

An Arboricultural Report on trees growing in Public Open Spaces owned by

Marldon Parish Council,

Marldon,

Devon

Prepared for

The Parish Council

By

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Client:
Marldon Parish Council,
c/o the Parish Clerk,
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Date of site inspection: 7th June, 2023

Report prepared by Rupert Baker BSc (Hons), Dip Arb (RFS), M Arbor A.

Is a consultant and plantsman who works in forestry, horticulture, and arboriculture, though he also ‘gets his hands dirty’. He has over 40 years’ experience in these fields, and manages, inspects, and reports on trees and woodlands, and manages, designs, plants and establishes orchards and arboreta.

He keeps his qualifications up to date with courses, research, and discussion. He is a member of the Royal Forestry Society, Arboricultural Association, and the Tree Register of the British Isles. He carries out tree surveys, assessing for risk using the QTRA system, and surveys in relation to development; veteran tree management, woodland planting and management plans, arboretum and orchard design and layout.

He is fully insured for Professional Indemnity and Public Liability in respect of tree and woodland surveys, and for carrying out works for clients.

In addition to his own work, he serves as the Arboricultural consultant to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for the Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows.

1.0 The Purpose of the report

1.1 To carry out an inspection to assess the health and risk posed by trees growing in the various areas of public open space owned and managed by Marldon Parish Council.

1.2 **Executive summary:** the majority of trees on your land were sound and healthy enough and posed an acceptably low level of risk; some specific trees will need removal due to disease or decay; these are listed below and marked on the attached plan. I've also commented, as requested, on specific trees not in your ownership, based on my general and local knowledge. Given the dry conditions this year, Chalara Ash Dieback Disease, a currently devastating disease of ash trees across the UK, is not causing major problems; however it will be necessary to regularly monitor your ash trees as they can rapidly become brittle and unstable when affected by the disease.

2.0 The methodology and limitations of the report.

2.1 The inspection of the trees was carried out from the ground, without climbing. The weather at the time of the inspection was sunny, with good visibility, and a light wind. The inspection comprised an examination of the above-ground parts of the trees, together with their rootzones. A visual inspection was carried out, a sounding hammer and probe being used to search for the presence of decay and cavities, and the crowns examined.

Measurements are given in metric, in metres(m) and centimetres(cm). The height and diameter of some of the trees was measured to allow assessment of risk under the QTRA system, and to provide information for management.

2.2 Following the inspection, a QTRA (Quantified Tree Risk Assessment) was carried out to give an objective appraisal of the risk posed by the trees. This informed my recommendations for tree works, below.

2.3 The report is valid for a period of eighteen months from the date of survey. The condition of the trees, and their immediate surroundings, can change as a result of climatic conditions, severe weather, and the effect of diseases, pests, and abiotic factors.

3.0 Site description and description of the trees.

3.1 Marldon is a parish to the west of the Torbay council area; being within the South Hams District Council administrative area. I was asked to survey trees on four separate areas of open space owned by the parish council, and to comment on one Highway oak tree on a traffic island in Peter's Crescent. All are within the built-up part of the village of Marldon. Overall, the land slopes down to the north; the sites range from 95-140m above sea level, going from north to south; the order in which they were surveyed; so somewhat sheltered from the prevailing south-westerlies; but exposed to winds from other quarters.

3.2 The soils appear to be gritty red loams of the Crediton Series, over Torbay Breccia and Marldon Limestone formations as bedrock. (Source SSEW soil maps, BGS geological data, and on-site observation). Such soils provide good growing conditions for trees, though being free-draining, they can be prone to drought stress.

3.3 Details of trees on open spaces owned and managed by Marldon Parish Council.

Those needing work (other than dead elms, which are obvious) are tagged with red plastic numerical tags.

There is no Conservation Area in Marldon; and the only tree with a TPO on it on your land is the oak on the hedgebank between path and drive into Peter's Field (TPO ref 526, T1).

3.4 Area 1 Jubilee Meadow

Use – public recreation and sports field. Size: 1.9 Acres (0.774 Ha), level land.

The Meadow is open, with trees planted or growing around the edges. It was surveyed from the southwestern corner by the entrance from the car park, in a clockwise direction, looking at all the trees around the edge of the Meadow.

3.5.1 The tree issues noted on this site are as follows:

A line of mature mostly multi-stemmed Birch to rear of the new sports pavilion or shed have heavy ivy growth on their stems. It would be wise to cut this around the base of each tree to prevent the ivy growing up into the canopies to a greater extent.

