Forest Tree Surgeons

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Tree Survey: Trees in Westfield Village.

Client: Westfield Parish Council.

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Introduction

Forest Tree Surgeons (FTS) has been commissioned by The Parish Council to carry out a survey of trees in regularly used areas of the Westfield Play Ground, trees at the football ground and two birches near the church, as instructed by the client and as detailed within the Visual Tree Assessment Tables. The survey scope in 2020 was to visually assess trees to manage trees for as safe retention as is possible from the visual assessments made. The 2025 update has been carried out to monitor any changes in tree health and record works carried out. It is noted that no tree report has been carried out for a few years before 2020.

Trees were assessed from ground level with the aid of binoculars. No specialist high technology devices were utilised such as ultrasound decay mapping machines. Assessment is based upon professional qualifications and knowledge and published professional guidance/recommendations and legislation. The survey was carried out during January 2025, the weather conditions were cold dry and clear presenting no impediment to the survey. The ground conditions were wet after heavy rainfall.

RISK ASSESSMENT: Although the potential risk to someone passing beneath a tree when the tree or part of it fails is relatively remote, the risk is present. This increases significantly in areas of consistent and regular usage on a year-round basis, such as pedestrian and vehicular highways and amenity areas. Where static structures exist, the risks become constant and an assessment is made as to whether complete or partial failure of a tree could cause damage to such structures. Within the scope of any tree survey it is a fact that not all risks of stem or crown failure can be covered, particularly in relation to freak occurrences of weather when even trees of a sound condition can be the subject of structural failure. Trees also have the rare propensity to drop limbs that appear to be in an acceptable condition. These rare occasions have been known to occur in spring and summer on calm days. Although rare, trees shedding limbs should be acknowledged as a risk that cannot be entirely mitigated. The law requires that properties are retained safely for residents, visitors and neighbours (Occupiers Liability Act, 1984, Defective Premises Act, 1972 and as Common Law Duty of Care) this includes the reasonable care of trees.

Limitations

The visual tree assessments (VTA) were solely visual and did not include the removal of any vegetation from or around the trees. Therefore, recommendations are based simply on indicators that could be seen. It is therefore possible that discreet defects could be missed however, regular surveying of trees and acting upon report recommendations increases the possibility that such defects will be detected.

Terminology/Interpretation

Epicormic: Growth low in tree crowns or along branches, often a sign of stress.
Pollard: Removal of the majority of a tree's crown.
Sphaeroblast: Warty or tumorous growth, generally causing no harm to the tree.
Retrenchment: Sensitive long-term pruning programme to reduce the tree to a safe structural height which provides the tree with sufficient recovery time between operations. Retrenchment pruning endeavours to ensure that the tree's physiological condition is not significantly damaged.
Crown clean: Making safe damaged and crossing branches.
Veteran: A tree beyond the mature stage; often this is the longest living phase and dependent on the species can extend for two to three hundred years and longer in exceptional circumstances.
Aged: Potential veteran tree.
Height in tables: L; large 20 metres+. M; medium 15 – 19 metres. S; small up to 14 metres.

Survey Findings

The vast majority of the trees surveyed did not present evidence of major structural vulnerabilities that could potentially result in injury to persons or damage to property. This is not surprising given that the trees appear to have not been the subject of regular management. Perspective is important as the chance of being under a tree at the exact moment it fails is rare and failure usually occurs during inclement weather, dead wood falls from trees constantly and is only noticed when it causes injury. However, there are a few high-level risk trees and this survey recognises this by recording these trees as requiring attention. The following tables set out briefly tree condition and management recommendations.

Route taken during inspection - through the play ground gate - turned left and worked around the perimeter in clock-wise direction and then to the centre of the area.

