EVOLVE

TREE MANAGEMENT

**Tree Risk Report & Management Considerations**

**for**

Hills Bottom

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**Prepared for**

Kirkby Stephen Town Council

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**Prepared by**

Josh Ledbury

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**Date:**

23/09/2026

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**Reference:**

ETM/RISK/HillsBottom/09-26

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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 at Hills Bottom, Kirkby Stephen.

1.3 The site comprises an area of public open space adjacent to the River Eden, with a well-used footpath running through the site and multiple park benches.

## 2. Instructions

2.1 The survey was instructed by Kirkby Stephen Town Council, with the works approved at the Council meeting on 14 July 2026.

2.2 The instruction was to undertake a ground-level visual tree risk inspection and provide an associated report for Hills Bottom. Specific advice was also requested regarding a tree that had been damaged through bark stripping.

2.3 The purpose of the inspection and report is to:

- Carry out a visual assessment of trees within the defined survey area, while individually recording only trees assessed as presenting an unacceptable level of risk, trees that may reasonably be expected to do so before the next scheduled inspection, and any other trees for which specific management or monitoring is recommended.
- Identify reasonably observable tree-related hazards and assess the associated risk.
- Provide proportionate recommendations to reduce identified risks and support ongoing tree management.
- Assess the tree damaged through bark stripping and provide appropriate management advice.

  Provide management recommendations for the wider tree stock within the survey area.

## 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 8 individual trees and 1 group.

6.2 The numbers and references of recorded trees and groups are summarised by recommended management timescale below:

| Recommended management timescale | Number of trees/groups | Reference numbers |
|---|---|---|
| Immediate | 0 | — |
| Within 3 months | 2 | G001, T008 |
| Within 12 months | 1 | T003 |
| Before the next scheduled inspection | 4 | T001, T002, T004, T005 |
| General Management | 2 | T006, T007 |
| No Work Recommended | 0 | — |

6.3 The locations of individually recorded trees and groups are shown in Appendix 1: Map.

6.4 Individual survey records are 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 report. Westmorland and Furness Council should be contacted to confirm whether any of the trees subject to recommended works are protected by a Tree Preservation Order before works commence.

### 7.2 Conservation Areas

7.2.1 Hills Bottom lies adjacent to the boundary of the Kirkby Stephen Conservation Area. The Conservation Area status of individual trees subject to recommended works should therefore be confirmed before works commence.

7.2.2 Where a tree is within the Conservation Area, the Local Planning Authority must normally be given six weeks' notice before undertaking tree works, unless a statutory exception applies.

### 7.3 Felling Licence

7.3.1 Having regard to the nature and extent of the recommended works, a Forestry Commission felling licence is not considered to be required.

### 7.4 Statutory Designations

7.4.1 The River Eden adjacent to the site forms part of the River Eden Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the River Eden and Tributaries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

7.4.2 The exact boundaries of these statutory designations may extend into the survey area. Natural England should therefore be consulted before works commence to confirm whether the proposed works affect designated land and whether any consent is required.

## 8. Management Considerations and Discussion

### 8.1 Tree Risk

8.1.1 The inspection identified a small number of trees requiring risk-related works. The most significant recommendations relate to T008 and G001, where works are recommended within three months. T003 requires work within 12 months, with further lower-category works recommended before the next scheduled inspection.

8.1.2 T001 is a dead third-party ash located within the adjacent field, with branches overhanging the public footpath. Although intervention is recommended before the next scheduled inspection, responsibility for the tree lies outside the surveyed site and the tree owner should be contacted regarding removal of the tree or those parts overhanging the footpath.

### 8.2 Bark-Stripping Damage

8.2.1 Two alders, T006 and T007, have been subject to bark stripping. At T006 the damage is confined to a lower branch, which should be removed as specified within the survey table. At T007, one stem of the twin-stemmed tree has been stripped around its entire circumference. This damage is considered highly likely to result in significant decline, although the tree does not currently present an immediate risk. Proactive removal of T007 is therefore recommended.

8.2.2 There is little practical remedial action that can restore bark once it has been removed. No replacement planting is recommended immediately adjacent to T007 due to competition from neighbouring trees and riverbank elms.

