

Tree Condition Report

Client:

Thame Town Council
Town Hall, High Street
Thame OX9 3DP

Site: Various around Thame, listed in the report.

Visited by John Morris,
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Date: July 2020



Photo - An interesting ornamental tree by the bench at Moreton – a relative of Horse chestnut, is it Yellow Buckeye from USA? Any planting records? Lovely colour in mid July.

1.0 Introduction

Following a discussion with Andrea Oughton, Asset Manager for the Town Council, it was agreed that John Morris should visit the number sites shown on the map that he had not visited before to assess what work was needed to put together an inventory of the trees on Council owned land so that they could be monitored and necessary works undertaken.

Some 19 sites managed by Thame Town Council were visited and 362 trees tagged with aluminium numbered discs.

This report gives first thoughts on the management of trees.

2.0 Dates of site visits – 3rd, 9th, 10th & 23rd July 2020 and Ham Wood on 31 July 2020

2.1 The visits were by John Morris who made notes on all the trees seen and assessed, assisted by Andrea & Mark with tagging, measuring trees and identifying which trees are the responsibility of the Thame Town Council. The process was speeded up by working as a small team.

2.2 Trees mentioned in this report were all surveyed by ground level visual inspection only. All trees were tagged with aluminium numbered discs. These are cross referenced to the 2012 tree survey maps, where possible. Trees that have been lost or removed were noted. These site reports provide you with baseline information for future monitoring and action.

2.3 This survey was conducted rapidly from ground level to get a general impression of the general health and condition of individual trees. No trees were climbed and no equipment used to test the strength of trees and their roots.

3.0 Trees subject to statutory controls:

3.1 NB - You should check with the South Oxfordshire District Council to see if there is **Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** on any of these mature trees. You will also need to check with the District Council about any tree works in any **Conservation Area**, such as the Town Centre and Elms Park.

3.2 **Ham Wood** was planted as a Millennium Wood by the Woodland Trust and passed to the Thame Town Council for day to day management in 2015. It was visited on 31st July and a separate report has been written. The main involvement from the council is to mow paths, give the site an annual grass cut and clear litter. A little safety felling and some hazel coppicing has been identified for this autumn and going forward.

4. Trees at Cuttle brook local nature reserve are not included in this survey

An application for a felling licence will be made for permission from the Forestry Commission to thin out ash with dieback and other trees in Cox's Wood, Old Tip Wood and around the rest of the reserve over the next five years. Some coppicing of hazel, pollarding of mature willows and scrub management will also be needed over the next five years. It is hoped that the cost of much of this work can be met by selling marked trees standing to firewood contractors. Three or four dead trees have been marked with orange paint for felling for safety reasons in the next few months. Some work will be undertaken by the Cuttle Brook volunteers.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The health and condition of some of the roadside trees and those identified as high risk will need to be monitored at about 18 month intervals, so they are checked in winter 2021/22 next time.

However some will need to be seen when in leaf next time for diseases such as Ash dieback which cause defoliation and thinning of the tree canopy.

Other trees where the risks are lower could be checked in 3 to 5 years. This will be zoned in future reports. The Town Council's maintenance team should also be instructed to keep an eye out for signs of tree or branch damage after storms or heavy snow, fungal fruiting bodies on the tree trunks, poor leaf growth and other signs of poor health. These should be reported back with a note of the tree tag number for further inspection, if necessary.

5.2 The condition of the trees should be monitored every few years. It helps to look at the trees in both winter for damage and summer for leaf health and condition, so inspect every 18 or 30 months, try to avoid checking at the same time each year.

5.4 **Safety work to trees** is desirable in any publicly accessible areas or where they pose a risk of harm to property.

5.5 It is important to keep records of inspections and any work done in case there are problems.

5.6 Pollarding, tree surgery and hedge cutting do not require felling permission from the Forestry Commission.

5.7 Work involving tree climbing and larger or dangerous trees should be carried out by a **skilled tree surgeon** with adequate insurance cover for this work.

5.8 I understand that the grounds maintenance team have had chainsaw training for smaller tree felling and pruning works.

