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Tree Report

- on the condition of a
Beech tree

At:-

West Hill Court
Millfield Lane
Highgate
London N6 6JJ

On behalf of:-

Faraday Property Management Ltd
3rd floor (West)
52-54 High Holburn,
London WC1V 6RL

Prepared by:

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Survey Date: 10th September 2014
Report Date: 6th October 2014
Project no: 675

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Beech tree (T1), located where shown on the plan included as Appendix A, has been reported as showing poor physiological condition for the last 10 years. As a result, an application was submitted to Camden council to fell the tree, which was refused
- 1.2** Having been informed that the tree could be unsafe, the owners and managing agents of the estate could be held liable if the tree were to fail. They have therefore commissioned a second opinion to either reinforce a second application to the council, or to suggest other appropriate measures.
- 1.3** The tree survey was undertaken, and this report has been prepared, by Simon Stephens MA Oxon, Dip Arb (RFS), MArborA, C Env, MICFor a Registered Consultant with the Arboricultural Association, with over 20 years relevant experience.
- 1.4** Documentation supplied:
 - Vivien Hodge report 18-07-2013
 - Letters from London Borough of Camden, dated 5-09-2013 and 16-12-2013
 - Spiraline letter dated 7-11-2013
 - Harraway Trees, report March 2014
 - Vivien Hodge advice dated 30-04-2014

2 SURVEY DETAILS AND SCOPE

- 2.1** Inspection of the Beech (T1) took place from ground level with the use of binoculars, sounding hammer and metal probe using the Visual Tree Assessment method (Mattheck & Breloer 1994). The presence and condition of bark and stem wounds, cavities, decay, fungal fruiting bodies and any structural defects that could increase the risk of structural failure were noted.
- 2.2** No internal decay devices, or other invasive tools to assess tree condition, were used.

