

Tree Technical Note

Client: Mr D Gibby

Site Address: 15 Ridgeway, Newport, NP20 5AF

Note by: James Pinder Tech Cert (Arbor A)

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Planning Application – 15 Ridgeway supplementary notes

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1. Introduction

This report has been produced to support the current application for the construction of one residential property on the land to the rear of 15 Ridgeway.

A previous application for two properties was refused planning permission but as part of that application a detailed BS5837 2012 Tree Report was produced. This is still relevant and is attached as Appendix 1.

In refusing the previous application the Delegated Decision Report made reference to comments and objections from the Ecology Officer and the Tree Officer. The purpose of this report is to address those concerns.

2. Site Location/Descriptions

The application site is exactly the same as the previous application and is still owned by my client. The fundamental difference is that this application is now for one property rather than two. The consequence of this is that the development does not take up as much of the site, is more central, and the impact on the surrounding trees and borders is much less than what was previously proposed.

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3. Site Plan and Arboricultural Implications Assessment

The site plan included in the BS5837 2012 Tree Report remains the same and is shown on the rear page. The proposed development area is now smaller and more central with no significant impact on any trees or borders. The Arboricultural Impacts Assessment remains largely unchanged but for ease of reference it is detailed again, updated where necessary.

1. T1 is a mature oak tree situated beyond the rear boundary line of the site within the protected woodland. The tree's rooting area is not influenced by the site. No alterations to the tree are required. This tree is easily excluded from the site.
2. T2 and T3 are off site birch species trees within an adjacent garden. Their rooting areas will need to be considered on site, but the trees are in excess of 10m from the dwelling now proposed. Protection of the rooting area can be achieved simply by retaining the mature boundary planting (G4) along this side of the site as a natural buffer zone and visual screen.
3. T4 is a street tree lime pollard belonging to Newport City Council. The pollarding of the tree by NCC suggests a potential low stem defect. Negotiating with NCC could enable a replacement younger lime tree within the verge at a greater distance from the site access. This would benefit the street tree planting, and the replacement tree could be located centrally in the soft verge meaning increased visual splay and a longer-term safe street tree within the verge.
4. T5 is a further street tree lime belonging to Newport City Council. No obvious defects are recorded. The tree's rooting area may interfere with services running past and into the existing site. Careful exploration and documentation of this area will be required to assess the influence of any changes on the trees rooting area. Shade cast by T5 does not affect potential build areas.
5. G1 is an adjacent cypress hedge. This hedge is in separate ownership and is highly likely to be retained by the owner as a visual screen. The rooting area for the hedge will extend into the site so any new access should factor this in. Further ground assessments for exact rooting extent within the site should take place.
6. G2 is a linear boundary shrub bed of mixed species. The length should be retained, and the bed utilised as a soft landscape buffer and tree protection zone for trees and shrubs along the boundary.
7. G3 is a protected woodland area. No trees are in close proximity to the site. It may be possible to utilise a natural clearing area in G3 for an attenuation pond location for surface water – ecological and pond advice should be sought. This feature must have no impact on T1. AWB should be used to indicate a suitable location away from mature trees in the protected woodland.
8. G4 and G5 are also mature shrub beds along boundaries. G4 is not impacted by the development now proposed whilst the effect on G5 is minimal. They should be retained and the bed utilised as a soft landscape buffer and tree protection zone for trees and shrubs along the boundary.

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4. Dead, Dangerous and Dying Trees

Immediately to the south of the proposed development area, in the formal part of the gardens to property number 15, there previously existed a large, mature red oak tree. One limb of this tree had fallen down in the past due to a structural defect, and the tree was the subject of a letter from the owner of property number 17 (Appendix 2). In addition to this my client had noted that the horse chestnut tree within what is now the proposed development area, together with a number of the larch trees, were clearly dead and in a dangerous condition. For these reasons the client sought my advice on what should be done with the trees.

Having viewed the red oak it was obvious that the non-tensile main fork was a potential danger to the area around the tree given below this highly loaded structural region of the tree, the tree was hollow. The basal cavity extending into a non-tensile fork was a safety risk so I suggested that the tree be removed on safety grounds. Had this tree still been on site, the tree would have been recorded as a U Category tree meaning its removal would have been required.

The dead horse chestnut was a danger to the site and has been removed to meet the landowner's duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957/84. The trees condition was discussed at the time with the NCC Tree Officer who agreed it should be felled. *Pseudomonas syringae* is the most likely cause for the concerns with secondary infection *Armillaria mellea* and also *Polyporus squamosus* meaning that structural support had been lost.

Phytophthora ramorum has been found in Larch (*Larix decidua*) across the UK. Larch trees in the garden were mostly dead (due to infection by *Phytophthora ramorum*). The disease is a characteristic of the species in maturity and occurs when grown in tight groups or lone trees. The trees had also been topped and were not structurally sound.