5.9 Please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-felling-getting-permission> for more details on **felling regulations**.

Dead and imminently dangerous trees, and thinnings under 10 centimetres diameter measured at 1.3 metres from the ground, are exempt.

However you are allowed to fell up to 5 cubic metres of timber each calendar quarter for your own use, but it is best to avoid felling and other tree work throughout the main **bird nesting season April – July**, except for emergency work. This could allow you to fell one or two trees at a time without need for further consent from the Forestry Commission.

6. Protected Species:

6.1 It is advised to check for protected species (most notably **bats** and nesting birds eg owls and other birds of prey) before carrying out tree work. This risk can be reduced by carrying out the work over the winter when the trees are not in leaf.

6.2 Beware of felling hollow veteran trees like the damaged old ash, which may be roost sites for **bats**, which are protected by law, as are **great crested newts** which may hibernate under logs and might be using the ponds and ditches to breed in the spring (along with frogs and toads). There is guidance about protected species and forestry on the website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-92QE5W>

7. Tree Diseases

The following are recent problems found in trees in UK.

7.1 You should beware of the increasing threat to ash trees due to a new air borne fungal disease, *Chalara fraxinea*, also known as **Ash Dieback**, this may lead to the death of **ash trees** in future years. Further inspections of ash are likely to be required in summer in coming years. More information about this disease is on the Forestry Commission website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-ash-trees-affected-by-ash-dieback-operations-note-46a>

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7.2 Oak trees are suffering from a number of problems across the country. Information on diseases such as Acute oak decline can be found on the Forestry Commission web site see <https://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/acute-oak-decline/>

Acute oak decline (AOD) is a condition affecting several thousand oak trees, mostly across East Anglia, the Midlands and Southern England. AOD is characterised visually by dark fluid oozing from cracks in the bark, rapid decline of the tree, and tree mortality. Death of affected trees can occur within four or five years of symptoms first becoming visible. Fortunately most of the oaks seem in good health, but four old oaks in **Elms Park** are suffering and shows signs of AOD. These oaks need urgent attention and monitoring.

Oak processionary moth caterpillars can cause defoliation and also have human health implications. They have been spreading from West London in recent years.

7.3 **Grey squirrels** may kill branches and weaken the tops of some trees, such as sycamore and birch, by bark stripping in June and July. This damage is more likely to be noticed later in the summer.

7.4 **Wind damage** and possible snow damage are other risks to apparently healthy trees and cannot always be predicted.

7.5 **Dying elms** should be felled to encourage new growth and reduce the risk of the trees falling.

7.6 Some trees may drop branches without warning in summer.

7.7 Roadside trees

Some of the planted trees are now quite close to busy roads and a programme of tree surgery to lift the canopy and reduce the length of low branches is likely to be required over the next five years to ensure these trees do not become a nuisance to traffic. In some places it may be important for the appearance of the trees to lift the canopy of all the roadside trees, rather than just the few that are the immediate problem.

7.8 Even if the branches are not actually hitting vehicles they can have an affect by causing drivers to move towards the centre of the road. High sided vehicles such as removal vehicles may hit branches eg along the A4129, Southern Road and Moreton Lane.

8. Replacement tree planting and new tree planting

8.1 It is a good idea to consider and start a programme of replacement tree planting, for those that have been lost or may need to be felled in the future. These do not need to be in exactly the same location. It is important to plant the right tree in the right place, so final size of the tree and its suitability for the site need to be considered.

8.2 In some places there may be opportunities for further tree and shrub planting. This may be away from gardens and close to boundaries where they can become an issue, requiring more tree surgery to maintain them.

8.3 An important consideration in urban conditions are any **buried services**, pipes, wires etc and the possible need to excavate these by utility companies. For similar reasons **overhead wires and street lights** should also be taken into account.

8.4 Protection of the newly planted trees from both people and animals is important. Mowers and strimmers can also be a major cause of damage to young trees. Keeping a woodchip mulch around the base of the tree helps keep the mowers away and also keeps moisture in. Watering of young trees in dry summers could be necessary. Planting smaller trees may reduce the need for watering and are less expensive to replace if they fail.

