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Tree Condition Survey

SITE LOCATION
Little Horwood
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK17

PREPARED FOR
Little Horwood Parish Council

PREPARED BY
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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Brief

1.1 Davies Arboriculture has been instructed by Little Horwood Parish Council (the 'Client') to undertake a tree condition survey of trees with the potential to affect the principal footpaths within Little Horwood Spinney, the Garden of Peace, and the Nature Reserve and Millennium Wood (the 'Site') and to provide an arboricultural report setting out the principal findings and tree work recommendations.

Author

1.2 This report was written by Lee Davies, a Chartered Arboriculturist with over 20 years of experience in the arboricultural industry. He is a Professional Member of the *Institute of Chartered Foresters* and the *Arboricultural Association*. He holds the *Level 6 Diploma in Arboriculture (ABC), Professional Tree Inspection Certificate (PTI), and is a registered user of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment system (QTRA).*

Site Visit

1.3 A site visit was undertaken on 27 July 2026. In accordance with the *Little Horwood Parish Council Tree Safety Management Policy* (*v1*, dated 12 January 2026), the Client requested that the survey focus on the higher-use parts of the agreed survey areas.

1.4 On arrival, David Foster, Chair of Little Horwood Parish Council, walked the Site with the Author to confirm the areas to be included in the survey. It was agreed that the trees within the Garden of Peace would also be inspected.

2. SITE INFORMATION

Site Context

2.1 Little Horwood is a village in Buckinghamshire, surrounded predominantly by agricultural land and semi-rural open space. The surveyed areas comprise Little Horwood Spinney, west of Wood End; the Garden of Peace, north of Mursley Road; and the Nature Reserve and Millennium Wood, east of Winslow Road. These areas are open to the public and contain a mixture of woodland, individual trees and hedgerows typical of the surrounding landscape.

Tree Preservation Orders

2.2 Online mapping provided by Buckinghamshire Council (the 'LPA') indicates that none of the surveyed trees are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). However, this information is subject to change and should be confirmed directly with the LPA before commissioning any tree pruning or removal.

Conservation Areas

2.3 The LPA's online mapping indicates that Little Horwood Spinney and the Garden of Peace are located within the Little Horwood Conservation Area. Therefore, unless an exemption applies, the LPA must be given six weeks' written notice before carrying out works to qualifying trees, including their pruning or removal.

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

General Methodology

3.1 The trees were inspected from ground level using basic inspection tools (i.e., mallet, probe, and binoculars).

3.2 Measurements were taken as follows:

- Stem diameter: Measured at 1.5 metres above ground level.
- Tree height: Measured using a digital clinometer to the nearest metre.
- Crown radius: Measured using a digital laser measure to the nearest half metre.

Where access restrictions prevented direct measurement, dimensions were estimated.

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA)

3.3 By applying QTRA principles, this assessment focuses on identifying trees that warrant individual recording, a detailed Risk of Harm calculation or management intervention. This approach recognises that tree safety management is a matter of limiting the risk of harm from failure while maintaining the extensive benefits trees confer upon the landscape and ecology. Rather than focusing solely on tree condition, the assessment prioritises the usage of the land (the Target) as the primary consideration, which in turn informs the level of rigour required for the inspection.

Thresholds	Description	Action
	Unacceptable Risks will not ordinarily be tolerated	Control the risk
1/1 000	Unacceptable (Where imposed on others) Risks will not ordinarily be tolerated	Control the risk Review the risk
	Tolerable (By agreement) Risks may be tolerated if those exposed to the risk accept it, or the tree has exceptional value	Control the risk unless there is broad stakeholder agreement to tolerate it, or the tree has exceptional value Review the risk
1/10 000	Tolerable (Where imposed on others) Risks are tolerable if ALARP	Assess costs and benefits of risk control Control the risk only where a significant benefit might be achieved at a reasonable costs Reviews the risk
1/1 000 000	Broadly Acceptable Risk is already ALARP	No action currently required Review the risk

Figure 1: *QTRA Advisory Risk Thresholds (Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Methodology)*
The figure illustrates the advisory risk thresholds applied within the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) methodology and their corresponding management responses.

