



Tree Safety Risk Assessment Report 2025

Barton Hills and Hexton Nature Reserves

2nd & 3rd July 2025
Ref: 020725/JF

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Document:

This report was commissioned to do the following:

- To assess the health and safety of all trees along defined footpaths and highways, as per initial communication.
- To use negative reporting methodology to mention only trees pose a risk of harm, and require a form of remedial action.

1.2 Scope of the Report & Survey:

The scope of the Tree Safety Risk Assessment Report is to offer guidance on the management of trees that have the potential to impact on users of the nature reserve footpaths (right of ways and permissive trackways) and two sections of highway (south side of Barton Road only), and in doing so it provides the landowner with a defensible risk management system that shows:

- A clear audit trail
- A tree risk re-assessment
- A clear management system to detail what action should be taken to reduce the risk and remove the hazard.

The general principles of the tree risk survey have been defined by the National Tree Safety Guidelines document 'Common Sense Risk Management for Trees' this publication is available to download from the Forestry Commission website. [Click Here to Download](#)

1.3 Birds, Bats & Habitats:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended by the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000) provides statutory protection to birds and other protected species that may inhabit trees.
- It is essential to check for nesting birds, bat roosts, badgers, and hibernating animals such as hedgehogs under trees before pruning or removing trees as negligent disturbance is an offence under the EC Habitat Directive 1992 and CROW Act 2000.
- In general, autumn tree work, in September, October and November, is least disruptive to bats and birds.

1.4 Survey Details and Methodology:

- The survey took place on 2nd & 3rd July 2025.
- The survey was conducted by Jack Foskett ND Level 2 in Arboriculture, LANTRA accredited Professional Tree Inspector, and experienced Arboricultural Consultant.
- Inspection was made at ground level using Visual Tree Re-assessment methods. Visual Tree Re-assessment techniques (VTA¹) are generally non-invasive (unless open cavities are present which can be probed from ground level).
- All trees on site were inspected for tree health and safety but only recorded if works or notes are prescribed.
- Weather Conditions: Clear and mostly sunny.

1 - DoE publication "The Body Language of Trees a Handbook of Failure Analysis" by Claus Mattheck and Helge Breloer

1.5 **Marking Trees & Mapping:**

The trees subject to this report are clearly identifiable on the appended site plan. Individual trees requiring detailed works have been tagged with a unique identification number, and plotted with a green dot on the site plan. Dead trees have been spot marked with orange eco paint, and plotted with an orange dot on the site plan. Trees requiring the removal of deadwood (>25mm diameter) have been spot marked with yellow eco paint, and plotted with a yellow dot on the site plan.

‘What3Words’ mapping has been used to record accurate locations of all trees on site (assuming a reliable GPS connection was present at the time and location of the survey). A link is available upon request to gain access to the file for ease of locating noted trees.

1.6 **Validity:**

Trees and plants are biological organisms and change with time. This assessment is valid for **24** months from the date of inspection, or until a major storm is experienced, after which time a re-inspection is recommended but not always necessary if no obvious damage is noticed.

The contents are intended for the sole use of the clients only. No liability is accepted for their use by any other parties.

2.0 **Status of the Trees**

2.1 **Tree Preservation Orders:**

There are no Tree Preservation Orders in place at either site. This information was found on the Central Bedfordshire County Council and North Herts Council websites.

2.2 **Conservation Areas:**

Part of Hexton Village is within a Conservation Area. This information was found on the North Herts Council website.

3.0 **Discussion & Recommendations**

3.1 **The Risks:**

The trees have been surveyed with practicality and common sense in mind. Within the survey the hazards have been identified, the associated risks have been evaluated and work recommendations provided to control the risk. For instance, a “Fell” recommendation has been put onto damaged, dead or diseased trees that will impact onto the surrounding areas.

3.2 A total of 17 trees across both sites are found to be dead adjacent or within falling distance to footpaths/highways. These trees have been spot marked with orange eco paint, and plotted with an orange dot on the site plan. A total of 4 trees across both sites are found to have large amounts or large sections of deadwood (>25mm diameter) over or within falling distance to footpaths/highways. These trees have been spot marked with yellow eco paint, and plotted with a yellow dot on the site plan.

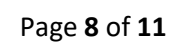
Appendices

Appendix 1: Tree & Tree Group Data & Recommendations - Barton Hills and Hexton Nature Reserves - 2025

Tree ID.	Species (Common Name)	Age Class	Height (m)	Stem dia. (mm)	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Observations / Comments	Recommendations	Work Priority
438	Beech	Middle aged	26	550	Normal	Fair	Moderate basal wounding to south. Exposed basal sapwood wot north with saprophytic fungi present	Reduce height by 5m	2
439	Beech	Mature	25+	900	Normal	Fair	Moderate basal decay to north west	Reduce height by 8m	2
440	Beech	Over mature	14	1000+	Fair	Fair	<i>Kretzschmaria deusta</i> fungal fruiting bodies at base up to 2m on south west side of stem. Large column of decay to north from 0-4m. Height historically heavily reduced	Monitor condition during routine inspections	N/A
441	Beech	Mature	25+	900	Poor	Poor	Upper crown is in significant decline/dead	Reduce height to live growth at 12m	1
442	Beech	Mature	23	1000+	Fair	Normal	Minor dieback and low vigour throughout crown. Tree appears to be stressed (unknown cause). Significant deadwood over footpath	Monitor condition during routine inspections Remove all significant deadwood	2
443	Sycamore	Middle aged	17	3 x 250	Normal	Fair	Heavily Ivy clad. Moderate lean over highway	Remove to ground level	2
444	Sycamore	Middle aged	17	2 x 350	Normal	Fair	Basal union partially fractured creating weak point	Remove to ground level	2

