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CREATING THE PERFECT HABITAT

Sturmer Parish Council
Amenity Walk
Tree Hazard Survey Report
January 2024

Tree Hazard Survey Report

Sturmer Parish Council

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APPENDICES

1. Introduction

The Woodland and Arboricultural Division of Oakbank Game & Conservation Ltd were instructed by Sturmer Parish Council to carry out a tree hazard survey along the Amenity Walk and to produce an associated report covering all trees under their responsibility.

2. A defendable tree hazard survey

2.1 Under both civil and criminal law, the owner of land on which a tree stands has responsibilities for the health and safety of those on or near the land and has potential liabilities arising from the falling of a tree or branches from a tree. Civil law gives rise to the duty and potential liability to pay damages in the event of a breach of those duties, whilst criminal law gives rise to the risk of prosecution in the event of an infringement of the criminal law. All landowners therefore have a statutory duty of care to ensure (as far as is reasonably practical) that every asset, including the trees located on their Estate, is unlikely to cause harm. In practice, this requires a balance between the interests of the owners of trees, those of the people that may be harmed by them and those of the public. Only if there are no trees present is it possible to ensure complete and guaranteed safety.

3. Tree hazard survey objectives

3.1 The objectives of the tree hazard survey are understood to be:

- To ensure the long-term retention of the trees within the specific areas.
- To minimise the risk posed to the public.
- To minimise any liability claims from members of the public.

4. Limitations of tree hazard survey

4.1 The findings and recommendations contained within this report are valid for a period of twelve months from the date of the survey. Trees are living organisms subject to change and therefore for reasons of safety and fully discharging the landowner's duty of care, it is recommended that some level of tree assessment is carried out on an annual basis.

5. Tree hazard survey method

5.1 A ground based Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) of all trees within influencing distance of the perceived targets in each particular zone was carried out on foot. A sounding mallet and probe was used where necessary to aid the tree assessments.

5.2 A systematic diagnostic approach was followed throughout the inspection – looking at the immediate vicinity around the tree, the root system, the trunk, the crown and all significant defects along with recommended remedial work were recorded.

5.3 Reporting was by exception only – only trees found to be defective were identified and recorded.

5.4 In practice, only visible defects and those detectable with the sounding mallet and metal probe were recorded. Techniques available to assess the structural integrity of the tree, such as electronic tomographs and hand operated borers, will not be used. However, where a further assessment of decay is required, in the case of particularly important trees, then this can be prescribed and recorded as per 5.5 below.

5.5 Trees recorded and recommended for remedial work were marked with a unique number using brightly coloured aerosol marker spray. This unique number is referenced with the details of the defects and recommended work in the 'Detail of Recommended Works' found in Appendix I and the location of the trees has been recorded on 'Map of all trees recorded' provided in Appendix II.

5.6 The tree hazard survey was carried out on foot by Ross Guyton on 22nd January 2024.

5.7 The tree hazard survey report has been provided as a digital version, but a hardcopy copy of the report can be provided on request.

6.0 Future tree hazard surveys

6.1 Future tree hazard surveys should be carried out biannually to ensure that the tree stock remains a low risk to members of the public and to discharge the Parish Councils Duty of Care.

7.0 Protected species

7.1 Bats are protected under the European Protected Species legislation and neither they nor their roosts may be disturbed without authority from English Nature or DEFRA.

7.2 It is quite possible that bat roosts are present in some of the older trees for which works are proposed, particularly those with multiple cavities and Ivy.

7.3 It is essential that those carrying out the prescribed works on the trees are alert for the presence of bats, and to be aware of the need to contact Natural England in advance of carrying out works if found: roost may occur in the following features:

- Woodpecker holes.
- Cracks and cavities within the main stem and crown.
- Hazard beam / delamination failures or similar.
- Hollow sections.
- Underneath loose bark.
- Within ivy.
- In dense epicormic growth.
- In bat or bird boxes.