3.4 The QTRA system moves the management of tree safety away from binary labels of ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’. Instead, it quantifies risk by combining assessments of the Target (people or property), the Size of the potential impact, and the Probability of Failure. These components are combined to calculate an annual probability of significant harm, allowing for management decisions that are balanced against predetermined risk thresholds. This supports proportionate management decisions that balance the level of risk against the costs and benefits of intervention, while allowing tree and habitat value to be retained wherever reasonably practicable.

Negative Recording

3.5 Any tree omitted from the survey schedule was assessed, within its specific context, as posing a Broadly Acceptable risk (<1/1,000,000). Such trees were not considered to require management intervention or individual recording. Trees included in the schedule were subject to a more detailed assessment and are documented with a risk rating and, where appropriate, recommended management actions. This includes some trees assessed as posing a Broadly Acceptable risk where their prominence, condition or other site-specific factors warranted individual recording.

3.6 Unless a full inventory is required for purposes other than risk management, negative recording provides an efficient means of assessing the tree stock. By individually documenting trees that warrant further consideration, the survey focuses available resources on matters of greatest relevance while avoiding unnecessary recording of trees presenting an insignificant risk.

Dead Tree and Branches

3.7 The assessment methodology for deadwood and standing dead trees prioritises proportionate management over automatic removal. Rather than treating these features as immediate defects, their risk is evaluated by assessing the interaction between the likelihood of structural failure and the frequency of Target occupancy. Where these features are located in areas of low occupancy, they are frequently assessed as posing a tolerable level of risk and are retained where possible to preserve ecological and habitat value.

4. LIMITATIONS

General Scope of Assessment

4.1 The conclusions and recommendations in this report relate solely to the condition of the site and trees at the time of inspection.

4.2 This survey represents a visual, ground-level assessment. It was undertaken without climbing, dismantling, excavation, or invasive investigation. No decay detection equipment or specialist diagnostic testing was used unless specifically referenced in the findings.

4.3 The inspection was limited to trees with the potential for branch or whole-tree failure to affect the principal footpaths through the surveyed areas. Trees that could not reasonably affect these footpaths were outside the scope of the survey and were not inspected.

Negative Recording & Risk Interpretation

4.4 The absence of a tree from the survey schedule should not be interpreted as a guarantee that it is free from defects. It indicates that, from the available inspection positions, the risk was assessed as Broadly Acceptable.

4.5 This status may result from one or both of the following:

- Tree Condition: *No significant defects or health issues were observed that suggested a high probability of failure*; or
- Target Occupancy: *The frequency of use or value of property in the Target zone is low enough that any failure risk remains below the management threshold*.

Temporal and Site Usage Constraints

4.6 This assessment reflects site use and target occupancy observed at the time of inspection.

4.7 Because risk is dynamic and influenced by land use, any material change that could increase the frequency or duration of occupation, such as the installation of new seating, paths or play areas, should prompt reassessment of the potentially affected trees.

4.8 Trees are living organisms; failure can occur without prior indication, even in trees with no visible defects. Risk cannot be eliminated entirely.

Landowner Responsibilities & Exclusions

4.9 This survey contributes to, but does not replace, the landowner's legal duty of care. Responsibility for ongoing risk management, including the implementation of recommendations and periodic reinspection, rests with the landowner or land manager.

4.10 This survey and report do not include an assessment of trees in relation to subsidence risk unless expressly stated.

5. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

General Findings

5.1 Site use across all surveyed areas was estimated to be relatively low. Depending on the location, pedestrian use was estimated to range from approximately three people per day to one person per hour. This limited occupation substantially reduces the likelihood of harm arising from branch or whole-tree failure and has been taken into account when determining the urgency and extent of the recommended works.

5.2 The detailed findings and tree-specific recommendations are provided in the tree survey schedule at Appendix B. The principal management requirements comprise the management of the two trees recorded as G4 within three months, through felling or, where safe and appropriate, reduction to 4–5 m habitat monoliths; the reduction of T3 and removal of T7 and T8 within one year; and continued monitoring of the remaining recorded trees. Crown reduction of T2 may also be considered where resources allow, although this is not required on current risk grounds.