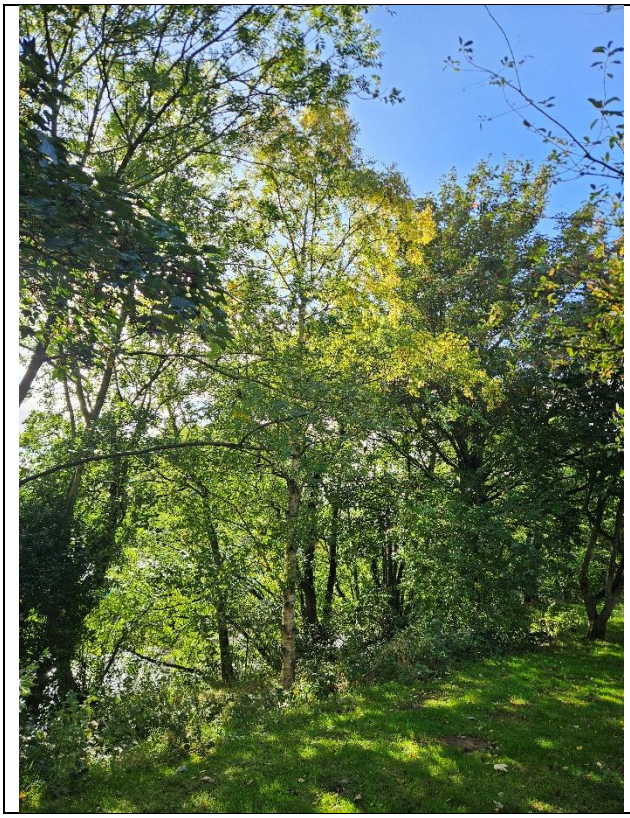
## 8.3 Riverbank Tree Management

8.3.1 Beyond the risk-related recommendations, the riverbank contains substantial areas of young regeneration alongside established trees and would benefit from selective thinning as a longer-term management exercise. This could be used to reduce competition, favour better-quality specimens, improve tree spacing and structure, and selectively improve views towards the River Eden.

8.3.2 This thinning is considered desirable proactive management rather than work necessary to address an unacceptable level of tree-related risk. It does not need to be undertaken as a single operation. A phased programme over approximately five years would be preferred, although management extending over up to ten years would still provide substantial long-term benefit.

8.3.3 The accompanying photographs provide examples of this approach. Within the illustrated group of five established horse chestnuts and sycamores, removal of trees numbered 2 and 4 would significantly improve growing space for the retained trees. A good-quality birch identified elsewhere along the riverbank provides a further example where selective removal of adjacent competing trees could improve its opportunity for continued development. These are examples of the wider thinning principle rather than individually recorded risk-related recommendations.

Example of selective thinning: removal of trees 2 and 4 would provide improved growing space for the retained large-species trees.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | | High-quality birch suitable for release through selective thinning of surrounding competing trees. |

8.4 Succession Management

8.4.1 Several bird cherries display poor unions and apparent or suspected canker. T002 and T004 provide examples which have not been assessed as presenting an unacceptable level of risk requiring more urgent intervention, but which are suitable candidates for removal before the next scheduled inspection and succession planting. Their replacement with younger trees of different species will contribute towards greater age and species diversity within the site.

8.4.2 The same principle could be applied progressively to other poorer-quality bird cherries as their condition declines, creating opportunities for replacement planting rather than waiting for deterioration to necessitate risk-led intervention.

8.5 General Management

8.5.1 Branches should be maintained clear of the public footpath to provide suitable pedestrian access. Approximately 2.4 m vertical clearance should be established and subsequently maintained.

8.5.2 More widely, the Council would benefit from establishing a regular annual programme and budget for proactive tree management alongside works arising directly from tree-risk inspections. At Hills Bottom this could support progressive thinning, selective removal and succession planting, rather than expenditure being directed solely towards reactive or risk-related works.

8.5.3 In the longer term, these individual management programmes could contribute towards a wider Council tree strategy providing an overarching approach to tree establishment, retention, management and replacement across its landholding.

## 9. Summary & Re-inspection

### 9.1 Summary

9.1.1 The inspection identified a small number of trees requiring risk-related works. G001 and T008 require works within three months, T003 within 12 months, with further lower-category works recommended before the next scheduled inspection. The recommendations also include management of two alders affected by bark stripping.

