature:	A tree beyond its mature phase, typically showing greatly reduced extension growth and increasing features associated with ageing.
Veteran:	A mature tree with significant, long-standing decay features, such as substantial heart rot or hollowing, or an accumulation of other advanced decay habitats. A veteran tree need not be ancient.
Ancient	A tree that is in the ancient stage of life and/or is exceptionally old relative to others of the same species. Characteristics may include crown retrenchment, development of semi-independent functional units and exceptional relative age. Ancient trees are also veteran trees.
Dead:	The tree is no longer physiologically active.

Physiological and Structural Condition

Physiological condition and structural condition in context are assessed separately using the categories defined below.

An assessment of the tree's physiological condition is defined as:

Normal:	Fully functioning physiological system showing expected vitality for the species and life stage, i.e. normal bud growth, leaf size, crown density and wound closure.

Moderate:	A functioning physiological system showing below average vitality for the species and life stage, i.e. reduced bud growth, smaller leaf size, lower crown density and reduced wound closure.
Early Decline:	A physiological system with reduced functionality showing a physiological decline, disease or significantly below average vitality, i.e. limited bud growth, small and chlorotic leaves, low crown density and limited wound closure; some branch tips may be declining.
Mid Decline:	Apparent decline affecting most of the crown, with branch tips declining and limited or no extension growth.
Late Decline:	Significant decline over the majority of the canopy with a large proportion of the branches dead or severely declining. The tree is moribund.
Dead:	The tree shows no signs of physiological activity.
Varying:	Groups with individuals being categorised according to a number of the above definitions.

An assessment of a tree's structural condition in context is defined as follows:

This is a contextual management rating rather than a standalone description of mechanical condition. It considers observed structural features, site use, potential consequences of failure and the benefits of retaining the tree, including habitat value.

Good:	No significant structural defects requiring remedial action were observed.
Fair:	Structural defects or abnormalities are present. Having regard to site use, potential consequences of failure and the benefits of retaining the tree, continued retention is considered appropriate. The assessed risk may be tolerable in its current condition or may require proportionate arboricultural works to reduce it to a tolerable level. Monitoring or further investigation may also be appropriate.
Poor:	Significant structural defects are present which result in, or may reasonably be expected to result in, an unacceptable level of risk. The defects are of a nature or extent whereby proportionate arboricultural works are unlikely to provide satisfactory longer-term risk management while retaining the tree in its current form. Removal or substantial intervention may therefore be appropriate.
Unknown:	Structural condition could not be assessed with confidence because of limitations such as Ivy, dense vegetation or restricted access.
Varying:	The group contains individuals falling within more than one of the above definitions.

Survey notes

Relevant observations concerning the tree, its condition, surrounding targets and site context, including any limitations affecting the assessment.

Recommendations

Recommended actions arising from the assessment, including tree work, further investigation, monitoring or other management measures.

Category

Each recorded tree or group is assigned a work category indicating the purpose and recommended timescale of any management action. Categories are colour-coded on the site plan. Unless a tree-specific timescale is stated in the survey table, the following standard timescales apply:

1 (Red): Safety – Immediate
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

2 (Orange): Safety – High
Work must be completed within 3 months.

3 (Yellow): Safety – Medium
Work must be completed within 12 months.

4 (Green): Safety – Low
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

5 (Red): Damage to Property – Immediate
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

6 (Orange): Damage to Property – High
Work must be completed within 3 months.

7 (Yellow): Damage to Property – Medium
Work must be completed within 12 months.

8 (Green): Damage to Property – Low
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

9 (Blue): General Management
Desirable works which may be undertaken subject to budget and management objectives.

10 (White): No Work Recommended
No work has been recommended.

Any tree-specific timescale stated in the survey table takes precedence over the standard timescales above.

Comments

Any further comments that do not fit within other headings.

Re-inspection

The recommended interval before the tree should be re-inspected. This may be shortened where particular defects, investigations, monitoring or management requirements are identified.