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Date: 27/02/2022

Our ref:

Client ref:

**FAO: Tree Officer
Gravesham Council**

BY EMAIL ONLY

RE: Tree removal and pruning at The Mill House, Mill Hill Lane, Shorne DA12 3HA

Dear Sirs

On the 24th of January I inspected a number of trees at The Mill House. I understand this property lies within the Shorne Village Conservation Area.

Of the trees I inspected, three individual trees and two tree groups are in urgent need of works. The first tree group, labelled G1 on the attached plan, consists of a number of sycamores. These trees have self-seeded at the side of the old mill. The conservation area boundary map indicates these trees may be outside of the conservation area, but these trees have been included within this notification in the interests of completeness.

In general terms, the trees are healthy with the exception of two trees at the southern edge of this group. One of these trees hosts a large cavity at the base and this cavity is filled with both mature and immature fruiting bodies of the wood decay pathogen, *Kretzschmaria deusta*. This fungus causes rapid decay in wood cells, leading to brittle fracture of the stem often without warning. Failure of the tree is foreseeable and unfortunately the tree directly adjacent to it has grown so bent and suppressed in the shadow of the decayed tree that retention would be impossible once the other tree is removed; the sudden wind loading of this tree being likely to lead to immediate failure.



Figure 1; Fungal fruiting bodies of *Kretzschmaria deusta* on G1 sycamore. Cavity is approx.. 11" wide and 8" deep



Fig.2; Group G1 (left) with blue circle annotating trees which are affected. (Right) blue annotation around second of the two trees, showing canopy bias away from decayed tree and vulnerability from exposure when the decayed tree is removed.

Listed as tree T2 on the plan is a dead laburnum. My client would like to remove the tree and is happy to replace it with an apple elsewhere within the garden. Adjacent to this tree are two tree stumps; these stumps will be removed.

Tree T3 is a mature weeping willow. At some point in this tree's life, the top has snapped out and has left the tree with a large wound on the main stem. The willow, in attempts to grow a replacement canopy, has put its growth efforts into a side branch. Unfortunately, this side branch has a large cavity (approximately 20" long) and there is evidence of extensive decay within. The limb is so extensively decayed that failure is foreseeable, and my concern is that once this limb fails the wound created by this loss will be so large that the structural integrity of the remainder of the tree will be at risk. I recommend that the tree is felled and replaced.



Fig.3; Willow T3. Left image shows lost leading branch and predominance of subordinate lateral branch (decayed). Right image shows decay in that limb and the size of the limb relative to the main stem.

Tree T4 is an over mature apple. The tree has a large cavity at the base on the east side of the stem; this cavity stretches up the stem to crown break at approximately 5', where it joins with an old pruning wound. Whilst apple is a species which is known for compartmentalising decay, there is little live sapwood which survives and unfortunately failure of this tree is foreseeable. My client seeks to remove the tree and is happy to replace it with another heritage apple species.



Fig.4; T4 apple. Left – cavity at the base joining (right) cavity just below crown break.

Most concerning of all my inspections is group G5, consisting of five mature Lombardy poplars. The trees border the driveway and the scout hut to the west. Being very close to property, I gave these trees a close inspection and found extensive decay, cavities and hollow stems in all but the last (northern-most) tree of the group. Poplar wood is not resistant to the spread of decay, and it is advised that the decayed trees are removed at the earliest opportunity. Once the four decayed trees are removed, the remaining fifth tree will also need to be removed; its sudden exposure following the felling of adjacent trees will subject this tree to wind loading from directions to which it has not grown accustomed.



Fig.5; Group G5 poplars. Left image showing trees within the group and ash tree growing on boundary between first and second trees. Right image showing cavity (second poplar) approx. 7" deep at base of stem.

This uneven and sudden wind loading will lead to failure of the tree; this is commonly seen in stands of trees following thinning operations and given that this tree is the closest to property and to the scout hut the risk of retaining it outweighs what remaining benefit the tree would provide. Once the group is removed, the trees can be replaced with species more befitting the rural nature of the conservation area. Growing at the property boundary (and underneath the canopy of G5) is a semi-mature ash tree. Once the poplars are removed, this ash will have the space and resources to grow and will assist the replacement trees in recovery of screening lost by the removal of the poplars.

If the Council need more details or do not consider the submission valid, please inform me at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

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