Duty of Care Tree Inspection Report

Brook House Primary School



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Duty of Care Tree Inspection Report

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Inspection Date:	22/10/2026
Next inspection:	22/10/2028
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Overall Conclusion and Management Recommendations

T001 is a mature London plane of considerable amenity, environmental and ecological value. The tree displays good physiological vitality, although several notable structural features were identified, including historic dysfunction, substantial pruning wounds, associated regrowth and suspected fungal colonisation.

Following the recent branch failure, particular consideration was given to the condition of the remaining crown and the potential consequences of further branch failure within the school grounds.

At the time of inspection, no defects were identified that indicated an immediate concern or an unacceptable likelihood of failure under normal conditions. Although the recorded features warrant ongoing management, they do not currently justify emergency tree works or the exclusion of pupils from the area solely on arboricultural grounds.

On this basis, T001 is considered suitable for continued retention and normal use of the surrounding grounds, subject to the following management measures:

1. Passive Tree Risk Assessment

The school should promptly initiate a formal, site-specific Passive Tree Risk Assessment and implement appropriate operational precautions. This should incorporate the school's existing changes to pupil arrival and dismissal, management of outdoor activities during adverse weather, and procedures for recognising and responding to changes in tree condition.

2. Crown Reduction

The school should promptly commence the necessary arrangements, including obtaining Tree Preservation Order consent, to facilitate completion of the recommended crown reduction within three months of the inspection, by 22 January 2027.

Previously reduced crown sections should be returned towards suitable historic reduction points, while previously unreduced sections should be reduced by approximately 3 m.

These works are intended to moderate mechanical loading and provide a proportionate response to the tree's structural characteristics and previous management history.

3. Ongoing Monitoring

T001 should be professionally inspected annually, with additional inspections where significant changes in condition, further branch failures or other relevant circumstances warrant reassessment.

The school should continue to report new concerns promptly and implement temporary precautions where appropriate.

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Continued Use of the Grounds

There is no immediate arboricultural recommendation to discontinue normal use of the grounds beneath T001, provided that the recommended management arrangements are progressed and appropriate adverse-weather precautions are observed.

The recently impacted play structure should be independently checked for damage and any remaining fallen material safely removed before the equipment is returned to use.

The school's existing adjustments to pupil movement are positive examples of practical exposure management and should be incorporated into its formal procedures.

The overall recommendation is therefore to **retain T001 through proportionate arboricultural management, annual professional inspections and the implementation of a practical passive tree-risk management strategy**, rather than introducing unnecessary restrictions on the use of the school grounds.

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1. Scope & Purpose

This inspection has been undertaken to assist the Client in demonstrating a reasonable and proportionate approach to tree risk management in accordance with their duties under the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The survey comprised a ground-based Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) of trees within areas of the site that are accessible to staff, pupils, and visitors. The purpose of the inspection is to identify obvious defects and conditions that may give rise to a foreseeable risk of harm, and to provide recommendations where such risks are considered to be unacceptable.

This report forms part of an ongoing tree management process and should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Tree Risk Management Recommendations. It does not constitute a guarantee of tree safety.

2. Inspection Limitations

The inspection was undertaken from ground level only and represents a visual assessment of observable tree condition at the time of survey. No aerial inspection, invasive investigation, or specialist decay detection techniques were employed unless otherwise stated.

In some instances, access constraints, dense vegetation, topography, or built features limited the ability to fully inspect the basal area or other parts of the tree. Where such limitations were encountered, they are noted within the survey schedule and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Weather conditions, seasonal factors, and natural variability in tree condition may influence observations. All measurements provided are approximate.

3. Risk Management Approach

Tree risk has been assessed in accordance with a reasonable and proportionate approach consistent with guidance from the National Tree Safety Group.

The assessment considers three key components:

- the likelihood of failure of the tree or part of the tree,
- the likelihood of impact based on the presence and frequency of potential targets, and
- the potential consequences should failure occur.

These factors are considered collectively to inform management decisions. The aim is not to eliminate all risk, but to ensure that risks are reduced to a level that is tolerable and consistent with the benefits that trees provide.

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4. General Recommendations

The Client is advised to maintain a structured and ongoing tree management regime. This should include periodic formal inspections, supported by informal observations undertaken by site staff as part of routine site use.

Records of inspections, findings, and completed works should be retained to provide an audit trail of management decisions. All tree works should be carried out by suitably qualified and competent contractors, in accordance with current arboricultural best practice.