9.1.2 Beyond these specific works, Hills Bottom would benefit from progressive proactive management of the wider tree population. Selective thinning over approximately five to ten years would improve spacing and structure, favour better-quality trees and provide opportunities for succession planting and improved views towards the River Eden. Approximately 2.4 m vertical clearance should also be established and maintained over the public footpath.

9.1.3 A regular annual programme and budget for proactive tree management would allow these improvements to be undertaken progressively alongside risk-related works and could contribute towards a wider Council tree strategy.

### 9.2 Re-inspection

9.2.1 Re-inspection should be scheduled for March 2028, allowing the trees to be assessed out of leaf and during a different seasonal phase from the present inspection. This will assist in building a more complete overview of tree condition. Subject to tree condition and completion of the recommended works, future inspection intervals may subsequently be extended to a three-year cycle.

**END OF MAIN REPORT BODY**

APPENDICES FOLLOW

Appendix 1: Map

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0 25 m 50 m

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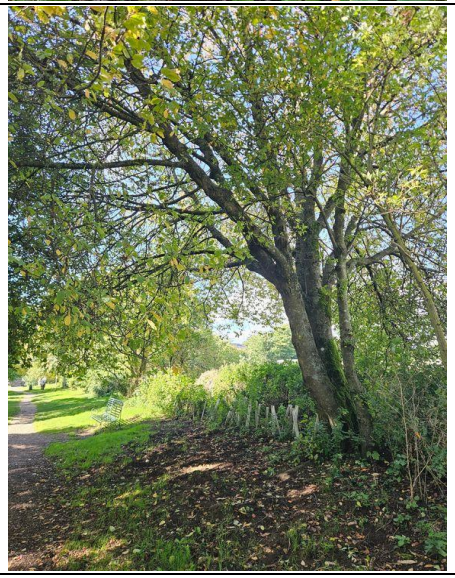
# Appendix 2 : Tree Survey Data Table