7.4 For each recorded tree, the tree survey records likelihood of bat presence (assessing the presence of suitable habitat above) and the impact the prescribed remedial work would have if bats were to be present.

Where the presence of bats and the associated tree work impact score medium or high, a specific bat surveys should be carried out to prevent disturbance.

7.5 Trees should be inspected for potential bat roosts prior to tree surgery works commencing.

8. Specific considerations prior to conducting tree work

Prior to works being carried out it should be established if any of the trees within this report are protected by the following potential designations.

Potential Designations	Action required/taken
Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)	Check with LPA if trees proposed for work covered by TPO.
Conservation Areas	Check with LPA if trees proposed for work covered by Conservation Area controls.

9. Ivy

Ivy has a very valuable place in the woodland ecosystem as it provides a valuable nectar source and habitats for many insects and nesting places for many birds. However, it can also be the cause of problems and may even lead to the total demise of the tree.

Ivy is an evergreen, producing leaves all year round. Once located around the trunk of a tree, its leaves prevent any light from reaching the tree bark and thus prevent activation of any dormant buds. This does not necessarily represent a problem and in some cases may even be desirable. It does however become a problem when Ivy grows into the trees crown and prevents the development of new and existing buds. Buds produce leaves and leaves produce food for the tree through the process of photosynthesis; without adequate supplies of food the tree starts to suffer. Ivy cannot harm the tree directly and the idea that it can 'strangle a tree to death' is unfounded. However, once it reaches the crown of the tree, Ivy can cause problems by way of additional weight and an increased wind sail area which can result in branch loss or total stem failure at ground level.

Ivy growth around the tree trunk can produce a localised humid microclimate which wood decay organisms enjoy; such a climate may increase the rate of decay on already damaged areas. Thorough tree Inspections becomes difficult to impossible with potential hazards such as cracks, cavities and fungal fruiting bodies being hidden from view and for these reasons it is essential that significant ivy on large trees in prominent locations be killed or removed to aid future tree inspections.

Further consideration does however need to be taken when dealing with a large number of ivy clad trees in a row along a road for example, where there is little or no other ivy habitat locally. In this instance ivy severing where possible will need to be programmed over a number of years so that the entire area does not become devoid of ivy in a relatively short period of time. A programme of severing approximately 1/3 of ivy every 3 years would be appropriate, dealing with the 33% of trees of greatest concern in year one. Ivy grows extensively throughout Southern England and should be addressed on all trees located where they may pose a hazard to the public. A selection of the worse affected trees within each zone have been identified and recorded by way as a prompt to address ivy across the estate. Recommended control of ivy is to sever ivy at ground level ensuring not to damage the tree’s bark cambium layer and remove all of the vegetation up to height of 1.8m.

10. Ash dieback and operator safety

Ash Dieback disease or Chalara (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) is killing a very high proportion of our Ash trees. The situation is compounded as the disease weakens the trees natural immune system and allows the Honey fungus (Armillaria mellea) to attack. This results in some of the trees requiring work in this report having a high proportion of deadwood in the crown and having no significant fibre strength at felling height. It is therefore essential that full consideration is given to planning any tree work operations to remove the risk of accident or injury to tree workers. The primary consideration must be whether the job can be done by other means, the best control measure must be to use mechanical access (MEWP) or harvesting equipment where the operators are kept further away from the trees and far better protected. Where this is not possible it is more important than ever that the chainsaw operator is both competent and properly equipped.

