



PATRICK STILEMAN LTD

ARBORICULTURAL CONSULTANCY



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Tree Inspection Report

Site

6 Pepys Close, Ickenham, UB10 8NL

Client

Jo Fidgen

Prepared by

Patrick Stileman BSc(Hons), MICFor, MRICS, Dip. Arb (RFS), RC.Arbor.A

Date

25th April 2024

Ref

TI08032401

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 I am Patrick Stileman, Director of Patrick Stileman Ltd. I have qualifications and experience in arboricultural consultancy and I have given details of this in Appendix 1.

1.2 **Brief:** We have been instructed by Jo Fidgen to undertake a condition assessment of a Douglas fir tree located at 6 Pepys Close. We are to assess the tree's condition and the risk that it poses of causing harm or damage from structural failure. We are to recommend management work to the tree as we consider appropriate.

1.3 **Report scope:** This report only relates to a single tree identified in Section 1.5. An assessment of the possible effect that the tree may have to structures through changes in soil volume is not included in this report.

1.4 Background

1.4.1 The tree is a large prominent specimen, protected by a tree preservation order (TPO), in the rear garden of 6 Pepys Close in close proximity to the boundary with 8 Pepys Close. The tree's crown overhangs the roof of both dwellings.

1.4.2 I am advised by the owner of 6 Pepys Close that in the three years that they have lived there, six branches have fallen from the tree of which two fell onto the roof of the house, one on a garden shed, two in the garden, and one onto the driveway of Number 8 where it caused damage to a parked car (see Photograph 5 provided to me). The most recent branch to fall from the tree did so in February 2024.

1.4.3 In September 2020 an application to the council was made for the tree to be reduced in height by 3m and for the lateral spread of the branches to be reduced by 1.5m. This application was refused on 15th October 2020.

1.5 **Tree identification:** The tree is located in the rear garden of 6 Pepys Close, approximately 3 metres from the north-west corner of the house, and at a distance of approximately 2 metres from the house at Number 8 adjacent. The approximate position of the tree is shown on the Tree Location Plan, included on Page 9 of this report.

1.6 Statutory protection

1.6.1 The Douglas fir is protected by a TPO administered by Hillingdon Council. The TPO reference is T14 of TPO 5.

2 SITE VISIT

2.1 **Date of site visit:** I inspected the tree on 10th April 2024.

2.2 **Method of inspection:** My assessment of the tree was based on a technique called Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) in which growth features on trees (body language) are used to interpret internal defects, and to assist the assessment of the likelihood of failure. The conclusions that I have reached are based on an interpretation of my observations using my knowledge and experience.

3 OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Details

• Species:	Douglas fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>)
• Height: (measured)	24.7 metres
• Crown spread: (estimated)	N: 6m; E: 6m; S: 6m; W: 6m
• Stem diameter at 1.5m (measured)	670mm
• Age class:	Early-mature
• Vitality:	Normal
• Target (land use in fall radius of tree)	Houses 2m & 3m, rear gardens
• Target value	High

3.2 General observations and comments:

3.2.1 The tree is a tall, prominent specimen with a single straight stem to its top. The tree has a high crown base with the lowest branches attached to the stem at a height of approximately 8 metres above ground level.

3.2.2 The tree's base has normal buttressing. From careful visual assessment, and use of a sounding mallet, I assess that the tree's base is solid with no decay or dysfunctional areas present.

3.2.3 The tree's crown comprises long, slender, side branches attached to the main stem and growing roughly horizontally. The branch distribution is reasonably even, though gaps exist where some have previously failed. The branches overhanging the roofs of both properties adjacent to the tree. I assess that the tree has normal vitality. The tree's top has a narrow conical shape with strong apical dominance.

3.2.4 I observed several stubs on the stem caused by past branch failure. On the south-east side of the tree at a height of approximately 10 metres above ground level I observed a broken, hanging branch over the roof of the house at Number 6.

3.2.5 I spoke to the owner of Number 8 and was told by him that the tree was planted after the extension to Number 8 was completed in 1973.

