

Tree Risk Appraisal
***John The Baptist Church, Dowling Street,
Rochdale OL11 1EX***



ROWBOTTOM'S TREE SERVICES LTD

INDEPENDENT ARBORICULTURAL CONSULTANCY

Ref: RTS/TRAQ/11062026 02

Date: 11th June 2026

Head Office: Cheddleton Lodge, West Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 3FB.
T: 07778 277200 E: bill@rowbottoms-tree-services.co.uk Web: www.rowbottoms.co.uk
Company Reg No: 4862189 VAT No 184 3636 88

Summary

In order to comply with duty of care the site manager of John The Baptist Church has commissioned this tree survey to assess one Elm tree for its potential to cause risk of harm within a time frame of one year.

The overall risk of harm level was found to be high. Recommendations to mitigate the present risk posed by the tree and reduce the risk to an acceptable level are noted in the Recommendations at section 5.

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1 Instruction:** As the tree assessor, I am instructed by the site manager of John The Baptist Church to undertake a TRAQ level 2 basic assessment, (see appendix 3), of one Elm tree located in the church grounds, adjacent to the front boundary. The report aims to provide the site manager with a qualitative tree risk assessment of the tree, as assessed in relation to the site conditions present at the time of inspection.
- 1.2 Qualifications and experience:** I have based this report on my site observations and the information provided and have come to conclusions informed by my experience. My experience and qualifications in arboriculture are listed in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Documents and information provided:** No documentation has been provided. The church's site manager has merely requested that I inspect the Elm tree for condition and to advise on any foreseeable risk that it may pose.
- 1.4 Scope of this report:** This report takes the form of a basic non-invasive visual assessment of the tree from ground level using simple tools (binoculars, steel probe and sounding mallet). I inspected the tree for signs of physical damage, structural, physiological and disease defects in order to make an assessment of the likelihood of tree failure within the given time frame. After noting the tree's age and general condition the time frame for this assessment is established at; one year. All the criteria of assessment used the evidence available at the time of inspection as the bases for the evaluation of targets, site factors and defects. Target occupancy rates in particular have relied on observations at the time of inspection and any information supplied by the site manager. If after inspecting the tree it is considered that a more in-depth inspection is required, (advanced assessment level 3 not included in the fee costs of this report), such would be advised in the recommendations section. The report includes an assessment based on the site visit and the information requested in 1.3 above. It should be noted that this report takes no account of any indirect structural damage that may arise to buildings as a result of tree induced soil volume changes. Such damage can occur to buildings built on shrinkable clay sub-soils and will be more prevalent during prolonged drought conditions. Also, this report does not take into account damage to drains, underground services and light structures that may be due to tree root activity. If damaged, drains can allow roots to penetrate them. If, however, they are in good repair tree roots have little capacity to access them. A drainage expert could give more advice.

1.5 Climate: The temperate climate of the Manchester / Northwest area does not often experience extreme weather conditions. The mean wind speed for the region – *annual average: 1991 – 2020 is recorded as 8 to 10 knots (10 mph, force 3, a gentle breeze), with a maximum recorded sustainable wind speed of 46 knots (53 mph, force 9 a strong gale); (7.3).* Stronger wind gusts do occasionally occur up to force 10, 55 to 63 mph. The likelihood of tree failure assessment is based on these expected normal weather conditions. Should wind speeds reach in excess of force 10 (force 11, 64mph and above) then failure of defect free trees can be expected. The statements made in this report do not take account of the effects of extremes of climate.

1.6 Classifying likelihood of failure: The likelihood of tree failure is classified based on an evaluation of defects and structural condition of the tree or its parts, expected loads, site conditions and local weather within the given time frame. The definitions of likelihood of failure are;

Imminent	Failure has started or is most likely to occur in the near future, even if there is no significant wind or increased load. The imminent category overrides the time frame and is stated in the scope of work.
Probable	Failure may be expected under normal weather conditions within the specified time frame.
Possible	Failure may be expected in extreme weather conditions, but is unlikely during normal weather conditions within the specified time frame.
Improbable	The tree or tree part is not likely to fail during normal weather conditions and may not fail in extreme weather conditions within the specified time frame.

