



George Robert

Lemon Lumba LTD

Eastwood Court , SO51 8JJ

Date: 21st November 2025

Reference: WGCS/T1/VTA/2025

RE: Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) of Mature Oak at Grovelands Farm, Highbrook Lane, West Hoathly, RH19 4PL

Dear George,

Following my site visit dated **21st November 2025**, and completion of a **ground-level Basic Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)** of the mature Oak (T1) located at **Grovelands Farm**, please find below the full written report of findings.

This report includes:

- 1. A description of the site and surrounding conditions.**
- 2. A ground-level Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) of the Oak (T1).**
- 3. Observations on the tree's physiological and structural condition.**
- 4. An estimation of the tree's likely rooting area based on site conditions and stem size.**
- 5. Considerations regarding potential impacts from the proposed timber-framed garage.**
- 6. Practical advice on avoiding soil compaction and unnecessary disturbance during construction.**
- 7. Recommendations for monitoring, ivy management, and ongoing tree care.**
- 8. Statutory and ecological considerations relevant to any future tree work.**
- 9. Supporting photographs and a full tree data table.**

1.1 This assessment was carried out from ground level only and is limited to features visible at the time of inspection. No climbing inspection or internal decay detection equipment was used. While this is not a full BS5837 survey, relevant BS principles have been applied where appropriate to give practical guidance on tree protection during construction. The survey was carried out by an arborist with practical experience and tree survey training, but who does not hold a PTI qualification or Level 4 arboricultural certificate; observations are therefore based solely on a ground-level visual assessment and should be interpreted accordingly. The findings should be read alongside the survey limitations and caveats detailed later in this report.

2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF SURVEY

2.1 Purpose of Survey

The purpose of this survey is to provide a Basic Visual Tree Assessment (**VTA**) of a single mature Oak (T1) located at Grovelands Farm. The inspection was requested to assess the tree's current health and structural condition, and to offer advice regarding potential impacts from the proposed construction of a timber-framed garage. This report is intended to help inform safe working practices and highlight any



foreseeable constraints or considerations relating to the tree during the development process. It is not a full BS5837 survey but applies relevant BS principles where appropriate to the scope of a VTA.

2.2 Extent of Survey

This survey covers **one tree only**:

- **T1 – Mature Oak (*Quercus robur*)**

No additional trees were inspected.

2.3 Limitations

This report is subject to the following limitations:

1. **This was a ground-level visual inspection only.**
2. **No climbing inspection, internal decay detection, or invasive assessment was undertaken.**
3. **Ivy coverage restricted visibility of several unions and parts of the main stem.**
4. **Raised ground levels on the north-east side obscured the root flare and prevented accurate diameter measurement.**
5. **Stem diameter (DBH) was therefore estimated based on accessible measurement points and professional judgement.**
6. **No soil excavation or root examination was undertaken.**
7. **The findings reflect the tree's condition only at the time of inspection.**
8. **Weather conditions were dry, calm and overcast, providing good visibility.**

3. SITE DESCRIPTION AND OBSERVATIONS

The survey was carried out at Grovelands Farm, Highbrook Lane, West Hoathly, a rural property consisting of a driveway, domestic garden areas, open ground and a small number of structures. The surveyed Oak (T1) stands adjacent to the driveway.

A duck/chicken coop is located directly beneath part of the tree's crown, and both the car parking area and a single outbuilding fall within the tree's potential falling distance. Other structures on the property lie outside the area that would reasonably be affected by branch or whole-tree failure.

Ground conditions around the tree consist of mixed vegetation, including brambles and unmanaged grass. The ground level is raised on the north-east side of the stem, where historic soil build-up has accumulated against the trunk. This raised ground partially obscures the basal area on that side.

The wider property appears to be a rural residential or smallholding-type setting, with general domestic use of the grounds.

3 LIMITATIONS

3.1

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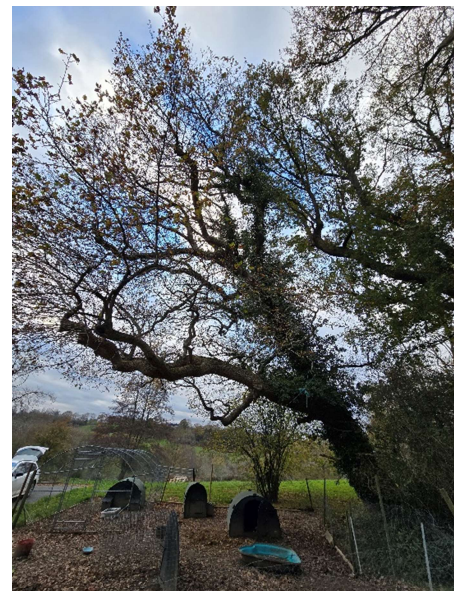
directly involved in this matter without the written consent of William Gordon Countryside Services Ltd (WGCS).

3.2

This report contains all my opinions at the time of inspection. Any representation or statements that have been, or may have been made, which are not specifically and expressly included in this report should not be relied upon, and no responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of such statements.

TREE DATA TABLE – T1 (OAK)

Tree Reference	T1
Species (Common / Latin)	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)
Height	15.5 m
Stem Diameter (DBH)	600 mm (estimated due to raised ground & ivy)
Crown Clearance	3.7 m
Crown Spread – North	5.2 m
Crown Spread – East	0.0 m
Crown Spread – South	10.46 m
Crown Spread – West	9.47 m
Age Class	Mature
Target – Coop	Directly beneath crown
Target – Car Park	10.1 m
Target – Outbuilding	16.24 m
Physiological Condition	Generally good for time of year
Structural Condition	Westerly lean, raised ground on NE side, basal Ganoderma brackets, historic pruning with reaction growth, deadwood typical for species, ivy obscuring unions
Remaining Contribution	20–40 years
BS Category (VTA Informed)	B1



5. TREE OBSERVATIONS AND CONDITION ASSESSMENT



The mature Oak (T1) was inspected from ground level as part of a Basic Visual Tree Assessment. The tree displays generally good vitality for the time of year, with no evidence of significant dieback or acute physiological decline noted during the inspection. Foliage density throughout the growing season has been consistent with what would be expected for a tree of this age and species.

