

Date: 03/03/2022

Our ref:

Client ref:

**FAO: Tree Officer  
Gravesham Council**

**RE: Tree inspection at The Mill House, Mill Hill Lane, Shorne DA12 3HA (Shorne Village Conservation Area)**

Dear Sirs

My client has commissioned me to undertake an inspection of two trees at The Mill House; my relevant experience being a masters degree in arboriculture and fifteen years' experience in the field of tree root damage and tree protection legislation. This notice seeks to inform the council of my client's intention to prune an apple tree and to remove a sycamore on the basis that repairs to the terrace retaining wall would not be possible without the removal of that tree. Please consider this letter as evidence to support a formal notification of intent to prune the apple and to remove the sycamore under section 211 of the relevant Act. My inspection of the trees found as follows.

The sycamore grows on the terrace of The Mill House, adjacent to the retaining wall and lean-to extension (fig.1). The tree has a large, open grown canopy and is approximately 100 years old. The tree is generally healthy for its age though there are some aerial cavities and signs of structural decay within previous pruning points; this is not an immediate safety concern as the species is known for being resistant to decay.



*Figure 1; Sycamore T1 growing against the retaining wall. Note the displacement and bulging of the wall and displacement of the capping bricks.*

Whether the tree was planted or self-seeded, the trunk bole of the sycamore has grown so large that it is now in contact with the concrete retaining wall in several places. The wall has distorted and cracked as a result of this direct pressure, and the wall is displaced for several metres along its length. Further to the damage caused by the trunk, roots of the tree have spread through cracks in the concrete and have displaced it further (fig.2).



*Fig.2; Sycamore T1. Large structural roots at the base of the bole having entirely displaced capping. Rebuilding wall to this level would require severance or trimming of these roots leading to structural instability and large wounds as entry points for decay*

My client has consulted a structural engineer whose advice is that a trench is excavated at the rear of the retaining wall to allow construction of concrete buttresses. These buttresses will stabilise the cracked concrete wall, pulling it back in line and allowing replacement of the brick capping and returning the wall to its original position.

Repairs present several issues for the tree. Firstly, trench excavations behind the retaining wall will likely encounter large structural roots and root masses. Secondly, the installation of concrete buttresses will likely require severance of those roots and thirdly, pulling the wall back to its original position would require severance of the large roots that have grown through the concrete and the sections of trunk bole that are now in contact with that wall (fig.2 & fig.3). In simple terms, it is not possible to rebuild the wall 'plum' and straight with the tree in place, and severance of any large roots or sections of root bole will be so harmful to the health of the tree that the structural stability of the tree would be jeopardised.

There are engineering alternatives to trench excavation that would limit damage to roots during excavations, such as air spading. However, it would not be possible to build the buttresses and repair the wall without major damage to the tree base and structural root network. Fig. 3 shows the expanse of wall affected by the trunk bole and roots that have grown through, giving a scale of the pruning and root/stem skimming that would be required. In my opinion, root severance and trunk skimming will either lead to structural instability of the tree immediately following root pruning or, if the tree does not fall immediately, decay will enter the large wounds and will allow decay to spread rapidly causing failure within a relatively short period after pruning. In the circumstances, I would advise that the tree is removed and replaced to allow these essential repairs as the risks to the tree are too great to allow it to remain.



*Fig.3; Stem base of T1 against retaining wall of terrace. Red line details sections of root or bole which have grown through or over the wall.*

Furthermore, wind loading of the tree will involve displacement of that load into the surrounding soil and movement of the root plate in wind will naturally cause some movement of the wall because the tree and the wall are in contact. Therefore, even if the wall is repaired with the tree in

situ, it is likely that wind loading of the tree and the natural movement of the root plate will inevitably place pressures on the repaired structure. Unfortunately, I do not see an avenue where continued stability of the wall can be assured without removal of the tree.

Whilst the tree is not necessarily a prominent feature in the village conservation area, it makes a collective contribution to the landscape and the loss of the tree would be noticeable from the surrounding fields. Given that, my client is happy to replace the tree to ensure long term landscape value.

This notification also considers 30% crown thinning of apple tree, T2. Thinning is required to remove congested and diseased material and to improve fruit production. The tree is not visible from outside of the garden. All works to the apple will be undertaken in accordance with British Standard BS3998:2010.

This letter accompanies the formal notification form and plan of the site. However, 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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