3 OBSERVATIONS

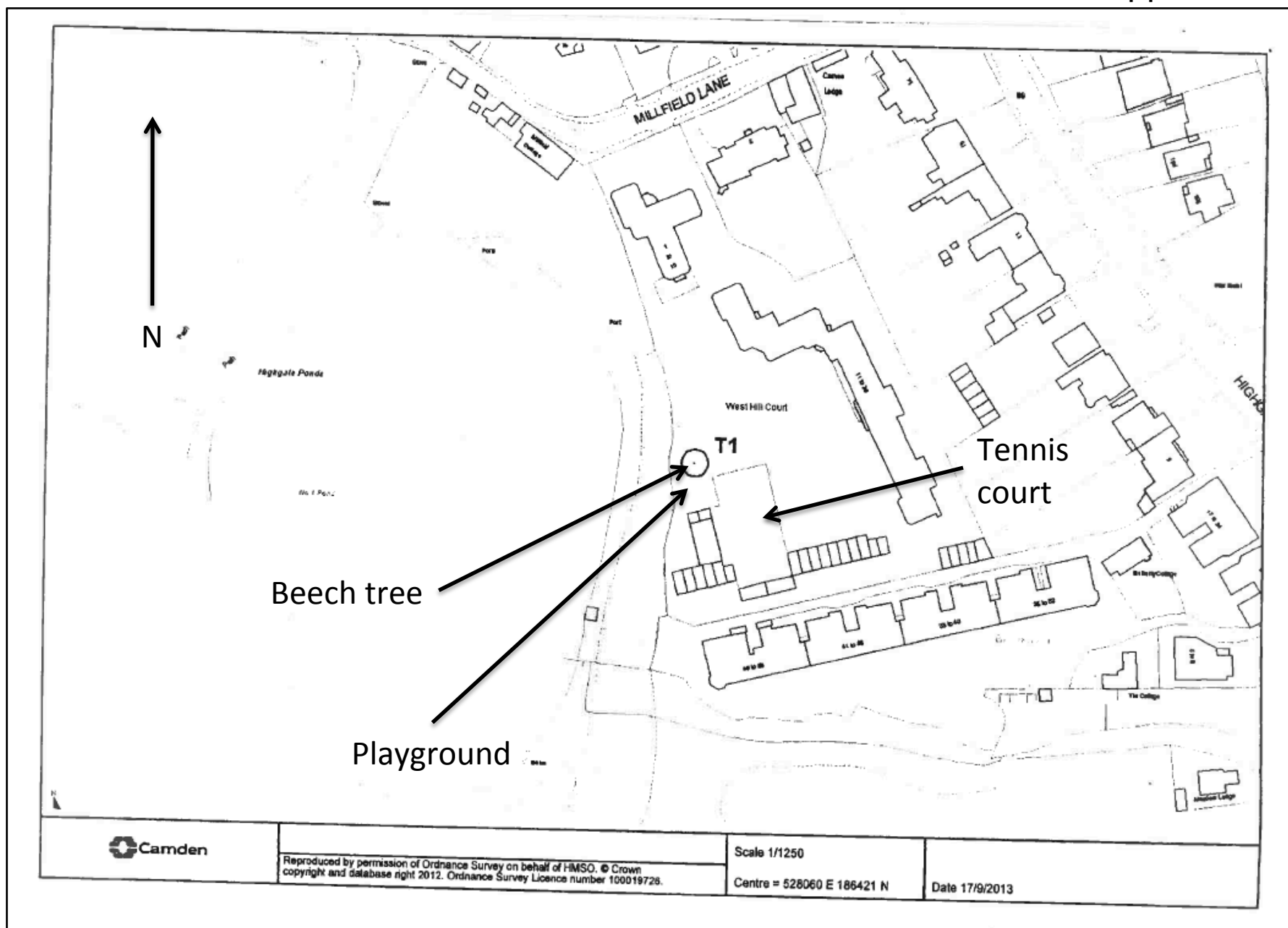
- 3.1** The Beech (T1) is early mature, with a height of 23m and a stem diameter, at 1.5m in height, of 910mm. The crown spread is approximately 18m.
- 3.2** The main stem has a slight lean to the north, however the crown is well balanced with lateral branches from the main stem of between 150 and 400mm diameter. There were signs of minor past crown reduction. There is a vertical bark crack to the east from 4.5 to 6.5m
- 3.3** There were occasional small patches of dead foliage in the canopy, and small dead twigs throughout. The leaf size was smaller than normal, with the crown overall being sparse, creating dappled, rather than dense, shade under the canopy. Photos are included in appendix B.
- 3.4** The majority of the area under the canopy is soft landscaping with small trees/mature shrubs and an area of lush grass around the stem. The majority of the area under the canopy is fenced off. There is a children's playground just outside the canopy to the south-east, shown in the photo included as Appendix Bii).
- 3.5** There were no signs of any decay or fungal fruiting bodies around the base, or signs of underlying decay when a sounding hammer was used.
- 3.6** Some limited soil excavation was carried out at two points around the stem of the tree, as shown in the photos included as Appendix Biii). Excavation to a depth of approximately 200mm did not reveal any signs of decay in major roots.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1** The tree is showing reduced vigour and, from the inspection records supplied by Vivien Hodge, clearly has done so for the last 10 years. However, as seen in the photos in Appendix B, the amount of die back is relatively minor.
- 4.2** The type of reduced vigour seen is typical of trees affected by root damage, drought, poor soil conditions or some other factor which is inhibiting the ability of the tree to take up adequate moisture and nutrients. There is no obvious cause in this case, although a fungal pathogen is a possibility. Although no fungal fruiting bodies have been observed at any time over the last 10 years, this does not rule it out.
- 4.3** From the inspection records, it appears that the vigour of the tree has been better in some years than in others, suggesting that there has not been steady, rapid decline but rather that the tree has been under continual stress but affected by seasonal conditions.
- 4.4** The limited soil excavation carried out did not show any signs of decay. Root excavation with an air spade would establish with more certainty whether there is decay to major structural roots. However, it would be much more difficult to establish the degree of dysfunction in smaller feeder roots and would inevitably cause damage to these smaller fibrous roots.
- 4.5** As suggested by Vivien Hodge, spreading composted bark/woodchip mulch under the canopy of a tree will provide additional nutrients, prevent competition for moisture from grass and herbaceous vegetation, prevent soil compaction and reduce soil desiccation in drought conditions. This approach has been used at Kew over recent years with good results.
- 4.6** The internal decay investigation undertaken by Harraway Trees did not show any signs of internal decay. The tree is well structured, without the excessively heavy lateral limbs or tight forks which one often finds with the species. There is no evidence of major branches breaking out to date.
- 4.7** The area immediately under the canopy has been fenced off and future management of the area can dissuade people from entering. There is one lateral limb, growing towards the play ground from the main stem at 7m to the south east – shown in the photo in Appendix Bi) - which could possibly threaten the area, but which could be reduced. Thus although there is a risk of a branch being shed, the chance of someone being underneath – particularly during high winds when failure is most likely – is not high.
- 4.8** The tree has a slight lean towards the north and with prevailing winds from the south-west, if it were to uproot it would be less likely to fall towards the playground and tennis court.
- 4.9** Minor crown reduction can make a significant affect on the wind loading of a tree and the resulting likelihood of failure.
- 4.10** This is an important tree providing high amenity value. It has not yet reached full maturity and, if there were not concerns about its health, it would be expected to remain for many decades.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1** Although the tree is clearly stressed, providing appropriate management is undertaken, I do not consider the imminent safety risk is sufficient to justify felling of the tree at this time.
- 5.2** The council do not consider felling of the tree to be justified and have suggested a further application is made with supporting information to demonstrate defects. At present, there is no new evidence that supports the case to remove the tree and any further application to fell the tree will almost certainly will be refused. It is unlikely that one would be successful in challenging such a refusal.
- 5.3** Instead, I recommend minor crown reduction and ongoing management as follows:-
- reduce the lateral branch growing from the main stem at 7m towards the play ground by 25%.
 - remove any major deadwood and reduce crown by approximately 10%, leaving pruning wounds of no greater than 75mm diameter.
 - spread 100mm well composted wood/bark mulch to the area under the canopy. No excavation should be carried out in installing any edging that might be required.
 - remove the table/benches, currently within the fenced areas, under the canopy, however the playground can remain.
 - alter the layout of paths so that none run under the canopy.
 - manage the grounds to put people off going below the canopy, through appropriate shrub planting and, in the short term, retaining the chestnut pale fencing.
 - continue to carry out annual arboricultural monitoring visits.
 - request that grounds staff look out for any signs of fungal fruiting bodies or for broken limbs and, if seen, request an additional arboricultural visit.
- 5.4** A tree work application will need to be made to the London Borough of Camden.
- 5.5** All tree work should be undertaken to the standards set out in BS 3998:2010 British Standard Recommendations for Tree Work.



Appendix Bi)





Appendix Biii)

