

To all members of the Facilities Committee

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Facilities Committee to be held on
WEDNESDAY 7th February 2024 at 19.30 at the School Green Centre.



Bruce Winton
Parish Clerk
1st February 2024

Members: Cllrs Boyer, Clarke, Jahromi, James, Johnson, Masseron, Peer and Tatla

Agenda

1. Public Questions

- 1.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** public questions

2. Apologies and declaration of members' interests

- 2.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** approval of apologies for absence
- 2.2 To **RECEIVE** members' declarations of interest

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 3.1 To **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** the minutes of the Facilities Committee held on 3rd January as a correct record of the meeting and to authorise the Chairman to sign the same*
- 3.2 To **CONSIDER** matters arising from the minutes

4. Millworth Lane and Sports Provision

- 4.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** an update from the Facilities Manager on the installation of toilets and peripheral work for the tennis club at Millworth Lane
- 4.2 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** an update from the Sports Working Party regarding Millworth Lane and High Copse

5. School Green Centre and School Green

- 5.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** a verbal update on the screens for the School Green
- 5.2 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update from the Facilities Manager on storage requirements for the School Green Centre
- 5.3 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** a verbal update from the Facilities Manager on the replacement notice boards at the School Green Centre
- 5.4 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** an update from the Deputy Clerk on catering at the School Green Centre

6. Spencers Wood Pavilion and Recreation Ground

- 6.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** a verbal update from the Facilities Manager regarding Chapel Lane Pre-School

7. Manor Ground

- 7.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** a verbal update from the Facilities Manager regarding the Manor Ground

8. Parish Wide Items

- 8.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a request from Shinfield Rangers Football Club to use portable floodlights at Millworth Lane Recreation Ground
- 8.2 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** a verbal report from Cllr Johnson regarding the cost of renovation of pitches by Shinfield Rangers Football Club
- 8.3 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal report from the Chairman on taking care of open space
- 8.4 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** taking care of roundabouts in the Parish
- 8.5 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** provision of a Mountain Bike track in the Parish
- 8.6 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** the provision of waste bins in the Parish

9. Correspondence

- 9.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** the 10th year report* regarding WBC/WDVTA Diamond Jubilee Oak Trees

10. Date of Next Meeting

- 10.1 To **NOTE** the next meeting of the Facilities Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, 6th March 2024 at 19:30

* Report attached

** Report to follow

Minutes of a meeting of
The Facilities Committee
Held on Wednesday 3rd January 2024
At School Green Centre commencing at 19:30

Present: Cllrs Boyer, Clarke (Chair), Johnson & Tatla

Attending: S Herring (Deputy Clerk), P Gudge (Facilities Manager)

24/FC/1 Public Questions

- 1.1 There were no public questions

24/FC/2 Apologies and declarations of Members' Interest

- 2.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Peer and Jahromi
- 2.2 There were no declarations of members' interests

24/FC/3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the Facilities Committee meeting held on 29th November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed as such by Cllr Clarke as Chair of the committee.

Proposed: Cllr Boyer
Seconded: Cllr Tatla
Approved: Unanimously

- 3.2 The following matters arising were discussed:

- 23/FC/80.1 Clerk to add the recommendation of the Facilities Committee to the agenda of the Full Council meeting to be held in December 2023

This had been done

- 23/FC/80.1 Clerk to contact Miriam Grace Day Care and Spencers Wood Coffee Morning group of the decision of the Committee

This had been done

23/FC/82.2 Clerk to discuss the rent with the Tennis Club
23/FC/71.1

The Clerk had not yet been able to commence those discussions.

ACTION – Clerk to discuss the rent with the Tennis Club

23/FC/82.2 Clerk to arrange for leafleting to Millworth Lane residents at the
23/FC/71.2 appropriate time

This will be done

23/FC/82.2 Clerk to arrange a public presentation on the proposed planning
23/FC/71.2 application for Millworth Lane at an appropriate time

This will be done

23/FC/82.2 Clerk to publish the presentation on the website after the public
23/FC/71.1 presentation

This will be done

23/FC/82.2 Clerk agreed to make contact with Arborfield Football Sports Trust and
23/FC/71.1 report to the next meeting

The Clerk had not yet done this

23/FC/82.2 Cafe Working Party to report back to the next meeting of the Facilities
23/FC/73.5 Committee

This was on the agenda

23/FC/83.1 Facilities Manager to arrange for an arborists report and to include the
removal of the Oak Tree in the planning application for Millworth Lane

This was on the agenda

23/FC/83.3 Clerk to negotiate potential rent for the Millworth Lane site with the
fitness company

The Clerk reported that he had asked our lawyer to prepare a draft Heads of Terms which would be shared with the committee when ready and at that point we would seek to agree the rental payments.

23/FC/85.2 Clerk to ensure that Shinfield Studios include suitable alternative storage
within their final proposal

This was on the agenda

- 23/FC/85.2 Clerk/Facilities Manager to contact the architects to ascertain whether the proposed proposal for storage was possible

A further site visit was planned for 12th January regarding AV. The Clerk had chased Bidwells regarding the storage issues.

- 23/FC/85.3 Facilities Manager to report back to the next meeting on progress for replacement notice boards

The insurance money was due on 5th January and the notice boards would be replaced within the next month.

- 23/FC/85.4 The Café Working Party would look at the options and report back to the Facilities Committee

This was on the agenda

- 23/FC/85.4 The Clerk to investigate the hire of vending machines for the café

After further investigation it had not been possible to find a vending machine contract for a short-term alternative to the café.