The increase in crown deadwood dramatically increases the risk of an operator being hit by falling branches and tops and this is most likely when the tree begins to fall or when wedges are being driven into the back of the tree, as the shock will vibrate through the stem and loose material will fall. Helmets and felling jackets will offer only limited protection from falling deadwood. In dead or dying ash, particularly where Honey fungus is present this fibre length will be reduced dramatically and the risk of a tree breaking the hinge and falling in an uncontrolled manner is very high. It is very likely that when felling trees in a group which has suffered from an attack of honey fungus that neighbouring trees will be knocked or dragged down as consequence of felling the intended tree. This again can put the operator at considerable risk in particular where trees with very weak root systems are reliant on the mutual support of the other trees in the group. Clearly whole trees falling from behind the operator are an unacceptable risk and in these situations every effort must be made to mechanise the felling operations. Working with dead and dying ash in effect makes an already hazardous operation much more dangerous and it is essential that every effort is made to dismantle dead trees via MEWP's and to fell them mechanically, keeping any climbing or chainsaw operations to an absolute minimum. Additionally, managers and main contractors must ensure that risk assessments and method statements are effectively communicated to all operators and that only the most competent and well-equipped operators are used on sites where dead ash is prevalent.

APPENDIX I

DETAIL OF RECOMMENDED WORKS

Tree No.	Species	Age Class	Condition and Comments	Recommendations	Risk Category	Likelihood of Bats Present	Impact on Bats
T1	Willow	Mature	Large, historically partially fallen willow with decay cavity with associated decay to limb loss wound at 1.6m, which is felt to now be compromising structural integrity. Secondary vertical stem several areas of bark damage to top of crown as clashing with neighbouring sycamore.	Pollard both stems at c.3m to regenerate.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T2	Willow	Mature	Multi stemmed and with prolific ivy growth to main stem and crowns.	Sever ivy at ground level and 1.8m and remove.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Medium	Low
T3	Willow	Early Mature	Lateral at c.5m parallel with footpath is partially hung up / supported by neighbouring thorn and has significant dysfunctional bark / wood c. half way along which is compromising structural strength.	Remove lateral at c.5m.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T4	Willow	Mature	Dead.	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Medium	High
T5	Ash	Early Mature	Dead limb and heavy ivy on remaining stems.	Fell dead limb and sever ivy on other stems at ground level and 1.8m and remove.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Medium	Low
T6	Ash	Semi Mature	Dead / dying - ADB	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T7	Ash	Early Mature	5 x ash poles, 4 of which are in chronic decline due to ADB.	Fell all 5 poles to regenerate stool.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T8	Ash	Early Mature	Twin stemmed both showing chronic decline due to ADB.	Fell both stems to regenerate stool.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T9	Sycamore	Semi Mature	C.13 dead stems on boundary - Sooty bark disease.	Fell all stems.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low

Tree No.	Species	Age Class	Condition and Comments	Recommendations	Risk Category	Likelihood of Bats Present	Impact on Bats
T10	Willow	Early Mature	Fallen willow stem, still laying up above ground level.	Fell to ground to make safe.	Low Risk - remediate within 12 months	Low	Low
T11	Ash	Semi Mature	3 x poles 5m apart, with chronic crown decline duee to ADB. All marked.	Fell all 3 poles.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T12	Ash	Early Mature	Group of 7 poles, 1 in significant decline due to ADB.	Fell pole leaving 1.5m stump to prevent rot ingress into basal area.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T13	Elm	Early Mature	Dead.	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T14	Ash	Early Mature	Co-dominant fork, union at 1.5m with significant included bark and reactive growth as a result. Weak union.	Fell tree to prevent collapse long term.	Low Risk - remediate within 12 months	Low	Low
T15	Ash	Early Mature	Crown weighted bias over boundary garden / patio area. Heavy ivy obscuring main stem and lower crown. Early stages of ADB evident.	Dismantle and remove entire tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T16	Elm	Semi Mature	Dead - DED	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T17	Prunus	Early Mature	Dead.	Fell tree.		Low	Low
T18	Elm	Semi Mature	Dead.	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T19	Elm	Semi Mature	2 x dead stems 5m apart due to DED.	Fell both trees.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T20	Elm	Early Mature	Neighbours tree has collapsed and hung up in PC trees. There are several along this section - unmarked.	Approach neighbour to request them to address with their trees that pose a hazard to the footpath.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low

