

ARBORICULTURAL ASSESSMENT OF TREE
BETWEEN
1 & 4 OSBORNE QUARTERS, ROYAL
VICTORIA COUNTRY PARK, NETLEY ABBEY,
SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 5HX

Carried out by Matthew Rowden for Graham Jackson,
applicant.

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TREESCAPES

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3. INSTRUCTION

I was instructed by Graham Jackson (applicant), to undertake a visual tree inspection of the tree located at 4 Osborne quarters. I refer to the current guidance set out within NTSG Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2024) to assist the occupier in discharging the duty of care owed in relation to trees.

The risks assessed comprise foreseeable personal injury from whole-tree or branch failure, direct contact damage to property and infrastructure, and other harm associated with the tree within falling distance of regularly used areas of the site.

4. LIMITATIONS

A formal re-inspection interval of five years is recommended unless otherwise stated within Appendix 1, or unless a material change in condition, significant storm event, construction activity or other circumstance warrants earlier review.

The site was inspected from ground level using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) principles outlined by Mattheck and Breloer (1994). No invasive investigation or detailed decay detection was undertaken. The findings should therefore be read alongside the 2026 survey schedule and tree location/risk plan.

5. SITE DETAILS

The tree sits between No.s 1 & 4 Osborne Quarters, forming part of the residential development within Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley Abbey, Southampton. Osborne Quarters comprises a compact group of dwellings arranged around areas of established landscaping within the former Royal Victoria Hospital estate. The present residential accommodation represents the redevelopment and refurbishment of the former quarters, with the properties having been brought into modern residential use ap-

proximately six years ago. Land Registry-derived sales records show a substantial number of the properties changing hands during 2019–20, consistent with the present residential phase of the development. The subject tree occupies a relatively constrained landscaped area between the surrounding dwellings and adjacent pedestrian route; the submitted tree plan illustrates the extent to which its mature crown now occupies this space and extends towards the neighbouring buildings.

British Geological Survey mapping records the underlying bedrock geology as the Selsey Sand Formation, comprising sand, silt and clay. These sedimentary deposits are shallow-marine in origin and comprise detrital material ranging from coarse to fine grained, locally containing carbonate and occurring as interbedded sequences. In arboricultural terms, such heterogeneous deposits are capable of producing correspondingly variable soil conditions across relatively short distances. The sandier horizons would ordinarily provide relatively free drainage, whereas localised silt- and clay-rich horizons may retain appreciably more moisture and exhibit some seasonal variation in soil-water availability. The geology therefore does not, in isolation, indicate any particular concern relevant to the present visual assessment, although the mature size of the tree and established raised root plate demonstrate that it has successfully occupied the available rooting environment for a considerable period.

6. LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

The entire site is covered by a blanket TPO, ref: 824-E.

7. PROPOSALS

The proposals are to evaluate the level of risk posed by the subject tree and establish whether any remedial arboricultural work is reasonably necessary. This is achieved through visual assessment of the tree's physiological and structural condition, including its vitality, stem and branch architecture, unions, deadwood and any visible evidence of decay, dysfunction or other structural defects. These observations are considered alongside the tree's dimensions, maturity and surrounding site use, with particular regard to the nature, proximity and frequency of occupation of foreseeable targets. The likelihood of tree or branch failure is then considered against the potential consequences of such an event, allowing the necessity and proportionality of any remedial intervention to be determined.

8. DRAWINGS AND DOCUMENTS

A scale drawing has been procured from the Ordnance survey and the tree has been annotated on it, plotted at a scale of 1:200 @ A3.

9. SUMMARY

Tree 1 is a mature Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) approximately 18 m in height with a stem diameter of approximately 770 mm. It is presently in good physiological and structural condition and, subject to removal of the identified major deadwood, there is little evidence from the visual inspection to suggest that it presents a significant or unusual risk to persons or property. The proposed crown reduction should consequently not be presented principally as risk-remedial work. Rather, the tree has developed a broad, somewhat sparse and disproportionately extended crown within a relatively confined residential setting. A sympathetic reduction in height and lateral spread would improve its overall form, relationship with the surrounding buildings and longer-term amenity contribution whilst retaining the tree as a prominent mature landscape feature.

