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ARBORICULTURAL CONDITION AND HAZARD ASSESSMENT REPORT

Oaken Brick Threals lane West Chiltington RH20 2rf

ARBORICULTURAL CONDITION AND HAZARD ASSESSMENT REPORT

Protected Oak Tree (TPO) Oaken Brick, Threals lane, West Chiltington, RH20 2rf.

Inspection Date: 21 July 2026

Tree Species: Oak (*Quercus* spp.)

Protection Status: Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

Height: Approximately 18 metres

Stem Diameter (DBH): Approximately 650 mm

Crown Spread: Approximately 6 metres

Physiological Condition: Poor

Structural Condition: Very Poor

Remaining Crown: Less than 20% live canopy remaining (>80% dieback observed)

1. Instructions

The tree was inspected following concerns regarding its declining condition, structural integrity and suitability for retention. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a visual assessment of the tree's physiological and structural condition and to provide recommendations regarding future management.

2. Methodology

The inspection was undertaken from ground level using the principles of **Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)**. No invasive investigations were undertaken during the inspection and observations are based upon visible external symptoms and defects present at the time of inspection.

The assessment was informed by the principles contained within:

- *Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management* – David Lonsdale
 - *The Body Language of Trees* – Claus Mattheck and Helge Breloer
 - Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 7 – *Tree Surveys: A Guide to Good Practice*
 - Lantra Awards Professional Tree Inspection methodology
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3. Tree Description

The subject tree is a mature oak situated within a semi-natural setting. The tree is approximately 18 metres in height with a stem diameter of approximately 650 mm and a crown spread of approximately 6 metres.

The crown exhibits extensive dieback throughout, with the majority of the canopy now consisting of dead branches and only isolated areas of live foliage remaining. Physiological vigour is very low and the tree is visually in advanced decline.

4. Observations

Crown Condition

Visual inspection identified:

- Extensive crown dieback throughout the canopy.
- Greater than 80% canopy loss.
- Significant deadwood present throughout the crown.
- Sparse and fragmented areas of residual live foliage.
- Overall physiological condition assessed as poor.
- Advanced decline consistent with a tree approaching the end of its functional life expectancy.

Stem and Basal Condition

Inspection of the lower stem and root buttress area identified significant structural defects.

The western side of the stem exhibits extensive bark necrosis, bark lifting and delamination. Areas of detached bark and exposed wood are evident extending vertically up the stem. The affected area is estimated to encompass approximately 30% of the stem circumference/diameter at the point of assessment.

The exposed wood beneath the detached bark appears desiccated and non-functional, indicating extensive cambial dysfunction and loss of conductive tissue.

Numerous sap exudations are present on the main stem. Such symptoms are frequently associated with dysfunction of the vascular system and may indicate progressive xylem failure and underlying decay processes.

Evidence of insect activity is also present at the base of the stem in the form of frass deposits, suggesting colonisation of weakened or decaying woody tissues by secondary insect species.

Fungal Activity

A fungal bracket was observed on the southern side of the tree approximately 500 mm from the base, associated with a damaged buttress root. The presence of fungal fruiting bodies at the stem base is indicative of active wood decay and raises concerns regarding the integrity of the root buttress system and lower stem.

The exact fungal species could not be positively identified during the inspection; however, the location and association with damaged structural roots is considered significant.

5. Structural Assessment

The combination of:

- Extensive basal bark loss and delamination;
- Significant cambial dysfunction;
- Sap exudations associated with vascular decline;
- Evidence of insect colonisation;
- Presence of basal fungal fruiting bodies;
- Severe crown dieback exceeding 80%;
- Very low physiological vigour;

indicates a tree suffering from advanced physiological decline coupled with substantial structural degradation.

The observed defects are consistent with progressive loss of stem and root buttress integrity. In accordance with the principles outlined by Lonsdale (1999) and Mattheck & Breloer (1994), the presence of extensive basal dysfunction, fungal activity and crown decline significantly increases the likelihood of structural failure.

The tree is therefore considered to be **severely structurally compromised** and at elevated risk of whole-tree failure or collapse.

6. Amenity Value

Whilst the tree remains a prominent landscape feature due to its size and mature form, its amenity value has been substantially reduced by extensive crown dieback, deadwood accumulation and advanced decline.

The tree now provides only a limited contribution to visual amenity when compared with a healthy mature oak. Given its current condition and limited life expectancy, its future amenity value is considered low.