Tree ID.	Species (Common Name)	Age Class	Height (m)	Stem dia. (mm)	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Observations / Comments	Recommendations	Work Priority
445	Beech	Mature	25	1000	Fair	Fair	<i>Kretzschmaria deusta</i> fungal fruiting bodies at base to north and east. Moderate basal decay. Adjacent to highway	Reduce crown overall by 8m	1
G1	Elm	Young	10	250	Poor	Poor	Many Elm are dead within falling distance to footpath. Currently low risk	Install signage to warn footpath users of potential danger, whilst retaining habitat value	2
A total of 4 trees are found to have significant deadwood over targets. These trees have been spot marked with yellow eco paint and marked on the site plan									
A total of 17 trees are found to be dead standing adjacent to targets. These trees have been spot marked with orange eco paint (where possible) and marked on the site plan									





Appendix 3: Key to Tree Data

Google Map Location: Link to the trees exact position on Google Maps

Tree Number: Trees are recorded as T1, T2 etc. Groups as G1, G2 etc. Woodlands as W1, W2 etc.

Common Name: The English name of the tree species

Height: In metres

Age Class: The tree was ascribed to one of six age classes as follows:

- **Young** - The first third of the estimated life expectancy
- **Semi Mature** - The second third of the estimated life expectancy
- **Early Mature** - The stage between second and last third of life expectancy
- **Mature** - The last third of the estimated life expectancy
- **Over Mature** - In slow decline
- **Veteran-** - Veteran (or near veteran status) trees have no precise definition, but are trees considered to be of biological, aesthetic or wildlife interest, because of their age or trees in the ancient stage of their lives or trees that are old relative to others of the same species. Special measures, such as increasing the tree protective zone distances and selective surgery could significantly increase their useful life expectancies.

***NB:** There may be some overlapping with the above categories.*

Physiological Condition: This refers to the evident health of the tree (Physiological) and if any apparent diseases, pests or damaged areas are present within the tree. Abiotic and biotic factors are both recorded.

Structural Condition: This refers to any defects within the main stem and structure of the tree:

- **Normal** - No apparent problems
- **Fair** - Minor problems
- **Poor** - Major problems
- **Dead** - Dead

Recommended Work: Prescriptions for remedial actions to alleviate problems or defects within the tree. Recommendations to fell are normally to ground level unless specified.

Appendix 4: Estimated Time Scales

It is strongly emphasised that these categories and figures are only guidelines which are applicable under normal circumstances only. The occurrence of extreme weather and other events beyond one's control do occur and so would have to take priority over recommended work.

Urgent	Carry out works as soon as can be arranged – prohibit access to target area until works complete!
1 (High Priority)	Carry out works within 3 months
2 (Medium Priority)	Carry out works within 6 months
3 (Low Priority)	Carry out works within 12 months

Compression fork/Co-dominant stem: Can be a failure point at a fork between two branches or limbs, which, as they grow, press against each other, causing a build-up of stresses similar to the effect you would get if a wedge were hammered into the fork. Increased end-loading as the limbs grow can lead to the fork failing.

Cracked bark: Another indicator of structural weakness in the wood. It can be on the surface of reaction growth that has grown rapidly, or it can show a shearing failure point, where the load on a branch/limb becomes too great and causes the grain of the wood to separate and fail.

Deadwood: Twigs or branches in the crown of the tree which have died off. This can indicate the tree's inability to transport fluid and/or nutrients to its extremities signifying that the tree is under stress or has failing systems. It can also take place naturally when a branch affects a process known as "self-pruning". This occurs when the energy needed to sustain the live branch outweighs the energy it produces.

Decay: This can be minor, such as on the surface of a shallow wound, or severe, with large sections of the trees structure being decayed. It is a problem that can progress to the point where the tree collapses.

Epicormic growth: This can sometimes indicate a problem within the tree's systems. Epicormic growth is produced by the tree to gain a greater ability to photosynthesise when it needs extra resources. Some trees, such as Lime, produce epicormic growth, particularly from the base, as part of their natural growth habit.

Lean: A lean does not necessarily mean inherent instability but when a tree's stem loses structural integrity, it can become a hazard, especially if the weakness is on the side to which the tree is leaning.

Loosened Bark: This indicates a problem under the surface in either the wood or the inner layers of bark (cambium). Bark can fall away from decaying wood behind it or can start to die off due to a range of reasons (bacterial infections etc). The bark can then no longer transport fluid or nutrients around the tree.

Mechanical Damage: Damage caused by non-biological means i.e. vehicle impact or damage caused by animals trying to eat bark. Damage of this kind can penetrate the structure and is more often found on the surface of the tree.

Reaction wood/growth: Where weakness or decay within a tree occurs, the tree will grow material to compensate for it. It is often seen as 'cable' like structures with patches of uneven bark which indicate irregular growth patterns. Another form of reaction growth can be seen as 'bulges' on a trees structure. Large amounts of reaction growth indicate advanced decay or weakness within the tree structure.

Weak unions: The unions between the stem (trunk) and structural limbs or branches sometimes develop weakly, and as the tree ages can become unstable. This can be exacerbated when the tree is affected by other problems. Also, certain tree species are prone to developing weak unions.

