

Fox wood Garden Village, Whiston

Treatment of boundary sycamore

Project	Fox Wood Garden Village (Halsnead Park)	Purpose	To present the results of an inspection of an individual sycamore tree following boundary wall removal		
Location	Whiston				
Client	Taylor Wimpey				
Doc Ref	Version	Authored	Checked	Date	
7137.09.001	1.0	JGS	TDP	09/07/2025	

Scope

- 1.1

This note presents the results of an inspection of a sycamore tree on the eastern boundary of the Fox Wood Garden Village development, undertaken by TEP arboriculturist Jonathan Smith on 3rd July 2025. The tree was recorded as part of group G13 in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (reference 7137.001, Version 8.0, March 2022) that supported the planning application and was proposed for retention.
- 1.2

The tree is middle-aged and is basally multi-stemmed, having self-seeded at the base of a sandstone wall within which the trees eastern root structure has become entwined. The final boundary treatment adjacent to the tree has been the subject of much debate, as the ground beneath and surrounding the existing stone wall contains roots on which the tree will rely for healthy function and stability. A proposal to replace the old wall and footings with a more contemporary stone wall has therefore been amended to the removal of the wall and replacement with a hedge.

The purpose of the current inspection was to assess the tree following partial removal of the existing wall. TEP was not present during the wall’s removal.

Observations

- 1.3

The tree is of moderate quality (Category B in accordance with BS 5837) and representative of an average middle-aged sycamore. Its principal value is its contribution to the greening of Fox’s Bank Lane for the visual amenity of road users. It is not in itself remarkable.
- 1.4

The tree is in good overall health despite the recent wall demolition and residential development, including ground level build-up, that has occurred beyond its western canopy extents. Now that most of the old wall has been removed, the precise interaction of the tree and the former structure is visible. The first three courses of the wall had acted to retain the soil in which the sycamore

has established, resulting in tree root growth into soil filled voids in the wall and the exposure of these buttress and surface roots following the walls removal. Viewed from the east, north and south, the tree now sits on a small pedestal of earth and remnant stones that couldn't be removed due to root encirclement. The exact extent of excavation employed to remove any footings of the old wall is not known but is indicated by the extent of bare ground visible on Photo 4.

- 1.5 On examination, the tree is not at risk of imminent collapse, as a large proportion of its root structure to the west, south-west and north-west is thought to remain in-tact. The tree is also not of sufficient stature to attract large loading forces from the wind, and it somewhat sheltered by the higher ground to west. The effects of the surrounding soil and root disturbance are unlikely to manifest until summer 2026, when some degree of decline in shoot vigour may become apparent due to loss and disturbance of the fine root mass responsible for water and nutrient uptake.
- 1.6 The tree is currently less than half its mature stature and will require cyclical pruning as it matures to maintain statutory safety clearances from a low-voltage powerline running north-south adjacent to the trees western canopy.
- 1.7 The position of the tree close to the site boundary and the fact that it's eastern root system is entwined with the remnants of the former wall preclude the installation of any substantial boundary treatment, including a new wall or hedge. This juxtaposition is shown in Photo 4. It demonstrates that it would not be possible to cultivate the ground to the east of the tree to allow for the establishment of a new hedge without further excavation and removal of tree roots that would effectively undermine the stem.

Recommendations

- 1.8 Based on the benefits of the sycamore tree, which are limited to greening and amenity inherent in all trees; it's self-set origin that ultimately led to the displacement of the old wall; the fact that it obstructs the installation of new boundary feature; and the foreseeable maintenance issues in relation to the adjacent powerline, we recommend:
 - Removing the sycamore and grinding out main root ball prior to backfilling with good quality topsoil.
 - Cleansing of the soft ground to the west of the recent wall removal, removing debris and weed control.
 - Planting of c. 20m of a mixed native species hedge between the new wall pillar to the retained section of stone wall in the south. This should be undertaken in late autumn/winter 2025.
 - Planting of 2 field maple (*Acer campestre*) in the ground to the west of the hedge. These will recreate the green screen lost by the removal of the sycamore but avoid long-term interference with the power lines. New trees should be of extra-heavy standard nursery stock and be subject to ongoing maintenance for up to 5 years to ensure their establishment. They should be planted in late autumn/winter 2025.

Photographs



Photos 1 and 2: Before and after the removal of old boundary wall



Photo 3: View west following removal of old boundary wall (new wall right of frame)



Photo 4: View north of tree growing over development boundary