Visual Tree Assessment of trees at Westfield Playground, Football Field and two Silver Birch near Church

Tree	Species	Life Stage	Condition	Height & Dbh	Comments
T1	Crab Apple	M	Well balanced crown, starting to exhibit veteran features. Height to lowest part of canopy = 1.8m. Open unions, no tight forks. Crown spread: N 2 m, E 2 m, S 2.5 m, W2 m. Multi-stemmed from 2m exhibiting tight junction points and some in-growing limbs. Good ground conditions on observation Minor mechanical damage to southern side of main stem. Some honey fungus growth at the base of the stem. 2021 – wound on main stem exhibits further decay – fruiting body of honey fungus on the ground within the root zone area. Cyclical reduction recommended in 2020 not carried out to date. Consider reduction. **2023 – wound to main stem is struggling to heal. Consider reducing crown by 30%.** 	7 m 270 mm	Footpath to the north – soil levels have been altered in the past. Recommend remove of small amount of deadwood within the canopy over target areas. Due to amenity area recommend cyclical reduction plan, to maintain at current size – within five years carry out light sympathetic reduction to BS 3998. Monitor fungal growth each year. Provides good nesting and roosting habitat.  **2022 New play equipment has been installed between T1 and T3 – branches snapped back over bin.** **2025 – No change – wound is no worse.**

T2	Ornamental Fruit	M	Tree splits at 0.3m from ground level in to distorted twisting of four main limbs, rubbing against each other causing weakness. Positioned by red rubbish bin. Crown Spread: N 3m, E 2m, S 1.5m, W 3m Deadwood present within crown. Tree shows a propensity to form tight unions although none are showing signs of bark inclusion at time of inspection. Base appears sound no sign of hollowing. Little nesting or roosting habitat value. Density and size of leafing – good. No cankers or fruiting bodies observed **2023 - No change - rot continues but no risk increase.** 	3.5m 40 mm	Recommend reducing to 2 m, crown clean to a neat shape to avoid eye/scratch injury to those using the adjacent bin. Consider removal. Recommend annual inspection if retained. 2021 – no action since last year – recommendation remains the same. **2022 No change - rot on wound is deepening into main stem.** **2025 – removed.**
T3	Field Maple	M	Poorly formed tree with two major stems (at 1m) , with poor unions. Northern stem reaches towards the adjacent footpath. Crown Spread: N 2m, E 2m, S 2m, W 2m Old wounds have occluded well. Ground to the east of the main stem dips and puddles in wet weather.	7.5 m 300mm	This tree will eventually grow into failure. To retain the tree it is recommended that cyclical reductions are carried out. Epicormic growth indicative of stress. Tree is used for climbing. Check regularly to ensure any snapped limbs from climbing are tidied to prevent infection.

			 2022  2023		Monitor annually 2021 – no action taken since 2020. Benefitted from a wetter year, with an improved leaf density and vigour. Slight mechanical damage to northern side of main stem - request that maintenance teams are aware to prevent worsening. **2022 – No alterations.** **2023 – No changes** **2025 – No change**
T4	Walnut	2009 Y	Planted in memory of Ann Norris. Splits at ground level (40cm) into five main stems. Heavy epicormic growth around the base of the tree indicative of a tree struggling to produce enough foliage for adequate photosynthesis. Good budding. Some snapped twigs  2022	3m 90 mm	Poor specimen growing in wet conditions, ideally Walnuts prefer a sandy soil that is free draining – we would suggest that the poor specimen is struggling in this position. However, it is valued and hopefully it will survive. 2021 – this tree has also benefitted from a wetter year - improved leaf size, density and vigour. **2022 – No alterations** **2023 - No changes** **2025 – Budding well – appears to be being used as a climbing frame due to low branching points which could cause damage.**

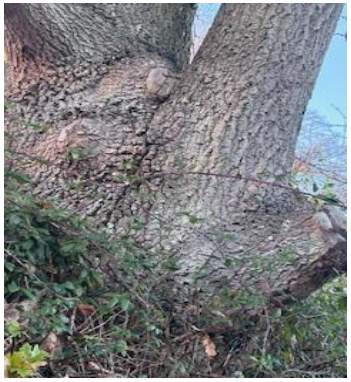
			 2023		
T5	Cherry	M	Within hedgerow on eastern side of the playground. There is a wooden fence and then brick building on the far side of the hedgerow. Limbs have been put back on that side. Single stem to 2.7 m. Heavy ivy cover to main stem - removed where possible. Exposed damaged roots in grassed area of playground. Impossible to access far side of the main stem. **2023 Ivy is beginning to encroach up the main stem again – sever now before it becomes a major issue. Weakness – main stem and first lateral evident – monitor.**  **2023**	10.5 m 850 mm	Damaged roots can allow access for pathogens. Reduce the weight carried by limbs reaching over the playground. Sever ivy growth at base of tree and remove when it dies back. Instruct ground contractors to lift mower height to avoid root damage. 2021 No new root damage from mechanical mowers. More deadwood in the lower canopy that should be removed. **2022 – cut limbs are on the ground around the base of the tree – trip hazards. Severed ivy is beginning to re-establish itself - cut again. Author pulled away substantial ivy cover.** **2025 – ivy has been pulled away and is largely dead - wound on ground to exposed roots – ask gardeners to lift blades on mowers.**

