Andrew Belson
Arboricultural Consultant

TREE ASSESSMENT REPORT

17 Louthe Way, Sawtry, PE28 5TR



29th November 2024
Client: Jack Fowler
Observations and recommendations following an inspection of trees at the property on 6th November 2024

[redacted]
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1 Introduction

1.1 I am a Registered Consultant of the Arboricultural Association. (RC Licence No: RC202) and have worked as a consultant for over 20 years. I hold the Arboricultural Association's Technician's Certificate and the Royal Forestry Society's Professional Diploma, which is a level 6 qualification equivalent to an Honours degree.

1.2 I was instructed by the client to inspect trees at the property.

1.3 An Application to remove two trees under Tree Preservation Order number TPO 24.94 (land off Louthe Way, Sawtry) was refused due to the absence of professional evidence to demonstrate the issues described.

1.4 My instructions were:

- To assess the health and condition of the trees
- To identify any hazards and assess the level of risk associated with any hazards found
- To assess the potential for Direct Damage
- To assess the potential for Indirect Damage
- On the basis of the information gathered, to provide recommendations for any works required to reduce the level of risk to an acceptable level
- To generally comment on pertinent tree management matters

2 Limitations of Assessment

2.1 As trees and shrubs are living organisms whose health and condition can change rapidly, conclusions and recommendations are only valid for one year. The health, condition and safety of trees should be checked regularly.

2.2 The soil was not examined and no soil samples were taken. Should soil analysis be indicated, this will be recommended in the report.

2.3 No tree can be guaranteed to be safe. So long as trees are retained, zero risk cannot be achieved. The recommendations in this report are based on a reasonable and proportionate response to risk.

3 Survey Findings

Overview

3.1 The trees are growing within the garden of 17 Louthe Way.

3.2 There are cracks in the conservatory that could be attributable to changes in soil volume due to the extraction of water by trees. (see Fig 1. Below)



Fig 1. Picture on left taken November 2024; and on the right taken in September 2024. Wider cracks are clearly visible in the picture on the right, indicating that the cracks are dynamic, closing as the trees become dormant.

Geology

3.3 Understanding the impact of trees on soil moisture content and considering the potential effects of changes in soil volume on foundations are critical for ensuring both the stability of the built environment and the preservation of retained trees. Chapter 4.2 of the National House Building Council Standards specifically addresses the requirements and considerations related to trees and shrinkable soils. It offers guidance to developers, engineers, and builders on how to assess the risks associated with trees and shrinkable soils in a development site and implement appropriate measures to mitigate these risks effectively.

3.4 The British Geological Survey of England and Wales identifies bedrock geology of: Oxford Clay Formation - Mudstone. No superficial deposits are recorded.

3.5 Oxford Clay gives rise to a soil that is capable of high volumetric change. In order to make my assessment, I have assumed a soil with a 'medium' plasticity index (PI).

The Buildings

3.6 The foundation depth of the house is not known but it is expected to have been built to the NHBC Standards in force at the time of construction. As the trees pre-date the building, it is expected that the presence of trees was also taken into account.

3.7 The foundation depth and type for the conservatory is not known but they can vary significantly due to differences planning and building control requirements.

3.8 The foundation depth of the neighbouring properties are not known but they are also expected to have been built to the NHBC Standards in force at the time of construction, taking the trees into account.

3.9 The specification for the boundary wall is not known and the foundation may vary significantly from that of the dwellings.

Observations

3.10 My detailed observations at my inspection are in the table overleaf:

Tag	Species	Height (m)	Age Class	TPO?	Observations	Distance from buildings	NHBC Foundation depth recommendation	Considerations	Recommendation
1703	Ash	13	SM	Possibly T1	Scattered minor dead wood throughout crown. Unoccluded wounds in scaffolds above main stem union (see fig 2 below) Crown spread: 5N, 4E, 5.5W, 4S	5.5m from back of house; 5.8m from conservatory.	1.6m	Foundation records retained by the Local Authority Building Control department may give a more accurate indication of the soil type at foundation depth and the depth of foundations constructed. Regardless of the construction of the dwelling and the suitability of the foundations, this is a woodland tree with a poor juxtaposition with adjacent buildings.	Fell and replace
1704	Ash	14	SM	Possibly T2	Scattered minor dead wood throughout crown. Included bark present in main stem union. (see fig 3 below) Crown spread: 2N, 4E, 5W, 5S	9.7m from back of house; 9m from conservatory; 3.1m from garden wall; 7.5m from neighbouring property.	1.33m 1.38m 1.75m 1.47m	Foundation records retained by the Local Authority Building Control department may give a more accurate indication of the soil type at foundation depth and the depth of foundations constructed. Regardless of the construction of the dwelling and the suitability of the foundations, this is a woodland tree with a weak main stem union that has a poor juxtaposition with adjacent buildings.	Fell and replace

Tag	Species	Height (m)	Age Class	TPO?	Observations	Distance from buildings	NHBC Foundation depth recommendation	Considerations	Recommendation
1705	Ash	15	SM	Member of Group 1	Scattered minor dead wood throughout crown. Unable to inspect stem due to Ivy. Crown spread: 7N, 4E, 5.5W, 4S	5.9m from neighbouring property.	1.57m	Foundation records retained by the Local Authority Building Control department may give a more accurate indication of the soil type at foundation depth and the depth of foundations constructed. Regardless of the construction of the dwelling and the suitability of the foundations, this is a woodland tree that has a poor juxtaposition with adjacent buildings.	Obtain foundation records and consult the writer for further advice, which may include removing the tree.