Structurally, the tree exhibits a pronounced lean toward the west. This lean appears long-established and is likely the result of historical competition for light from adjacent trees, combined with the tree's own adaptive growth over time. The ground on the north-east side of the stem has been raised historically, with soil built up against the trunk in a way that obscures part of the natural root flare. This raised ground prevented a full inspection of the basal area on that side.

Fungal brackets, consistent in appearance with Ganoderma, are present low on the east side of the stem. Probing behind the area where the bracket was observed identified a shallow pocket of decay confined to the outer section of the stem, but firm wood was encountered beyond this depth. At the time of inspection, this decay did not appear to be causing significant structural compromise, although ongoing monitoring will be required.

Several older pruning wounds were noted on the lower southern and western limbs. These wounds exhibit normal reactionary growth, with callus tissue forming around the cut surfaces. Some exposed heartwood is still visible, with minor cracking that is typical of historic pruning rather than indicative of active decay. No major dysfunctional wood or cavities were identified around these pruning sites.

The crown contains a typical amount of deadwood for a mature oak. No deadwood was observed directly over the car parking area; however, some deadwood is present in other parts of the crown and should be removed where it poses a risk to areas of regular use, such as the duck/chicken coop beneath part of the canopy.

A significant amount of ivy is present on the main stem and throughout the crown. The ivy restricts visibility of several unions and prevents a complete assessment of their structural integrity; however, where unions were visible, they appeared strong and generally U-shaped.

The tree stands within falling distance of a duck/chicken coop directly beneath part of the crown, as well as the driveway and an outbuilding on the property. These targets increase the importance of regular monitoring and maintenance.

Based on the observations made during the inspection, the tree is considered to have a remaining useful contribution of between 20 and 40 years, assuming ongoing monitoring and appropriate management, particularly relating to the ivy cover and the development of decay at the base.

6. BUILDING IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

Based on a ground-level visual assessment, the proposed timber-framed garage is positioned at a distance where significant direct impacts on the tree's rooting environment appear unlikely. The estimated functional rooting area of the tree is expected to extend to around 8-10 metres from the stem, and the development lies outside this zone.

While no below-ground conflicts are anticipated, it is still important to consider general good practice to avoid inadvertent harm during construction. In my opinion, adopting a simple precautionary approach will help minimise the potential for soil compaction, disturbance or contamination around the tree.

To that end, it would be sensible to avoid storing materials, driving machinery or undertaking excavation within approximately 10 metres of the stem. This helps to reduce the risk of compaction and protects the soil structure within the tree's likely rooting area. These observations are offered as practical considerations rather than formal arboricultural directions, and they reflect the conditions seen on site during the visit rather than any detailed engineering or subsurface analysis.



With these general precautions in place, the proposed garage is unlikely, in my view, to have any meaningful adverse effect on the tree.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the ground-level visual assessment carried out, the Oak (T1) appears to be in generally reasonable condition for its age, with manageable structural features and no signs of acute physiological decline at the time of inspection. The tree has a long-standing lean and some localised basal decay associated with a small Ganoderma fruiting bodys, but the decay observed appeared limited to the outer wood during probing. Several historic pruning wounds also show normal adaptive growth, and the tree continues to produce seasonally appropriate foliage.

The presence of ivy throughout the crown and across parts of the main stem restricted full visibility of the unions and the basal area. For this reason, it would be beneficial to sever the ivy at the base to allow it to die back naturally, after which a clearer assessment can be made. Monitoring of the basal area and the suspected fungal activity is advised over time, particularly following periods of heavy wind or ground saturation.

In terms of the proposed timber-framed garage, the development is situated at a distance where substantial direct impacts on the tree's roots or structure are unlikely. A precautionary approach is still sensible, and it would be advisable to avoid storing materials, driving machinery or carrying out excavation within approximately 10 metres of the stem. This will help reduce the risk of soil compaction and minor disturbances to the tree's likely rooting area. These suggestions are offered as practical considerations rather than formal arboricultural requirements.

With routine monitoring, sensible ground protection, and the removal of hazardous deadwood where it is directly above areas of use, the tree should remain suitable for retention in its current location. A follow-up inspection is recommended once the ivy has died back, or sooner if any significant changes in the tree's condition are observed.

8. STATUTORY AND ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Areas

The Local Planning Authority has not been contacted as part of this assessment, and it has not been established whether the tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or whether the site lies within a Conservation Area. Before any tree work is undertaken, the appropriate checks should be made and any necessary permissions must be obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Protected Species

This assessment does not constitute a protected species survey. While no obvious habitats or signs of protected species were noted during the visit, only a basic ground-level inspection was carried out. Prior to any tree work, it is advisable to ensure that no protected species, such as nesting birds or roosting bats, are present or likely to be harmed. If any protected species are suspected, further specialist advice should be sought.



Photo B7 – Northwestern Aspect
Showing Lean and Ivy



Photo B1 – Basal Ganoderma
Fruiting Body (In Situ)



Photo B3 – Decay Probe Behind
Bracket



Photo B2 – Detached Ganoderma
Brackets



Photo B4 – Old Pruning Wound
on Lower Western Limb



Photo B5 – Old Pruning Wound on
Lower Southern Limb

Sincerely,

William Gordon

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