					 **2023**
T6	Cherry	M	Ivy cover on main stem too strong to remove by hand. Heavy limb to east over neighbouring property – corner of the building approximately 2 m away. Deadwood in canopy. Exposed damaged roots in playground.  2022  2023	10 m 700 mm	Approach neighbours to suggest cutting limb back to avoid damage to their property. Remove deadwood. Instruct ground contractors to lift mower height to avoid root damage. 2021 No new root damage Limbs that were touching adjacent building have been cut back. **2022 Limbs have been cut back to property to rear. Ivy beginning to re-establish itself. Keep tackling ivy cover.** **2023 -excellent crown reduction, redressing crown imbalance.** **2025 - Extension to adjacent property to rear of the two cherries – canopies of the two trees will have to be regularly cut back to prevent damage to roofs.**
T7 T8 T9	Group of three Ornamental	M	Positioned in the south-eastern corner of the playground. All split into three or four main steams, many exhibiting peeling bark	5 m average	Remove deadwood and monitor stability as they die back.

	fruits		and heavy deadwood. Fallen rotten fruit may be an issue in the late summer attracting wasps – assumption only. Ground levels and conditions good. **2023 – No change: 2025 – No change**  **2023**	150 mm av	2021 – Die-back has continued in all three – no action taken to date.  **2022 New bonfire area seems to have been established in the corner – prevent scorching of limbs. Cut limbs lying on the ground – trip hazards.**
T10	Silver Birch	M	On western boundary of the playground. Crown spread: N 7m E 2m S 4 m W 6m Uneven crown shape – limbs to west hang over the hedge and pavement beyond and heavy limbs to the north. Damage to buttress roots on south-western side. Thin small leafing in the upper canopy. 2021 – Evidence of area of decay on the northern side of the main stem, and mechanical damage. Thin canopy within the upper crown	9 m 440 mm	Consider reducing the height of the tree as it appears to be struggling to sustain the upper canopy. Even canopy up to match southern reaching limbs. Northern lower two limbs have a poor junction points, exhibiting weep marks where there appears to be a water retention point. Weight should be reduced. Lift over external pavement 2021 – reduce canopy by 30%  **2022 Lost limb observed on southern side**

			 **2023 – Wound observed at base – good crown balance -monitor**  **2023**		**of canopy. Poor healing on cuts. One limb now reaches ground level - cut back so not accessible as climbing aid.** **2025 - No change.**
T11	Cherry	S-M	Heavy ivy cover to main stem. The majority of the crown spreads to the west, over the hedge and pavement beyond. Ivy cover was removed, to find hollowed out stem with peeling bark. On the northern side of the main stem, evidence of honey fungus strands were identified. Crown spread is only to the west by 3 m	6.5 m 440 mm	Recommend removal. 2021 – remove. Honey fungus has progressed – main stem is much weaker.  **2022 no action taken – remove**

