

Siobhan O'Connell
BHT Sussex Head Office
144 London Road
Brighton
BN1 4PH

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RE: Arboricultural Condition Assessment -54 Leylands Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 8AL.

PJC consultancy has been commissioned to undertake an arboricultural condition assessment of a single Oak tree (*Quercus robur*) within the ground of 54 Leylands Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 8AL. The purpose of this condition survey was to visually inspect the oak tree located in the east of the garden, as shown in figure 1 and 2, following recent limb drops onto Leylands Road. The oak tree is predominantly visible from Laylands Road and contributes to the local visual landscape.



Figure 1. Location of oak tree. (Copyright Google 2025).



Figure 2. Picture taken in August 2025 of oak tree from Laylands Road.

Site Survey & Survey Methodology

The arboricultural inspection was undertaken on 22nd August 2025 by Professional Tree Inspector qualified arboriculturist Nick Hollett. The survey methodology was restricted to a visual tree assessment from ground level. No tree climbing or ground investigation was carried out for this report. A sounding hammer was used to detect potential areas of decay or cavities. Binoculars were used where appropriate to assess the crown of the tree and primary canopy structure as foliage cover permitted. A metal probe was used to determine the extent and depth of cavities (if any). No invasive decay detection or specialist decay detection methodologies were utilised as part of this survey.

Tree inspection methodology is based on the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) practices as defined in the publication Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management by Dr David Lonsdale. This method has been applied to an area of land containing a significant population of trees and has been adopted accordingly. The guidance as set out in the National Tree Safety Groups publication 'Common Sense Risk Management of Trees,' has been used to inform the risk management strategy behind the tree survey methodology. Frequency of use, size and location of tree or defective part of tree, and likely users within target area have been assessed and used to judge the priority of works.

Findings

The oak tree reaches a height of 16 meters, exhibiting a crown spread that averages between 5 to 8 meters, while maintaining a ground clearance of 6 meters above Leylands Road. Its crown displays an asymmetric shape and is assessed to be in fair physiological health, characterised by a sparse foliage density and the presence of minor deadwood. The structural integrity of the tree's scaffold is also deemed to be in fair condition, although it bears several recent pruning wounds resulting from the dropping of limbs

Recent limb drops have occurred at 6, 9 and 10m, two of which can be seen in figure 3. The recent occurrence of limb drops in the oak tree is attributed to a phenomenon known as Sudden Oak Limb Drop, or Summer Branch Drop. This condition is characterized by the unexpected shedding of large branches from seemingly healthy, mature oak trees, often occurring without any apparent cause, even during calm weather conditions. It is believed that these branch failures are linked to internal weaknesses within the wood, as illustrated in figure 4, which shows a section of a fallen limb exhibiting signs of internal decay. The situation has likely been aggravated by an extended period of drought, which can lead to increased stress on the branches, resulting in internal cracking. Additionally, the presence of long, horizontal limbs that extend across Laylands Road contributes to the problem, as these branches bear excessive weight, particularly when burdened with summer foliage or acorns. This added weight further heightens their susceptibility to failure, making it crucial to monitor the health and structural integrity of these trees.

The sound produced by hammers striking the oak tree's stem suggests the presence of internal hollows, indicating potential decay or structural weakness within the tree. However, it is important to recognize that a thorough evaluation of the tree's internal condition, particularly at the junction where branches meet the trunk, cannot be accurately determined through external visual inspection alone. This limitation underscores the necessity for more invasive diagnostic methods, such as imaging techniques or core sampling, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the tree's health.



Figure 3: Picture taken in August 2025 showing two locations of recent limb drop.



Figure 4: Picture taken in August 2025 of internal decay within fallen limb.

Management recommendations

To address the significant stress and strain on the internal branches of the tree, it is recommended to undertake a crown reduction of approximately 40%. This measure is particularly important given the recent dry conditions, which have exacerbated existing weaknesses within the tree's structure, alongside the presence of internal decay. By reducing the crown, the overall weight and load on the compromised branches will be significantly diminished, thereby promoting better health and stability for the tree. This proactive approach not only mitigates the risk of further branch failure but also enhances the tree's resilience against environmental stressors, ultimately contributing to its longevity and vitality. It is advised that the tree be subject to an arboricultural inspection once every two years to review the ongoing management strategy.

Yours sincerely

Arboriculturist