Tree No.	Species	Age Class	Condition and Comments	Recommendations	Risk Category	Likelihood of Bats Present	Impact on Bats
T21	Elm	Semi Mature	Dead - DED.	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T22	Elm	Semi Mature	Collapsed elm top hung up over footpath and 1 x dead elm 6m to SE.	Fell and make safe both trees.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low
T23	Elm	Semi Mature	Dead - DED.	Fell tree.	Low Risk - remediate within 12 months	Low	Low
T24	Ash	Semi Mature	1 x ash with historic crown decline due to ADB. 1 forked stem ash 7m to SW with weak fork union with associated reactive growth and stress cracks. The tree is unable to adapt to this defect to prevent it failing long term . Image is report front page.	Fell both trees.	Low Risk - remediate within 12 months	Low	Low
T25	Ash	Semi Mature	Dead - ADB.	Fell tree.	Medium Risk - remediate within 4 months	Low	Low

APPENDIX II

MAP OF ALL TREES RECORDED

Sturmer Parish Council

Amenity Walk Tree Survey January 2024

Map of All Trees Recorded

Page size: A4

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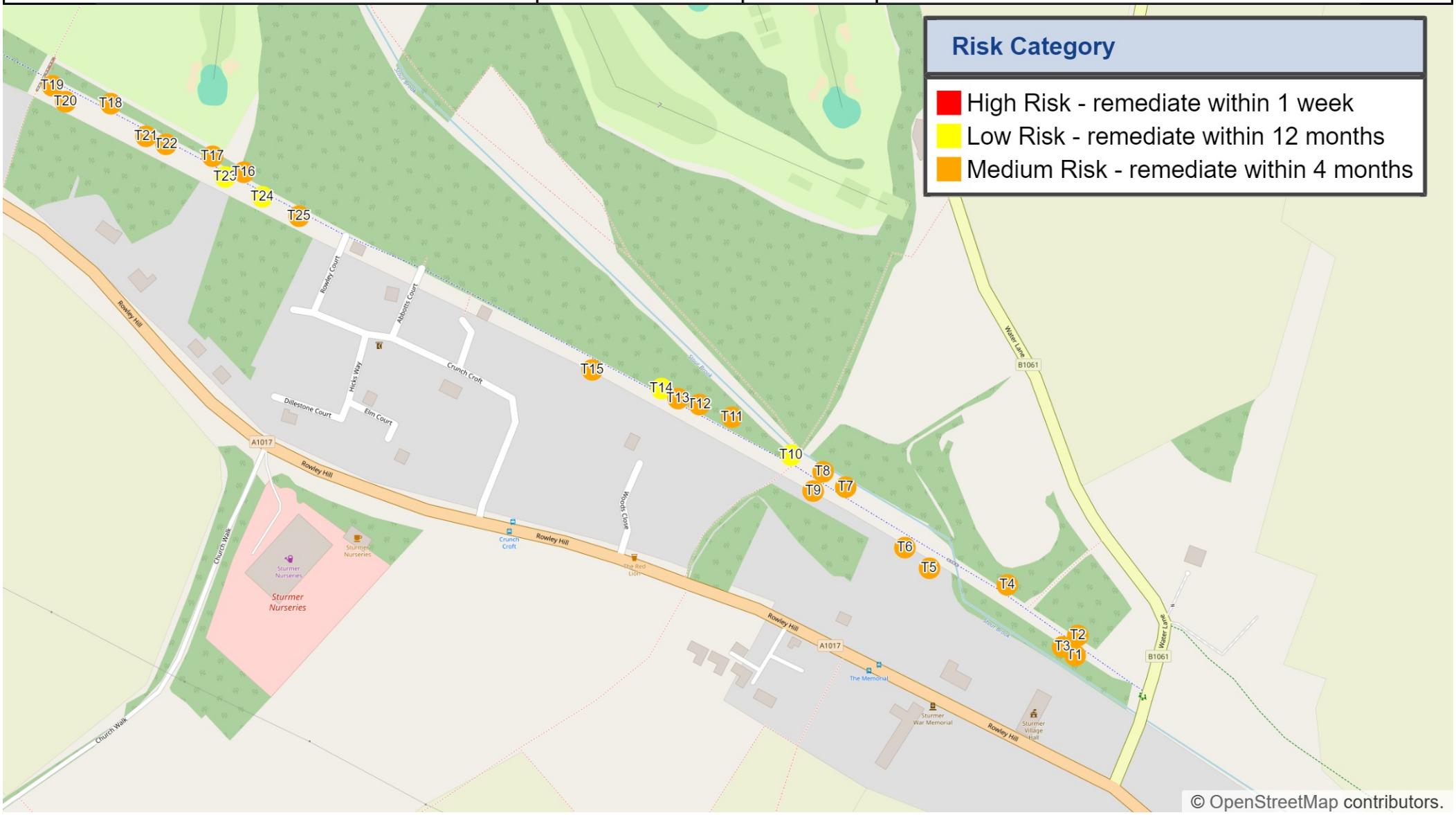

