

Report: Laverstock & Ford Parish Council

Subject: Appointment of Contractor, London Plane Trees at The Green, Bishopdown Farm

Author: Joe Elder, Operations Officer

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1. Report Summary

A report to councillors regarding the award of a contract to pollard London Plane Trees on The Green at Bishopdown Farm

2. Background

In April 2021, Laverstock & Ford Parish Council commissioned a survey of parish council owned trees on the Bishopdown Farm estate, the survey was carried out by Astills Tree Consultancy. The completed survey report contained comments and recommendations with specific mention of the 84 London Plane trees on The Green (attached at Appendix 1).

3. Summary

Astills commented on the spacing of the trees which are planted 5 to 5.5 metres apart, and that a more appropriate spacing for the species would be 10 metres to 15 metres apart.

The result of the planting schedule is that the tree crowns have now made contact at an early stage in their life. As they continue to mature the competition will result in pinched crowns with some trees becoming very laterally suppressed by their neighbours. In decades to come the inevitable removal of some trees will render their retained companions to have very etiolated (pale and weak leaf growth) and asymmetrical crowns with major branches subject to significant levels of exposure.

4. Conclusions

Astills made two recommendations at bullet points 6 and 7 of Appendix 1 below.

- *A drastic option, to safeguard the long-term uniformity of the scheme and permit the trees to develop with shapely form, well into maturity, would be to remove every other tree in the next few years or even 2 of every 3 trees. Understandably, I would expect such a proposal to cause an unprecedented level of upset among local residents (and further afield) given that the scheme in the 'here and now' looks excellent.*

- *An alternative option would be to pollard the trees at a uniform height of circa 10 metres at some point within the next decade and maintain them on re-pollarding cycle of anywhere between 5 to 20 years dependent on their rate of regrowth. The pollarding of London Planes is common practice in temperate cities all over the world as they are a robust species that respond well to such pruning. However, I anticipate that this too would be viewed by many as a drastic and unsavoury approach. As such I am not advocating these 2 proposals, simply providing food for thought, as locals in 50 years from now would benefit hugely from timely action.*

The potential loss of over 40+ trees is considered an extreme solution and would likely cause significant discontent with local residents. Pollarding will provide the means to maintain the current number of trees on The Green and maintain their health for future generations

Local Arboriculturists were invited to submit quotes for the contract to pollard the London Planes and the following submissions were received;

Quote 1 £14,320 + VAT

Quote 2 £14,450 + VAT

Quote 3 £15,840 + VAT

5. Recommendations

It is recommended

1. That the London Plane Trees on The Green are pollarded as an alternative to felling 40+ trees
2. That the Parish Council resolves to appoint Ockendens Tree Services (Quote 1) to carry out pollarding of 84 London Plane Trees at The Green for a sum of £14,320 + VAT as per their quote dated 27th June 2024.

Appendix 1 – Astills Tree Survey

APPENDIX A² TREE SURVEY SCHEDULE (GROUPS OF TREES)

Location: Laverstock and Ford Parish - Service Devolution and Asset Transfer (SDAT) – Sites 1, 2, 3 & Hampton Park Trail

Survey Dates: 21st, 27th, 30th April and 4th May 2021

Surveyor: Jonathan Astill

Group Ref. No.	Location	Species	Condition / Comments	Management options	Priority
			<p>Site 1 - Hampton Park Recreation Ground</p> <p>Refer to 'Individual' Tree Survey Schedule (Appendix A¹) for tree specific management recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniform landscaping scheme of 84 London Planes planted around the edge of the recreation ground. Based on historic aerial imagery, it appears that the trees were planted as heavy standards in the 1990's They are an imposing feature of the estate and provide a high level of amenity. The trees have been planted c. 4 metres in from the edge of the highway at a spacing of 5 to 5.5 metres apart. They now range between 250mm to 400mm in stem diameter and 10 to 14 metres in height. As a large tree species, London Plane have the potential to grow up to 25-30 metres in height with radial crown spreads over 10 metres (or greater in good conditions). Unfortunately, the scheme lacked long-term foresight in that the spacing is far too close for the species. A more appropriate spacing would have been 10 m (absolute minimum) to 15 metres or more. The tree crowns have now made contact at an early stage in their life. As they continue to mature the competition will result in pinched crowns with some trees becoming very laterally suppressed by their neighbours. In decades to come the inevitable removal of some trees will render their retained companions to have very etiolated and asymmetrical crowns with major branches subject to significant levels of exposure. A drastic option, to safeguard the long-term uniformity of the scheme and permit the trees to develop with shapely form, well into maturity, would be to remove every other tree in the next few years or even 2 of every 3 trees. Understandably, I would expect such a proposal to cause an unprecedented level of upset among local residents (and further afield) given that the scheme in the 'here and now' looks excellent. An alternative option would be to pollard the trees at a uniform height of circa 10 metres at some point within the next decade and maintain them on re-pollarding cycle of anywhere between 5 to 20 years, dependent on their rate of regrowth. The pollarding of London Planes is common practice in temperate cities all over the world as they are a robust species that respond well to such pruning. However, I anticipate that this too would be viewed by many as a drastic and unsavoury approach. As such I am not advocating these 2 proposals, simply providing food for thought, as locals in 50 years from now would benefit hugely from timely action. Coming back to the 'here and now', the trees are generally of good form with no structural features of any significance. A few Planes have been planted close to the south-western corner of the club house and have been pruned back to provide some crown clearance from the building. Further management may be required in future years subject to ongoing surveys. I am informed that most of the trees have displayed some withered and chlorotic (yellowing) foliage last year. Whilst I undertook this survey before bud burst, the symptoms described are consistent with a fungal leaf and shoot disease called 'Anthracnose of Plane' (<i>Aploogmonia veneta</i>). The disease is widespread on London Plane (albeit variable dependent on the clone). Whilst unsightly, it does not have a serious impact on the health of the trees, but can reduce the tree's vitality following many successive infections. There is no feasible control for established trees but re-infection can be reduced by clearing leaf fall. Please click on the following for further information: Anthracnose disease of Plane (Aploogmonia veneta) - Forest Research One tree (511) has recently sustained a major limb failure due to a weak 'included bark union' and has since been pollarded at height of 6 metres above ground level. There was a period where many clonally propagated London Planes were sold and planted out which were genetically predisposed to weak forks and branch failure, notably around Bristol. Nursey standards have subsequently improved and many of these defective trees has since been removed from the urban landscape. With exception to tree 511, all of the others exhibit robust, normally formed unions. Four other trees (508, 509, 510 and 512) have been individually tagged for minor pruning to clear play equipment and lamp columns. Many of the other Planes have some low branch tips or light encroachment over the lawn, carriage way and highway pavement. Details of proposed works can be found in the 'Individual' Tree Survey Schedule 		
All trees	Hampton Park Recreation Ground (including trees around the pavilion and play area not shown within the red polygon)	84 x London Plane <i>Platanus x hispanica</i>			