Photograph 1. *View of the tree from the road, looking north. No 6 centre of view, No 8 on the left*



Photograph 2. *View of the tree from the rear garden of No 6. No 8 to the right of the view*



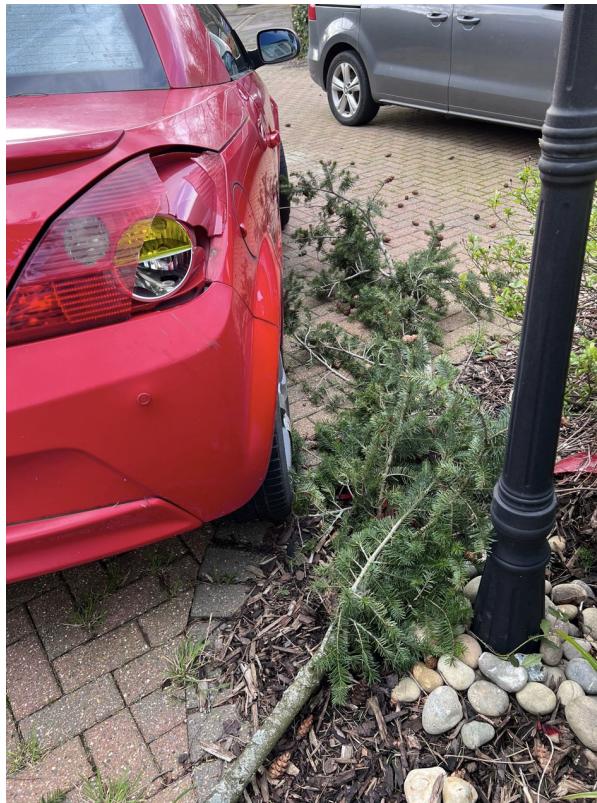
Photograph 3. Broken hanging branch over roof of No 6, at approximately 10m above ground level



Photograph 4. Stubs on stem from past branch failures



Photograph 5. Provided by the client. Recent branch failure onto the driveway of Number 8, causing damage to a parked car



4 APPRAISAL

4.1 In general terms, as a species Douglas fir trees are known to have brittle branches which are highly prone to breaking and falling, and I have seen this many times. In the Collins Field Guide*, Mitchell describes Douglas firs as having '*big crowns much broken by gales and snow*'. The tree at 6 Pepys close is clearly pre-disposed to shedding branches with six having reportedly fallen from the tree in the past three years, and a further broken branch that I observed lodged and hung-up in the crown overhanging the roof of the house (see Photograph 3).

4.2 Douglas fir trees have the capacity to grow very tall – the tallest tree in each UK country is a Douglas fir, with the largest (near Inverness in Scotland) being in excess of 66 metres in height. The tree at 6 Pepys Close has a height of close to 25 metres; however, it has a narrow apical habit which indicates that it is still growing quickly (as conifers start reaching their top height they develop a rounded upper crown profile). Whilst I am not suggesting that this tree will reach an ultimate height in excess of 60 metres, it is still relatively young (with an age that I assess to be between 40 and 50 years) and with high further growth potential. I assess that the tree could realistically reach a height in excess of 35 metres with time.

* Mitchell A (1978). Collins Field Guide – Trees of Britain and Northern Europe. P 148

4.3 In 2020 a TPO application was made for the tree to be reduced in height and spread; however, I do not consider that pruning would be a suitable form of management for this tree. The branches are long and slender, with most live foliage at their periphery. Even if it were practically possible to undertake this work (which appears unlikely given the lack of access for a mobile platform and the brittle nature of the branches probably making it not possible by climbing) shortening each one by 1.5 metres would remove a high proportion of the tree's foliage and leave the tree with a sparse crown and unnatural manicured appearance which would significantly reduce its amenity value.

4.4 Little thought was given to the tree's future potential when it was planted some 40 – 50 years' ago. It is located very close to two houses (2 metres and 3 metres) and its branches significantly overhang both. When branches fall from the tree (as they will continue to do) there is a possibility that they will fall butt first and cause damage to the roof tiles.

4.5 I assess that the tree's species is entirely inappropriate for its location. It is prone to dropping branches, has done so on numerous occasions in the past (causing damage to a parked car on one occasion), and will continue to do so in the future. The tree has high future growth potential and I consider it likely that the problems caused by the tree will increase as the tree's size increases.

4.6 For the reasons set out I consider that the only sensible management approach is for the tree to be removed.

4.7 I have looked at options for replacement tree planting, and I have identified a location at the front of the property close to the road (see Photograph 6 and the Tree Location Plan). In this position a replacement will be highly visible to a large number of houses which face towards it, and the replacement tree would be sufficiently far from the buildings that it will be a more sustainable relationship with the built environment. I recommend that the replacement tree is a deodar cedar, with this having many of the visual attributes of Douglas fir, whilst being less prone to branch failure.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 I recommend that Douglas fir is removed.