Little Horwood Spinney

5.3 Little Horwood Spinney contains the greatest number of large, mature trees with the potential to affect users of the principal footpaths. The main longer-term arboricultural consideration is the presence of several mature ash trees exhibiting varying stages of decline, including symptoms consistent with ash dieback.

5.4 The most pressing recommendation within this area relates to the two sycamores recorded as G4, which have basal decay, bark-included unions and crown dieback. These trees should be felled within three months; however, where this can be achieved safely and appropriately, consideration may be given to reducing them to habitat monoliths approximately 4–5 m in height. Crack willow T3 should also be

reduced in height by approximately 50% within one year to reduce the likelihood of stem failure onto the adjacent footpath.

5.5 Although several of the mature ash trees contain dead branches or declining crown sections, the low level of site use means that the associated risk is generally low. Accordingly, extensive pruning or deadwood removal is not currently required on risk grounds. These trees should nevertheless remain the principal focus of future monitoring and longer-term maintenance once the more immediate recommendations have been completed. Where resources allow, selective crown reduction may be considered for individual trees, including T2, to reduce the likelihood of future branch failure while allowing their continued retention.

Garden of Peace

5.6 The Garden of Peace contains predominantly smaller trees that were generally found to be in reasonable condition. Few significant defects were noted, and the overall risk of harm from trees within this area is low.

5.7 One dead birch, T7, was identified. Although its relatively small size and the low level of site use mean that it currently presents a low risk, its removal would be straightforward and proportionate. It is therefore recommended that the tree be felled to eliminate the residual risk.

Nature Reserve and Millennium Wood

5.8 Most trees within the Nature Reserve and Millennium Wood were planted around 2000 and are relatively small, early-mature specimens. They were generally found to contain few significant defects and to pose a low risk of harm. Accordingly, little management intervention is currently required for tree-risk purposes.

5.9 One small dead tree, T8, was found leaning against another tree close to a footpath. Although the associated risk is low, the tree could be removed with relative ease, and its removal is recommended as a proportionate means of eliminating the risk.

5.10 A small number of veteran ash trees are also present adjacent to the boundaries of this area. These trees have historically been managed at a reduced size and currently pose a low risk of harm. No immediate work is required, although they should continue to be monitored through the routine inspection programme.

Tree Work Standards

5.11 All tree works should be carried out by suitably qualified and insured arboricultural contractors in accordance with *BS 3998:2010 Tree Work – Recommendations*. Pruning should be undertaken with the aim of maintaining the tree's natural form and physiological health wherever possible.

5.12 All operations must comply with relevant wildlife legislation, specifically the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* and the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*, concerning the protection of nesting birds and bats. Contractors should also employ appropriate biosecurity measures (e.g., cleaning tools between sites) to prevent the spread of pests and pathogens.