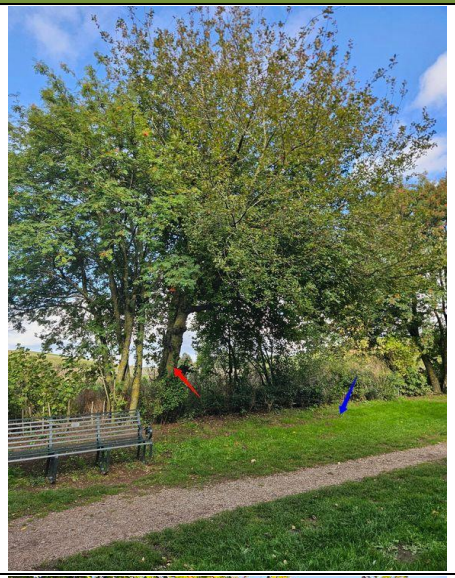
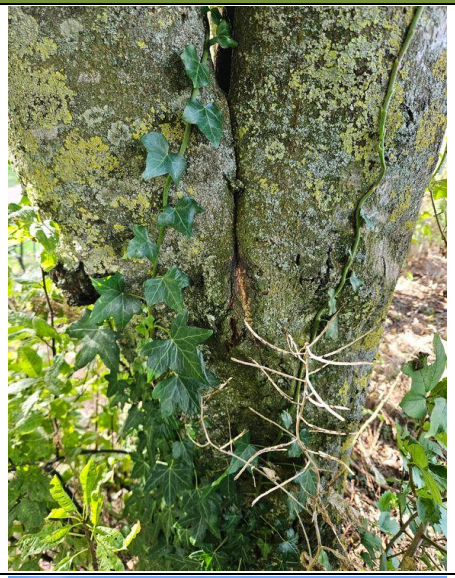
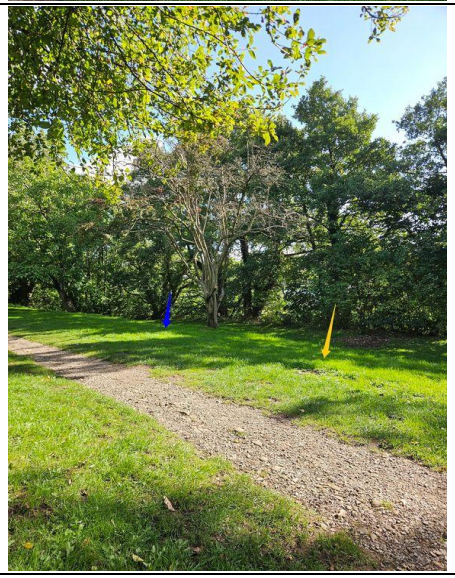
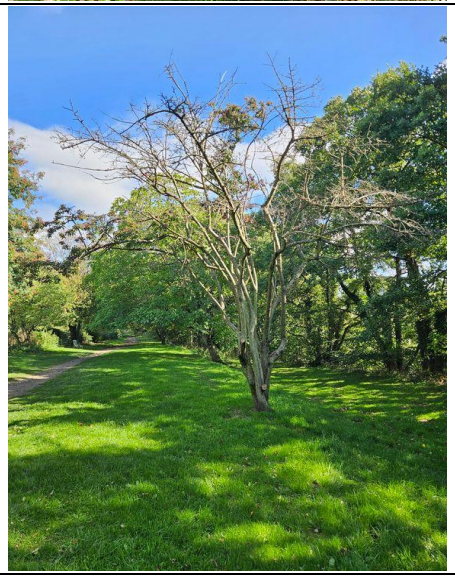
| Ref. | Species | Description/Tag number | Measurements | Physiological Condition | Structural Condition | Survey Notes | Recommendations | Category | Comments | Inspect Period |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G001 | Sorbus *(Sorbus sp.)* Bird cherry *(Prunus padus)* | Three trees marked with orange spray on the fence side. | Height (m): 10-15 Life Stage: Mature | Early decline | Poor | • Three trees adjacent to T008.<br>• Removal of T008 will result in altered wind loading to these trees.<br>• The sorbus is tall and slender and considered unlikely to have substantial independent stability.<br>• Two bird cherry stems have poor unions, suspected canker on the stems, reduced vitality and dieback within the upper canopy.<br>• Given their existing condition and the anticipated altered wind loading following removal of T008, an increased likelihood of failure is considered foreseeable. | • Remove all three trees marked with orange spray as part of the works to T008, leaving stumps below 200 mm in height. | 2) SAFETY - HIGH | • This work should be carried out along side the removal of T006. | N/A |
| T001 | Ash *(Fraxinus sp.)* | Located in the adjacent field | Height (m): 10-15 Life Stage: Dead | Dead | Poor | • Third-party ash tree is dead, with branches overhanging the public footpath.<br>• It is foreseeable that branches will fall onto the footpath as the tree deteriorates. | • Contact the tree owner and request removal of the tree, or removal of those parts overhanging the public footpath. | 4) SAFETY - LOW | •None | 18 Months |
| T002 | Bird cherry *(Prunus padus)* | 1791 | Height (m): 10-15 Life Stage: Mature | Fair | Fair | • Primary unions are poorly attached.<br>• Longitudinal fissures and separation in the bark are present at the union. Adaptive growth is occurring around this area; however, the features indicate an internal crack extending along the union and are considered early signs of failure. | • Remove the tree, leaving the stump below 200 mm in height.<br>• Plant one downy birch (Betula pubescens) between this tree and T003. | 4) SAFETY - LOW | • Replacement tree to be supplied as standard-sized nursery stock and planted in accordance with BS 8545, with appropriate support, mulching and aftercare. | 18 Months |
| T003 | Bird cherry *(Prunus padus)* | 1781 | Height (m): 10-15 Life Stage: Mature | Fair | Poor | • Poor union with included bark visible on the rear side beneath moss.<br>• Longitudinal fissures in the bark at the union appear indicative of excessive stress and potentially early signs of failure.<br>• Branch is weighted towards and overhangs an adjacent park bench. | • Fell, leaving the stump below 200 mm in height. | 3) SAFETY - MEDIUM | •None | N/A |
| T004 | Bird cherry *(Prunus padus)* | 1795 | Height (m): 10-15 Life Stage: Mature | Fair | Fair | • Primary unions are poorly attached.<br>• Longitudinal fissures in the bark are present at the union. Adaptive growth is occurring around this area; however, the features indicate an internal crack extending along the union and are considered early signs of failure. | • Remove the tree, leaving the stump below 200 mm in height.<br>• Plant one Dawn redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides) in the location indicated by the blue arrow in the accompanying pictures. | 4) SAFETY - LOW | • Replacement tree to be supplied as standard-sized nursery stock and planted in accordance with BS 8545, with appropriate support, mulching and aftercare. | 18 Months |