On the eastern boundary, about a third of the way down, is an early-mature hybrid Balsam Poplar; it has severe basal decay on its western side; with much deadwood in the canopy, indicating that the decay is extensive enough to interfere with water conduction from the roots. Although it is producing reaction-wood on other parts of the stem base, it is my professional opinion that it is immediately dangerous; and should be felled before the autumn storms. It is tagged 421.

Further along the eastern boundary is a dead standing two-stemmed Birch; this too should be felled; with less urgency, but it would be sensible to have the work done to both trees at the same time, as being more cost-effective. It is tagged 422

The final issue noted on this site was a complaint from a resident opposite the south-eastern corner of the site, where a group of Horsechestnut and Oak are growing; to the effect that the trees were overhanging toward his property. This is not a safety issue; and technically, under common law, there is no duty on the owner of the tree to cut back such an overhanging tree; whereas there is a right on the part of the person overhung to do so.

3.5 Area 2 Tor Field/ Village Road boundary.

Open space with adjacent play area. 2.2 acres, (0.88 Ha); sloping to the east; Limestone rock outcrop close to eastern boundary.

- 3.5.1 Tree issues: The boundary to Village Rd was first walked; there is a small dead Elm at the northern end which should be removed in due course; and a line of Ash and Sycamore overhang the road. Because the road is not a 'principal highway', there is no statutory duty to crown-lift the trees to provide 5.1 metres clearance. The Ashes show slight signs of Chalara Ash dieback disease and should be monitored. Another issue noted was that on Tor Rock, on the roadside, are two standing dead elm stems with ivy growing up their stems. These will fall in due course but are probably too far from the road to cause a serious impact with it. Behind the 'village seat' are a group of dead elm which should be felled. Next Tor Field itself was walked, in a clockwise direction, from the entrance at the southern end of the site; examining the trees, which were mostly on the eastern boundary, and in a belt in the centre of the site.

Adjacent a substation building at the southern end are a group of small dead Elm, which should be felled in due course. Other than those mentioned above, the only trees needing action are two dying Ashes, Tagged 423, 424, located at the northern end of the site. Some other ashes on site were showing signs of Chalara ash dieback disease; and should be monitored.

3.6 Area 3 Peter's Field.

Open space. 0.5 acres (0.2 Ha); fairly level, with its southern boundary a bank between a tarmac drive to some bungalows and a footpath into the field.

- 3.6.1 At the western end is a large mature oak tree, legally protected by TPO (see above). It has a limb growing out over the tarmac drive which has been damaged by heavy vehicles accessing the bungalows. The damage is not too serious, causing scarring on the underside of the limb. The canopy of the tree grows to the south, overhanging the garden of an adjacent property. As noted above, you have no duty to cut back the overhang; though the householder has a right to do so subject to approval from the local planning authority since the tree is legally protected. In general the tree appears sound; though the upper canopy is thinner than the foliage lower down. It has a rope swing hanging from a limb; if this is to be kept it should be reattached so that it does not strangle the branch it is attached to.
- 3.6.2 Within the site are several specimen trees; all appeared in good condition. Toward the eastern end are a pair of American Red Oaks; the eastern of these has some dead lower branches to which children are attaching thin rope for swings; it would be wise to have these branches removed to prevent an accident if children are swinging and they give way. To south of these trees, on the boundary, is an old pollard oak, 78cm dbh (diameter at breast Height), which appears in good condition; and on the eastern boundary is another mature oak, 67 cm dbh. The adjacent householder or their gardener have been dumping grass mowings over their boundary fence around the base of the tree; which will not do it much good. The northern boundary- which dates from the development of the adjacent houses- looks to have been planted as a Beech hedge; Some of the trees have grown up as trees, whilst others have been managed as a hedge; they all appeared sound.
- 3.7. Next, I was asked to look at an oak tree growing on a small traffic island in the middle of Peter's Crescent; the tree is undoubtedly in highways ownership; and not your responsibility. It is fully mature, and appears to have started life as a field tree, being much older than the adjacent houses and road; it has a dbh of 95cm. Despite being surrounded by tarmac, it appears sound and healthy; but is not the Parish Council's responsibility.

3.7 Broomhill meadow.

Open space and dog-walking area. 1.8 acres (0.73 Ha); Level, with accesses on southern and western sides. The only tree giving any cause for concern was an Ash, just south of the kissing gate towards the NW corner, showing about 25% dieback. This will need monitoring; but is not a present threat.

3.8 I have marked the various trees on the attached plan, derived from OpenStreetMap data and thus available for anyone's use.