6. RE-INSPECTION

Routine Inspection

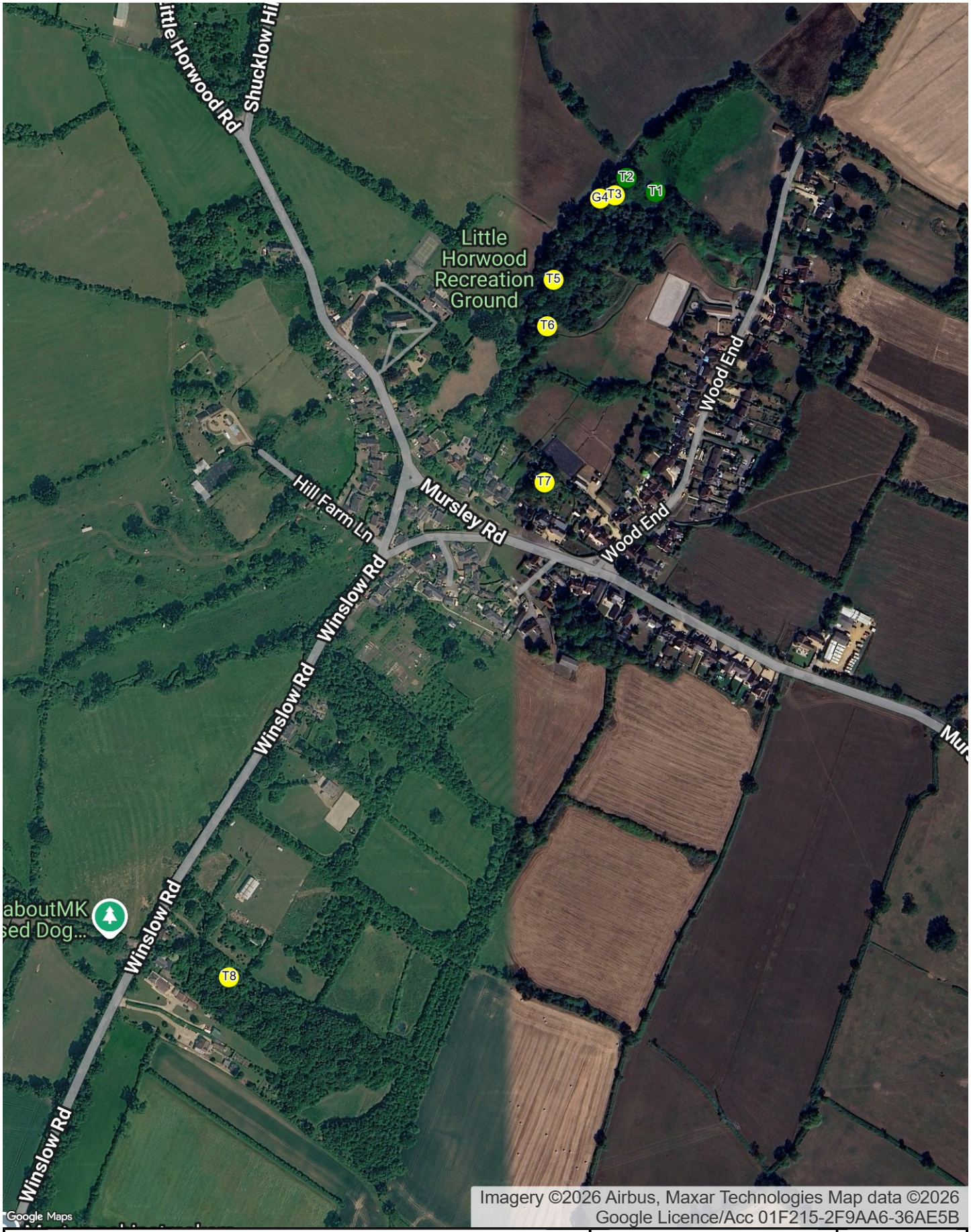
6.1 In accordance with the Little Horwood Parish Council Tree Safety Management Policy, the higher-use parts of the surveyed areas should be reinspected on a three-year cycle. This interval is considered appropriate given the generally low level of site use and the correspondingly low risk of harm from trees.

Storms & Site Changes

6.2 Following any extraordinary weather event, such as winds exceeding 50 mph (Beaufort force 9), the landowner or manager should undertake a visual inspection of the surveyed areas. An inspection by a qualified arboriculturist should be arranged where new damage, fallen or hanging branches, tree movement or other concerns are identified. Arboricultural reassessment should also be undertaken before any material change in site use that could increase the frequency or duration of occupation.

Appendix A

Tree Location Plans



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Little Horwood Spinney, Garden of Peace, Nature Reserve & Millennium Wood

