

Report on MRN 254 - July 2010 - Diseased large oak near Morrisons

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I have inspected the oak tree positioned by the Emmbrook in the park land behind Morrisons and this is what I found there:

- There is no sign of disturbance or instability in the tree's rooting area.
- The crown of the tree shows good healthy growth which is equally distributed throughout the canopy. What deadwood that is present appears to be from crowding out as opposed to die-back.
- The trunk has a cavity roughly 3 foot tall and 6-8 inches wide with the subsequent hole being capable of fitting an adult inside.
- I sound tested the trunk with a rubber mallet to determine the extent of the decay. This test showed that (apart from the hole) there was live wood around the rest of the tree.
- The remaining trunk did not show any other signs of disease or decay except for a couple of old pruning wounds.

Following on from my visit and discussing the matter with Jon, we shall be taking the following actions:

- Halting the cutting of the grass under the tree to discourage people from approaching the tree.
- Planting hawthorn or holly in front of the cavity to keep it hidden from passers by (tree cavities often become "rubbish bins" and subsequently fire hazards).
- The tree will also be re-assessed during the winter with a view to possibly reducing the canopy of the tree.

We shall be making every effort to retain this tree for as long as possible, due to its age the tree is an important ecological benefit to the area.

Update – March 2013 – from WBC Trees & Landscape

The initial thought was to grow deterring shrubs, but the soil is so poor and the footfall constant, so that did not work. We will now install a mesh over the hole. This has worked in other areas where fire setting in trees has occurred. The mesh will be large enough to allow air to circulate and enable inspection of the void, but small enough to discourage litter being poked through the holes. That's the plan.