The disease is a notifiable disease and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) can serve a plant health notice on landowners to remove them to try and reduce the spread of the disease. NRW specifically state that: 'Cutting down trees (or 'felling') stops the spread of the disease.' If the infected trees are not cut down, the disease can potentially infect other species in the locality. In fact, with the prevailing winds being from the west it is quite likely that the trees on property number 15 could have been affected by the larch trees of the same age on the boundary between properties 13 and 13A.

Removing the odd completely dead tree would have created gaps meaning windthrow or storm damage from altered exposure to adjacent trees would also have been possible. The trees might have been visible from a distance, but they were showing poor physiology and structural condition close up. These would have been U or at best C category trees. Photos taken of the trees stumps after work confirms basal decay and staining from the various diseases present.

Various other cypress on site were remnants of old outgrown hedges. These had outgrown topping points, non-tensile forks, damaged branches and dead sections. Again, C Category at best.

Whilst I fully understand that people living near the site may have thought the trees looked better than they were, they had not seen the defects present in the trees close up. Appendix 3 contains a

sample of photographs of the stumps from the felled trees. In nearly all of the stumps there were obvious signs of major defects. These defects are cavities/hollowing, decay/rot and other basal defects. Their loss was inevitable and not as part of any development proposal. The removal of previous trees was because they were either dead, dying or dangerous and therefore exempt of TPO, Conservation Area or Forestry Act methodology. My client has a duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957/84 that had to be met, the trees had to be removed.

After my assessment of the trees, the client made the decision that the trees needed to be felled. This was in February 2024 but because of the imminent start of the bird nesting season the works were not programmed until October 2024. I understand that the NCC Tree Officer, Richard Baron, visited the site whilst the felling was being undertaken and was happy that the works should proceed.

5. Ecology

The trees that were previously removed were felled due to disease and structural problems. The oak tree had a significant basal cavity and poor low stem resonance. It was at risk of failure onto the existing houses. The garden species such as larch and Lawson cypress were large timber crop species and not suitable for gardens.

Drought stress and mutual suppression is why they were stressed and succumbed to disease/infection in the first place – the stumps showed decay and dysfunction in all of them. They were potentially 30m plus tall trees and planted very close/too close together. Hardly ideal circumstances to promote good growth form and create good trees. All the trees had been historically “topped” (Appendix 4), which makes it clear they had become unsuitable for a garden and that someone had to control the height of them. The trees had presumably been planted to frame a garden view but inevitably outgrew the location while still young due to the speed of growth. The topping created a number of other mechanical defects which could not be ignored such as wide scooping lateral branches prone to hazard beam failure. Had every defect tree been removed and just the odd tree left here and there, altered exposure as per table B1 of BS3998 2010 would have been a factor. Tree failures and wind snap would have been the obvious outcome.

No work has taken place within the woodland other than to place some of the timber from the felled trees there. This timber from previously felled trees is effectively a giant hibernaculum – something many sites simply could never have. The range of species that will use this will be incredible as it develops into a decaying mass. Reptiles and amphibians will like this. There has not been any habitat loss, if anything more habitat has been created in the form of the hibernaculum. This has added to the site, not taken anything away.