Trees should be re-inspected following significant weather events or where changes in site use may alter target levels. Inspection frequency should be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains appropriate to the level of risk presented by the site.

5. Prioritisation of Recommended Works

Recommended works have been prioritised to ensure that identified risks are managed in a manner that is proportionate, practicable, and consistent with the Client's duty of care.

Priorities are assigned having regard to the condition of the tree, the nature of any identified defects, and the level of potential exposure within the surrounding area. This approach enables resources to be directed toward those trees presenting the greatest foreseeable risk, while supporting the retention of trees where risks remain acceptable.

The priority categories are defined as follows:

- Urgent – A defect presents an immediate or imminent risk of harm. Action should be undertaken as soon as reasonably practicable, typically within 24–72 hours.
- Within 3 Months – A defect presents an elevated or increasing risk. Action should be undertaken in the short term to prevent the risk from becoming unacceptable.
- Within 12 Months – A defect presents a moderate and manageable level of risk. Works can be scheduled as part of routine maintenance.
- Advisory – No immediate action is required. Recommendations are provided for monitoring, good practice, or longer-term management.

These timeframes are indicative and may require review in response to changes in tree condition, site use, or external factors such as severe weather.

6. Alternative Risk Mitigation Measures

The recommendations provided represent the most appropriate and proportionate means of managing identified risks at the time of inspection. However, it is recognised that there may

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be operational, environmental, or financial considerations that influence how these risks are addressed.

Where appropriate, alternative or phased risk mitigation measures may be considered, provided that they achieve an equivalent level of risk reduction. Such measures may include temporary access restrictions, changes in site use, enhanced monitoring, or staged works.

Any alternative approach should be clearly documented to ensure that the Client's duty of care continues to be met in a reasonable and defensible manner.

7. Tree Health and Preventative Management

A proactive approach to tree management is recommended to support long-term tree health and reduce the likelihood of defects developing.

Appropriate management interventions, such as soil care, mulching, and sympathetic pruning, can improve tree vitality and resilience to environmental stress, pests, and disease. Over time, this can reduce the need for reactive works and contribute to a more sustainable management strategy.

8. Relationship to the Tree Risk Management Recommendations

This report should be read alongside the accompanying Passive Tree Risk Management document, which sets out practical operational measures to support the continued use of the school grounds, including adverse-weather precautions, pupil movement, supervision and procedures for responding to changes in tree condition.

9. Inspection Regime and Review

Tree inspection forms part of an ongoing management process. Trees within areas of higher use or occupancy should be subject to more frequent inspection than those in lower-use areas.

In addition to formal inspections, site staff should remain vigilant for obvious changes in tree condition (e.g. damage, movement, dieback) and report concerns for further assessment.

Inspection frequency should be reviewed periodically and adjusted where site use, tree condition, or external factors indicate a change in risk profile

10. Threat Category / Numbered Risk System

Each tree is assigned a numbered threat category to provide a consistent and proportionate indication of the level of tree-related risk identified at the time of inspection. The category is

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determined by considering three principal factors together: the size of the tree or part that could fail, the assessed likelihood of that failure occurring, and the presence and level of exposure of any potential target, such as people, buildings, vehicles or frequently used areas.

These factors are not considered in isolation. For example, a large branch with a low likelihood of failure may represent little risk where there is no meaningful target beneath it, while a smaller defective branch may warrant greater attention where it overhangs a frequently occupied area. The numbered category therefore reflects the combined significance of the potential failure and its likely consequences, rather than simply the condition or size of the tree.

Lower numbered categories represent lower levels of foreseeable risk, while higher categories indicate progressively greater concern and a greater need for monitoring, further assessment or risk-reduction measures. The system is intended to support consistent management decisions and prioritisation; it is not a prediction that a tree or branch will fail.

The colours assigned to threat categories correspond with the tree identification markers shown on the site map, allowing the relative level of assessed tree risk to be identified visually.