Tree Location Overview

Page size: A4

1 : 5,000

0 100 m 200 m

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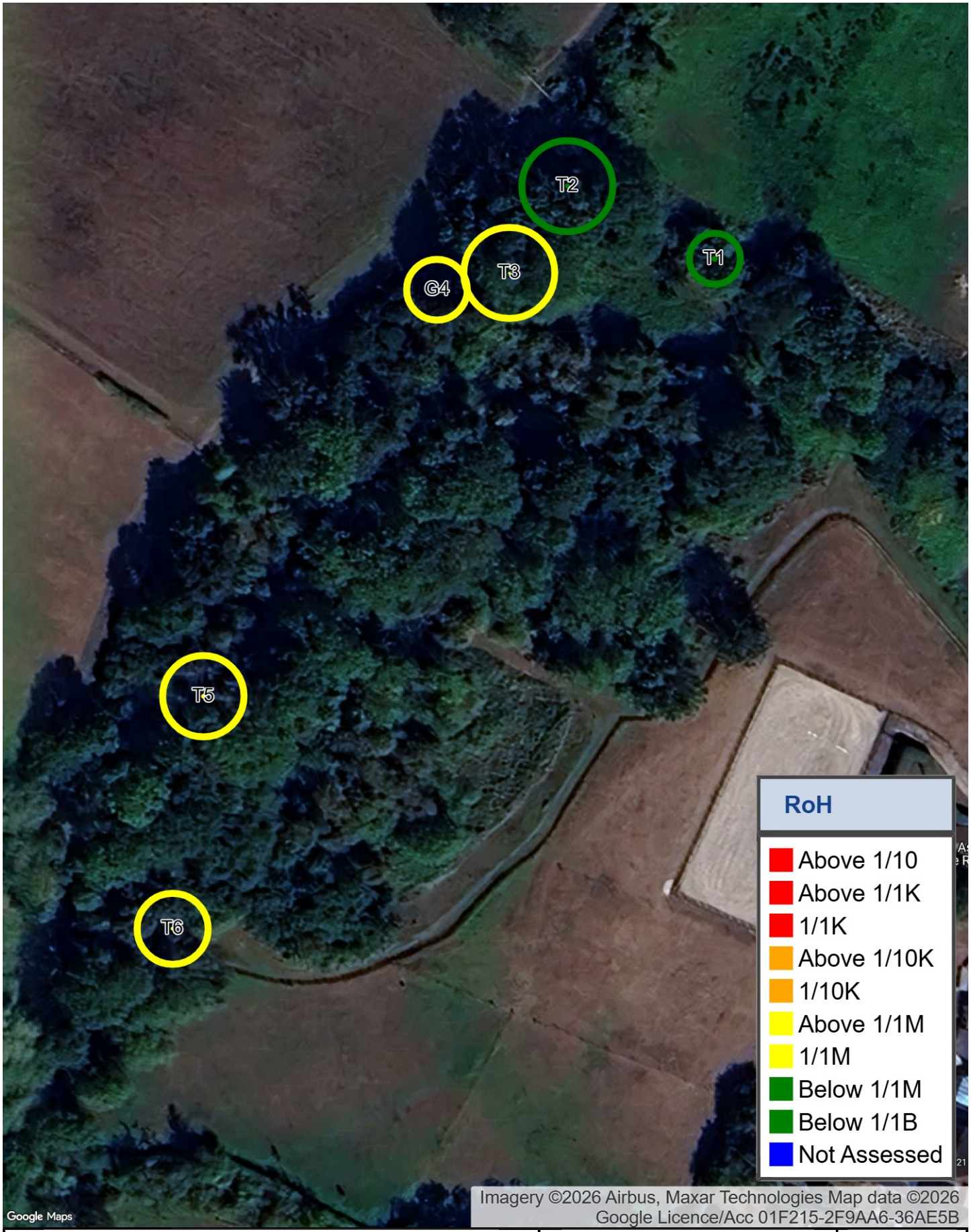