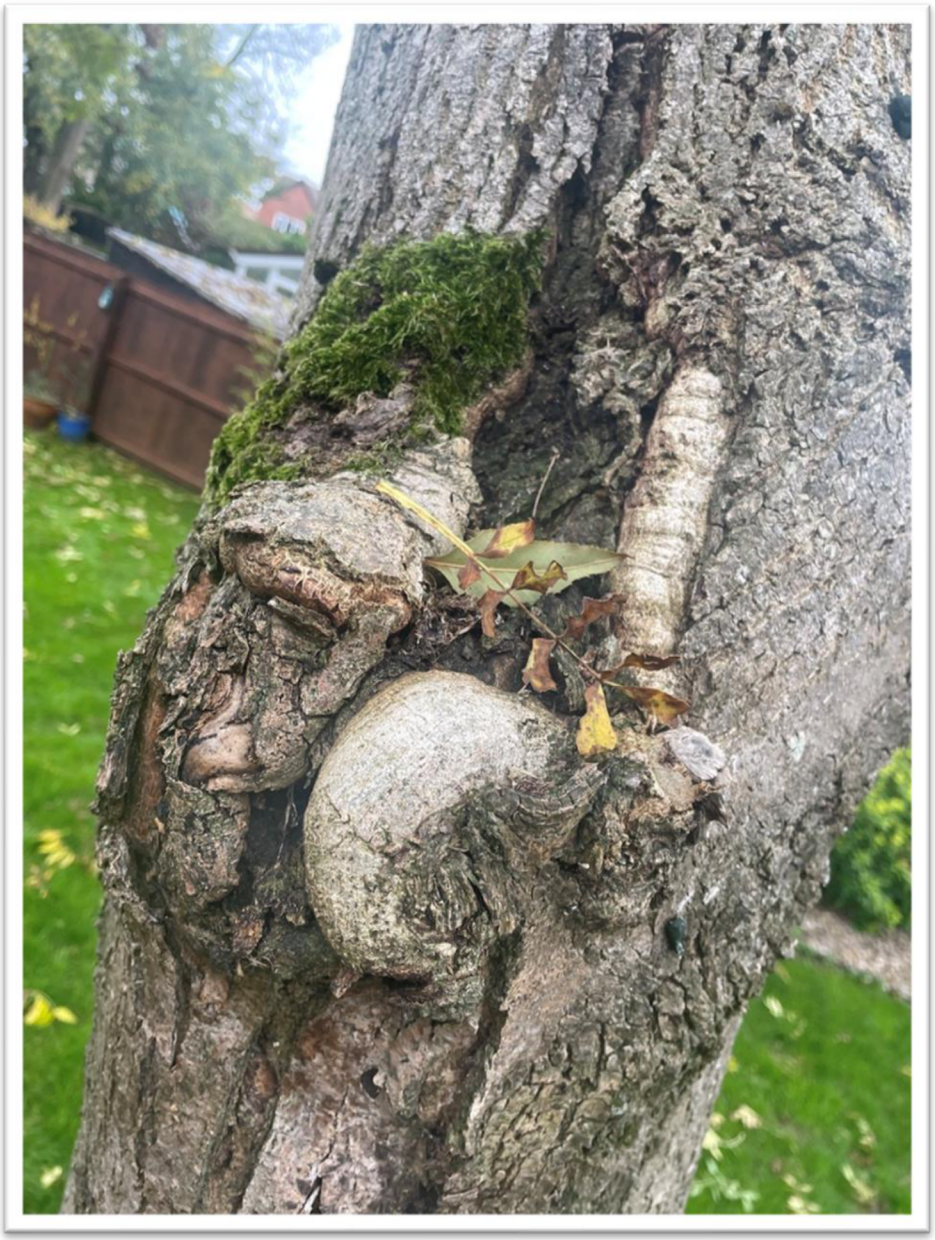

Fig 2. Picture showing unoccluded wound on the northern main stem of Ash 1703



Fig 3. Picture showing the main stem union of Ash 1704 with reaction growth at base of union indicating a point of stress.

4 Conclusions

4.1 It is not clear from the TPO Plan that Ashes 1703 and 1704 are T1 and T2 of the TPO but even if they are, I do not consider that they were suitable for inclusion in a TPO due to structural weaknesses.

4.2 We do not know the foundation depths of the adjacent buildings but it is reasonable to expect the dwellings to be built on foundations that comply with the NHBC Standards.

4.3 We do not have laboratory testing results for the local soil but it would seem reasonable to assume it has some volumetric change potential due to the soil type.

4.4 Although not scientifically measured, the evidence captured in the pictures at Fig 1 shows that crack widths have reduced between September and November. This type of movement is typical of tree-related damage.

4.5 I do not consider that Ash is a suitable species to be cultivated in such close proximity to residential dwellings due to the future growth potential both in height and crown spread.

4.6 Taking the apparent damage into account with the unsuitability of the trees for retention in a residential garden, I consider that the most pragmatic decision is to fell and replace the trees.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Fell ad replace Ashes 1703 and 1704.

5.2 Obtain foundation inspection records for the Local Authority Building Control Department and refer back to me for best advice regarding Ash 1705.

5.3 Replacement tree species, size and location can be agreed through negotiation with the Local Planning Authority.

References:

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 [Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/211]

Mynors, C.; Hall, S. & Nicholls, E. (2023) *The Law of Trees Forests and Hedges* London: Sweet & Maxwell.

Gov.uk (2014) *Tree Preservation Orders and trees in Conservation Areas* (Collection: Planning Practice Guidance) [available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas]

British Standard 3998:2010 'Tree work – Recommendations'

Diagnosis of Ill Health in Trees (Strouts and Winter) 1994

Land off Louthe Way, Sawtry Tree Preservation Order 24.1994

Geology Viewer British Geological Survey (on-line resource)