4.0 **The implications of the survey data, and recommendations.**

4.1 The risk posed by the trees was assessed using the QTRA system.

4.2 Briefly, the system involves an inspection to assess the likelihood of a tree, or a part thereof, failing in the following year; combined with an assessment of the size of the part likely to fail (to give a numerical rating to the damage it could inflict when it fails), and an assessment of the likelihood of the target area being occupied by vehicles, pedestrian, or structures. In the case of buildings, the value of the structure is also taken into account. These ratings are then used to derive an overall risk rating. So a sound tree standing in a quiet area would be given a low rating; one in a busy place with small dead limbs likely to fall, but unlikely to cause serious damage would also be given a low risk rating; whereas a potentially dangerous tree close to a valuable target, be it a vehicle, building, or people, would be given a high risk rating.

4.3 The ratings produced by the system give the likelihood of the tree in question failing, *and* causing damage or injury, in the following year.

4.3 In safety terms, one must apply the Tolerability of Risk framework (ToR) to QTRA. There are two threshold values. A Risk of Harm less than 1/1,000,000 is broadly acceptable and would be considered to be already 'As Low as Reasonably Practicable' (ALARP). A Risk of Harm 1/10,000 or worse is unacceptable when imposed on third parties; and should not ordinarily be tolerated. Between these two thresholds, the RoH may be tolerable if it is ALARP. Where risks are in the range 1:10,000 to 1:1m, management decisions must be made, considering the benefits and costs of risk control, including the benefits provided by trees that might be lost to risk control measures.

4.4 **A description of each parameter:**

Target rating.

This is calculated in relation to the likely presence of vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians on the adjacent roads, and the presence of adjacent buildings, as a ratio. The levels of use were assessed during inspection.

Impact rating

This relates to the size of the tree or piece of tree most likely to fail; banded into diameters: rating 1= 450mm + diameter, rating 2= 250-450mm, rating 3= 100-250mm, rating 4= 25-100mm, etc. Trees are rated according to their species, crown architecture, and condition.

Probability of Failure rating:

This is set out in bands based on an assessment of the tree's condition; eg a tree with defective unions or basal decay might be assigned a 1:1000-1:10,000 (range 4) chance of a failure in the next year, whereas a tree with no obvious defects would be assigned to range 6. The failure rating bands increase by a factor of ten each time, from band 1 – 1:1-1:10; to band 6- 1:100,000-1:1million.

Risk rating – Risk of Harm

Is a compound of the above inputs, to give an overall risk of the tree or a part failing, hitting someone or something, and causing damage or injury, in the next 12 months. The tree works recommended are where trees pose a sufficient potential Risk to warrant removal.

4.5 Conclusions:

The majority of trees on your four sites appeared sounds and healthy enough to be retained; with some work needed particularly in Jubilee Meadow, and Tor Field.

4.6 Recommendations.

4.6.1 Jubilee Meadow: Fell the Poplar tagged as 421, and the dead Birch tagged as 422.

4.6.2 Tor Field. Fell the various dead elms shown on plan and mentioned in 3.5.1 above; fell two dying ash trees tagged 423 and 424.

4.6.3 Peter's Field. Remove the dead lower branches from the easternmost American Red Oak.

4.6.4 Given the condition of the trees, the presence of a good number of Ashes, and their susceptibility to Chalara Ash Dieback Disease; and the level of adjacent targets, the trees on the various sites should be inspected regularly. Normally, assuming that the recommended works are carried out, a suitable timescale for such re-inspections would be every two years; however, given the number of ash trees on the sites, I recommend that you have a relatively brief walkover survey every summer, concentrating on marking any ash trees showing severe symptoms of the disease, and having these felled, until it is apparent that the remaining ash trees are resistant to the disease (and there is plenty of evidence of this in various areas of Devon) or have all been removed because of their susceptibility.

5. Arboricultural Constraints

5.1 Legal Constraints:

The trees are not within a Conservation Area; only one tree is legally protected by Tree Preservation Order, the Oak at the entrance to Peter's Field, ref number T1 of TPO 526. You or your tree surgeon would only need to apply to South Hams District Council, with a copy of my report, if you decided to have any work carried out to this specific tree.

5.2 Ecological considerations

It is an offence to disturb nesting birds, or to injure or disturb bats or damage their roosting sites. Prior to carrying out any work on the trees, the contractors carrying out the work should examine them to ensure that there are no nests or roosts present in the tree.

5.3 Specification for Tree Works

Any specific tree work operations should be carried out as per BS3998:2010 and any amendment or re-enactment thereof.

Rupert Baker BSc (Hons), Dip Arb (RFS), M Arbor A 8th June 2023

**Tree Location Plan,
Marldon PC Open Spaces**
Drawn by RB 08 06 2023