					2023 – has been removed
T12	Cherry	S-M	Heavy ivy cover on main stem. The majority of the crown spreads to the west as with T11. Crown spread to west 2.5m. Damaged exposed roots in grassed area of play areas observed. **2023 - Has been removed.**	6.0 m 440 mm	Recommend removal. 2021 – remove.  **2022 – recommend removal. Bark is peeling away from limbs and main stem – extensive decay within main stem. Author removed some ivy cover.**
T13	Cherry	S-M	Smaller specimen than T 11 and T12, and has a more even crown, spreading approximately 2 m in each direction. Damage to bark on main stem in places **2023 – has been removed.**	5.5 m 300 mm	Monitor closely – proximity to T11 and T12 will make it vulnerable to honey fungus as root systems will be co-dependant. 2021 – no action taken, much deadwood on the eastern side towards play equipment. Recommend removing deadwood, indicative of impaired feeding system. **2022 – better specimen of the three - leader stem has been removed at some point – poor canopy shape. Remove and plant three trees that are not vulnerable to honey fungus in a line inside the hedgerow.**
T14	Oak	M	Fence line abuts with the main stem - grass contractors informed surveyor that the tree belongs to Westfield PC rather than East Sussex Highways.	14 m 980 mm	Check ownership. Remove lowest northern limb. **2022 – limbs to north removed - remove**

			Main stem splits at 3m. Crown spread: N 14 m E 12 m S 11 m W 12 m Good crown spread with dense leafing, although tips of canopy are thinner. Major limb running parallel with hedge to north is dead and should be removed. Target area = bus shelter and pavement Limb to south east is also dead. 2021  Deadwood in canopy over playground – evidence of slow deterioration. Weep marks on main stem (see above)  **2023** Weak joint occluded seam. Has ownership been ascertained? Monitor annually.		**deadwood in upper northern canopy – ownership to be established (ESCC?).** **Tree is continuing to produce deadwood, indicating decline in health.** Remove south-eastern limb. Remove deadwood in southern side of the canopy. 2021  Remove dead lateral to the north - high target zone to the roadside with bus stop and bench. **2025 - some deadwood has been removed from the crown and cutting points exhibit good compartmentalisation. Monitor the joint in photo to left.**
T15	Cherry – (By	M	Crown Spread: N 5 m E 5.5 m	7.5 m	Ask contractors to keep mower blades higher over the root system.

	the gate)		S 5 m W 4.5 m Target area high risk due to gateway to the play area. Tarmac areas to the west and north of the main stem. Damaged root system observed in grassed areas. Good sound mature specimen. **2023 sever ivy growth which is covering most of the trunk and main limbs potentially hiding any cavities/defects.**  **2023**	590 mm	2021 – sever ivy 20 – 25% deadwood in canopy Canopy resting on bus stop road side - lift to avoid damage to the roof. No further ground damage observed. **2022 Ivy cover has reached upper canopy and should be severed - cut limbs on the ground are a trip hazard – remove.** **2025 – The majority of the ivy has died back but is still live at the base - suggest severing it now. Tree is in good health.**
T16	Lime	M	Positioned in the centre of the play area as one of a group of three, presenting as one canopy. All have damaged surface roots and suffer from ground compaction around the main stems. Canopies all spread to the outer sides of the grouping with little crown spread within the inner circle. Crown spread to the north 5 m. Small amount of deadwood - epicormic growth at base is normal in this species. **2023 – Crown reduction and removal of epicormic growth has improved matters.**	12.5 m 580 mm	Remove deadwood and consider height reduction of 20 – 25% to reduce the risk of wind blow. Measures to avoid ground compaction and mechanical damage to main stems and above ground rooting material should be adopted. 2021 – same recommendation - no significant changes.

			 **2023**  **2025 – much deadwood on the ground - deadwood**		 **3 x Limes 2022 - all exhibiting heavy feathering around the base, typical to Limes. Deadwood on ground represents a trip hazard.**
T17	Lime	M	Positioned in the centre of the play area as one of a group of three, presenting as one canopy. All have damaged surface roots and suffer from ground compaction around the main stems. Canopies all spread to the outer sides of the grouping with little crown spread within the inner circle. Crown spread to east 5m Small amount of deadwood – epicormic growth at base is normal in this species. **2023 – Crown reduction and removal of epicormic growth has improved matters.**	12 m 630 mm	Remove deadwood and consider height reduction of 20 – 25% to reduce the risk of wind blow. Measures to avoid ground compaction and mechanical damage to main stems and above ground rooting material should be adopted. 2021 – same recommendation – no increase in deadwood. **2022 Fallen deadwood on ground to remove. 2023 – no change** **2025 – remove deadwood and hangers from canopy**

