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Arboricultural Report

Tree Condition Assessment

Site

**Pond Farm Cottage
Harvel Street
Harvel
Kent
DA13 0DE**

Client

Mr A Cahill

Prepared by

Curtis Barkel

RCArborA, DipArb (RFS), F.Arbor.A

Ref: SA/1975/22

Date: 16 May 2022



Arboricultural Consultant: Curtis Barkel - RCArborA, DipArb(RFS), FArborA
Fellow and Registered Consultant of the Arboricultural Association

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Site	Pond Farm Cottage, Harvel Street, Harvel, Kent. DA13 0DE.
Inspection Date	21 April 2022
Report Date	16 May 2022
Inspected by	Curtis Barkel

Terms of Reference

To carry out a visual inspection of one tree located in the garden of the property. The inspection is to provide a preliminary condition assessment of the subject tree and advise on any required remedial works or ongoing maintenance requirements.

1.0 Instructions

- 1.1 Sylvanarb has received instructions from Mr Cahill of Pond Farm Cottage, to carry out an inspection of one mature tree located in the side garden of the property and adjacent to the south-eastern flank wall of the house.
- 1.2 Mr Cahill explained that his main concern is the proximity of the tree to the house and the potential risk this may present to the structure of the building.
- 1.3 Mr Cahill has therefore sought an independent arboricultural assessment of the tree to identify any potential risk to the building and to assess the general condition of the tree in order to inform management decisions.

2.0 Scope of Report

- 2.1 A preliminary visual assessment of the subject tree was carried out noting external faults and features. The assessment was carried out from ground level only.
- 2.2 This preliminary assessment did not include a detailed examination of the tree root system or the use of internal decay detection equipment. A further supplementary Detailed Report may be advised as a result of the findings herein.
- 2.3 The assessment considers and advises on:
- Structural condition
 - Physiological condition
 - Pests and diseases
 - Priority safety work requirements
 - Risk of damage to adjacent structures
- 2.4 The inspection was carried out with aid of the following equipment:
- Sounding mallet
 - Metal probe
 - Laser measure
 - Rounded down diameter tape
 - Digital camera
- 2.5 All significant findings, along with recommendations for tree work, are presented in brief on the Survey Data Sheet (Appendix A) and explained in detail within this report.
- 2.6 A tree with internal structural faults will often display associated external evidence of such faults, these would be noted in a visual tree inspection. However, such signs are not always apparent at all times of the year. The following findings and recommendations have been drawn from the evidence present on the day of inspection.
- 2.7 This report remains valid for the period specified for the re-inspection of the subject tree provided in the survey schedule at Appendix A, or until extreme weather conditions affect the locality, whichever is sooner. A tree owner is advised to have all trees in their ownership regularly inspected, it is recommended that trees are re-inspected after strong winds.
- 2.8 All measurements taken are approximate.

3.0 Site Details

- 3.1 The property is located in the village of Harvel, within the Gravesham Borough Council administrative area.
- 3.2 The site accommodates a detached house with side and rear gardens, Mr Cahill informed me that the house is around 120 years old and he has owned the property for approximately 20 years.
- 3.3 The property is located within the Harvel Conservation Area, this providing protection for the subject tree and requiring that the Local Authority be given six weeks notice of any intended tree work being carried out.
- 3.4 The planning history for the property shows that a single storey rear extension was approved in May 2002, this shown to be constructed off strip foundations. A further single storey side extension, adjacent to the subject tree, was approved in July 2015.
- 3.5 The British Geological Survey shows that the property is located in an area of Seaford and Newhaven Chalk Formations, with superficial deposits of Clay-with-Flints.
- 3.6 Mr Cahill confirmed that there had been no history of building movement (subsidence/heave) over the 20 years that he had lived at the property and there had been no differential movement noted between the existing building and the two extensions.

4.0 Observations

4.0 T1 Yew - Observations & Considerations

- 4.1 A single-stemmed early mature tree located 2.4m from the south-eastern flank wall of the house, adjacent to the point at which the 2015 side extension joins the main house.

Photo 1: General view of tree.