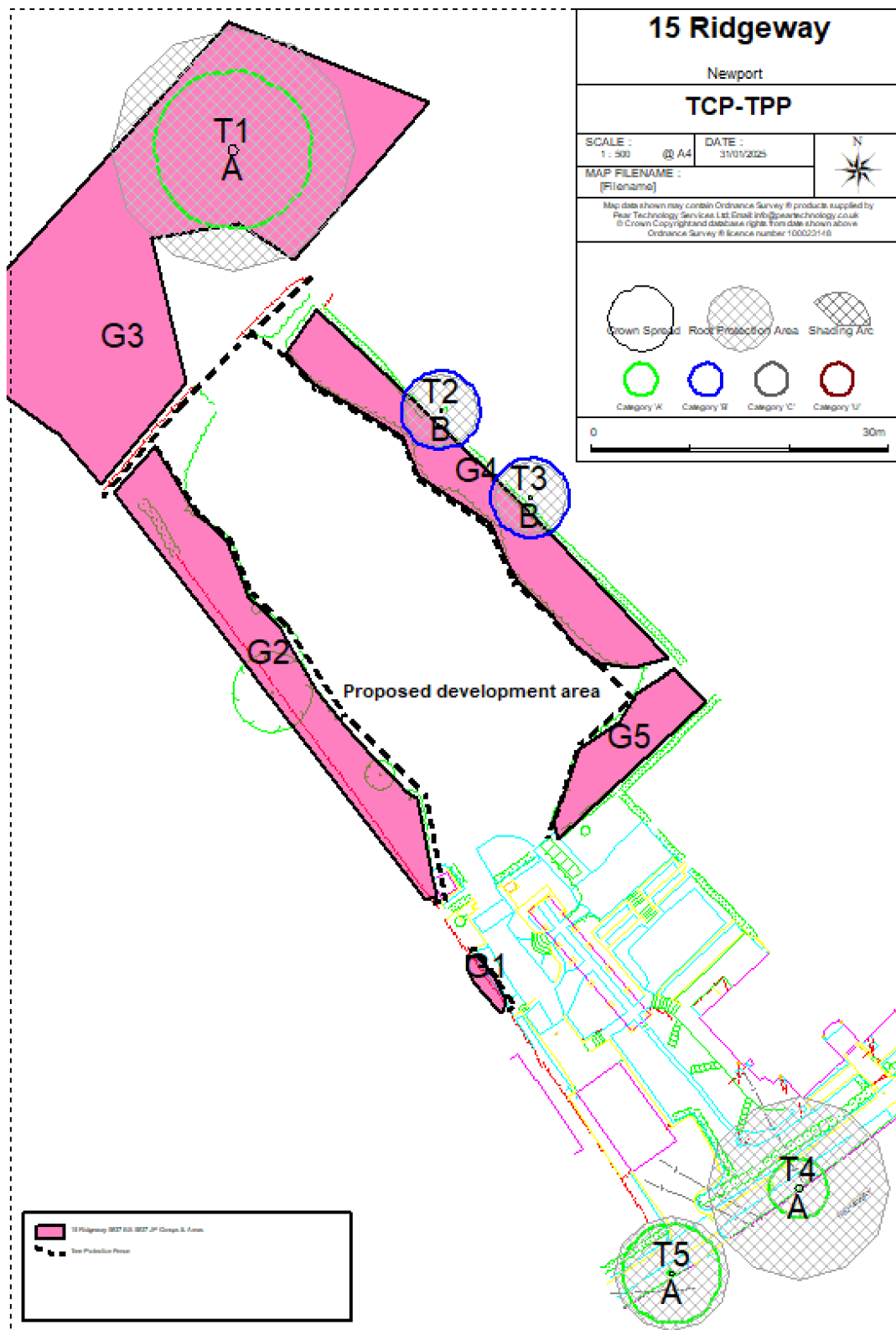
Given the species removed were forestry plantation trees, there is also no ecological loss – nothing lives in coniferous forests as the needles acidify the soils creating a sterile environment that removes potential habitat, not increase it. Natural self-set regeneration will occur within the woodlands (G3). This regeneration will replace any perceived loss of trees locally and bolster the protected woodland tree stock numbers.

6. Summary of site findings

Tree Technical Note

There were clear reasons for all the tree removals on site. All trees suitable for retention have been retained. We cannot forget that the trees were originally part of a previous outgrown garden layout. They were not planted for wider public amenity like a parkland tree area. They were not suited to the location, were dead, dying, diseased, dangerous and posed a threat to adjacent properties. The Occupiers Liability Act 1957/84 states quite clearly why a land owner has a duty of care to neighbours.

7. Site Plan



17 Ridgeway

Newport

02/07/2023

Dear Carolyn,

I hope you and your family are well and enjoying the summer?

I am writing to you with regards the condition of the Red Oak tree situated in the rear garden of 15 Ridgeway, Newport.

If you recall, some years ago part of the tree fell onto my garden causing significant damage. I now believe that between the remaining trunks of the tree there is evidence of further deterioration and my concern is that should the most easterly trunk fall, extensive damage will be caused to the hard and soft landscaping in my garden.

I would kindly suggest that you seek the advice of a qualified arboriculturalist or alternatively, a qualified tree surgeon, to assess the condition of the tree. A tree surgeon I have used in the past and would be happy to recommend is AJR Treesurgery, contact details:

Adrian Johnson-Reynolds,
17 Bernard Street
Cwmcarn
Newport
NP11 7EE
T: 01495 270160/ M: 07734 930172

I kindly await your comments.

Yours sincerely,

Brian

Brian Turner





Why Topping Hurts Trees

Learn why topping is not an acceptable pruning technique and discover recommended alternatives.



Topping is perhaps the most harmful tree pruning practice known. Yet, despite more than 25 years of literature and seminars explaining its harmful effects, topping remains a common practice.

What is Topping?

Topping is the indiscriminate cutting of tree branches to stubs or to lateral branches that are not large enough to assume the terminal role. Other names for topping include “heading,” “tipping,” “hat-racking,” and “rounding over.”