Continued retention is unlikely to provide a sustainable long-term public benefit and would require increasing levels of management intervention whilst structural condition continues to deteriorate.

7. Recommendations

Tree Removal

Based upon the observations recorded during the inspection, the tree is considered to be:

- In advanced physiological decline;
- Structurally compromised;
- Of very low vigour;
- At elevated risk of complete collapse in the foreseeable future.

It is therefore recommended that the tree be **removed as soon as reasonably practicable** to mitigate the risk of structural failure.

Removal works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and insured arboricultural contractor operating in accordance with current industry best practice and relevant health and safety legislation.

8. Mitigation and Replacement Planting

Although the removal of a protected mature oak represents a loss of landscape amenity, the current condition of the tree significantly limits its future contribution.

To mitigate the loss, replacement planting is recommended as follows:

Replacement Specification

Plant:

- **1 x English Oak (*Quercus robur*)**
- Minimum size: **Heavy Standard (14–16 cm girth)** or preferably **Extra Heavy Standard (16–18 cm girth)** where available.

Alternatively, another large-growing native species may be agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

Planting and Aftercare

The replacement tree should:

- Be planted during the first available planting season following removal.
- Be protected from browsing and mechanical damage.
- Receive watering and establishment maintenance for a minimum period of five years.
- Be replaced should failure occur during the establishment period.

This replacement strategy will ensure continuity of tree cover and secure future landscape, ecological and visual amenity benefits following the removal of the existing tree.

9. Conclusion

The inspected oak exhibits severe physiological decline and significant structural defects. More than 80% crown dieback is present, accompanied by extensive basal bark delamination, sap exudations indicative of vascular dysfunction, insect activity associated with decaying wood, and fungal colonisation of the buttress root region.

These defects collectively indicate a tree with substantially diminished structural integrity and a high likelihood of continued deterioration. The tree is assessed as being in poor physiological condition, possessing very low vigour and presenting a foreseeable risk of whole-tree structural failure.

Accordingly, removal is considered justified on arboricultural and safety grounds. The proposed replacement planting will mitigate the loss of the protected tree and provide a sustainable long-term amenity contribution to the site.

Prepared by: Kim Gifford
Arboricultural Inspection Report
Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)
21 July 2026













Consultant Mr Kim Gifford: Profile

Before starting GTS, Kim Gifford completed a four-year apprenticeship in 1972 with the Royal Parks at Hampton Court Palace and gained City & Guilds qualifications in Horticulture and Arboriculture. In addition to these qualifications, Kim Gifford continued his professional development by attending seminars and conferences and by studying for a professional diploma and foundation degree in Arboriculture. Further work experience before starting the business included subcontracting for arboricultural companies, working as a lead arborist for the London Borough of Ealing, and working as an arborist in Berlin, Germany.

Kim Gifford t/a Gifford Tree Service started trading as a sole trader in 1980 and became a partnership in 1985. The company specialises in all aspects of arboriculture. From 2007, Kim Gifford again traded as a sole trader in his own right. In 1988, Kim Gifford became an Arboricultural Association Approved Contractor after a comprehensive assessment, with reassessments in 2002 and 2007. Kim Gifford served on Arboricultural Association committees for 10 years and became National Chairman of the Arboricultural Association in 2001. Kim Gifford is now an honorary member of the Arboricultural Association.

Kim Gifford personally undertakes Picus sonic decay tests for local authorities and other arboricultural contractors across southern England. Kim Gifford has owned Picus equipment through treetesting.com for 17 years and has completed more than 3,000 tests, giving him considerable experience in analysing tomographic images. This service complements other consultant reports and is supported by his 48 years' knowledge of arboriculture.

The Picus system has been updated and maintained in line with recent manufacturer improvements. In 2020, it was upgraded to Picus 3, Q74 Expert software, and Resistograph Micro Drill IML Resi PD400 Pro software.

Kim Gifford has undertaken many tree surveys, including mortgage reports and BS5837 surveys, to meet planning authority requirements for development proposals, Tree Preservation Order applications, and planning inspectorate appeals.

Kim Gifford was certified by Lantra Training Awards with a Professional Tree Inspection Certificate on 30 November 2013 and by the Arboricultural Association with a BS5837 Advanced Tree Assessment for Planning certificate on 4 May 2016.

Kim Gifford also provides quotations for recommended works, risk method statements, health and safety policies, site-specific procedures, operational supervision, and management services.