

EVALUATION OF CONDITION, AND PROPOSALS FOR WORKS ON A SYCAMORE TREE AT ST LAWRENCE AND ST PAULS CHURCH, LONGRIDGE

Client: The Vicar and Churchwarden St Lawrence and St Pauls PCC.

Date of Tree Inspection: 21.9.18

Weather conditions: Cold and damp.

The re-inspection was carried out as a result of the clients concern about the condition of the sycamore located close to the terraced cottages on Chapel Brow. The previous report in June 2005 indicated that the tree was sound with compartmentalized decay in a limb loss wound at 2m from ground level. The report at that time suggested that future canopy growth would occur and some thinning to reduce the wind catch of the tree was appropriate.

The tree was not climbed but inspected from ground level and decay tests carried out with a sounding hammer.

The current inspection suggests that:

1. The tree has increased in height and canopy spread. It is about 12m high with a dense upper canopy extending to a radius of 6m. The decay cavity is still present but does not represent a safety issue, the tree having created additional timber support growth around the cavity to reduce the risk of failure.
2. The canopy is exposed especially to a westerly wind and stands proud above the local land and buildings being on a wall supported bank which is 2.5m above the road and dominates the terrace of cottages on the other side of Chapel Brow.
3. The root plate appears firm but there is now a visible failure of the wall capping and a bulging of the wall with water ingress being evident. The wall damage has been caused by the trees root plate and rooting activity and will be accentuated by the leverage of the root plate caused by the winds on the canopy of the tree.
4. Our last report was in June 2005, when the need for canopy pruning was mentioned and a reinspection suggested in 2010. A re-inspection was not requested of us and we are not aware if a canopy thin was carried out.
5. The tree has a wind induced lean to the east and dense canopy able to exert pressure on the root plate and the wall and capping. This damage can be seen on the attached photographs.
6. The current concern has come from a local resident whose property may be in fall range of the tree and at a time when high winds coming in from the Atlantic and the Irish Sea have reached speeds of 45 mph. The cottage side of Chapel Brow is regularly used as a car parking place. At wind speeds of more than 45mph it is very difficult to know how trees will react.
7. The lack of soil support to the tree on the wall side gives concern while the frail nature of the wall structure compounds the problem. If the wall was to be taken down and repaired this would reduce the trees stability. If the tree was to be pollarded it would look butchered and would regrow within 10 years requiring a further programme of reduction.
8. In these circumstances we conclude that the tree should be removed, the stump poisoned and the tree replaced by an appropriate species located at least 7m from the wall. Given the recent increase in the incidents of high gustings winds in the UK we feel that this work should take place within the next 14-21 days.

Please let us know if you require more information

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