- 4.2 A paved side access path runs alongside the house, between the house and the tree. Natural levels fall gently from the house towards the tree, as such the path has been built off a low brickwork supporting structure, approximately 1m from the tree.
- 4.3 Mr Cahill informed me that the main house at this point has a basement level room below the ground floor; and the extension had been built with a strip foundation across the rear elevation and a suspended steel beam along the side elevation. Excavations for the strip foundation had been taken down to the underlying chalk.
- 4.4 Using the John White¹ method to estimate the age of the tree, the calculation results in the tree being approximately 118 years old, having presumably been planted around the time the house was built.
- 4.5 Due to the proximity of the tree to the house the radial branch spread has been relatively heavily reduced in the past towards the house (NW) and to the rear (NE), whilst the canopy towards the pond (SE) and the road (SW) has been only lightly reduced. Low branches and stem growth has been removed to provide ground clearance to a height of 2-3m.
- 4.6 Regrowth has subsequently developed from the past reduction points with the north-western canopy now in contact with the roof of the house. It is recommended that a notification to the Local Authority be submitted to prune the canopy to maintain clearance from the building, as the action of branch movement presents a risk to fabric of the building (see Photo 2 and 3).

¹ Forestry Research Information Note, Ref: FCIN12, John White, 1998.

Photo 2: Tree adj. to house from south.



Photo 3: Tree adj. to house from north.



- 4.7 Considering whether any risk is presented for potential damage to the building through the action of the tree roots. Tree roots present a risk of two types of damage:

Direct Damage

- Where roots come into contact with light structures such as paving or walls and the annual growth in root mass lifts the structure causing damage.

Indirect Damage

- Where damage to a structure occurs as a result of the action of changes in soil moisture content due to the uptake of water by tree roots beneath foundation level.

- 4.8 Direct damage will only occur to light structures such as garden walls, paving, thin concrete floor slabs etc and research shows that where roots come into contact with larger buildings the pressure they exert is unlikely to result in damage, instead the root tips are diverted and continue to develop in other directions. As an example, BS5837 provides guidance for planting distances from buildings in relation to potential direct damage, recommending a minimum distance of 1.2m for large species of tree adjacent to a building/heavily loaded structure. As such, the subject tree is not considered to present a risk of direct root damage to the extension or house; however it can be expected that some lifting of the adjacent paving and brick supporting structure is likely to occur over time.

- 4.9 Indirect damage will only occur when the foundations of a building are bedded onto a shrinkable soil, such as clay. Mr Cahill had a good knowledge of the building foundations, with the main house comprising of a basement level and the adjacent extension partly suspended over ground level with a steel beam and a rear strip foundation. Mr Cahill confirmed that the strip foundation was bedded into the underlying chalk and it is therefore assumed that the basement is also constructed within an area of excavated chalk. Chalk remains stable with moisture variations and as such does not present a risk of vegetation related root damage occurring.

- 4.10 This is evident from the tree having established alongside the house with no history of damage being recorded and no evidence of more recent differential movement between the main house and the adjacent side extension.
- 4.11 As such, from the evidence available, I consider the potential for root related building damage to be very low. However casual monitoring of the junction between house and extension is recommended, if movement does occur further assessment will be required.

5.0 Management Options

- 5.1 The tree canopy requires management in order to maintain clearance from the house. This will result in some asymmetry to the tree canopy, however this is purely an aesthetic matter and does not present any increase in tree failure risk. This presents two options:

Option 1: Minimal works to reduce/lift the house side of the canopy in order to maintain clearance from the building, whilst allowing the remainder of the tree to develop a natural canopy spread over the garden area.

Option 2: Carry out the work under option 1 and also reduce the remainder of the canopy, then periodically manage the regrowth (perhaps every 4-6 years), to contain the ultimate height and spread of the tree. Alternatively, the management of the regrowth could be carried out more regularly (every 2-3 years), and the tree maintained as a formal trimmed feature, which would be in keeping with the style of the house and grounds, but would of course result in higher maintenance costs (see Photo 4).

Photo 4: Example of regularly trimmed Yew (Cobham, Kent).



- 5.2 In addition, the lower branches and stem growth will require periodic management to maintain clearance beneath the tree canopy.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The tree is a valuable asset within the garden setting and has been a companion feature with the house for over a hundred years.
- 6.2 Considering the geology of the area, the construction of the house and extension/s and no record of building damage occurring, I consider the risk of either direct or indirect damage to the building to be very low.
- 6.3 Some damage to the adjacent paving and supporting structure is foreseeable, however this may be fairly easily monitored and repaired as and when required.
- 6.4 The canopy of the tree presents a risk to the fabric of the building and will require periodic management to maintain clearance. This work will involve the cutting back of regrowth and is likely to require the appointment of a contractor, however the work is not overly onerous and unlikely to be particularly costly.
- 6.5 An alternative management option has been presented to maintain the overall height and spread of the tree, this is purely a matter of choice and comes down to the owner's individual preference. I would expect either option to be acceptable to the Local Authority.
- 6.6 Any work to the tree will require that six weeks prior notice to the Local Authority be submitted, I would recommend that a proposal for repeat maintenance works be included in the notification, so as to avoid the need for future repeat submissions, this being something that is recommended under current planning guidance.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Tree Works

The following works are recommended in the interests of good management, so as to ensure the tree is maintained at an acceptable level of management within the current site context.