5.2 I recommend that a replacement deodar cedar is planted in the front garden in the location indicated on the Tree Location Plan. The replacement tree is to be a containerised standard with a stem girth of 10-12cm.

5.3 I recommend that, within the next 3 months (sooner if possible), the broken hung-up branch overhanging the roof of Number 6 is removed.

Photograph 6. Recommended location of replacement deodar cedar tree (red star)



6 WILDLIFE

6.1 Nesting birds, bats and bat roosts are protected by law. It is the duty of the contractors to satisfy themselves prior to commencement that neither these, nor any protected species shall be adversely affected by the proposed work. Work should be undertaken in accordance with BS8596:2015: *Surveying for bats in trees and woodland – Guide*.

7 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The tree is protected by a TPO. A formal TPO application must be made to the council, and written consent must be obtained prior to work to remove it commencing.

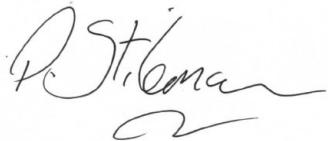
7.2 Removal of the broken, hung-up branch does not require prior consent or communication with the council.

8 IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 All work is to be carried out in accordance with BS3998 (2010) *Recommendations for tree work*. The contractors should be trained in the work that they are performing, carry public liability insurance (it is for the client to satisfy themselves that a suitable level of cover is held by the contractor; however, £5 million is a minimum level generally considered to be acceptable), and undertake written risk assessments for the work being undertaken. I recommend that a certificate of insurance and site-specific risk assessments should be seen by the client prior to the contractor commencing work.