1.7 Sudden Branch Drop (SBD): Sometimes known as summer branch drop; this is a phenomenon that occurs unexpectedly in calm conditions and high temperatures. It is not well understood and occurs without wind usually after heavy rain fall following a prolonged dry spell, predominantly in the late afternoon or early evening. Branch failure typically occurs a short distance from the branch union of large horizontally growing branches. Typical trees affected by SBD are; Lebanese cedar *Cedrus libani*, English oak *Quercus robur*, Sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Common ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Poplar *Populus spp*, Willow *Salix spp* and Horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*. At this time, it is not possible to predict failure or mitigate risk due to SBD.

2. Site visit and observations:

- 2.1 Site visit:** I carried out an unaccompanied site visit on 11th June 2026. All my observations were basic visual inspections from ground level. When thought appropriate, non-invasive simple tools were used as listed in 1.4 above. The weather at the time of inspection was dry and slightly overcast, visibility was acceptable to proceed with the tree survey.
- 2.2 Brief site description:** John the Baptist Church (a grade II listed landmark building) is located in Rochdale town centre. Main vehicle access to the church carpark is via the southern boundary off Dowling Street. Mature trees border the south, west and north perimeters of the carpark.
- 2.3 Identification and location of the trees:** The assessed Elm tree is located adjacent to the southern boundary wall of the church grounds, close to the southwest corner of the church building. Its approximate location is illustrated on the Tree Location Plan 002. All the relevant information pertaining to the tree is contained within this report.
- 2.4 Tree observations:** I visually inspected the tree and recorded the information on a tree risk assessment form. The recorded synopsis of the tree information is noted in the Tree Schedule at appendix 6.

3. Appraisal:

3.1 Site: The following site information was observed at the time of tree inspection. No other site occupancy rates were communicated to me.

1. The target occupancy rate of people in the church grounds and on the adjacent public pavement: - *Frequent*.
2. The target occupancy rate of parked vehicles and moving traffic on the Dowling Street highway: - *Constant*.
3. The target occupancy rate of building structures: - *Constant*.

I have relied on this site information to estimate target occupancy rates (see appendix 4) and to obtain an understanding of the general site conditions. If the site manager considers the above not to be a fair representation of target occupancy rates, they should bring this to my attention. The target assessment notes and noted site factors are listed in the Tree Schedule at appendix 6.

3.2 Trees: I undertook a methodical visual assessment of the tree. My assessment of each tree part of concern is listed in the Tree Schedule at appendix 6. At this stage my main areas of concern are: -

T1 Elm *Ulmus glabra*: The Elm tree has significant die-back of the crown branches (photos 01 & 02). Although no dead bark or beetle galleries were noted from a ground level inspection, the symptoms of decline are consistent with Dutch Elm disease. The tree is unlikely to recover and tree failure can be anticipated in the near future. I would recommend that the tree be removed at your earliest convenience (within the next 3 months).

4. Conclusions:

4.1 Risk matrix: From the site information obtained and the qualified assessment of likelihood of tree failure within the given time frame of one year under expected normal weather conditions, the categorised risk rating of the tree is:

- **T1:** - Moderate risk to people.

High risk to vehicles.

Moderate risk to building structures

The risk rating matrices and methods are at Appendix 2.

4.2 Mitigation: Recommended arboricultural works are noted in the Recommendations, Section 5 of this report. The arboricultural recommendations are advised to solely mitigate a likely risk of harm due to tree failure. Considerations beyond this arboricultural perspective, such as property boundaries and ownership, disputes between neighbours, planning issues, sight lines, landlord-tenant matters and leaf litter nuisance etc are not considered part of the tree risk assessment. As an arborist I cannot take such issues into account unless complete and accurate information is passed on to me.

4.3 The '*time frame*' for the risk categorization should not be considered a '*guarantee period*' for the risk assessment. Should there be any future changes in site conditions (especially removal of adjacent shelter trees, landscaping and building works close to the tree) or after an extreme weather event, my advice would be to have the tree re-assessed for risk as such events can alter the tree risk rating.