10. FINDINGS (PLEASE SEE APPENDIX 1 FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS)

1. Tree 1 is a mature Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) approximately 18 m in height, with a stem diameter of approximately 770 mm and an asymmetric crown extending approximately 11–13 m from the stem. Physiological condition was assessed as good, with satisfactory vitality and no indication from the visual inspection of significant physiological decline. Structural condition was similarly assessed as good. No significant defects were identified within the main stem and no fungal fruiting bodies were visible at the time of inspection. On the evidence presently available, there is therefore no indication of a significant basal or stem-related defect that would materially increase the likelihood of whole-tree failure.
2. The principal branch structure divides through a series of unions at approximately 2.5 m, 3 m and 4 m, ultimately forming six dominant stems. These unions appeared well formed and there were no obvious external indicators of significant weakness, such as pronounced included bark, cracking, adaptive growth associated with excessive mechanical loading or visibly compromised attachment. The multi-stemmed architecture is relevant when considering the distribution of mechanical loading through the crown, but its presence should not in itself be interpreted as a defect. There is consequently insufficient evidence from the visual assessment to attribute an elevated likelihood of major scaffold failure to these unions.
3. Major deadwood was identified at approximately 7 m on the north-eastern aspect. This represents the clearest identifiable defect relevant to immediate risk management. Dead branches have, by definition, ceased the adaptive growth and compartmentalisation processes associated with living crown structure and will eventually be shed. The significance in this instance arises primarily from the presence of foreseeable targets beneath and adjacent to the crown, including the pedestrian route and surrounding residential properties. Removal of significant deadwood is therefore justified as a proportionate precaution. Importantly, however, the presence of isolated deadwood within an otherwise physiologically vigorous mature tree does not indicate that the tree as a whole is structurally unstable.
4. The underside of the lowest south-western limb exhibits symptoms considered consistent with *Pseudomonas*, although these were assessed as being of low significance at the time of inspection. There is no evidence within the present visual assessment that this feature has resulted in sufficient dysfunction or deterioration of the supporting limb to constitute a material structural defect. It should consequently be regarded as an observation for future monitoring rather than evidence requiring substantial intervention at the present time.
5. The more notable characteristic of the tree is its crown architecture. Although vitality remains good, foliage coverage is comparatively sparse and a number of limbs within the upper and peripheral crown have developed an extended and leggy form, with relatively limited subordinate branching within the inner crown. This architecture does not presently provide evidence of an unacceptable likelihood of branch failure. Nevertheless, the concentration of foliage and branch length towards the crown periphery produces relatively long lever arms and gives the tree a disproportionately broad and open appearance. Previous crown lifting has also influenced the present architecture by removing lower-order growth and concentrating the visual mass of the crown at greater height.
6. The significance of this crown form is increased by the physical context of the tree. The crown extends across a comparatively confined residential space, overhanging both Nos. 1 and 4 Osborne Quarters as well as the adjacent footpath. The survey records shading of No. 1 and deposition of organic detritus into the gutters of Nos. 1 and 4. These matters are principally issues of spatial relationship and amenity rather than evidence that the tree is dangerous. The proximity and occupation of the surrounding properties and footpath nevertheless increase the potential consequences should a significant branch fail and are therefore relevant to the overall assessment of risk.
7. When likelihood of failure and consequences are considered together, the overall risk presented by the tree is considered low once the identified significant deadwood has been removed. There is no observed structural defect that would presently justify substantial crown reduction solely as a safety measure. It would therefore be inappropriate to characterise the proposed reduction as necessary to

make an unsafe tree safe. The distinction is important: the tree is presently structurally satisfactory, while the principal justification for further management arises from its crown form, spatial relationship with the surrounding development and the opportunity to improve its future amenity contribution.

8. Notwithstanding the low assessed risk, a sympathetic crown reduction remains arboriculturally reasonable. The survey recommends reducing the crown in height and spread by approximately 3–4 m. Such work would allow the disproportionately long peripheral growth to be shortened and the crown to be brought back towards a more compact and visually coherent form. The objective should be to retain an appropriately furnished natural crown rather than impose an artificial geometric outline, with pruning points selected to suitable secondary branches capable of assuming terminal roles. This would improve crown balance, reduce the extent of overhang towards the surrounding properties and footpath, and improve the proportional relationship between a substantial mature tree and the relatively restricted space within which it is growing.
9. The benefit of the proposed reduction is therefore predominantly one of arboricultural management and amenity rather than mitigation of an immediate hazard. Retaining the tree without reduction would remain a defensible option from a purely risk-based perspective, subject to deadwood removal and continued inspection. However, carefully executed reduction offers the opportunity to improve the tree's form while retaining its substantial landscape contribution and may reduce the likelihood that continued peripheral extension creates greater conflict with the surrounding properties in future. In this respect, moderate intervention at the present stage is preferable to allowing continued extension to result in pressure for substantially heavier pruning or removal later in the tree's life.
10. Legal and policy considerations. The proposed works are consistent with the underlying purpose of tree protection legislation. Section 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides for the preservation of trees where this is expedient in the interests of amenity, while the NPPF recognises the contribution made by trees to the character and quality of the environment and the wider benefits derived from their retention. Importantly, protection does not require a tree to remain unmanaged. In determining an application for works to a protected tree, the LPA should assess the existing amenity value, the effect of the proposed works upon that amenity, and whether the works are reasonably justified. Government guidance further confirms that consent may be appropriate even where there is no particular arboricultural need for the work, where its effect upon amenity is negligible. In this instance, the proposed reduction retains the tree in its entirety, preserves its substantial landscape contribution and seeks to improve its presently sparse and over-extended crown form. I therefore consider the works entirely consistent with the amenity purpose of the TPO: they represent proportionate management of a protected tree rather than an erosion of the amenity the Order exists to preserve.
11. Overall, the visual assessment identifies no evidence that Tree 1 presents a significant or immediate risk of whole-tree or major structural failure. Removal of the significant deadwood represents the principal risk-management requirement. The proposed 3–4 m crown reduction should instead be regarded as a proportionate intervention intended to improve crown form, spatial compatibility and longer-term amenity. Accordingly, the reduction is considered moderate to low priority and could reasonably be undertaken within the next two years, rather than being presented as urgent safety work.

