Liz Berry
Billingshurst Town Council
Main Hall Roman Way
Billingshurst
West Sussex
RH14 9QW

20th August 2026

Dear Liz,

Site: Inspection of tree 2083, Church Path, Billingshurst

Following your request earlier in the year, I viewed tree 2083, a horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) at the southern end of Church Path, on the 17th August 2026. I have appended some photographs to the end of this letter.

The tree is circa 14m tall with average radial crown spread of 7m. Its trunk is circa 90cm diameter at 1.5m above ground level.

It stands to the east of the footpath, close to Station Road to the south and Carpenters to the west. Billingshurst Primary Academy lies south west of the tree, on the other side of Station Road.

Prior inspections of the tree have recorded a lack of vitality with sparse, undersized leaves and the presence of dead branches. Deadwood has been removed from the tree over the years and a large stem growing toward the east was removed in the past.

This inspection revealed the tree to be in a continuing state of decline; small, undersized leaves and dieback of the shoot tips. Also present at this inspection were layers of fungal fruiting bodies at circa 2m above ground level on the south eastern side of the stem, at the point where the subsidiary stem was removed (see Photograph 4 at Appendix 1). The fungus was identified as Dryad's Saddle (*Polyporous squamosus*). This is a common stem decay fungus of horse chestnut.

Horse chestnut wood is very poor at resisting the spread of decay. Unlike some trees, such as English oak, it is ineffective at forming barriers to resist the spread of decay, radially and vertically, within the infected stems. As the decay spreads, so it weakens the wood rendering it highly susceptible to fracture.

The tree is located in a highly frequented area, adjoining a footpath and carriageway. I have noted on prior inspections that children and parents dwell under, and near, the tree.

Given the high risk of stem breakage and the high frequency of occupation beneath the tree, remedial action is required.

Firstly, I considered whether the tree could be pruned to reduce its size and reduce the risk of stem breakage to an acceptable level. However, pruning would need to be substantial, leaving a disfigured tree, large pruning wounds and the need for repeat pruning at circa 5-year intervals. The large pruning wounds would be susceptible to decay and this would render any regrowth also susceptible to failure. Pruning would be a short-term solution but not an enduring and sustainable solution.

Removal of the tree would overcome the risk from stem breakage. Whilst it is a drastic action it avoids the need for repeat maintenance and, perhaps of most benefit, frees space for replacement planting.

Mindful of the need to manage risk, manage budgets and sustain tree cover, I would advocate removal of the tree and the planting of a replacement.

Horse chestnut are prone to many pests and diseases and are proving to be an unsustainable species in modern times. However, there is nothing quite like them for flowering. Even though they are spectacular in flower, I would not recommend planting another as replacement. There are similar species that are more robust, for instance Yellow Buckeye (*Aesculus flava*). Alternatively, something more columnar in form (to avoid the compromise of proximate dwellings in the long-term) such as Liquidamber would swap summer flowering for bold autumn colour. The range of suitable replacement species is vast and others may have an equally suitable choice.

The tree is protected by tree preservation order (Tree T5 of the Clevelands, Station Road, Billingshurst Tree Preservation Order 1979) and an application for consent to remove it will need to made to Horsham District Council. This letter can be used to support the application.

Yours sincerely,



Jago Keen
Keen Consultants

Appendix 1 – Photographs



Photo 1 - Tree seen from Carpenters, to west of tree. Sparse, undersized leaves seen in upper crown.



Photo 2 - Tree seen from the north, looking toward Station Road. Sparse, undersized leaves in upper crown. Larger leaf size present on adventitious shoots from lower stem.



Photo 3 - Tree seen from south, alongside Station Road. Sparse, undersized leaves in upper crown. Pruning wound just visible at circa 2m above ground level.



Photo 4 - Stem of tree as seen from the south. Fungal fruit bodies seen at top of image, just left of the large pruning wound. Fallen, degraded fungal fruit body seen on ground to right hand side of stem.