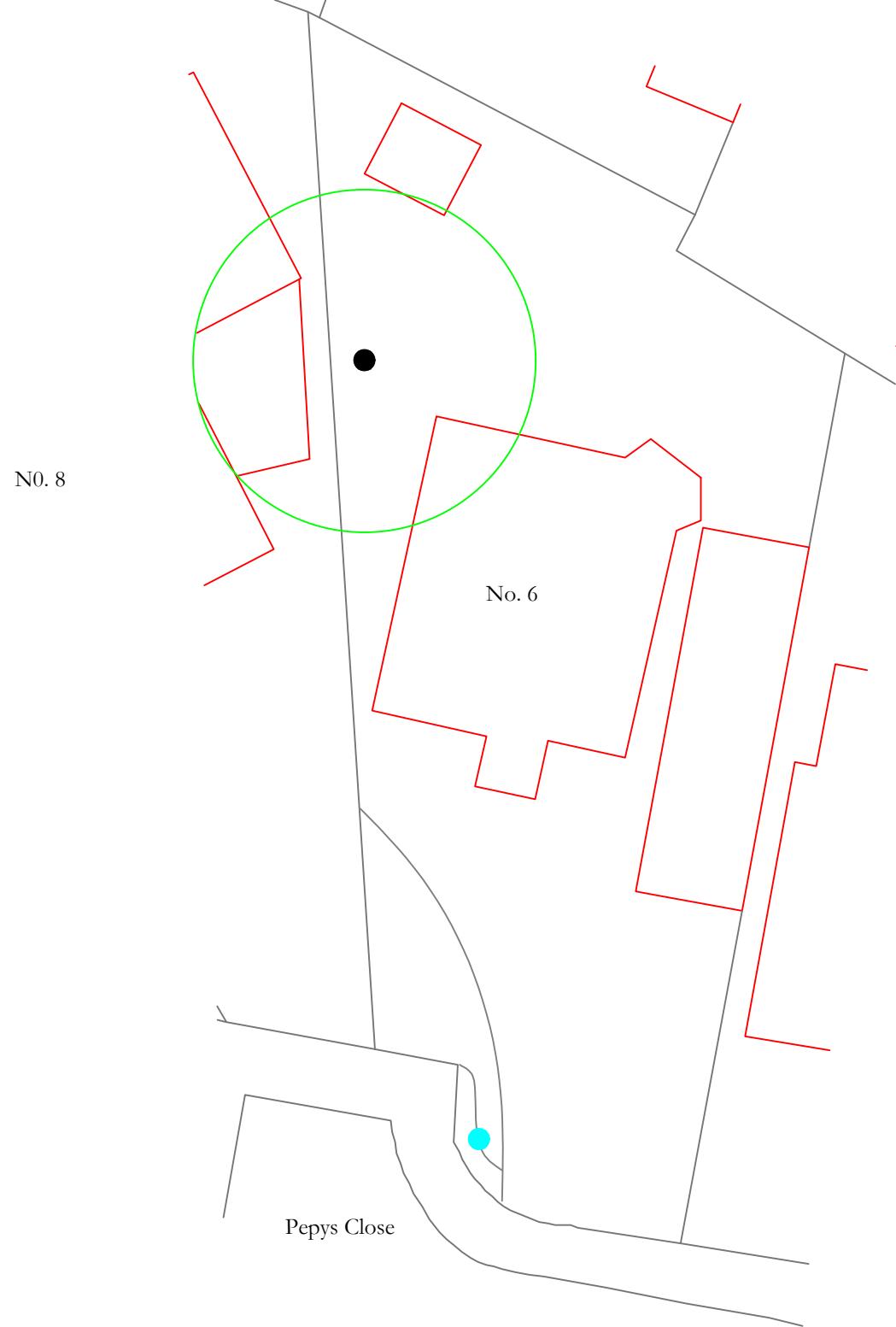
9 REPORT LIMITATIONS

9.1 The hazard of retained trees (or parts of trees) failing cannot be removed entirely, and by their very nature all retained trees pose a certain level of risk. This report is based on my assessment of the tree and the risk of it causing harm or damage through structural failure; it provides recommendations for management which I consider to be reasonable and acceptable in arboricultural terms.



PATRICK STILEMAN BSc(Hons), MICFor, MRICS, Dip.Arb(RFS), RC.Arbor.A
Chartered Arboriculturist. Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant

Director Patrick Stileman Ltd



TREE LOCATION PLAN

SITE ADDRESS
6 Pepys Close, Ickenham, UB10 8NL

CLIENT
Jo Fidgen

JOB REF
TI08032401

DRAWING NO
TI08032401.01

DATE
25/04/2024

Patrick Stileman Ltd
9 Chestnut Drive, Berkhamsted, Herts,
HP4 2JL 01442 866112

KEY

● Approximate position of tree stem

○ Indicative crown spread

● Proposed location for replacement deodar cedar

APPENDIX 1

Qualifications and experience of Patrick Stileman BSc(Hons), MICFor, Dip.Arb(RFS), RC.Arbor.A

I am Patrick Stileman, Director of Patrick Stileman Ltd Arboricultural Consultancy.

My qualifications in arboriculture are as follows:

National Certificate in Arboriculture *Nch(arb)*

The Arboricultural Associations Technicians Certificate *Tech.Cert (Arbor.A)*

The Royal Forestry Society's Professional Diploma in Arboriculture *Dip.Arb(RFS)*

In addition to the qualifications listed above which are specific to the field of arboriculture, I also hold an Honours degree in Environmental Science *BSc(Hons)*.

I hold chartered status, being a Chartered Arboriculturist and professional member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters *MICFor*. I am a professional member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors *MRICS*.

I am a Registered Consultant with the Arboricultural Association, a scheme for which I am also an assessor.

I am a trained expert witness, and hold the Cardiff University Bond Solon Expert Witness Certificate.

I am a member of the Royal Forestry Society.

I have been working in the arboricultural industry since 1994 and as a consultant since 2001. I am frequently instructed by professionals to provide advice and assistance relating to trees within the planning process; I have a wide client base in this field including developers, architects, planning consultants, and Local Planning Authorities. I am experienced with providing arboricultural input in planning appeals as written representation, informal hearing and public local inquiry.

I am regularly instructed to assist with tree risk assessments, and to provide guidance relating to tree safety. Past clients for this work include local authorities, schools, residents' associations, large organisations including zoos and estates, and private individuals.

I provide advice in relation to alleged tree-related damage to buildings. Clients for this work are typically domestic homeowners, but have also included local authorities. Other work that I undertake involves the provision of tree planting schemes; and advice relating to the general management of trees.

I have worked as an arboricultural expert witness for public and private sector clients in both civil and criminal cases.

Prior to running my current consulting practice, I was a partner in an arboricultural contracting business in which I was involved with the practical aspect of organising, and execution of contract tree work.