- 23/FC/86.1 Clerk to report back to the committee on the progress of the Chapel Lane Pre-School Lease at the next meeting

This was on the agenda

- 23/FC/86.2 Clerk to arrange for signage to be installed at the SWP

This was in hand

- 23/FC/86.2 Clerk to promote a 50% discount until the end of March 2024 on new bookings at the SWP

This had been implemented. A sign had been posted on the notice board at the Spencers Wood Pavilion and had been published on the SPC website and newsletter.

The Deputy Clerk reported that there had been five weekend bookings up to the end of March 2024 and none of these had specifically asked for the 50% discount. It was expected that these bookings would have been made regardless of the discount. Cllr Johnson advised that this information should be communicated on social media to have the greatest impact.

ACTION –

- Deputy Clerk to arrange for discounted rate for the hire of Spencers Wood Pavilion to be published on social media
- Clerk to invite Cllr Johnson to the Engagement Working Party

- 23/FC/86.2 Clerk to develop a video for promotion of the SWP with assistance from Cllr Johnson

The Clerk would contact Cllr Johnson when he had a “script” for the required filming.

- 23/FC/89.1 Clerk to add to the agenda of the Full Council in December 2023 ‘Refurbishment of Ryeish Green Pavilion’

This had been done

24/FC/4

Millworth Lane and Sports Provision

4.1 Toilets for Millworth Lane

The Facilities Manager reported that following a meeting with the Planning Department at Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) they stated that the removal of the tree, that was restricting the delivery and installation of the toilets, would need an arborists evaluation due to its substantial size and suggested that Shinfield Parish Council hire a crane for the installation. This was not an option that SPC would entertain due to the excessive costs. SPC had offered to replant new trees to compensate for the loss. The tennis club were due to write to WBC expressing the urgency of toilets for the survival of the club.

4.2 Update on Millworth Lane Refurbishment and Verbal report from the Sports Working Party

There had been a meeting with Andy Glencross and other WBC officers on 14th December where the proposed refurbishment of Millworth Lane had been discussed. WBC were broadly supportive but raised concerns over the viability of the proposed netball/basketball courts; they felt that there was no demand for such an outdoor facility within the borough and recommended that a 3g 5-a-side pitch would benefit more residents and prove much more viable. They also suggested that a grasscrete surface for the car parks would be more cost effective.

Cllr Tatla expressed her concerns that there was no netball facility within the parish and reported that Earley Netball Club was thriving with many on the waiting list. Cllr Boyer stated that football was the main sport, but SPC should be mindful that there is nothing else on offer, therefore, netball should be included. The netball season was April to October.

The next meeting of the Sports Working Party was scheduled for the 16th January.

ACTION – Clerk to send Cllr Johnson the draft plans for Millworth Lane Recreation Ground

School Green Centre and School Green

5.1 School Green Working Party

The Facilities Manager reported that the new bollards had been installed and he was still working on the planning application for the screens.

ACTION – Clerk to communicate to the community via the newsletter and social media that the bollards had been replaced and were constructed of recycled plastic

Cllr Johnson reported that members of the public had expressed concerns regarding cars exiting the public car park over the narrow pathway that was posing a danger to the public.

ACTION – Facilities Manager to arrange for the recycle bins to be put closer to the path to restrict cars from using this route

5.2 Storage at the School Green Centre

The Facilities Manager reported that Shinfield Studios were working on a proposal for providing storage at the School Green Centre to compensate for the loss of cupboard space. The Clerk had received a response from the studios confirming that the storage would be included in the technical design, but it would be sometime before further information was available.

ACTION – Clerk to report back once further information had been received

5.3 Notice Boards at the School Green Centre

This had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

5.4 Catering at the School Green Centre

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk had met with a catering consultant on 20th December to discuss the requirements for the tender document and our needs for the new café operation. This would take about 4 days of work (total cost in the order of £3,000) but would ensure that we were able to fully assess all interested applicants. An advertisement had been placed in 'Wokingham Today' requesting expressions of interest to ensure that we were seen to be ensuring awareness of the tender exercise. The Clerk had now received 19 expressions of interest.

The draft tender document was due next week and once approved by the working party would be issued to all those who had expressed an interest in tendering.

Robyn's Nest were still using the café area for a few private functions at a discounted hire rate. This would be beneficial to both parties as SPC wished to retain links with potential organisers of events for the future. Members requested that all references to the current café were removed from the SPC website.

The Deputy Clerk reported that the 'Happy Bee' mobile coffee provider had expressed an interest in providing a temporary provision from the car park at the School Green Centre and were due to meet with the Clerk on 4th January.

ACTION – all references to the previous café provider to be removed from the SPC website

24/FC/6

Spencers Wood Pavilion and Recreation Ground

6.1 Chapel Lane Pre-School contract

The Facilities Manager reported that he was meeting with the pre-school next week and would make it clear that this needs to be signed urgently. He reported that they were paying the rent and the back payments.

6.2 Installation of shutters to the front entrance of Spencers Wood Pavilion

The Facilities Manager reported that the shutter to the front entrance of the SWP was installed on 2nd January 2024.

On 3rd January there had been an incident with youths outside the pavilion who had subsequently damaged the shutter. The Facilities Manager would ensure that it had been installed correctly and organise the repair. Members requested that the community be informed of the amount of money spent on the pavilion over the last few months to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the steps that SPC had taken to address this. The good work of the Youth Club and other successful activities should also be reported to ensure that the Pavilion is seen as a positive asset to the community.

