RMTTree Consultancy Ltd

36 Chetwode Place, Aldershot, Hants, GU12 4BS – Email: rmttreeconsultancy@gmail.com
Tel: 07921 313967

Tree Condition Survey

Site Address:
College Francais Bilinge de Londres
87 Holmes Road
London
NW5 3AX

Robert Toll
HND Urban Forestry - ND Forestry - MArborA

Ref: RMT561
Site Inspection Date: 15th December 2020
Date Report Published: 1st February 2021

Arboricultural ASSOCIATION
Professional Member
PRO2239

Contents

1. Direction

1.1. Instructions were received from Patrice Negros, who is the premises manager at the school, to undertake a tree condition survey of one Black Poplar growing within the playground of College Francais Bilinge de Londres, 87 Holmes Road, London, NW5 3AX.

1.2. The goal of the report is to assess the physiological and structural condition of the Black Poplar at the time of my visit, and to make management recommendations as appropriate.

2. Inspection details

2.1 The local authority has not been contacted directly to ascertain whether the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or if it is within a Conservation Area.

2.2 A check on the Camden Council online planning register indicates that the Black Poplar is protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) C169.

2.3 Trees protected by a TPO benefit from statutory protection and no work can be carried out to it (including cutting roots, branches or felling) without the written consent of the local planning authority.

2.4 There are exemptions within the statutory legislation that allow for the removal of deadwood and dead trees without the need seek consent from the local planning authority. It is recommended that in such situations where exempt works are to be undertaken the local authority should be notified as matter of courtesy.

2.5 It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Rights of Way Act to disturb nesting birds or roosting/breeding bats. When carrying out tree work care should be taken to avoid disturbance. If necessary, advice should be taken to avoid disturbance. If necessary, advice may need to be sought from a qualified Ecologist.

3 Scope and method of inspection

3.1 The inspection was carried out from ground level using the Visual Tree Assessment *(VTA)* system *(Mattheck and Breloer 1994)*. Visual tree assessment has been the standard method of assessment for the purpose of surveying and inspecting trees in the UK for several decades. The term describes a general approach to tree surveying using visual observation and recording, combined with experience and knowledge of tree biology and structure, to draw conclusions about tree condition and stability. The VTA system follows a standard process which guides the inspector from biological and mechanical observations through to diagnosis, using experience and knowledge of failure criteria.

3.2 No internal/invasive investigation was carried out to the Black Poplar. The conclusions in this report are based on observations from ground level and relates to general tree condition and evidence of site conditions and constraints.

3.3 A nylon hammer was used to strike the stem of the tree(s) to test for any noticeable sound changes which may indicate internal decay.

3.4 This inspection cannot predict the effects of unpredictable and extreme inclement weather conditions.

4 Observations, recommendations and photos

Tree/ Tag No.	Species	Height (m)	DBH (mm)	Canopy Spread (m)				Age Class
				N	E	S	W	
T1	Wild Black Poplar (Populus nigra ssp. betulifolia)	9m	1265	3	2	3	2	Over mature

Weather:	Sunny, calm.	Surveyed by:	Robert Toll

Observations/findings

General observations of Form and Vitality
- Good vitality demonstrated by normal leaf, bud and twig development;

Canopy
- Crown has been previously heavily reduced throughout (pollarded) at c8m agl with significant decay observed in pruning wounds;
- Fungal fruiting bodies observed in October 2020 within upper cavity at the pruning point on the main stem at c8m are consistent with immature Honey Fungus;
- Regrowth was removed on 19th October 2020;
- Various small openings with minor decay on primary limbs and within main unions;

Main Stem(s)
- Water runs in various locations on main stem indicates possibly linked to cavity formation;
- Various areas of bark necrosis on main stem;
- Various small openings with minor decay;
- Tonal change on northern side of main stem between gl and 250mm agl;
- Tonal change on southern side of main stem between gl and 250mm agl;

Buttressing
- Slimy white and light brown residue on north-eastern buttress at c100mm agl is consistent with recently removed or decayed fungal fruiting body;

Rooting Area and Root-plate
- Severed root at c400mm from western outer stem with minor decay;

Target considerations

- Growing within a school playground;

- The tree is within falling distance of the school buildings;

Considerations

General Points

- T1 Black Poplar is a specimen of great age;
- This tree is protected by a TPO and is visible from the to the wider public;
- The tree owners/managers would like to retain the tree if possible;
- There is visible evidence of decay and cavities within the trees structure;
- Roots have been previously severed;
- Striking with a nylon hammer indicates that there is decay in at least two locations around the buttressing and lower main stem;
- A previous branch failure in 2017 required the tree to be further reduced;
- It is generally accepted that Poplars do not react well to infection by decay fungus and the structure of their wood tends to deteriorate very quickly;
- T1 is located in a high target area;
- Photographic evidence of decay fungi Honey Fungus and Perenniporia fraxinea;

Honey Fungus (Armillaria spp.)