Little Horwood Parish Council

Little Horwood Spinney - Tree Location Plan

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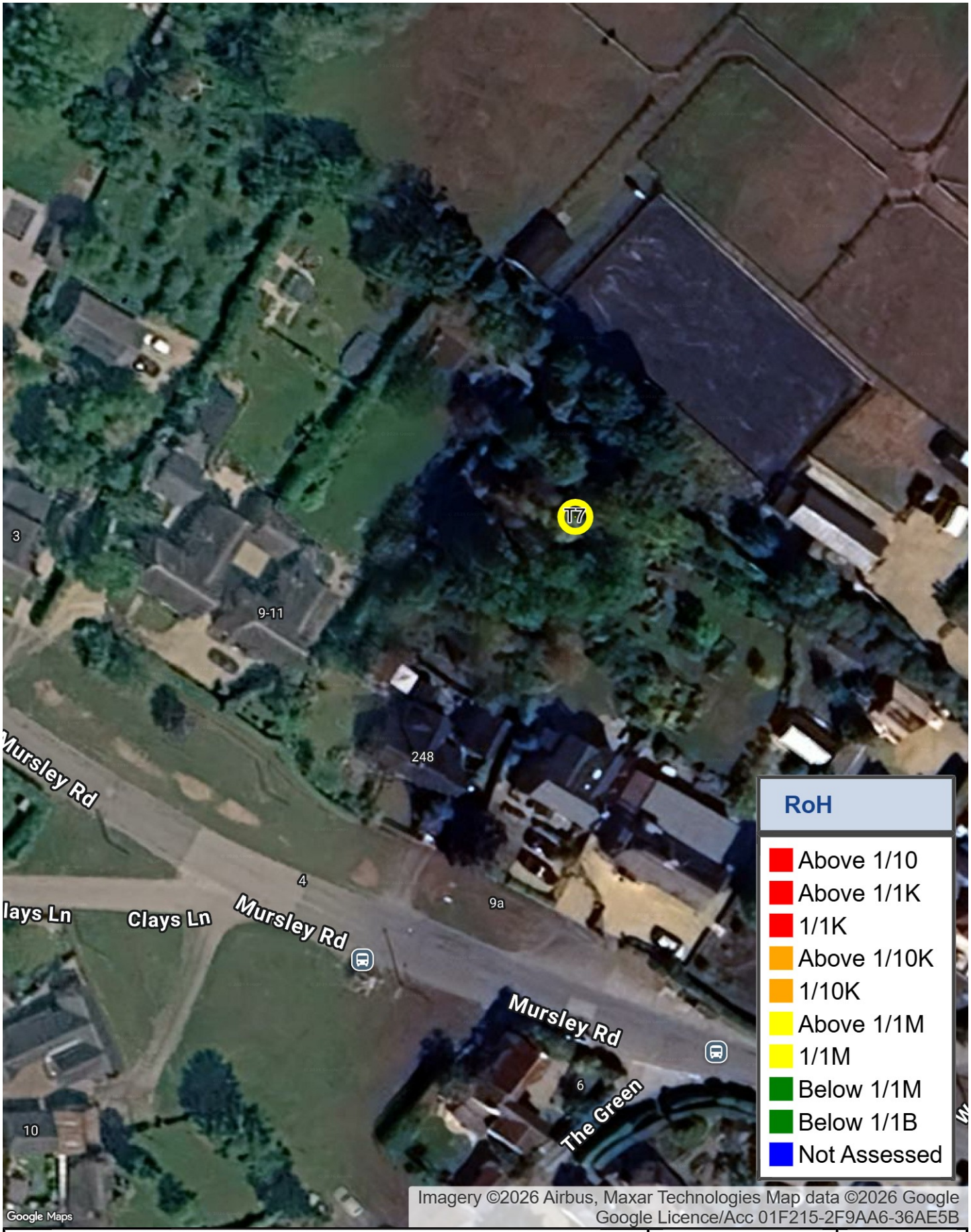

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Garden of Peace - Tree Location Plan

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Nature Reserve & Millennium Wood - Tree Location Plan

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1 : 1,500

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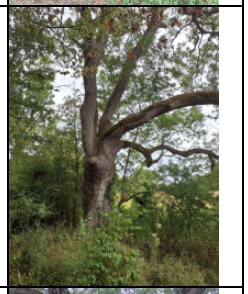
Appendix B

Tree Survey Schedule

Tree Schedule (QTRA)