APPENDIX III

ABBREVIATIONS & GLOSSARY

Abbreviations

DED – Dutch Elm Disease

ADB – Ash Dieback

Glossary

- ***Armillaria mellea*** – Honey fungus. Causes a white root and butt rot often causing crown and tree death resulting in dead wood or whole tree failure and uprooting.
- ***Cerioporus squamosus*** – Until recently known as Polyporus squamosus and commonly known as Dryads Saddle, this fungal pathogen is common in most broadleaf species. It affects the main stem and principal branches causing white-rot of the sapwood. In many cases the decay is restricted to a relatively small area around a wound. Excessive decay and consequent stem fracture can occur when the fungus is able to spread though the tree.
- ***Chalara fraxinea* -** is a disease of ash trees causing leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions and fatality in affected trees.
- ***Fistulina hepatica* -** a fungal pathogen causing brown rot resulting in structural failure.
- ***Ganoderma sp.*** – (Ganoderma species) - is a genus of polypore wood-decaying fungi producing a white-rot with enzymes that allow them to break down wood components such as lignin and cellulose causing structural failure.
- **Horse Chestnut Bleeding Canker** - Bleeding canker is a disease that causes cankering lesions under the bark, which when extensive the branch or trunk can become girdled, and the branch or entire tree will inevitably die and have to be removed. See Pseudomonas syringae below.
- ***Inonotus hispidus*** - Significant wood decay fungus resulting in white rot and this aggressive decay agent weakens the timber and can result in trunks or branches breaking and failing in stormy weather.
- ***Kretzschmaria deusta* -** a very significant wood decay fungi causing a soft rot, breaking down both cellulose and lignin, and decays the trunk and/or roots of living trees resulting in structural failure.
- ***Meripilus giganteus* -** causes extensive root decay in broadleaves especially mature beech and is a major cause of windblow in beech trees. Decay can be rapid, and the fungus kills and decays roots and so there may be an associated decline in the condition of the crown although frequently there are few obvious signs and otherwise apparently healthy trees can fall over even in calm weather.
- ***Pholiota squarrosa* –** Selective delignification leading to intense white–rot in later stages. Annual flesh toadstool with dark scales. Can lead to whole tree failure when extensive.
- ***Phytophthora ramorum*** - is a fungus-like pathogen which causes extensive damage and mortality to a wide range of trees and other plants in the UK.
- ***Polyporus squamosus* -** a significant wood decay fungus causing a white rot in the heartwood of living and dead hardwood trees resulting in structural failure.
- ***Pseudoinonotus dryadeus* -** Significant wood decay fungus resulting in white rot leading to de lamination and softening of wood. Ductile fracture can occur with risk of root failure and resultant total tree failure.