- Photographic evidence from a climbing inspection carried out in October 2020 indicates the presence of the decay fungus Honey Fungus (Armillaria spp.). Honey Fungus is generally found around the buttressing and rooting area of infected trees however on occasion it has been recorded much higher up main stems. The toadstools appear to be developing the characteristic collar below the cap associated with this fungus. The toadstools appear to be immature and this would be consistent with their time of fruiting in autumn.
- The explanation for the fruiting bodies being so far up the stem is that the cavity extends some distance down the tree which could be indicated by the various water runs. The cavity has filled with organic matter which has created ideal conditions for the Honey Fungus rhizomorphs to spread. The previous pruning works in 2017 have exposed the fungus to external elements causing it to fruit.
- Honey Fungus is a decay fungus which in advanced cases leads to root failure of the host tree. Additionally, this fungus can invade the cambium (vascular system just under the bark) resulting in areas of necrotic bark.

Perenniporia fraxinea

- Photos taken from a previous climbing inspection carried out in 2017 indcates the present of the white rot decay fungus Perenniporia fraxinea on the upper main stem. The intense decay of this fungus results in cavity formation and can lead to brittle fracture. Brittle fracture occurred in 2017 with a large section of the main stem failing.

Conclusions

- It is acknowledged that this tree is an old and significant specimen in the locale which is under the statutory protection of a TPO. The tree condition survey, complimented by the photos taken as part of a climbing inspection, show that this tree has several structural issues, including cavity formations, root severance and internal decay. The growing location of the tree within the school playground

means that there is a high frequency of targets throughout the year. The importance of retaining old historical trees is acknowledged however a dispassionate view must be taken on the risk that every tree poses to persons and property.

- On this occasion and in light of the issues detailed in this report, it is considered that the risks to persons and property from future failure outweigh the public, environmental and ecological benefits. It is considered that further management necessary to retain this tree would be so significant and damaging as to render the tree useless and would potentially result in its death.

- Taking these considerations into account it is considered reasonable and proportionate to remove this tree to ground level.

Work recommendations

- Remove tree to ground level and grind stump.

- Plant a replacement tree (if practical).

Priority/works to be completed by:

3 – 6 months

Resurvey to be complete by:

N/A

T1 Photos

T1 viewed from a westerly direction and the canopy has been heavily reduced (pollarded)

T1 viewed from a southerly direction with the location of the cavity indicated by the red arrow.

Immature Honey Fungus fruiting bodies growing in the cavity in October 2020.

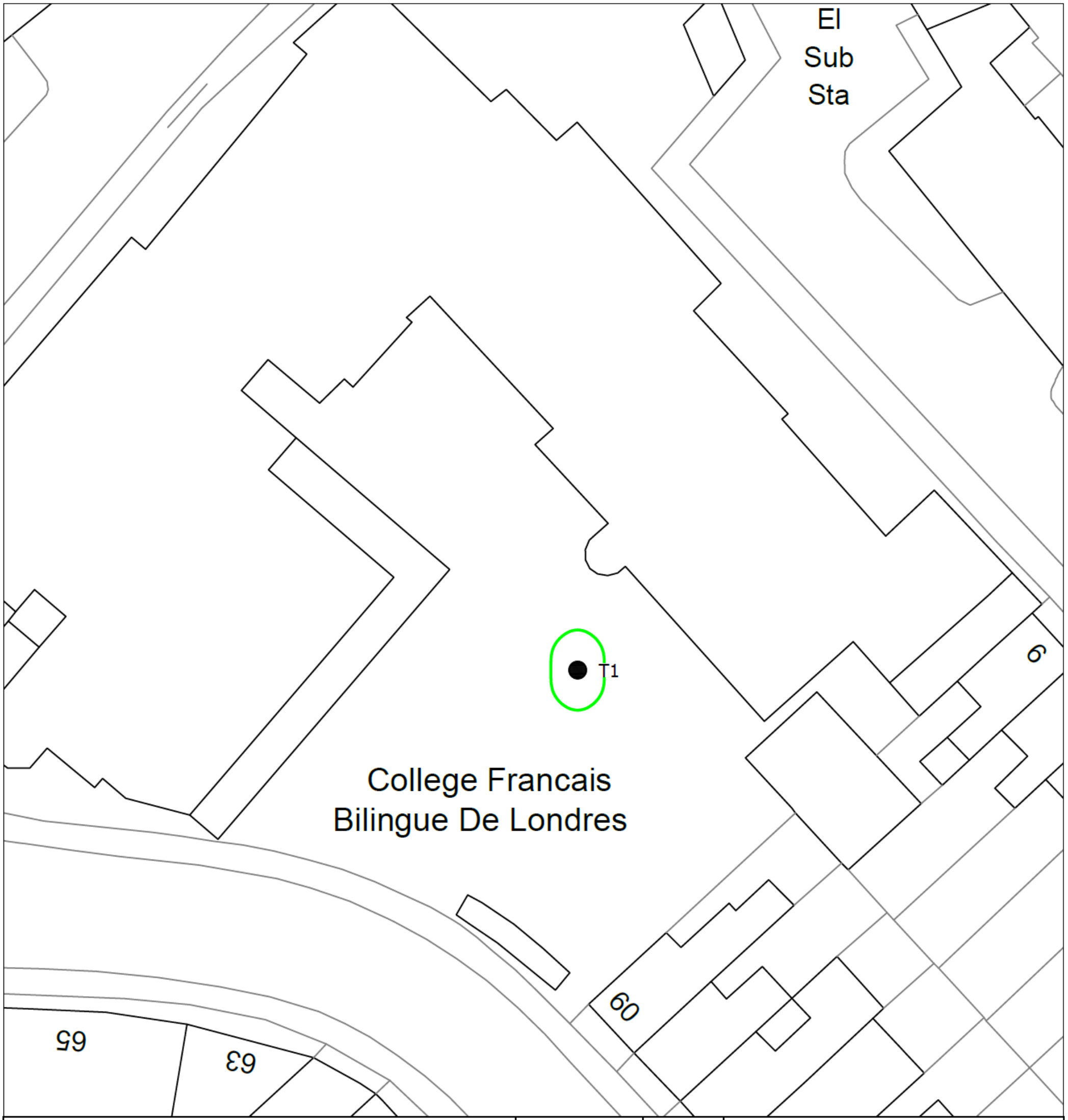
One of several water runs observed on the main stem.