5. Recommendations:

- 5.1 The following arboricultural works are recommended to mitigate the present risk posed by the tree and reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Table 1 **Tree work specifications**

Tree	Present Risk	Recommended Work	Residual Risk
T1	High	Fell to ground level.	None

- 5.2 All the recommended tree works should be of a standard that is in accordance with BS 3998:2010 Tree Work-Recommendations. All the arboricultural work on this site should be undertaken by an arboricultural contractor who is able to comply with the above BS standard. The arboricultural contractor should hold public and products liability insurance to a minimum of £5 million and employer's liability insurance as required by law. The arboricultural contractor should be able to show competency by means of relevant certification and health and safety policy. Suitable arboricultural contractors can be sourced from the Arboricultural Association approved contractor list or the Local Planning Authority occasionally has lists of competent contractors. Rowbottom's Tree Services Ltd (arboricultural consultancy) cannot accept any liability where the prescribed work is not carried out in a correct and professional manner in accordance with current good practice.

6. Legislation:

- 6.1 The Elm tree on this site may be protected by a Tree Preservation Order (*TPO*) or the church may be in a Conservation Area. Before undertaking or authorising the recommended tree works, or other tree works on this site, you should contact your Local Planning Authority to confirm if either apply and if so, obtain consent. Failure to do so may result in prosecution.**
- 6.2 Trees by their very nature have structures that allow bats to shelter or roost in them, more so with moribund and decayed trees. All species of bats are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation (Natural Habitats) regulations 1994 and the Countryside Act and Rights of Way Act 2000. Also, it is an offence to disturb or destroy nesting birds. Appropriate ecological assessments should be undertaken to avoid contravention of the above.**

7 Bibliography:

- 7.1 Assessment of Tree Forks-*Assessment of Junctions for Risk Management*: - Dr D Slater; 2016
- 7.2 ISA Tree Risk Assessment Manuel second edition: - Dunster. J; 2017
- 7.3 Manchester climate information: – Met office: 2020
- 7.4 Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management: Lonsdale. D; 1999



Mr. W J Rowbottom *HN Dip Arb* M. Arbor. A

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Brief qualifications and experience of Mr W. J. Rowbottom. *HN Dip Arb M Arbor A*

1. Qualifications:

- Tree surgery craft certificate 1992
- BTEC Higher National Diploma in Arboriculture 2000 (HN Dip Arb).

2. International Society of Arboriculture (ISA):

- Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ).

3. Practical experience: Managed an arboricultural contractor business for 23 years and arboricultural consulting service since 2010.

4. Continuing professional development: Profession member of the Arboricultural Association., M Arbor A. Professional member of the Consulting Arborist Society.

Appendix 2

Risk Assessment method:

Likelihood of tree failure: The tree assessor (arboriculturist) makes a visual assessment of the likelihood of tree failure within the given time frame as described in 1.6 above.

Likelihood of impacting a target: From information gathered on site and communicated to him by the site owner / manager, the tree assessor estimates or determines the occupancy rate of any targets within the target zone, the likely direction of fall and any factors that could protect the target from impact by the falling tree or tree part.

Likelihood matrix: Using the above information and the likelihood matrix table below, an estimate of the likelihood of a tree failure impacting a specified target is determined.

Likelihood of failure	Likelihood of Impact			
	Very Low	Low	Medium	High
Imminent	Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Probable	Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Likely
Possible	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Likely
Improbable	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely

Risk rating matrix: Once the likelihood of impact has been determined, the consequence of such an impact is categorized. The consequences are categorized based on the value of the target and harm that could be done to it. High value targets are considered to be serious personnel injury or fatality; expensive property and power lines, etc. Low value targets would be a small garden fence or landscape decking, etc. The significance of target values (both monetary and otherwise) are sometimes subjective and are relative to the client. Generally target values are assessed from the client's perspective.