11.CONCLUSION:

Overall, Tree 1 is a healthy and structurally satisfactory mature Turkey oak. No significant basal, stem or union defects were identified and there is no evidence to suggest an elevated likelihood of whole-tree or major scaffold failure. The principal foreseeable hazard is the identified major deadwood which, once removed, leaves the residual risk posed by the tree low.

That does not, however, mean that further management is unwarranted. The tree has developed a broad, sparse and increasingly extended crown within a relatively confined residential setting, with substantial overhang towards the adjoining properties and footpath. A sympathetic 3–4 m reduction would improve its form, balance and relationship with the surrounding development without materially diminishing its landscape contribution.

I therefore consider the proposed works reasonable, proportionate and arboriculturally justified. They should not be misrepresented as urgent safety works; their principal purpose is to improve the tree's amenity and secure its satisfactory longer-term retention. This is entirely consistent with the purpose of TPO protection and Government guidance concerning works where there may be no overriding arboricultural necessity. The reduction is moderate to low priority and should reasonably be undertaken within the next two years.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Remove deadwood (priority: within 1 year).
2. Reduce in height and spread by 3-4m (priority: 2 years).



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13. REFERENCES

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TREE NO. ON PLAN	SPECIES	HT (M)	CROWN SPREAD (M) N E S W	STEM DIA. @1.5M (MM)	LIFE STAGE	ESTIMATED REMAINING CONTRIBUTION IN YEARS	GENERAL OBSERVATIONS PHYSIOLOGICAL CONDITION - P STRUCTURAL CONDITION - S	PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS	PRIORITY
1	<i>Quercus cerris</i>	18	11 12 11 13	770	M	>40	P- Good S- Good Raised root plate around lawn. No fungal fruiting bodies visible at this time. No visible defects main stem. Branch structure: unions well formed at 2.5, 3, and 4m, splitting into 6 dominant stems. Broad spreading tree overhangs 1 and 4 Osborne quarters, with extended limbs over footpath. Underside of lowest south west aspect limb exhibiting <i>Pseudomonas</i> symptoms of low sig. Major deadwood at 7m NE aspect. Canopy vitality = good, but sparse in terms of coverage, with extended, leggy limbs in the upper canopy with minimal support wind anchors as inner canopy. Overview: large tree in too small a space with long, over extended limbs that shade #1 and drop detritus in the gutters of #1 & #4. Tree has been crown lifted historically, but overall the longer term retention of the tree may be secured by maintaining the tree at a height of 16m, with a spread reduction of 4m.	Reduce in height and spread by 3 - 4m.	Moderate

SURVEY SCHEDULE KEY

1. Tree ID: Refers to numbers as shown in the tree location plan.
2. Species: scientific name
3. Height (measured in meters)
4. Crown spread (measured in meters at the points of North, South, East and West). Where “#” is used as a suffix, the measurements are approximate.
5. Stem diameter measured at 1.5m height in mm.
6. Life stage: Young (Y) (small trees at a very early stage of their growth), young mature (YM)(larger trees at an early life stage with the potential to still grow considerably larger), Mature (MA)(trees which have reached their maximum size and are self sustaining at the point), Over mature (OM)(trees that are beginning to decline and starting to die back from the tips), Veteran (V)(trees that are rapidly in decline and steadily losing canopy spread), Dead (D)
7. Estimated remaining contribution in years: Until such a time as any residual amenity is lost.
8. General observations - a visual assessment of the physiological and structural condition of the tree, classed as :Poor, fair, good, dead, decline. Physiologically refers to the vitality and vigour of the tree; Structural refers to the presence of physical defects within the tree's structural makeup. For example, a multi stemmed tree from a lapsed pollard with multiple defects in those unions, but with good vitality and good leaf cover would be classed as physiologically good, but structurally poor.
9. Preliminary management recommendations - recommendations to maintain the tree as part of the proposals, or assessing whether its retention is viable, whether it be the suggestion of aerial inspections, remedial pruning, or detailed decay inspections.
10. Likelihood of causing damage/ harm: None, low, moderate, high and critical. These mean that respectively, the recommendations are to be actioned with no time scale and within 5 years (green canopy spread), 1 year (blue canopy spread), 6 months (red canopy spread). Trees to be felled with have the canopy spread denoted in a red dotted line.



General Notes

Key

Low risk trees

Moderate risk trees

High risk trees

No.	Revision/Issue	Date

Firm Name and Address

ROWDEN

TREESCAPES

Project Name and Address

1 Osborne

Quarters, Royal

Victoria Country

Park, Netley

Abbey,

SOUTHAMPTON, SO31

5HX

Project

HR5/GJ/2025/VTA/V1

Date

11/09/2025

Scale

1:200 @ A3

Sheet

Appendix B

Tree

Location

Plan