Slimy white and light brown residue on north-eastern buttress at c100mm agl is consistent with recently removed or decayed fungal fruiting body.

Perenniporia fraxinea bracket on main stem (photo from 19th January 2018).

Severed root on western side at c400mm from main stem.

Appendix 1 – Location Plan – RMT561 – LP1



RMTTree Consultancy Ltd		Key	Address: College Francais Bilinge de Londres, 87 Holmes Road, London, NW5 3AX
Title	Location Plan	Tree Location	●
Drawing no.	RMT561 - LP1	Tree Number	T001
Scale	Not to scale	Canopy Spreads	○
Date	January 2021		

N

Appendix 2 – Glossary of terms

Physiological Condition Classification	
Good	A tree in good health which demonstrates good bud, twig and leaf development.
Fair	A tree in fair health which is demonstrating signs of less than expected bud, twig and leaf development, distal dieback and early indications of decay.
Poor	A tree showing serious decline demonstrated by characteristics such as poor leaf, bud and twig development, dieback, significant deadwood, and decay.
Dead	No longer living.

Age Classifications		
Young	Y	A tree considered to be less than approximately 20 years old.
Middle Aged	MA	A tree in approximately the first 1/5th of its normal life span with apical dominance (rapidly growing with a clear main leader) and not yet fully at its environmental potential full height.
Mature	M	A tree in its 2/5ths to 5/5ths of its normal life span with apical dominance lost and at its environmental potential full height.
Over Mature	OM	A tree beyond the normal life span for the location with apical dominance lost and with symptoms of canopy decline.
Veteran	V	A tree of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of its age and is old relative to others of the same species.

General Word Abbreviations	
AGL	Above Ground Level
GL	Ground Level
C	Circa
h x w x d	Height x Width x Depth

Priority of Works	Time from survey in which to have recommended works undertaken.
N/A	Non applicable
Minor	24 months
Moderate	12 months
High	3 - 6 months
Imminent	5 days

Appendix 3 – Qualifications and experience

Robert Toll has been working with trees since 2004 when he completed his studies.

In 2000 he began his studies at Riseholme College, Lincoln where achieved a pass with merit in Forestry at National Diploma level. In 2002 he attended Moulton College in Northampton where he gained a Level Five Higher National Diploma in Urban Forestry with merit.

In 2004 Robert began work as a temporary tree inspector at Northampton Borough Council, undertaking inspections of trees in response to enquiries from the public. After 4 months Robert took up a permanent tree inspector role at Coventry City Council which predominantly involved undertaking safety inspections of trees on school sites.

In 2006 Robert moved to Warwick District Council to take up a temporary post of Tree Protection Officer which involved reviewing old area tree preservation orders and identifying those trees which were considered worthy of protection under new specific orders. He also streamlined the council procedure for making new tree preservations orders, cutting the time from making to serving from up to 2 weeks to within 2 hours.

In 2008 Robert moved to Hart District Council, Hampshire to take up the role of Tree Officer within the planning department. This role included determining works trees applications, commenting on planning proposals, liaising with the public and providing arboricultural advice to other departments within the Council.

Between 2014 and 2016 Robert took up the role of Tree Officer at Elmbridge Borough Council, Surrey, once again carrying out tasks such as determining works trees applications, commenting on planning proposals and liaising with the public. While at Elmbridge Borough Council he passed the Arboricultural Association's Professional Tree Inspection course.

Since leaving local authority employment Robert has provided locum arboricultural assistance to several local authorities including Elmbridge Borough Council, Woking Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Rushmoor Borough Council.

Robert is a professional member of the Arboricultural Association.