| Ref. | Species | Description/Tag number | Measurements | Physiological Condition | Structural Condition | Survey Notes | Recommendations | Category | Comments | Inspect Period |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T005 | Cotoneaster *(Cotoneaster sp.)* | 1703 | Height (m): 5-10<br>Life Stage: Mature | Late decline | Fair | • Cotoneaster approximately 90% dead. | • Fell.<br>• Stump may be removed if desired.<br>• Replant with one common walnut (Juglans regia) location indicated by the yellow arrow in the accompanying pictures and one downy birch (Betula pubescens) location indicated by the blue arrow. | 4) SAFETY - LOW | • Replacement planting to comprise standard-sized nursery stock, planted and established in accordance with BS 8545, including appropriate support and mulching. | 18 Months |
| T006 | Alder *(Alnus sp.)* | 1702 | Height (m): 10-15<br>Life Stage: Semi Mature | Normal | Fair | • One lower branch has had bark stripped around its entire circumference. | • Remove the affected branch back to the point indicated by the red line in the accompanying photograph. | 9) GENERAL MANAGEMENT | •None | 18 Months |
| T007 | Alder *(Alnus sp.)* | 1718 | Height (m): 10-15<br>Life Stage: Semi Mature | Fair | Poor | • Twin-stemmed alder tree; one stem has had bark stripped around its entire circumference.<br>• The damage is considered highly likely to result in significant decline of the tree, although the tree does not currently present an immediate risk. | • Proactive removal of the tree is recommended. | 9) GENERAL MANAGEMENT | • No replacement planting is recommended in the immediate vicinity due to the likelihood of excessive competition from adjacent trees of the same species and the riverbank elms. | 18 Months |
| T008 | Bird cherry *(Prunus padus)* | 1758 | Height (m): 15-20<br>Life Stage: Mature | Normal | Poor | • Crack at the primary union between the two stems.<br>• Failure of one stem is considered likely to result in a significant part of the tree falling across adjacent infrastructure, including a sign, bin and footpath. | • Fell both stems marked with orange spray, leaving stumps below 200 mm in height.<br>• Plant one replacement Tulip tree (Liriodendron tulipifera) within the hedgerow at the location indicated by the blue line in the accompanying photograph. | 2) SAFETY - HIGH | • Replacement tree to be supplied as standard-sized nursery stock and planted in accordance with BS 8545, with appropriate support, mulching and aftercare. | N/A |

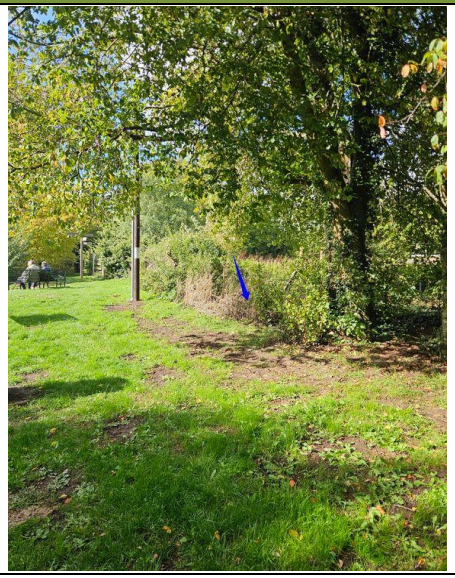
# Appendix 3: Pictures

| Ref. | Photo | Photo | Photo |
|---|---|---|---|
| G001 | | | |
| T001 | | | |

| Ref. | Photo | Photo | Photo |
|---|---|---|---|
| T002 | | | |
| T003 |  | | |

| Ref. | Photo | Photo | Photo |
|---|---|---|---|
| T004 |  |  | |
| T005 |  |  | |

| Ref. | Photo | Photo | Photo |
|---|---|---|---|
| T006 | | | |
| T007 | | | |

| Ref. | Photo | Photo | Photo |
|---|---|---|---|
| T008 |  | | |

## 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.