

# Arboricultural Impact Assessment

Cotefield Farm  
Oxford Road  
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**Report number 407 prepared by:**



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## 1 Report limitations

- 1.1 I write as an arboriculturist; I have no technical engineering competence. My career in practical arboriculture began as a forestry graduate with the local authority tree gang in Ealing in 1980. A range of roles in the public, charity and commercial sectors followed and in October 2011 I established my own arboricultural consultancy practice, a detailed c.v. can be found at [www.jhazell.com](http://www.jhazell.com).
- 1.2 My report represents the analysis of my arboricultural observations following an external assessment of the trees from ground level only. No samples were collected for analysis, and no decay detection devices (such as an increment borer, a micro-resistance recording drill or sonic tomograph) were used during my assessment.
- 1.3 Trees are living organisms and their condition may have changed after I left the site for any one of a variety of reasons, including for example, but not limited to:
  - a natural consequence of their pattern of growth, and/or
  - a response to changes in neighbouring trees and shrubs, from whatever cause, and/or
  - in response to the weather, either an extreme event or a prolonged spell of consistent weather, and/or
  - a consequence of infection or infestation, and/or
  - a consequence of a pollution incident, and/or
  - a response to changes in soil condition or structure.
- 1.4 My conclusions, and any recommendations flowing from those conclusions, relate to the conditions that I found at the time of the assessment, and are valid for
  - no more than two years from the date of that assessment, or
  - until such time as any work is carried out at the site, either in accordance with the remedial action prescribed or for other reasons which may be outside my control, or
  - until the site is re-surveyed whichever is the sooner.
- 1.5 My report it is not, nor should be taken to be, a thorough assessment of the health and condition of the trees on or adjacent to the site: if such an assessment is required then it is recommended that a separate tree inspection be carried out to comply with the land owner's overall duty of care and to satisfy health and safety requirements.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 My client is CALA Homes (Chiltern) Limited, Gemini House, Mercury Park, Wooburn Green, Buckinghamshire, HP10 0HH.
- 2.2 I was instructed to proceed in an email of 13 March 2017.
- 2.3 The proposal is to develop the site with a mixture of residential units and associated infrastructure including areas of communal open space.
- 2.4 The specific issue being addressed here with this arboricultural impact assessment is the proposal to breach the planting belt bordering the site to allow for the construction of the necessary services, swale and attenuation pond. The previously approved drainage scheme required that the planting belt be breached to the same extent.

## 3 Fieldwork

- 3.1 I visited the site on Tuesday 14 March 2017.



- 3.2 The planting belt to be breached was identified by RPS in their report reference JKK5617 – Blossom Field, Cotefield Farm, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, dated 28 November 2014 as G5. The extent of the breach, an 8 m wide cordon, is marked on site by red pegs as seen in image 1 below:



*Image 1: the extent of the proposed breach, looking south west*

- 3.3 The over-storey tree species in the planting belt include alder, ash, beech, cherry, field maple, oak, silver birch and willow, as well as larch and pine. The plant material used seems to have been of unremarkable quality, many of the stems are of poor form with many examples of forked stems leading to co-dominant leaders, as seen in image 1. The area does not appear to have been thinned to improve the overall quality of the retained and managed stock, the planting belt seems to have received only a light management touch, some stems have been coppiced, and some multiple stems have been singled. Because of their poor form and the lack of management intervention the individual elements of the planting belt were categorised as Category C1 under Table 1 Cascade chart for tree quality assessment of BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations:

**Category C:** Trees of low quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 10 years, or young trees with a stem diameter below 150 mm.

**Subcategory 1:** Unremarkable trees of very limited merit or such impaired condition that they do not qualify in higher categories

- 3.4 At the point of the proposed breach, the natural low point in the landscape where an open ditch crosses the planting belt, the alder and willow are perhaps exhibiting slightly better than average annual incremental increases compared with those trees further up the slope, maybe due to the levels of moisture in the ground. However, whilst the individual trees' stem diameters maybe greater here than elsewhere, the quality of the stock is uniformly unremarkable, lost central leaders and co-dominant stems are common throughout the belt.



- 3.5 The under-storey includes hazel, holly and laurel. On either side of the planting belt the single line of hawthorn trees has been treated as a hedge, faced and topped at 2.4 m. An informal and unsurfaced path much used by dog walkers' meanders through the planning belt, see image 2 below:



*Image 2: the informal path, looking north west*

## 4 The arboricultural impact assessment

- 4.1 The trees that are required to be removed for the drainage will not be directly replaced, nor would they have been with the previous drainage scheme. The quality of the stock to be lost is unremarkable, and the impact of their removal is equivalent to the impact of the previous drainage scheme.
- 4.2 Overall, the breach will lead to a permanent change in appearance and coherence of the planting belt when viewed from afar, as would the previously approved drainage scheme. However, the development of the fields on either side of the belt will also lead to significant changes to the amenity of the locality, and the impact of this breach required to service the developments will be rendered almost insignificant in comparison with those changes.
- 4.3 In the overall context of the proposal I do not consider that the adverse impact of proposal to breach the planting belt to be significant.