ACTION – Clerk to inform the community of the successful asset and the problems with ASB at the Spencers Wood Pavilion

24/FC/7

Manor Ground

7.1 Manor Ground Pavilion

Cllr Johnson reported that there was a lot of standing water on the pitches and was concerned about drainage and matches being cancelled. The Facilities Manager noted that the weather had been extremely wet over the last month and professional teams were also cancelling games due to the bad weather, therefore this was a general problem due to excessive rain. Cllr Johnson would monitor the situation and report back if there were still problems. The supplier had delivered the incorrect size of goal posts and would replace them in due course.

ACTION – Facilities Manager to rectify situation relating to goal posts

Parish Wide Items**8.1 Football in the Parish**

Cllrs Clarke and Johnson expressed concerns that the Shinfield Rangers Football Club would lose a home once Millworth Lane Recreation Ground was redesigned. They stated that a 3G pitch was urgently needed and suggested that the University of Reading(UoR) be asked if they had any available land that would be suitable for a pitch, parking, and lighting. The English Football Association could be approached for grant funding. Land was possibly available near the Shinfield Studio site.

ACTION – UoR be approached to ascertain whether they had any suitable, available land that could be utilised as a 3G pitch

8.2 High Copse Pavilion

A meeting was provisionally booked for Friday 5th January with the University of Reading to look at the layout and plans. Contractors were due to start laying the cricket pitch on 15th January 2024. Cllr Johnson offered to take drone pictures throughout the development of the area.

ACTION – Cllr Johnson to provide drone pictures of the development of High Copse

8.3 Taking care of open space in the Parish

Cllr Clarke reported that WBC would not take over the environmental field until Taylor Wimpey had restored it to its intended state.

8.4 Taking care of roundabouts in the parish

Cllr Clarke reported that the roundabouts in the parish were not being maintained by WBC, specifically the following:-

Aborfield Road / Eastern Relief Road
Church Lane / Hayes Drive / Coronation Drive
Hollow Lane / Church Lane
Hollow Lane / Hyde End Lane / Arborfield Road

The Facilities Manager had written to WBC regarding maintenance and safety issues but not had any response. Members were keen for the roundabouts to be maintained and suggested local business be contacted to sponsor them.

ACTION – Facilities Manager to examine options for maintaining the roundabouts

8.5 Registration of Allotments

Members noted that the Deeds to the allotments and other land, ie School Green and Spencers Wood Recreation Ground, would be sent to Shinfield Parish Council once they had all been received by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council.

24/FC/9

Ryeish Green Pavilion

- 9.1 As was agreed at Full Council on 20th December the Clerk would seek formal clarification from WBC regarding the following issues:
- a) Access rights to the pavilion
 - b) What the current Class of Use of the pavilion was, and what potential future uses of the pavilion would be possible without needing to apply for planning permission

24/FC/10

Date of Next Meeting

- 10.1 The next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 7th February 2024

The meeting ended at 20:46

List of Actions

24/FC/3.2 23/FC/82.2	Clerk to discuss the rent with the Tennis Club	Clerk
24/FC/3.2 23/FC/86.2	Deputy Clerk to arrange for discounted rate for the hire of Spencers Wood Pavilion to be published on social media	Deputy Clerk
24/FC/3.2 23/FC/86.2	Clerk to invite Cllr Johnson to the Engagement Working Party	Clerk
24/FC/4.2	Clerk to send Cllr Johnson the draft plans for Millworth Lane Recreation Ground	Clerk
24/FC/5.1	Clerk to communicate to the community via the newsletter and social media that the bollards had been replaced and were constructed of recycled plastic This had been published in the January 2024 Newsletter	Clerk
24/FC/5.1	Facilities Manager to arrange for the recycle bins to be put closer to the path to restrict cars from using this route	Facilities Manager
24/FC/5.2	Clerk to report back on storage proposals at the School Green Centre once further information had been received	Clerk
24/FC/5.4	All references to the previous café provider to be removed from the SPC website	Clerk
24/FC/6.2	Clerk to inform the community of the successful asset and the problems with ASB at the Spencers Wood Pavilion	Clerk
24/FC/7.1	Facilities Manager to rectify situation relating to goal posts	Facilities Manager
24/FC/8.1	UoR be approached to ascertain whether they had any suitable, available land that could be utilised as a 3G pitch	Clerk
24/FC/8.2	Cllr Johnson to provide drone pictures of the development of High Copse	Cllr Johnson
24/FC/8.4	Facilities Manager to examine options for maintaining the roundabouts	Facilities Manager

WBC/WDVTA Diamond Jubilee Oak Trees – 10th Year Report

We thought the chairman, councillors and grounds managers of Shinfield Parish Council would be interested in the WDVTA survey report on the progress of the 60 Diamond Jubilee oak trees that were planted across the Borough in a joint project with Wokingham Borough Council 2012/13. (attached) For a map of the planting sites see section 1.4 p.5. There are five Diamond Jubilee Trees growing within the Shinfield Parish boundaries. #49, #50, #51, #52, #53. The survey was undertaken in the autumn of 2022 and written up in 2023 with later updates.

We have been very pleased to find that of the 60 trees planted 56 were still alive, most in a very good condition. Sadly four of the original trees have been lost for different reasons but in 2023 their substitutes were all found to be thriving. We have noted some changes to the sites during the ten years since the trees were planted. In particular we have been encouraged to see that more tree planting has taken place, considerably increasing overall the number of new trees the project has initiated.

We owe much of the success of this project to the excellent professional work carried out by Oliver Ward and his colleagues at Heartwood Tree Surgery. The original contract allowed for the trees to be maintained and watered for five years thus ensuring that none died from drought or lack of care. We are also grateful to a number of WDVTA colleagues and friends for keeping an eye on the trees and alerting us if and when problems arose.

Martin Woolner, a local ecologist and tree expert, has been supportive of the project and some of his comments are included in the report. He points out that overall *'variation in the amount of growth, size, shape, leafiness is to be expected in part due to the genetic variation of the plants purchased'*. There are also many other varied factors that might affect the trees' survival but he says reassuringly that *'Quercus robur is a real survivor'*.

One particular matter that concerned us though was the potential damage to trees from close mowing up to the bark. Martin, quoting Ted Green of the Ancient Tree Forum, recommends that trees should be left 'unapproached' for the first few decades, allowing vegetation to occupy the space around the tree as a protection. Not mowing around the base of trees is to be recommended and mulching is to be avoided. Leaving bare earth is only necessary where watering is needed in a dry summer.

We know that the original bases for most of the tree plaques have rotted and are very grateful indeed to Stephanie McKay and her husband, Andrew, for putting in new bases. The plaques are lost for a few trees and for these we will be creating new labels.

We trust you find the report interesting. Please let me know if you or your colleagues have any comments on this or news about any particular Diamond Jubilee trees .

Best regards

Barbara Stagles

WDVTA Jubilee Trees Co-ordinator January 2024



Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

Sixty Diamond Jubilee Oak Trees

**Joint Project with Wokingham
Borough Council**



**Ten-year review
2012/13 to 2022/23**

Trees planted in 2012 or 2013



Diamond Jubilee Tree #21 Woosehill Spine Road, Wokingham 2012

Welcomed by Councillor Angus Ross, Stephanie McKay, (Hawthorns and Forest School teacher),
WDVTA members, Hawthorns School students and parents

Trees surveyed in 2022 or 2023



Diamond Jubilee tree #21 ten years on in 2023 – a successor to the dead tree

1. Background to the project

In June 2012 Councillor David Lee, Leader of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), invited members of Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association (WDVTA) to collaborate with the officers of the Borough Council Trees and Landscape team to plant 60 standard English oak trees across the borough to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Barbara Stagles agreed to act as WDVTA Jubilee Trees coordinator and she enlisted the support of local volunteers. Oliver Ward and his team at Heartwood Tree Surgery, Riseley, were contracted to carry out the planting and maintenance of the trees.

The project proved a good opportunity to plant trees in places where it was hoped they could grow to their full glory. Well over 200 splendid old trees had been lost in the borough in previous years and others faced threats from ground compaction by roads and paved areas, heavy pruning, and also disease. It was thought important to try to compensate for these lost trees as far as possible as well as to enhance the local treescape. The new trees might also help remind people of Wokingham's history as part of Windsor Forest and give pleasure for decades, if not centuries.



Lost Veteran English oak, Holt Lane, Wokingham

Recorded as MRN 452 in the [WDVTA Survey Map](#)

1.1. The Sites

Some 50 suggestions for sites were received by a project team consisting of WDVTA members and WBC officers and, after careful consideration, it was decided that trees should be planted on 44 sites including public open spaces, churchyards, nature reserves, roadside verges and schools. In four sites groups of three trees were to be planted and in five sites pairs of two. Care was taken to ensure the chosen sites were as well distributed across the district as possible. The [map](#) on the WDVTA website shows their eventual positions.

NB Every tree has been given a number preceded by a hash.

1.2. Buying and Planting the trees



The trees were bought in June 2012 from Barcham Trees, Cambridge and they were planted by Heartwood Tree Surgery, project subcontractors, in the winter 2012/13. The firm was contracted to monitor and maintain the trees for five years. When planted the trees were between five and seven years old and 3 to 4m tall. Each tree was recorded in the Woodland Trust's Royal Record and was labelled with a numbered memorial plaque fixed to a wooden base as below.



One of the plaques

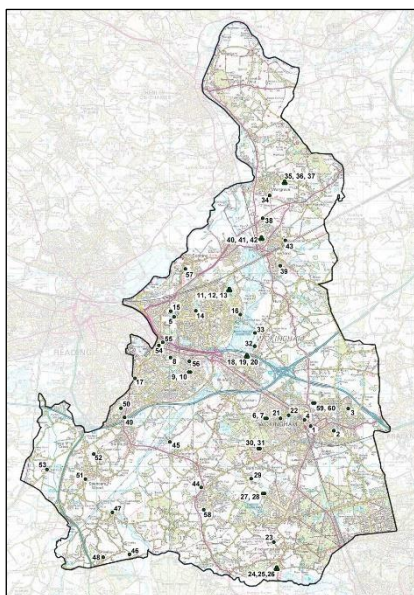
1.3. Planting celebrations

During 2012/2013 planting ceremonies, including community groups, took place in the 44 sites. The first ceremony was held at WBC offices at Shute End on 24th November 2012 where the Mayor of WBC, Councillor, Bob Wyatt, officiated.



At the ceremony in Cantley Park in March 2013, Cllr David Lee, WBC Leader and initiator of the project, welcomed trees #59 and #60. He was accompanied by Barbara Stables, WDVTA Jubilee Tree Coordinator.

1.4. WDVTA website records



On the WDVTA website there is an [interactive map](#) of the locations of all the tree sites, together with links to photographs and some details about the trees, planting events and ceremonies. The website is regularly updated to record subsequent developments concerning the trees, including photos taken in 2017 for the 5th review and this 10th year review.

WBC and WDVTA published a [Diamond Jubilee Tree leaflet](#) about the plantings and this can be downloaded from the website.

1.5. Local benefits of the project

As well as the trees being widely welcomed for their own sake, the planting and associated events generated considerable community interest among voluntary groups and local residents. All the sites were, and are, attractive and environmentally valuable and many have an interesting history. The presence of the Jubilee trees may well have encouraged people to visit previously unknown places. In some instances it has led to further improvements to the sites, such as additional tree planting. Notable examples of the latter are the attractive extended avenue in Burnmoor Meadow, Finchampstead from trees #24, #25 and #26 and the number of new trees planted along the Eversley Road, Arborfield associated with tree #44. In Elizabeth Park, Barkham, many more young trees now grow near trees #30 and #31.



Avenue at Burnmoor Meadow including Jubilee trees #24, #25, #26

1.6. Five year interim review

In 2017 Barbara Stables and Stephanie McKay visited all the sites and photographs of the trees were added to the website. At this stage fifty-seven of the trees were thriving. Two had been replaced by courtesy of Barcham Trees. Tree #25 in Burnmoor Meadow, Finchampstead had a root canker and the replacement tree was doing well. #47 in Swallowfield Recreation Ground had failed for no known reason and at that point the replacement was doing well. Later this new tree failed so a new tree was planted in Swallowfield Meadow in 2022. One of the trees in Ashenbury Park, #11, had died and it was thought this might have been related to soil contamination as the land had once been a rubbish tip. Investigations were started to obtain a replacement and plant it in another part of the park near where Jubilee trees #12 and #13 were flourishing. This new tree was planted in 2018. For photographs and details of all the replacement trees see section 2.15.

2. Ten year survey

2.1. The survey procedure

In 2022 Barbara Stagles and Stephanie McKay carried out a more extensive survey of the trees. This included recording their general condition, girth and height, crown shape, condition of leaves, branches, trunks, bark and root cover. Observations were made of the size and condition of acorns, including their deformities, as well as the presence of oak galls. Also noted were varieties of lichen growing on the trees and evidence of animal life such as ants and other creatures. Possible risk conditions such as proximity to main roads, susceptibility to drought, animal damage, root compaction, invasions of other plants or vandalism were recorded, including changes to the sites since the planting. Photographs were taken.

The main part of the survey was carried out in late September and October 2022. A few further observations were made in 2023. The surveyors have been very grateful for advice, commentary and technical support from WDVTA colleagues and friends. Every effort was made to be as accurate as possible but they recognised the limitations in their capacity to do more than record an informed amateur appraisal of the condition of the trees. Many of their observations, such as the presence of disease and damage to leaves and bark and the identification of lichen and mosses and other plant and animal life required specialised knowledge. The observations did, however, lead to interesting questions as to why some trees were flourishing better than others and whether other factors were at play, such as soil conditions or air pollution, which would require much more sophisticated study.



#28 Rooks Nest nature reserve

2.2. Trees surveyed

This analysis refers specifically to observations of the 56 original trees. As indicated earlier details of the four replacement trees are summarised separately in section 2.15.

2.3. The sites and their changes

Most of the sites have remained the same, though many, unsurprisingly, have much more natural growth, grass and other shrubs, around them. The only site that had changed was that for tree #47 in Swallowfield as noted in section 1.6.

Except for three, all sites were fairly easily accessible - with car parking not far away. The site in Addington School grounds, Woodley (#5) had always only been accessible with permission from the school but now this also applied to tree #52 at Ryeish Playing Field as the site has been enclosed in the Oakbank school grounds. Tree #45 at Hall Farm in Arborfield has never been accessible by car without permission via the Reading Road gate, but it can be reached on foot from Church Road.

There have been a few changes to sites that might have affected the growth of the trees. Tree #16 at Sandford Lane, Woodley now has an estate immediately behind it, but it still grows in a good sized grassy plot. Tree #32 at Dinton Pastures, Winnersh, is no longer on a golf course and is now alongside a busy footpath near the refreshment centre. Tree #33, also at Dinton Pastures, has probably been slightly affected from being near to the recent major building of a new activity centre.



#16 Sandford Lane – new houses



#33 Dinton Pastures – new activity centre

2.4. The general condition of the trees.

This was a simple appraisal of the overall impression the surveyors had of the general health of the trees. 19 were thought to be in excellent condition (including #23 and #51 below) and 22 in good condition. Two thirds of the sample were therefore thought to be doing well while another 9 were assessed as OK. 5 trees were judged to be in a somewhat poor condition and requiring monitoring. Only one tree, #15, in Bulmershe Park, Woodley was doing badly and at risk of not surviving. See section 2.8.



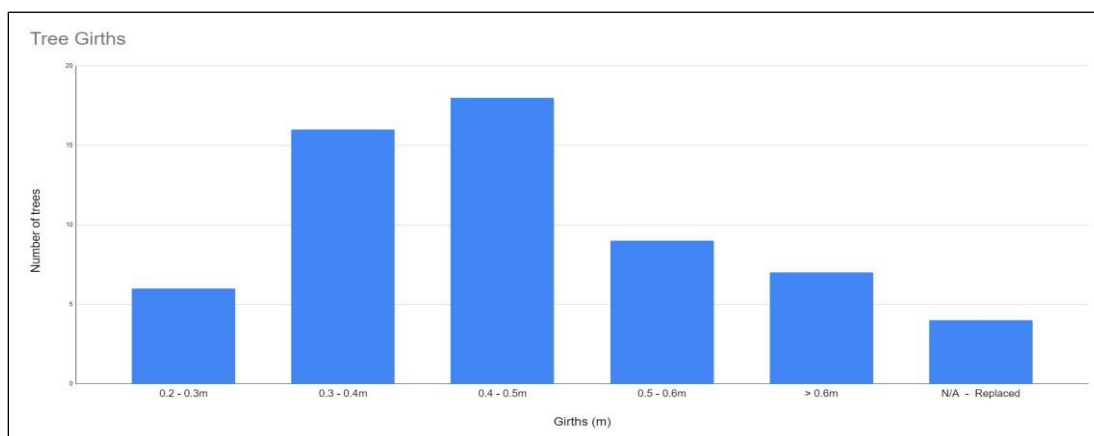
#23 Finchampstead Church Green



#51 Spring Gardens Shinfield

2.5 Girths

One of the indicators of the age of trees is their girth at 1.5m. None of these trees had reached 1m but, although they were of comparable age when planted, there were significant variations in girth, ranging from 22cm to 66cm.

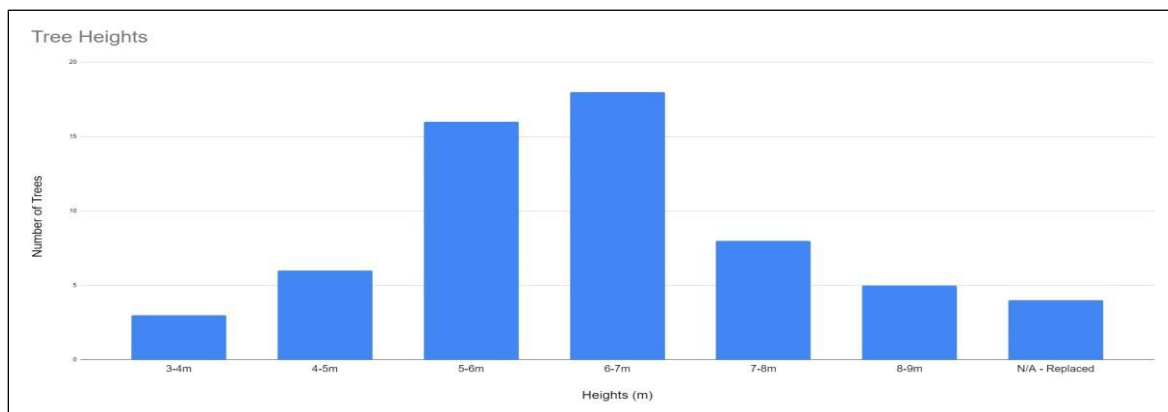


Trees with the largest girth were in Burnmoor Meadow and Church Green, Finchampstead (#25 and #23), St Pauls Churchyard (#4), the park off Chestnut Avenue (#6) and Riverside Walk (#22) in Wokingham and Rooks Nest Wood Country Park, Barkham (#28). The girths of three of the trees assessed as in poor condition had girths less than 35cm.

2.6. Heights

It was quite noticeable how different were the heights of the trees ranging from 3.4m to 8.4m. We did not have a measurement for the height of the trees when planted but it was likely to have been around 3-4m tall.

The tallest tree at 8.4m was #6 in the park off Chestnut Avenue closely followed by #4 in St Pauls Churchyard, #27 and #28 in Rooks Nest Wood Country Park and #23 on Finchampstead Church Green. 37 of the trees were 6m or above and 19 of the trees were 5m or below. Two trees were below 4m in height. These were #15 at Bulmershe Park (3.4m) and #49 (3.6m) on the main roundabout in Shinfield.



#6 Field off Chestnut Ave, Wokingham

8.4m tall



#49 Roundabout Reading Road, Shinfield

3.6 m tall

We were not able to ascertain what obvious factors might account for these differences but, as the height of the trees clearly seemed to relate to their general condition, we explore this matter this a little further in sections 2.13 and 2.14. It would be interesting to see if these height differences persist over future years. We have been advised that these are likely to even out in time. Overall we found unsurprisingly that, with one exception, the height of the trees was related directly to their girth – the taller the tree the greater the girth.

2.7. Shapes of the trees

Our judgements about the shape of the trees were informal and subjective. We categorised them as pyramidal, oval or rounded. Most of the trees were pyramidal and regular in shape although of the 38 pyramidal trees we recorded 12 were irregular or lopsided. 7 trees were distinctly oval and 11 trees were rounded. To some extent their shape appeared to be determined by whether they were growing in an open space or close to other trees.



Pyramidal

#42 King George V Field
Twyford



Oval

#43 Ruscombe Church



Rounded

58 Tyler Drive, Arborfield

2.8. Leaf cover and health

As the survey was carried out in late August and September it was not surprising to find that many of the trees were beginning to show some autumnal changes. However most were well covered with leaves. We estimated that 40 of the trees showed cover at 75%, 11 with 50%, 4 with 25% and 1 (#15) with 0% cover.



75%

#34, Mumbery Field, Wargrave



35%

#35 Kings Field Wargrave



25%

#53 Grazeley Village Hall

Sadly, tree #15 in Bulmershe Park was almost bare of leaves, though a return visit in 2023 showed the tree with much improved leaf cover and general health. The grounds staff at Woodley Town Council had been alerted and had nurtured the tree.



#15 in 2022



#15 in 2023

Many of the trees had some leaves with differing kinds of damage caused by disease or invertebrates but none of these were particularly extensive. We were not in a position to identify specific types of damage or their cause but made photographic records of our observations. Examples are shown below.



We were advised that it would be difficult to identify these types of damage from photographs but our local experts thought that, as far as could be seen, none posed a serious threat to the trees.

2.9. Trunks, branches and roots

Most of the trees displayed small dead twigs and a few had small broken branches or signs of light pruning. 30 of the trees had one or more bark lesions of various kinds but none seemed to be causing the trees serious damage at this stage. One tree had wire around the trunk which we removed and another had a row of unexplained holes. It is suggested that many of the lesions and holes have probably been caused by mechanical damage.



#55

Sol Joel Park, Earley



#28

Rooks Nest Nature Reserve, Barkham

More concerning was the damage at the base of some trunks. 14 of the trees showed some damage at this point and, in the case of 8 of these, the grass had been cut very short up to the trunk.



#14

Woodford Park, Woodley



#53

Grazeley Village Hall

This suggested that close cutting or strimming could account for this. 5 trees had bare soil around their trunk bases and three of these had trunk damage. The bare soil does not appear to have protected these trees from damage. 33 trees had long grass growing around the base of their trunks and of these only 5 had any trunk damage. Clearly when the grass is long most tree bases are well protected but the question arises as to what happens when the long grass is cleared in the autumn.



Long grass

#60 Cantley Park, Wokingham



Short grass

44 Eversley Road Arborfield



Bare earth

56 Meadow Road Park, Earley

The surveyors have been advised that best practice for the health and management of young trees is to keep an area of uncut grass around the trees equivalent to an area equal to the spread of its crown. Mulching is not recommended but none of the trees surveyed appears to have been mulched. See section 3.

2.10 Acorns and galls

All but 7 trees had acorns growing on them. Of the 49 trees with acorns most had a small number but 12 had an abundance. Overall, acorns varied in size from large to small. There appeared to be no particular relationship between the tree's condition and the number and size of its acorns except that, of the five trees in poor condition, 4 had none or a few small acorns.



Large



Medium



Small

We have been advised that these are natural variations reflecting the different genetic makeup of the trees and of no particular concern with regards to the health of the trees. Indeed it has been suggested many of the difference we have identified between the trees might in part be explained by genetic variation. (Martin Woolner)

The acorns on 10 of the trees showed some abnormalities and 11 of the trees had oak galls. All these had been formed by gall wasps. We understand this is not a significant problem and artificial control of gall formers is impractical. Native oaks '*can tolerate any of over 50 causes of galls on acorns, leaves, bark, roots without their health being much compromised*'. (Martin Woolner)



2.11 Lichen, moss and other epiphyte species

Lichen was to be found on almost all of the trees ranging from a negligible amount on #10 on Rushey Way to a great deal as in the case of #23 on Finchampstead Green where it was prolific. In 44 cases the types of lichen identified were the foliose *Xanthoria sp* and *Physicia sp* and the crustose *Lecidella sp*. In the other 12 cases only a crustose lichen was to be found, probably also *Lecidella sp*. It was encouraging to find so much lichen on the trees as this can be a sign of good air quality.



Xanthoria sp *Physicia sp*



Lecidella sp

Significant amounts of moss were rare and only found on two Wokingham trees, #1 at Shute End and #21 at Woosehill Spine Road. No other epiphytic species were observed.

2.12 Ants and other animal species

As our observations were limited, in most cases, to a one off visit for half an hour or so we were not likely to observe many of the creatures that will have visited the trees over the years.

However, ants were very common and they were to be seen on 35 trees running up and down the trunks. We have been advised that these are not a problem and that they are probably '*climbing high in the canopy to milk honey dew from species of aphid which are sucking juices out of the thin bark up high. The sugary liquid is the main source of energy for such ants and some of their load is taken down to the nest to feed ant larvae therein*'. (Martin Woolner)

On the occasional tree we spotted earwigs, spiders and other small invertebrates and there was evidence of moles, rabbits and squirrels nearby.

Some of the damage we noticed on the bark of some trees may well have been caused by deer and we have alerted volunteers to this possibility, particularly in relation to trees #25, #36 and #37 in Kings Field, Wargrave.

Apart from a magpie we saw few birds in the trees but this signifies little as other birds may have visited the trees at different times.



Ants



Deer damage?



Unspecified animal damage?

2.13 Proximity of main roads /air pollution

Although many of the sites are well away from daily traffic 10 sites are very close to main roads such as #9 and #44 (below).

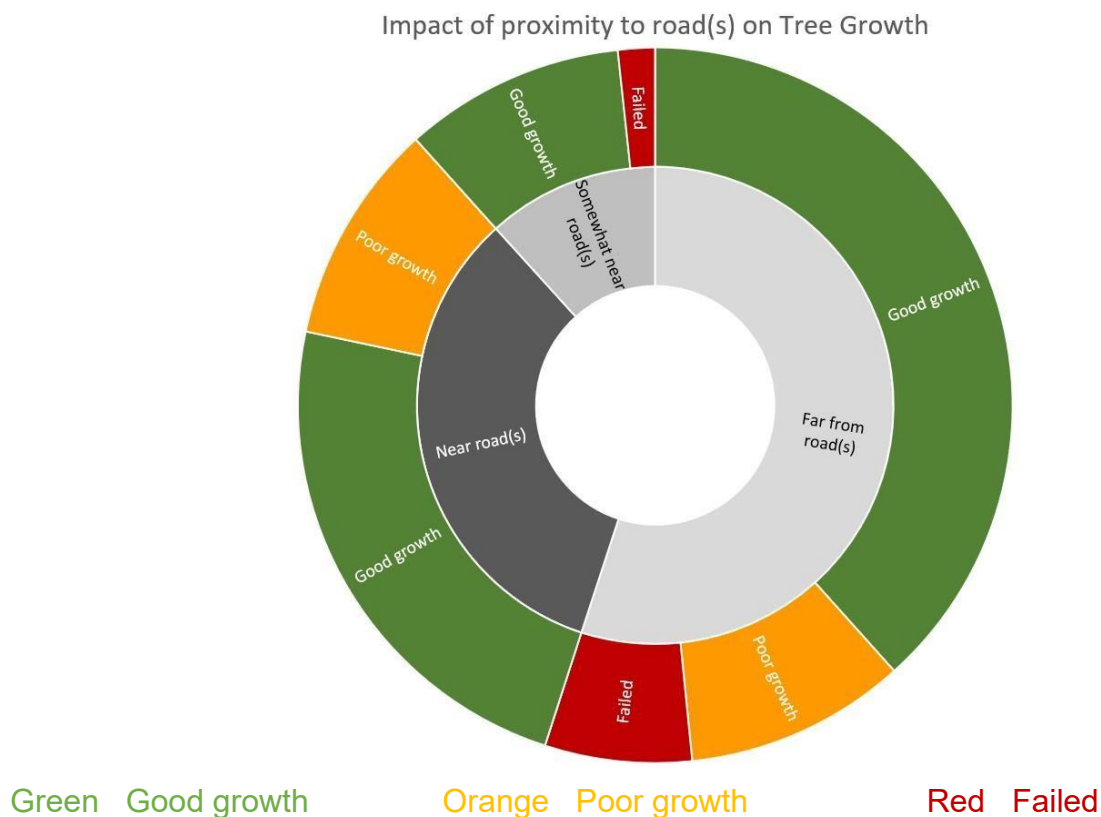


9 and #10 Rushey Way, Earley



44 Eversley Road, Arborfield

We wondered, in particular, whether proximity to roads could be related to the condition of the trees, possibly because of problems with air quality and compaction. One of our colleagues drew up the following chart based on the data we collected to see if there was any hint that there might be a causal connection at play.



Although we found that about half of the trees showing good growth were indeed far from or only somewhat near roads, these categories also included some trees with poor growth and indeed all four of the failed trees. For this and many other reasons such as the limitations of our sample and the quality of our assessment of the trees' condition, we cannot claim that our study shows any causal connection at work. However this could be one of a number of factors worth following up in future.

2.14 The impact of surrounding vegetation

It was noticeable that trees growing in open conditions in park-like sites tended to grow to a more substantial size and height.



#22 Riverside Walk, Wokingham



#34 Mumbery Field, Wargrave

Some trees were planted quite near other vegetation with varying results. #29 in Barkham Village car park appears to be rather overshadowed by other trees yet #28 in Rooks Nest Wood Country Park has done well in close proximity to a woodland.



#29 Barkham Village Hall car park



#27 Rooks Nest Wood Country Park, Barkham

2.15 The condition of the four substituted trees

As indicated in section 1.6, the trees on four sites were, for various reasons, replacements. We recorded details about these trees but did not include them in the analysis of the condition of the 56 original trees. Two (#11 and #18) were surviving well. The second replacement (#47) in Swallowfield Meadow was at an early stage of growth. The tree in Winnersh Meadows (#18) had yet to be planted at the time of the survey but was in place in 2023. Both these trees will need watering and maintenance for four more years.



#11 Ashenbury Park Woodley (2022)



#26 Burnmoor Meadow, Finchampstead (2022)



#47 Swallowfield Meadow (2022)



#18 Winnersh Meadows (2023)

2.16 Plaques and posts

During the survey we took the opportunity to look at the state of the plaques and posts which had been set in position when the trees were planted. See section 1.2. We found that most of the posts of the trees had become rotten or had disappeared. In a few cases replacement posts had been put in place. New reconstituted posts have been acquired with the help of WBC and the plaques are being attached to them. We are arranging for them to be put in place over the coming months. For a few trees where the plaques have been lost, we will explore alternative ways of labelling them.



Original plaque and post



New positions for plaques



#50 Shinfield Park – a succession tree for veteran oak MRN 432

3. Conclusions

3.1. Threats to the trees

In most cases the trees appeared to be growing in sites where they will be able to grow to their full glory as the years pass. In a few cases, as above, they will serve as replacements for veteran trees when they reach the end of their lives.

However, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, there are clearly some threats to the trees which need to be monitored in the coming years. Specifically we noted:

1. Damage to the base of trunks from strimming grass too near the trees.
2. Damage to bark from animals and insects – and unknown infestations
3. Too close proximity to other vegetation
4. Air pollution from nearby busy traffic
5. Compaction from nearby paths
6. Lack of water in drought conditions (especially for new replacement trees)

3.2. Concluding observations and recommendations

This has been a very satisfactory joint project between WBC and WDVTA. We hope that the trees will continue to flourish in the years to come. We highlight a few general observations which arise from our survey.

1. The survival rate after 10 years of 56 trees of the 60 trees originally planted is very encouraging. Of the remaining 4 replacements, 2 are thriving and, as the other two have only recently been planted, we await reports of their condition.
2. Although there are differences in the general condition of the trees, the majority are doing very well. The five year maintenance programme that was built into the original contract with Heartwood Tree Surgery for the purchase and planting of the trees has proved very effective.
3. Regular surveys have enabled WDVTA members to identify problems, especially at an early stage, ensured that remedial action was taken where needed.
4. In general the trees are growing in safe and suitable sites, though one of the principal dangers to their survival could be too close mowing of grass around the base of their trunks. It would be good if action were taken on this (See section 2.9).
5. It would be interesting to analyse the reasons for the many differences we have noted between the trees, especially that of height, but this would require more professional study including, we suspect, the analysis of the soil in which the trees grow and also the effects of air pollution, compaction and drought.
6. Further surveys at 5 or 10 year intervals could be very interesting and worthwhile.

Barbara Stagles, Stephanie McKay December 2023

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