			Damage to roots evident in the ground.		 **2023**
T18	Lime	M	Positioned in the centre of the play area as one of a group of three, presenting as one canopy. All have damaged surface roots and suffer from ground compaction around the main stems. Canopies all spread to the outer sides of the grouping with little crown spread within the inner circle. Crown spread to the west 5m. Mechanical damage to main stem. Small amount of deadwood - epicormic growth at base is normal in this species. **2023 – Crown reduction and removal of epicormic growth has improved matters.** **Damage to roots evident in the ground.** **2025 – Remove deadwood and hangers**	13 m 510 cm	Remove deadwood and consider height reduction of 20 – 25% to reduce the risk of wind blow. Measures to avoid ground compaction and mechanical damage to main stems and above ground rooting material should be adopted. 2021 – tight junctions. No deterioration in condition.  **2022 Heavy feathering and deadwood on ground - remove. 2023 – No change**

			 **2023 – poor healing points and bark loss at cutting points on western side of the crown.**		

Area to the north of the church:

T19	Silver Birch	M	Wounds to buttress roots. Evidence of phytophthora at base. Crown has been cut back haphazardly to keep the limbs away from phone lines. Bark is peeling away from main stem beneath dense ivy cover. Main stem splits at 1 m with a deep junction point exhibiting weep marks on both sides of main stem indicating a weakness. Tree has a poor feeding circle with path to the south, bin store to the north and concrete path to the east. Poor healing to old wounds.	8.5 m 650 mm whole stem splits into two - 30 mm	Reduce the height of the canopy by at least 30% or consider removal. Deep fissures distort dbh measurement. Remove ivy as it dies back to enable better visual tree assessment. Check ownership/responsibility. 2021 – T19 has been removed. 2022 – remove from report
T20	Silver Birch	M	Outside No 16 Mechanical damage wounds at base. Canopy has been cut back due to phone lines. Main stem splits at 1.5m and then re-join creating weak junction point. Spread of canopy is weighted towards the property.	5.5 m 250 mm	Check ownership/responsibility. Request more care is taken when cutting grass in the area. Reduce canopy size by 30% and re-balance the crown. 2021 T20 has been removed. Mr Lawson at Number 15 wants the Silver Birch removed TN35 4SN – he says he has

			 2023		someone lined up to dismantle it as it is causing damage to his property. There is some damage to the pathway near the tree. **2022 – mechanical damage at base tight junctions and limbs touching phone lines.** **2023 – tight occluded junctions create weakness.** **2025 - No change – avoid strimmer damage**

Football access path and field:

G1	Hedge	M	Access to football field from Cottage Lane. Hedge lies to the south of the access route path. Mixture of Hazel, Holly, Rosehip and Field Maple. Panel fencing to adjoining gardens to the south.  2022  2023	35 m length Av height 4m	Suggest consulting with neighbouring gardens before cutting height of hedge back to 1.5 m which will thicken the hedgerow and improve wildlife habitat for nesting birds. Cut back Rosehips which reach path and could snag clothing or individuals. 2021 G1 – Hedge is in the process of being laid – excellent use of the mixed hedge line. Specimen standard trees being left within the hedge line. **2022 – excellent re-growth – fine example of good hedge-laying.** **2023 – hedge has flourished in the last 11 months - needs a top cut before bird nesting season.** **2025 – Hedge needs topping before nesting season to retain density of the hedgeline.**

T21	Silver Birch	Veteran	The tree splits into three main stems at 0.5m exerting pressure on the low junction point. Ivy cover is so dense, it is currently impossible to assess the tree properly. Ground in the area has been built up, possibly spoil arisen during construction of concrete pathway? Lawn mowing cuttings have been dumped to the south of the main stem. Uneven crown shape due to the dominant oak immediately to the east. Crown spread: N 1m E 1m S 6 m W 8.5m Good for wildlife habitat. **2023 - dead ivy pulled away has revealed weak base with cavities near ground level – consider removal.**  **2023** **2025 - Has been removed.**	8 m 440 mm	Sever ivy and pull off once dead. Prevent further grass clippings being left in the area – causing unnatural ground level and acidic soil quality. With ivy removed, assessment in 2021 should be more informative. Cut back length of limbs over neighbouring garden to the south and remove deadwood. 2021 – full inspection was not possible due to the excessive amount of ivy and dumped material to the rear of the tree. No work has been carried out. **2022 Severed ivy is now dead - pull away from main stem. Area has not been cleared and more debris tipped to rear of main stem. Feathering at base is indicative of distress due to root compaction in the root protection zone. Clear the area.**  **2023**
T22	Oak	Veteran	This specimen is the dominant tree of the football field suppressing Silver Birch T21 to the west. Heavy ivy domination preventing access to inspect main stem Deadwood and damaged limbs within the	13 m 1200 mm	Sever ivy. Cut back limbs over neighbouring garden, many of which have substantial deadwood within them. Remove holly stem to rear that prevents access to main stem.