Site: Little Horwood Spinney, Garden of Peace, Nature Reserve & Millennium Wood

Ref.	Species	Measurements	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Description	Failure Indicators	Risk of Harm	Inspected	Recommendations	Re-inspection	Photos
T1	Common ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*	Height (m): 10 Crown Radius (m): 5 DBH (cm): 120 Life Stage: Veteran	Fair	Decaying	Veteran tree adjacent to path. Historically reduced to 5m height. Hollow trunk with large open cavity. Mature epicormic growth forming crown.	Failure of mature epicormic stems.	1/50M	27-Jul-2026	No action required. Timescale: No Action	3 Years	
T2	Common ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*	Height (m): 18 Crown Radius (m): 9 DBH (cm): 95 Life Stage: Over Mature	Fair	Fair	Mature tree overhanging footbridge. Recent failure of live branch approximately 17cm in diameter. Recent crown pruning on south side of crown. Major deadwood over path.	Declining crown condition. Pests and Diseases: Ash Health Class 1 - 100%-75% remaining canopy	1/5M	27-Jul-2026	No tree work is required on risk grounds. Crown reduction may nevertheless be considered where resources allow, to reduce the likelihood of further branch failure over the footpath. Timescale: 27-Jul-2029 (3 Years)	3 Years	
T3	Crack willow *(Salix fragilis)*	Height (m): 15 Crown Radius (m): 9 DBH (cm): 50 Life Stage: Mature	Good	Poor	Tree appears to have historically uprooted with lower stem resting on the ground. Hollow trunk with open cavities both sides of trunk. Sheltered crown which grows away from path.	Hollow trunk.	1/400K	27-Jul-2026	Reduce overall height by 50% to reduce the likelihood of stem failure onto the footpath. Timescale: 27-Jul-2027 (1 Year)	3 Years	

Ref.	Species	Measurements	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Description	Failure Indicators	Risk of Harm	Inspected	Recommendations	Re-inspection	Photos
G4	Sycamore *(Acer pseudoplatanus)*	Height (m): 18 Crown Radius (m): 6 DBH (cm): 50 Stems: 6 Life Stage: Mature	Poor	Poor	Two trees with signature coheisive crown located between stream and boundary fence. Multi-stemmed tree and tree with co-dominant stems, both with bark included unions. Significant decay at base of multi-stemmed tree and open cavity. Crown dieback throughout; more notable on northwestern side. Ganoderma spp. fungal brackets within cavity.	Decay at base. Bark included unions.	1/40K	27-Jul-2026	Fell trees. Consider retaining stems at 4-5m for wildlife habitat. Timescale: 27-Oct-2026 (3 Months)	NA	
T5	Common ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*	Height (m): 18 Crown Radius (m): 8 DBH (cm): 90 Life Stage: Mature	Poor	Fair	Located adjacent to footpath. Recent removal of large branch on footpath side. Significant crown dieback. Major deadwood over footpath.	Major deadwood.	1/1M	27-Jul-2026	No action required. Timescale: No Action	3 Years	
T6	Common ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*	Height (m): 16 Crown Radius (m): 7 DBH (cm): 70 Life Stage: Mature	Poor	Fair	Located adjacent to footbridge. Significant crown dieback. Cavity at 5m above ground level in northern stem. Major deadwood over footbridge.	Major deadwood over footbridge.	1/1M	27-Jul-2026	No action required. Timescale: No Action	3 Years	
T7	Silver birch *(Betula pendula)*	Height (m): 10 Crown Radius (m): 2 DBH (cm): 12 Life Stage: Semi Mature	Dead	Fair		Dead tree	1/50K	27-Jul-2026	Fell tree. Timescale: 27-Jul-2027 (1 Year)	NA	

Ref.	Species	Measurements	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Description	Failure Indicators	Risk of Harm	Inspected	Recommendations	Re-inspection	Photos
T8	Other *(Other)*	Height (m): 7 Crown Radius (m): 1 DBH (cm): 12 Life Stage: Semi Mature	Dead	Poor	Dead tree and broken branch hung up in adjacent birch and within falling distance of footpath.	Failure at base.	1/1M	27-Jul-2026	Fell tree. Timescale: 27-Jul-2027 (1 Year)	NA	

Table 4. QTRA Advisory Risk Thresholds

Thresholds	Description	Action
1/1,000	**Unacceptable** Risks will not ordinarily be tolerated	• Control the risk
	Unacceptable (where imposed on others) Risks will not ordinarily be tolerated	• Control the risk • Review the risk
1/10 000	**Tolerable** (by agreement) Risks may be tolerated if those exposed to the risk accept it, or the tree has exceptional value	• Control the risk unless there is broad stakeholder agreement to tolerate it, or the tree has exceptional value • Review the risk
1/1 000 000	**Tolerable** (where imposed on others) Risks are tolerable if ALARP	• Assess costs and benefits of risk control • Control the risk only where a significant benefit might be achieved at reasonable cost • Review the risk
	Broadly Acceptable Risk is already ALARP	• No action currently required • Review the risk

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