The risk rating is determined from the risk rating table below:-

Likelihood of Failure and Impact	Consequences of Failure			
	Negligible	Minor	Significant	Severe
Very Likely	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Likely	Low	Moderate	High	High
Somewhat Likely	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Unlikely	Low	Low	Low	Low

From the above method, a tree risk assessment rating of extreme, high, moderate or low is established for the given time frame. The tree owner or manager can then determine if the established risk is acceptable or whether mitigation actions are needed.

Appendix 3

Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ)

Brief Summary

Introduction: Trees provide many benefits to people living and working in the urban environment. Such as:

ecological;	increase biodiversity
Monetary;	can increase property values
Improve air quality;	produce oxygen, reduce carbon dioxide, absorb dust and pollutants
Etc.	

The benefits increase as trees become older and larger. However, as they get older and larger, trees may become more likely to shed branches or develop decay which can lead to an increased likelihood of failure. Also, the consequences of tree or branch failure become greater with size and age. It is impossible to maintain trees free from all risk. Some level of risk must be accepted to experience the benefits provided by trees. Tree owners and people who manage trees should aim to strike a balance between the risks that a tree or group of trees pose and the benefits that people and the community derive from those trees. Risk being the combination of the likelihood of an event and the severity of the potential consequences, in relation to trees, we term this as “Tree Risk Assessment”. Tree owners / managers have a duty of care to users of their site and facilities. However, this duty of care need only be reasonable and proportionate to the specific conditions and situations.

A perfectly healthy defect free tree can fail if the stresses, due to the forces that are exerted onto the tree, exceed the strength of the tree structure or the tree soil connection that is supporting the tree. Such events can happen when wind speeds reach storm strength (force 10: - 55 to 63mph), especially if such winds are accompanied with heavy rain. When wind speeds reach hurricane force (force 12: -greater than 73mph), failure of defect free trees can be widespread.

The aim of the TRAQ tree risk assessment is to categorise the risk that selected trees pose within their site setting for a given time frame. It is important to establish a time frame because trees are natural living organisms in which host / pathogen interactions can change over time. Also, a change in site conditions can affect tree stability. Time frames of 1 to 5 years are usually recommended depending on the age and condition of the trees. The acceptable level of risk should be determined by the tree owner / manager.

Tree risk assessments are usually undertaken because the tree owner / manager recognise that trees have the potential to cause harm. Anticipating problems, identifying specific trees where risk exceeds the **acceptable threshold** and preventing damage before it occurs are the key reasons for undertaking a tree risk assessment. The TRAQ tree risk assessment follows a systematic evaluation of the likelihood of tree failure within the given time frame, the likelihood of the failed tree or tree part impacting a target and the consequences of such an impact should it occur. The risks are categorised into risk levels of: Low, Moderate, High or Extreme. Although this qualitative assessment of trees is subjective, the tree assessor (arboriculturist) uses up to date tree assessment methods together with experience to obtain a reasonably accurate assessment of the tree risk. Once the tree risk category is established, it is the responsibility of the tree owner / manager to decide whether the established level of risk is acceptable or whether mitigation actions are needed. The tree assessors report would recommend mitigation works where appropriate. Extreme and high risk would usually require immediate mitigation to comply with duty of care. Low risk would usually be acceptable and moderate risk may be acceptable until funds are available to effect mitigation works.

The TRAQ tree risk assessment three, levels of inspection: -

Level 1)

Limited Visual Assessment: This involves a visual assessment of an individual tree or a population of trees near to targets of concern, conducted from a specified perspective, to identify obvious defects or specified conditions. It typically identifies trees with imminent and or probable likelihood of failure. This is the fastest but least thorough means of assessment and is primarily intended when managing large populations of trees, when time and resources are limited. Level 1 assessment is a visual assessment performed from one side of the tree / trees, either by walking or driving by and typically looking for obvious defects such as, but not limited to: dead trees; large cavity openings; large dead or broken branches; obvious fungal fruiting structures; large cracks and severe uncorrected leans. Only defects visible from the perspective from which the assessment is made are expected to be identified. Level 1 assessment can be used to identify trees that should later receive a more thorough assessment.