			canopy – up to 20%. Some epicormic growth on main stem, an indicator of stress. Unnatural ground level. Good canopy shape and budding points. Crown spread: N 11m E 9 m S 8 m W 10 m over the top of the adjacent Silver Birch.   **2025 – good reduction Consider 5 year cycle to reduce back over neighbouring gardens.**		Recommend climbing inspection whilst removing dead and broken limbs. 2021 Cavity at base on northern side – with rubbish inserted which made measuring the extent of the cavity depth impossible. Area around the veteran tree should be cleared to allow for full inspection - high risk area – remove adjacent dying Hawthorn in the process. **2022 – Silver Birch is still being adversely affected by the Oak's canopy. Limbs are touching cable running to the aerial on the pavilion - cut back. Hanging broken limb on northern side of the canopy should be removed. Debris continues to be dumped to rear of the main stem. Low limbs to the east over the path should be lifted.**  **2023 - Part of the crown broke away in recent storms and has been made safe.** **Whole crown reduction is necessary to tidy wounds and minimise potential infection and water intake and therefore create a**

			 2023		**smaller crown, less vulnerable to wind blow.** **Scheduled for new year.**
G2	Yew hedgerow	M	55 m row of Yew trees. 2021 Work has been completed. **2023 – No change.** **2025 – Hedge has thickened into a good dense hedge line - keep it topped to retain the density.**		It is understood that it has been arranged to reduce the height and width of the row, and then maintain them as a boundary hedge as intended at planting. **2022 Trees are recovering well and bushing out effectively as a good hedge line. Good management to boundary line.**

Photographs of trees and faults follow in Appendix 1

Appendix 1:



T1 Mechanical damage at base and fruiting bodies – Crab Apple

T2 Ornamental Fruit

T3 Field Maple

T4 Walnut

T5 Cherry

T5 Cherry – damaged roots in grass area

T6 Cherry

T7 8 and 9

T10 Silver Birch

T10 Silver Birch – poor junction

T11 Cherry

T11 Cherry – honey fungus strand

T11 Cherry – peeling bark

T12 Cherry

T12 Cherry

T13 Cherry

T14 Oak

T14 Oak – poor occlusion

T14 Oak – poor healing ability

T14 Oak – basal wound (west)

T15 Cherry by gate.

T16 T17 and T18

T16 Lime – root damage

T17 Lime – root damage

T18 Lime - root damage

T19 Silver Birch

T19 Silver Birch – weak junction

T19 Silver Birch – root damage

T20 Silver Birch

T20 Silver Birch – weak junction

Football Field trees

G1 - Mixed hedge

T21 Silver Birch

T22 Oak

T22 Oak

G2 Yew hedge row

Conclusion

Working in accordance with this plan will help towards meeting legal liability obligations. Urgent work recommendations should be carried out as soon as possible. However other work can be spread over a period of years. Trees are self-optimising dynamic structures and whilst indicators of possible short-term structural collapse are evident trees continually grow wood to counteract such collapse. Therefore surveys such as this are snap shots in time; as tree work progresses and retained trees develop the level of work recommended for them may need to be adjusted to more, less or perhaps no work. I recommend Forest Tree Surgeons for the management operations however, if others do the work they should be suitably trained and qualified professionals. Such professionals should be able to provide advice on necessary changes to work recommendations as situations change. All tree work should accord with the British Standard for tree works: BS3998 (2010).