Table 1: Recommended Management Works

Tree No.	Species	Recommended Works	Reasons for Works
T1	Yew	Option 1 - Reduce and crown lift house side of canopy to maintain 1m clearance from the house and roof. - Maintain clear stem and crown lift to provide 2.5m clearance over ground level. - Works to be carried out as required for a period of ten years from the date of submission to the Local Authority. Option 2 - Reduce and crown lift house side of canopy to maintain 1m clearance from the house and roof. - Reduce remainder of tree to a height of 6m and a radial spread of 3m. - Periodically trim regrowth as required for a period of ten years from the date of submission to the Local Authority.	• In the interests of good management and to prevent damage to building.

7.2 **General Recommendations**

- 7.2.1 A tree owner has a legal duty of care to the visitors to their property and to their neighbours, this duty requires that their trees are regularly inspected and recommended management carried out. 'Regularly' is not defined in law, however an advised inspection frequency has been provided for each tree based on the condition of the individual and the potential target.
- 7.2.2 Six weeks notice of intended work (S.211 Notice) is to be submitted to the Local Authority prior to any tree work being carried out.
- 7.2.3 All tree work is to be carried out by a competent arborist in accordance with the British Standard for tree work BS3998:2010 'Recommendations for Tree Work' unless otherwise specifically prescribed herein to address health and safety issues.
- 7.2.4 Trees may provide host sites for legally protected wildlife such as birds and bats. It is essential that prior to works being carried out the tree work contractor is instructed to assess each tree for the presence of protected species such as bat roosts and birds nests. It is an offence to disturb or destroy such sites. Advice on bats can be obtained from the Bat Conservation Trust (tel:0845 1300 2280), advice on nesting birds can be obtained from Natural England (tel:0845 600 3078).

All advice given in this report is based on the information available on the day of inspection. Should additional information not available or apparent on the day of inspection come to light, the right is reserved to modify the conclusions found within this report. This report is valid for the period of re-inspection specified for the tree at Appendix A, notwithstanding change of site conditions, extremes of weather or other such overriding environmental changes.



Signed:

16 May 2022

Date:

Appendix A

Tree Survey Data

Gravesham Borough Council

Survey Key

Tree No.	Tree Number - cross-referenced with tree numbers shown on Site Plans.	
Age Class	Young	Staked or recently established tree at the fast growing early stage of establishment.
	Semi mature	An established tree at a stage of rapid growth with increasing future growth potential
	Mature	A tree that is at a stage of constant growth nearing/at ultimate canopy size.
	Veteran	A mature tree, often of great ecological or heritage importance, that has reached a stage of natural decline.
	Over-mature	A tree in an advanced state of decline, moribund with minimal live growth.
Hgt (m)	Height range estimated in metres. 0-5m; 5-10m; 10-15m; 15-20m; 20-25m; 25-30m	
Recommended Mgt	Management recommendations to bring the trees to an acceptable and safe standard in the current site context.	
Work Priority	U Urgent	Works required immediately to make tree safe.
	H High	Works required within 90 days.
	M Medium	Works to be carried out within 12 months.
	L Low	Suggested good arboricultural management, which may be carried out as and when the budget allows.
Inspection Frequency	1 Every year	High risk tree considering size/condition/location/use of target area.
	2 Every 2 years	Moderate risk tree considering size/condition/location/ use of target area.
	5 Every 5 years	Low risk tree considering size/condition/location of tree/ use of target area.