Level 2)

Basic Assessment: This is a detailed visual inspection of a tree and its surrounding site. This level of assessment is most commonly performed by the arboriculturist in response to a client's request for individual tree risk assessment. The trees are inspected from ground level. Simple tools may be used (e.g. binoculars, sounding mallet, probe etc.). An advantage of a level 2 assessment over a level 1 assessment is that each tree is inspected more closely and from all sides, thereby increasing the amount of detail and information collected. Often a level 2 assessment is adequate for assessing risk and making recommendations, but it sometimes reveals the need for more advanced assessment measures.

Level 3)

Advanced Assessment: This is performed to provide detailed information about specific tree parts, defects, targets or site conditions. An advanced assessment may be required in conjunction with or following a basic assessment if additional information is required. Specialist equipment, expertise, data collection and analysis are usually required for advanced assessments. A level 3 assessment, therefore, is generally more time consuming and more expensive. The arboriculturist (tree assessor) can advise the client if a level 3 assessment might be required.

The primary goal of a tree risk assessment is to provide information about the level of risk posed by a tree / trees over a specified time frame, as assessed in relation to the site conditions present at the time of assessment. The arboriculturist (tree assessor) would rely on the client (tree owner / manager) for information about site occupancy levels (e.g. site usage frequencies by people, cars etc.).

Tree risk assessments are carried out by a TRAQ qualified arboriculturist.

Appendix 4

Target Occupancy Rates: -

Occupancy Rate	Description	Impact Likelihood
Constant Occupancy	A target is present at nearly all times, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.	High
Frequent Occupancy	The target zone is occupied for a large portion of a day or week.	Medium
Occasional Occupancy	The target is occupied by people or targets infrequently or irregularly.	Low
Rare Occupancy	The target zone is not commonly used by people or other mobile / movable targets.	Very Low

Appendix 5

Explanatory notes

Age:	Estimated maturity of the tree; Moribund (at the point of death), Mature (last one third of life expectancy), Early mature (one third to two thirds life expectancy), Young (at less than one third of life expectancy).
CODIT	Compartmentalization of decay in trees
Canopy spread:	The maximum crown spread diameter is visually estimated to the nearest metre.
Condition:	Good (high vigour and strong growth), fair (average vigour and growth), Poor (low vigour and declining growth).
DBH:	Diameter at breast high. This is a measure of the tree trunk diameter at approximately 1.3 metres above ground level. The diameter of trees with multiple trunks is measured at the base or ground level.
Epicormic growth:	A shoot having developed from a dormant or adventitious bud and not having developed from a first-year shoot.
Height:	Measured or estimated height of the tree.
Included Bark:	Bark that remains (trapped) between branch and trunk or co-dominant stems. Has the potential to be a structurally weak union.
Measurements:	All dimensions are estimated unless otherwise indicated. Measurements taken with a tape or clinometer are indicated with a *. Less reliable estimated dimensions are indicated with a '?'.
Species:	The tree species identification is based on visual identification. The common English name of what the tree appeared to be is listed first followed by the botanical name in italics. In some instances, it may be difficult to quickly and accurately identify a particular tree without further detailed investigation. Where there is some doubt as to the precise species of the tree, the genus is followed by the abbreviation spp; in order to avoid delay in the production of the report. The species listed for groups and hedges represent the main component and there may be other minor species not listed.

Appendix 6

Tree Schedule:

Tree	Species	Height (M)	DBH (mm)	Part of concern	Likelihood of:		Failure & Impact	Consequences	Risk Rating	Comments
					Failure	Impact				
T1	Elm <i>Ulmus glabra</i>	12.0	340 & 350 (Twin stemmed)	Whole tree: Crown branches, Trunk & Root Anchorage	Probable	Target 1: Medium	Somewhat Likely	Severe	Moderate	The tree is clearly in decline, given the tree's size and rapid decline this is likely due to Dutch Elm disease.
						Target 2: High	Likely	Significant	High	
						Target 3: High	Likely	Minor	Moderate	

Target 1: People in the church grounds and on the adjacent public pavement: - *Frequent*.

Target 2: Parked vehicles and moving traffic on the Dowling Street highway: - *Constant*.

Target 3: Building structures: - *Constant*.

Photo 01:



Photo 02:

