

Ringswell Common, Marshfield

Safety Inspection of ash trees with regard to Chalara ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) crown symptoms

Inspection date: 3rd August 2021

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Ref: 7428

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 I am Nigel de Berker, BA Hons, ND Arb, FARbor A. I am a Fellow of The Arboricultural Association and have with over 45 years' professional, practical and consultative arboricultural experience.
- 1.2 At the request of Marshfield Parish Council I have undertaken a walkover inspection of Ringswell Common, Marshfield to consider and advise on what I judge to be current, reasonable safety management of ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*), where they are growing within the Common's curtilage and insofar as I observe that they show crown dieback symptoms of a character typically associated with Chalara dieback disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*). Along with the above, the advice that I provide seeks to avoid unnecessary removal of trees or other loss of tree-related habitat about the Common.
- 1.3 I undertook the walkover inspection on 3rd August 2021.
- 1.4 Please see below section 5.0 for my inspection schedule, in which I have recorded brief details of those ash trees that I judge currently pose an unacceptable risk of harm to users of the Common on the basis of this assessment. I have marked approximate positions of these trees upon the site plan¹ accompanying this report. The area outlined in red on the site plan is understood to represent the extent of Ringswell Common. As part of my assessment, along with looking out for Chalara crown dieback symptoms, I have also considered how the layout and character of vegetation about different parts of the Common and the proximity and nature of nearby neighbouring properties influences occupancy of areas within potential falling range of obviously symptomatic trees, and how this is likely to affect the levels of risk posed by those trees.
- 1.5 The inspection process along with my observations and advice are subject to the limitations set out in section 4.0, together with other constraints and considerations expressed in the report.

¹ Site plan taken from Smith M. 2021 *Ringswell Common Restoration Plan (Version 2.0)* : Figure 1

1.6 There is a wide range of information available on line regarding Chalara ash dieback, its history, symptoms and advice on management, see: U.K. Government Guidance², Forest Research³, The Tree Council⁴, The Woodland Trust⁵ and others. Additionally, The National Tree Safety Group⁶ provides guidance on tree safety management in general.

2.0 Constraints

- 2.1 Where the ownership of ash trees included on the schedule (section 5.0) is unclear (e.g. T13 and parts of G15), the duty-holder should be identified as a basis for establishing responsibility for reasonable safety.
- 2.2 The structural strength of ash trees may be affected by Chalara and by associated secondary pests or pathogens (e.g. Honey fungus *Armillaria spp*). Limbs and stems of infected trees may become unusually brittle. This may create high risk conditions, not only for the trees' surroundings, but also for those engaged in felling and other works to the trees. Risk assessments and working practices should take into account the likelihood of such tendencies and the potential effects of possible disease progression since the trees in question were last assessed. The condition of those trees marked down for works in this report should be reviewed directly before operations are due to begin to ensure that treatment specifications remain applicable and are safely practicable. If, in some instances, significant change has occurred, work recommendations should be reconsidered by a competent tree specialist and the Parish Council notified of any advised alterations.
- 2.3 Felling and other treatments should be undertaken only by proficient arborists. Where work requires aerial access to parts of a Chalara-infected tree, a mobile elevated work platform ('cherry-picker') should be used, unless a competent, and up-to-date risk assessment deems that other means are acceptably safe.

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-ash-dieback-in-england>

³ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/ash-dieback-hymenoscyphus-fraxineus/>
https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/7277/7894_New_FC_Chalara_leaflet_dft9.pdf

⁴ <https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/ash-dieback/public-guidance/>

⁵ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/ash-dieback/>

⁶ <https://ntsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FCMS024.pdf>

- 2.4 Conservation Area provisions, Tree Preservation Orders and other relevant statutory constraints that may affect felling and other work to the trees at Ringswell Common should be properly observed. This will also apply to any replacement tree planting obligations that may legally apply.
- 2.5 Planning permission does not override statutory protections. Under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Habitats Regulations (2010) it is an offence to disturb or harm any protected species, including to damage or disturb their habitat or resting place. Separate legislation specifically protects badgers. Generally, though not exclusively, the protection afforded to birds⁷ and bats is of particular relevance to work affecting areas of established woody vegetation. Other protected species may also be affected

3.0 The ash trees

- 3.1 According to the Forestry Commission's online *Chalara ash dieback map*⁸, Chalara was first confirmed in 2018 within the 10km square hectad, about Ringswell Common and the surrounding area.
- 3.2 At the time of inspection, judging from present canopy response, some of the more lightly infected ash trees on the Common look to be retrenching. I saw little obvious fresh dieback amongst this current season's foliage and shoot growth. A number of these trees, showed what looked to be a considerable mass of currently vigorous and healthy-looking, leafy, young sucker regrowth about the inner crown, framed by a halo of older, fine deadwood. Whilst this response is encouraging, its implications are uncertain and the trees should be monitored.

⁷ Feeding, roosting and nesting activity of a range of BoCC* Red and Amber list species of birds have been reported in recent times about the woody vegetation of the Common (inc. Marsh Tit, Willow Warbler, Bullfinch Redwing, Field fare, Song Thrush and Woodcock) *pers. comm.* John Barnett, ornithologist -Marshfield

*Eaton M et al 2015 *Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man* British Birds 108 pp708–746

⁸ <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/chalaramap/>

- 3.3 Within the densely wooded area of the Common to South of the Duncombe Brook ford I found no ash trees that currently showed severe crown dieback symptoms
- 3.4 The canopies of three fairly prominent mid-mature ash trees, standing in a distant line along the mid-slope contour of the area of open Common, look particularly vigorous. This includes an ash tree close to a healthy-looking mature apple – the ash was recommended for removal in the recent Restoration Plan (Item 2.1.3). I advise that this recommendation should be reconsidered, at least for the time being, as judging from current appearances, along with the other two ash trees mid-slope, it may prove to be a Chalara-resistant survivor.
- 3.5 Other than alongside the lane's edge, as included in the work schedule, I found no severely infected ash trees in the wooded area to East of the lane. A number of medium-large ash trees in this area currently look healthy. Judging from present appearance, some of them may prove to be Chalara-resistant survivors.
- 3.6 I advise that all the works within the schedule should be undertaken as soon as reasonably possible. However, if work has to be completed in stages; I consider that removal of trees T2 and G12 is probably the most pressing item, followed by felling of G15.
- 3.7 Whilst some trees may be resistant to the disease, Chalara dieback is liable to increasingly affect many of the ash trees on the Common over time. I advise that the condition of the ash throughout the site should be monitored and, subject to the outcome of that process, the trees should be subject to a formal inspection in the latter half of summer 2022.
- 3.8 To make up for loss of ash trees about the Common from Chalara, a programme of tree planting is advised. A range of native species could be used. The following is a suggested list, from which choices could be made according to chosen planting positions. The list includes small and large-growing species, and species variously suited to drier and damper ground conditions. The list is not exhaustive: small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*), oak (*Quercus robur*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), purging buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), alder buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), wild pear (*Pyrus communis*), whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*), myrobalan plum (*Prunus cerasifera*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), goat willow (*Salix caprea*) and grey willow (*Salix cinerea*).

4.0 Limitations

1. This Report expresses my observations and honest opinion and advice, presented in good faith. However, there is no guarantee that the Report is free from omission or error.
2. The remit and scope of this Report is strictly limited to that set out in Item 1.2 above. The curtilage of the Common is limited to that shown on the site plan accompanying this Report, as described in Item 1.4 above.
3. Tree inspection was restricted to ground-level visual assessment of obvious external features of the ash trees on the Common, as viewed from nearby readily accessible points about the Common.
4. In some instances, limited access, restricted viewing perspective, vegetation and/or other obstacles prevented view of parts of a tree. As a consequence, some defects and/or other condition indicators may have passed unnoticed and may not have been taken into account in the assessment and advice.
5. No material has been assessed by laboratory. The time of year when the inspection took place may have affected and limited observations and inferences, including with regard to certain pathogens. The Report has not been informed by detailed background information concerning the past management history of the site, or by knowledge of its soil, geology, or hydrology.
6. Measurements, compass orientation, proportions and assessments of age are estimates. Tree heights have been assessed by eye. Plotting of tree positions on plan is approximate. Distance from tree refers to approximate distance from nominal centre of base of main trunk.
7. Consideration of the extent, nature and use of areas within the potential dropping zones of trees has been based upon circumstances observed and interpreted by me at the time of the inspection.
8. Recommendations do not aim to achieve zero risk of tree-related harm, but are intended to limit currently observed unacceptable risk of serious injury to persons or property from falling branches or stems of those ash trees, that I noted were showing severe crown dieback symptoms, at the time of inspection, of a character typically associated with Chalara dieback. No other sources of risk or types of risk have been considered.
9. The assessment and recommendations cannot be relied upon to account for, or to protect against the effects of severe weather.
10. The assessment of the ash trees about the Common and the safety management recommendations within the Report are strictly current. It is hoped that the tree management advice within the Report should remain valid for about a year, but this is categorically not guaranteed. Chalara ash dieback may progress rapidly and unpredictably about the site. This, together with other limitations referred to above in this section and elsewhere within the Report may affect the Report's longevity and adequacy.

5.0 Ringswell Common - Currently advised Schedule of safety management for ash trees showing Chalara crown-dieback symptoms

Tree No.	Position	Ht x dbh (approx.)	Maturity	Approx % live crown	Notes	Recs inc. review period
T1	E side of lane 30m from N apex of site; next to edge of lane, amongst dense hedge	10m x 30cm (x 2)	Fully mature	60%	Medium-sized tree with dense ivy Twin stems from base, biased to N, away from nearby T2. Part of spreading crown with moderate Chalara symptoms reaches over lane. Dead wood in falling scope of lane	Remove major dead wood and weak live growth in falling range of lane. Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
T2	E side of lane 35m from N apex of site; next to edge of lane, amongst dense hedge	10m x 60cm	Fully mature	25%	Medium-large tree with dense ivy. Crown parts with severe Chalara symptoms reach over lane.	Cut to 3m tall monolith Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
G3 (approx. 15 stems)	E. side of lane; 15m long stretch, 40-55m from N apex of site; amongst dense hawthorn, 2-3m from edge of lane.	≤ 10m x ≤ 15cm	Juv. and Early-mature	25%	Linear cluster of small young trees; drawn up stems with small, narrowly restricted light crowns showing severe Chalara symptoms. Occasional healthier stems intermixed. Ivy-covered to mid height	Fell G3 stems Retain adjacent/intermixed currently healthy-looking ash stems where apparently viable - prune as necessary to stabilise. Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
T4	E side of lane; 4m from edge and 4m S of where field-boundary and lane-side hedges meet [W side of lane]	10m x 12cm	Early-mature	10%	Severely infected small, young drawn-up tree ; light outer canopy reaches close to overhead BT lines along lane. Small cluster of healthier ash stems of similar size and form, on verge, between T4 and lane	Fell T4 Retain adjacent/intermixed, currently healthy-looking ash stems where apparently viable - prune as necessary to stabilise. Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
T5	E side of lane; 22m S of BT pole No 1; 2m from edge of lane; fronting a roadside stretch of hawthorns	10m x 25cm	Early/Mid-mature	30%	Stem on roadside aspect of close cluster of three stems; ivy-clad to 3m ; stem inclines to lane; light crown overhangs lane and reaches close to BT lines. Upper crown shows severe symptoms	Cut T5 to 3m tall monolith. Retain adjacent two currently healthy-looking, closely associated ash stems and prune as necessary to stabilise. Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
G6 (3 no.)	W. side of lane on open common ; 4-15m S of BT pole No 2; 2-4m from edge of lane	G6/1 9m x 15cm G6/2 12m x 250 G6/3 13m x 300	Early /Mid-mature	G7/1: 30% G7/2: <25% G7/3: 50%	Close group of three young ash trees. G6/1 smallest, stands slightly apart; drawn up with narrow crown; currently healthy mass of sucker regrowth about main stem and inner framework G6/2 severely infected wider spreading tree inclines to lane. Canopy of G7/1 reaches to edge of lane; G7/2 reaches partly over lane; both with light growth amongst/close to BT lines. G6/3 upright with narrow, light crown; does not reach over the lane ; high incidence of recent, currently healthy-looking sucker regrowth amongst older die-back	G6/1:Pollard to 3m ht G6/2 : Fell G6/3: Reduce to approx. 7m ht and remove dead and clearly infected growth about remaining crown framework Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
T7	E side of lane; 17m S of BT pole No 2; 2m from edge of lane amongst bramble	9m x 100 + 150 x2	Early-mature	<25%	Small, unbalanced triple-stemmed tree (possibly a close cluster of 3 separate stems). Light branches reach partway over lane. Heavily infected	Fell