Tree Survey Data

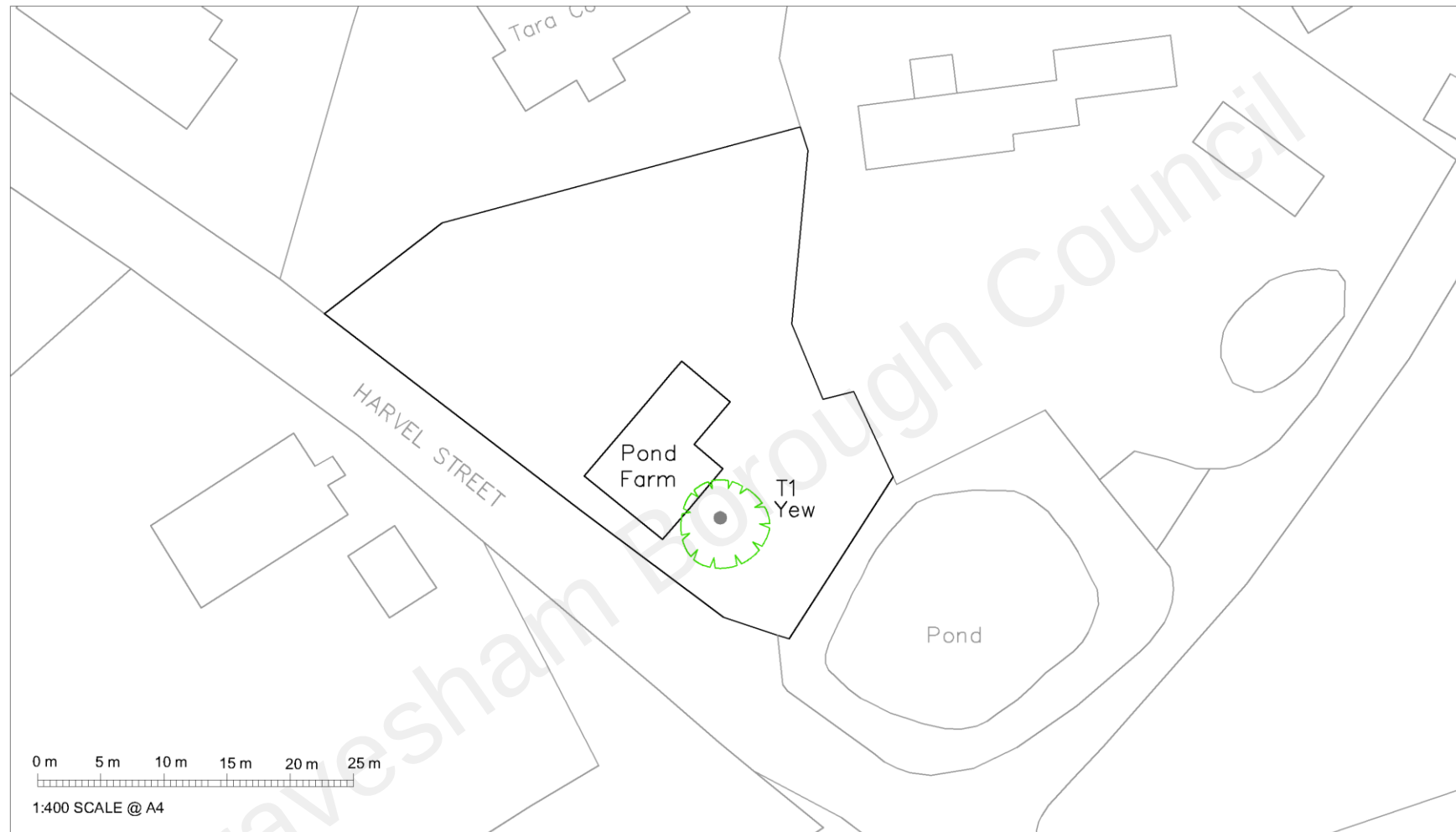
TREE No	SPECIES	HEIGHT (m)	STEM DIA.	AGE CLASS	NOTES / CONDITION	RECOMMENDED MGT.	WORK PRIORITY	INSPECTION FREQUENCY
1	Yew	7	820	M	- NE side historically cut back to 1.5m spread with regrowth. - House side (NW) historically cut back to 1.5m spread with regrowth. - Remainder of tree had light reduction. - Crown lifted to 2-3m. - 1m to path. - 2.4m to house.	Option 1 - Reduce and crown lift house side of canopy to maintain 1m clearance from the house and roof. - Maintain clear stem and crown lift to provide 2.5m clearance over ground level. - Works to be carried out as required for a period of ten years from the date of submission to the Local Authority. Option 2 - Reduce and crown lift house side of canopy to maintain 1m clearance from the house and roof. - Reduce remainder of tree to a height of 6m and a radial spread of 3m. - Periodically trim regrowth as required for a period of ten years from the date of submission to the Local Authority.	M	5

Appendix B

Tree Location Plan

Tree Location Plan

Pond Farm Cottage, Harvel Street, Harvel, Kent. DA13 0DE.



139 Bush Road
Cuxton
Rochester
Kent
ME2 1EZ

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TREE LOCATION PLAN

Site Address:

Pond farm Cottage
Harvel
Kent
DA13 0DE

Client:
Mr A Cahill

By: C. Barkel

Date: 16 May 2022

Ref: PF/TLP/1975-01

Scale: 1:400@A4