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11. Tree Survey Schedule

Ref.	Species	Description	Measurements	Overall Condition	Threat Category	Inspect Period	Recommendations
G001	Mixed species *(Mixed species)*	Young, newly planted trees in tree planting grids. No observable features of concern. Fair vitality.	Height (m): 5 Crown Radius (m): 2 DBH (cm): 10 Life Stage: Young	Fair	2. Minimum	2 Years	
T001	London plane *(Platanus x hispanica)*	Artificial turf and rubber safety surfacing surround the base of the tree. Buttress roots are well formed, with pronounced circumferential stem swelling (bottle butt) at approximately 1 m above ground level. Minor secondary growth is extending through the adjacent fencing. Moderate areas of dysfunction are present on several scaffold limbs, with associated woundwood development. A substantial area of dysfunction is also present on the roadside of	Height (m): 30 Crown Radius (m): 10 DBH (cm): 150 Life Stage: Mature	Fair	4. Moderate	1 Year	**Control Measures 1:** Reduce previously unreduced sections of the crown by approximately 3 m and reduce previously managed sections back to suitable historic pruning points. **Timescale:** 22-Jan-2027 (3 Months) **Control Measures 2:** Continue implementing passive tree-risk management measures for the use of the surrounding area. Monitor forecast wind speeds, gusts and adverse weather warnings, restricting access and outdoor activities where appropriate.

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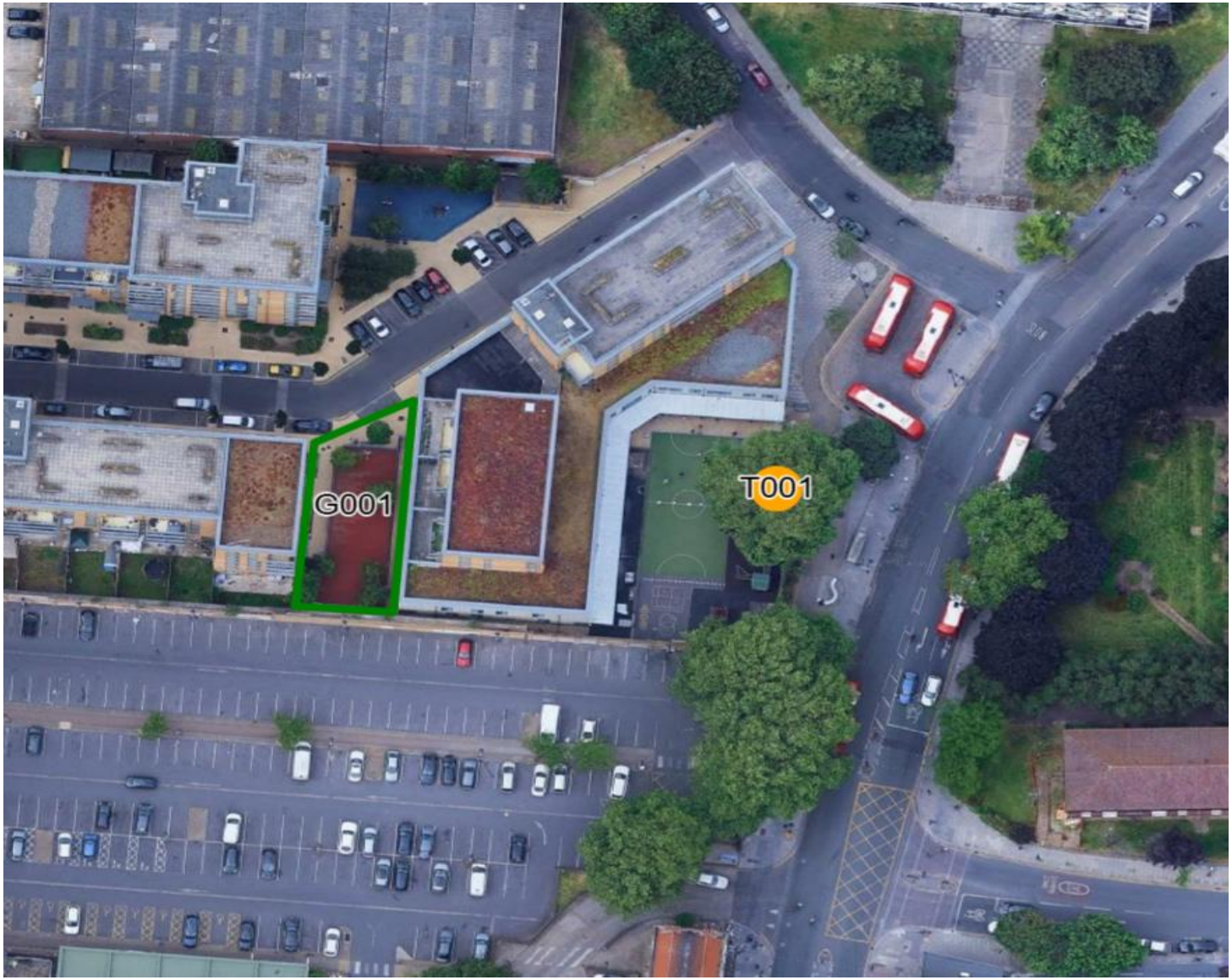
		the main stem, with woundwood formation and minimal externally observable decay. Fungal brackets, suspected to be *Fistulina hepatica*, are present on two primary limbs, one extending over the scooter storage area and another over the adjacent road. The crown has previously undergone selective reduction. Overall physiological vitality is good. Spore-like structures resembling those associated with Massaria disease were observed on the recently failed branch.					**Timescale:** Ongoing — Review by 22-Oct-2027 (1 Year)

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12. Site map

Work Due

- None
- Urgent
- Within 3 Months
- Within 1 year



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13. Key Terms

Active Assessment
A formal tree inspection carried out by a competent person, involving a structured visual examination from ground level and, where necessary, closer inspection to assess risk.

Advisory
A recommendation provided for good practice, monitoring, or long-term management where no immediate risk reduction is required.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
A planning and environmental framework requiring developments to deliver a measurable increase in biodiversity value compared to the pre-development baseline.

Branch Union
The point where a branch joins the main stem or another branch. Some unions are structurally strong, while others (such as included bark unions) may be weaker and more prone to failure.

Crown
The upper part of the tree made up of branches and foliage.

Decay
The breakdown of wood by fungi, which can reduce the structural strength of the tree even if the outside appears sound.

DBH
Diameter at breast height.

Defect
A structural or physiological feature that may increase the likelihood of tree failure, such as cracks, decay, cavities, or weak branch unions.

Dieback
The progressive death of shoots or branches, often starting at the tips of the crown, which may indicate stress, disease, or root problems.

Dysfunction
A general term used to describe when a tree or part of a tree is not functioning normally, including signs of stress, decline, or internal structural weakness.

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Duty of Care
The legal obligation placed on landowners and occupiers to take reasonable steps to ensure that people and property are not exposed to foreseeable harm.

Escalation
The process by which a tree is moved to a higher level of inspection when a potential risk feature is identified.

Facilitative Planting
A planting approach that supports existing and future trees by selecting species and locations that improve long-term resilience, continuity of canopy cover, and ecological function.

Fungal Fruiting Body
The visible part of a fungus (such as a bracket or toadstool) growing on or around a tree, often indicating internal decay.

Hazard Beam / Crack
A significant longitudinal crack or split within the trunk or major limb that may indicate internal structural failure.

Included Bark
Bark trapped between two stems or branches, preventing proper wood formation and creating a weak union.

Lean
A noticeable deviation of the trunk from vertical, which may indicate root instability if recent or increasing.

Microbiome (Soil Microbiome)
The community of microorganisms in the soil that support nutrient cycling, root health, and tree vitality.

Mulch
A layer of organic material (such as woodchip, composted bark, or leaf mould) applied to the soil surface around a tree to improve soil structure, retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, suppress competing vegetation, and support the soil microbiome

Best practice:
Mulch should be applied in a ring around the tree, typically 75–100 mm deep, extending as far as practicable (ideally to the edge of the crown spread), and kept clear of direct contact with the trunk to prevent moisture-related decay and pest issues.

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Obvious Tree Risk Feature (OTRF)
A visible structural or physiological feature that may indicate an increased likelihood of tree failure.

OPM (Oak Processionary Moth)
An invasive pest whose caterpillars feed on oak leaves and pose a public health risk.

Passive Assessment
Day-to-day observation of trees by site staff to identify obvious changes or defects.

Priority Categories
Timescales for recommended actions: Urgent, within 3 months, within 12 months, Advisory.

Root Plate
The structural root system at the base of the tree that anchors it in the ground.

Root Protection Area (RPA)
The area around a tree that should be protected from disturbance, based on trunk size.

Structural Root
Large roots close to the trunk that provide support and stability.

Target
A person, structure, vehicle, or area that could be harmed if a tree fails.

Tree Risk–Benefit Management (TRBM)
An approach that balances the potential risks of trees with the many benefits they provide.

Vitality
An assessment of the tree's overall health and ability to grow and respond to stress.

Wound
Damage to bark and underlying tissues that can allow decay to enter the tree.

Zone of High Consequence (ZoHC)
An area where people or property are frequently present, increasing the consequences of tree failure.

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