8.5 I would be happy to help devise planting plans for specific areas. I have suggested a few places on the report sheets.

9. Changing the mowing regime

9.1 In some places it may be sensible to change the mowing regime to perhaps twice a year, avoiding the wild flower season April – early July. This may help trees by reducing damage and disturbance and keeping people away from planted areas while benefitting wildlife. This could reduce maintenance costs in places.

9.2 To help keep areas looking neat mowing strips along tarmac paths and creating mown grass paths can help. Play areas and frequently used grass areas can still be cut on a regular basis through the summer, but not everywhere needs the same approach.



Mature ash at Churchill Play Area – looks healthy at the moment, but it will need monitoring for ash dieback each summer, it overhangs gardens and is at risk of dropping branches.

Consider planting replacement trees nearby – perhaps close to path, rather than boundary fences.

The sites are listed below in the approximate order visited.

Each has a separate record sheet showing the numbered trees. Some trees were mapped on the previous survey in 2012.

1. The Moats	03 July 2020
2. Hopton Road	03 July 2020
3. Table Top – Marston Road	03 July 2020
4. Edgehill	03 July 2020
5. QEC Park	03 July 2020
6. QEC Bypass A4129	03 July 2020
7. Elms Park	09 July 2020
8. Youens Drive	09 July 2020
9. Southern Road Recreation Ground	10 July 2020
10. Southern Road Play Area	10 July 2020
11. Pearce Way	10 July 2020
12. Webster Close	10 July 2020
13. Pickenfield	10 July 2020
14. Brookside	10 July 2020
15. Trees by Barley Hill School	10 July 2020
16. Memorial Gardens	10 July 2020
17. Churchill Play Area	23 July 2020
18. Lenthall Green	23 July 2020
19. Moreton pond	23 July 2020
20. Ham Wood	31 July 2020

Also looked at the cherry tree planted in a container on the High Street near the Book House car parking. It is leaning and may require staking and also may need watering in summer. It could get too large in a few years and at risk of falling on to traffic or pedestrians. An option could be to move it elsewhere in the winter and replace with a more suitable shrub?



A splitting trunk in a Norway maple at Southern Road Recreation Ground, fell

The columns on the Report Tables are all as in following example, some have map references in final column linked to previous tree survey, produced in September 2013

Note - not all the areas mapped last time have been included, as not all are responsibility of the Town Council eg St Mary's Church

Site name ... Churchill Play area.....For.....Thame Town Council. Visited by John Morris

Date of visit.....23.../ 07 /...2020

Tree Tag No	Approx Height S/M/T	DBH (cm)	Tree Species	Age class Y/M/V	Condition (Physiological and structural)	Zone Assessment (H/M/L)	Location	Work priorities & recommendations	Overall risk category (1-5)	Map ref
360	Very tall	152	Black poplar Hybrid?	Mature becoming veteran	Generally good, healthy leaves, old pruning wounds. Decay at base starting, black weeping to about one metre, bracket fungus	High	In open next to tarmac play area	Monitor decay		N/A
An example	Small Medium Tall	At chest height		Young Mature Veteran		High Moderate Low		Action needed soon!		
361	Medium tall	66	Ash	Mature	Looks reasonably healthy at the moment.	High	In corner over gardens	Monitor in summer for ash dieback (annual check next summer)		N/A

The numbered aluminium tags are placed at adult head height or slightly higher so harder for children to bend or pull off, they are often on the side away from main public view to reduce the risk of tampering or removal. The tags were put on in number sequence.

Useful References

Common Sense risk management of trees by National Tree Safety Group

<http://ntsgroup.org.uk/>

FC Practice Guide *Hazard from Trees*

Ash dieback see case studies from the Royal Forestry Society

<https://rfs.org.uk/media/598372/rfs-managing-ash-dieback-case-studies-2019.pdf>

Also Tree Council guidance for landowners

<https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/ash-dieback/public-guidance/>

Forestry Commission – felling licences

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-felling-getting-permission>

Find a tree pest

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-a-specific-tree-pest-or-disease>



Fungal decay at the base of the large poplar, Churchill Play Area