Tree No.	Position	Ht x dbh (approx.)	Maturity	Approx % live crown	Notes	Recs inc. review period
T8	W side of lane on open common; 45m S of BT pole No 2; 6m from edge of lane.	9m x 15cm (x 3)	Early-mature	<25%	Small, triple-stemmed young tree with spreading crown in falling scope of lane. Severely infected	Fell
G9 (2 no.)	E side of lane; 45m and 49m S of BT pole No 2; 3m from edge of lane; fronting a dense roadside stretch of mostly blackthorn and ivy	G9/1 (N) 8m x 15cm G9/2 6m x 10cm	Early-mature	G9/1 (N) 25% G9/2 Nil: Dead	Two small young upright trees (one dead) G9/2 (N) has a small light crown and is severely infected. G9/2 (4m to S) is a small dead remnant stem with no crown remaining.	G9/1 Fell G9/2 Cut to 2m height
T10	W side of lane; open common; bottom SW corner next to Duncombe Brook and c. 10m from low boundary wall of neighbouring cottage-garden. From the wall, T10 is the second ash tree along the brook.	10m x 25cm	Early/Mid-mature	25%	Upright young tree with lightly-branched narrow, upswept crown; Extensive dead wood about outer parts from Chalara; moderate incidence of recent sucker regrowth about inner framework. With regards to the common, T10 stands well clear of areas of likely frequent public access. Upper crown parts look to be potentially just in falling range of the neighbour's garden boundary - fall in this direction would likely be impeded by the crown of the neighbouring ash	Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022 or Fell – leave 3m tall standing trunk , if safely practicable to do so.
G11	E side of lane; extending est 10m length from approx. opposite SE end of residents parking area , southwards, towards the splay of the farther cottage's drive; ; 1m -4m from edge of lane amongst dense bramble	6m x 15cm	Early-mature	<25% and Nil(dead)	Severely infected/dead , small, young drawn-up trees with light crowns	Fell
G12 (est.25 stems)	W side of lane; est.16m stretch, southwards from approx. opposite S end of cottage; 1m from edge of lane, next to Duncombe Brook with the beech-hedge and boundary wall of the cottage garden alongside, 3m to W <i>Also</i> Line of ash trees directly opposite, along verge on E side of lane	≤10m x ≤15cm	Early/Mid-mature	<i>W side of lane</i> <25% and Nil(dead) <i>E side of lane</i> 70%-80%	<i>W side of lane:</i> Line of severely infected and dead , young drawn-up, spindly trees at close spacing, with narrowly restricted light crowns. Dense ivy on some stems. G12 is in falling scope of lane, neighbour's garden; The S end of the cottage is within height range of some of G12 stems at the N end of the line <i>E side of lane:</i> Close line of tall spindly ash young trees with light restricted upswept crowns .Currently non-severe symptoms. Occasional dead branches (≤50mm diam x ≤4m length) over lane	<i>W side of lane:</i> Fell <i>E side of lane:</i> Remove dead branches over lane Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022

Tree No.	Position	Ht x dbh (approx.)	Maturity	Approx % live crown	Notes	Recs inc. review period
T13	E side of lane; est 15m from edge of lane on E side of recent clearing; on slightly raised ground directly alongside(to E of) an old, low drystone wall.	12m x 15cm	Mid-mature	Not visible amongst canopies of other trees	Young, tall, spindly severely leaning tree with small, high crown. Main stem is caught up at 7m ht against adjacent elm tree. T13 appears unstable and inclines along boundary, downslope, towards lane and is liable to collapse onto Common land T13 appears to stand just outside Common boundary.	Fell Note: Management responsibilities subject to clarification of ownership
T14	W side of lane; 2m N of Wessex Water entrance splay ; 1m from edge of lane; next to Duncombe Brook.	10m x 15cm (x 3)	Early-mature	50%	Small, triple-stemmed young tree with spreading crown; moderate-level infection; dense ivy; Wessex Water entrance within potential falling range of tree	Reduce to 5m ht ; proportionately shorten back laterals and remove major dead and unhealthy looking growth from rest of crown Cut ivy at base Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022
G15 (est 20 stems.)	W side of public FP; from opp S end of Wessex Water entrance splay, est 45m southwards, up to and including penultimate ash tree next to (to N of) field gate. G15 stems stand directly alongside, and in some cases apparently stand upon, the remnants of an old, drystone boundary wall	10 – 15m x 15 – 35 cm	Mid- and Fully mature	25 -50 %	Medium-sized and small trees closely clustered at irregularly spacing along Common boundary, with neighbouring field to W and Common to E , both in potential falling scope ,also the public FP in many cases . Drawn up crowded stems amongst dense brambles; mostly with dense ivy to mid height or above. Small restricted upswept closely integrated crowns , variously with severe and mod-severe symptoms Ownership of various G15 trees uncertain judging from positions of base of trunks in relation to what looks to be an old boundary wall	Fell G15 – amongst the felled stems cut a small number (suggest 5no) of selected, well-spaced stems to monoliths (3m -5m ht) if safely practicable to do so Note: 1.Management responsibilities subject to clarification of ownership 2.Where felling takes place, much of the larger diam felled material could be left in long lengths, lying safely positioned on the ground for habitat; some could be used for rustic log-benches; brushwood could be cut down to small sizes and left in habitat piles/racks ; a proportion could be converted to woodchip - useful for mulching new tree plantings etc.
T16	E side of public footpath; next to path and old drystone wall; N of TPO veteran oak; est. 15m S of woodland's N edge	20m x 35cm (x 2)	Fully mature	80%	Large mature tree; twin heavy ascending stems from 2m ht; spreading crown over footpath. Currently non-severe Chalara symptoms, but with some lower mod-heavy (c. 75mm diam) dead wood over FP	Remove /Stabilise heavy dead wood over FP Monitor; review latter half of summer 2022

End of Report