Topping is often used to reduce the size of a tree. A homeowner may feel that a tree has become too large for his or her property, or that tall trees may pose an unacceptable risk. Topping, however, is not a viable method of height reduction and certainly does not reduce future risk. In fact, topping will increase risk in the long term.

Topping is cutting branches back to stubs or lateral branches not large enough to sustain the remaining branch.



Topping Stresses Trees

Topping can remove 50 to 100 percent of a tree’s leaf-bearing crown. Leaves are the food factories of a tree. Removing them can temporarily starve a tree and trigger various survival mechanisms. Dormant buds are activated, forcing the rapid growth of multiple shoots below each cut. The tree needs to put out a new crop of leaves as soon as possible. If a tree does not have the stored energy reserves to do so, it will be seriously weakened and may die.

A stressed tree with large, open pruning wounds is more vulnerable to insect and disease infestations. The tree may lack sufficient energy to chemically defend the wounds against invasion, and some insects are actually attracted to the chemical signals trees release.

Topping Leads to Decay

Correct pruning cuts are made just beyond the branch collar at the point of attachment. The tree is biologically equipped to close such a wound, provided the tree is healthy enough and the wound is not too large. Cuts made along a limb between lateral branches create stubs with wounds that the tree may not be able to close. The exposed wood tissues begin to decay. Normally, a tree will “wall off,” or compartmentalize, the decaying tissues, but few trees can defend the multiple severe wounds caused by topping. The decay organisms are given a free path to move down through the branches.

Leaving a stub maintains an open pathway to decay.



Topping Can Lead to Sunburn

Branches within a tree’s crown produce thousands of leaves to absorb sunlight. When the leaves are removed, the remaining branches and trunk are suddenly exposed to high levels of light and heat. The result may be sunburn of the tissues beneath the bark, which can lead to cankers, bark splitting, and death of some branches.

Topping Can Lead to Unacceptable Risk



New shoots develop profusely below a topping cut.

The survival mechanism that causes a tree to produce multiple shoots below each topping cut comes at great expense to the tree. These shoots develop from buds near the surface of the old branches. Unlike normal branches that develop in a socket of overlapping wood tissues, these new shoots are anchored only in the outermost layers of the parent branches and are weakly attached.

The new shoots grow quickly, as much as 20 feet (6 m) in one year in some species. Unfortunately, the shoots are prone to breaking, especially during windy or icy conditions. While the original goal was to reduce risk by reducing height, risk of limb failure has now increased.

Topping Makes Trees Ugly

The natural branching structure of a tree is a biological wonder. Trees form a variety of shapes and growth habits, all with the same goal of presenting their leaves to the sun. Topping removes the ends of the branches, often leaving ugly stubs. Topping destroys the natural form of a tree. Without leaves (for up to six months of the year in temperate climates), a topped tree appears disfigured and mutilated. With leaves, it is a dense ball of foliage, lacking its simple grace. A tree that has been topped can never fully regain its natural form.

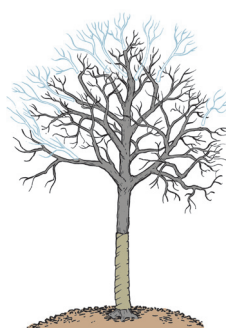
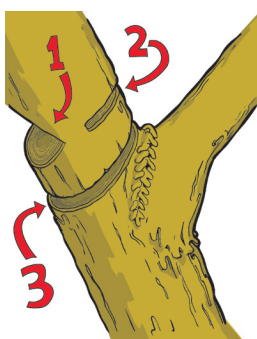
Topping Is Expensive

The cost of topping a tree is not limited to only the job cost. Some hidden costs of topping include:

- Increased maintenance costs. If the tree survives, it will likely require corrective pruning within a few years (e.g., crown reduction or storm damage repair). If the tree dies, it will have to be removed.
- Reduced property value. Healthy, well-maintained trees can add 10 to 20 percent to the value of a property. Disfigured, topped trees are considered an impending expense.
- Increased liability potential. Topped trees may pose an unacceptable level of risk. Because topping is considered an unacceptable pruning practice, any damage caused by branch failure of a topped tree may lead to a finding of negligence in a court of law.

Alternatives to Topping

Sometimes a tree must be reduced in height or spread, such as for providing utility line clearance. There are recommended techniques for doing so. Small branches should be removed back to their point of origin. If a larger limb must be shortened, it should be pruned back to a lateral branch that is large enough (at least one-third the diameter of the limb being removed) to assume the terminal role. This method of branch reduction helps to preserve the natural form of the tree. However, if large cuts are involved, the tree may not be able to close over and compartmentalize the wounds. Sometimes the best solution is to remove the tree and replace it with a species that is more appropriate for the site.



Proper branch reduction preserves natural form.

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