

Retrospective Arboricultural Statement

For recent construction activity at 54 Lower Road in Salisbury



On behalf of Gary Scutt
54 Lower Road
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP2 9NQ

Prepared by: Nick Baxter BSc(Hons) MArborA

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1 Introduction

1.1 Brief

I have been instructed by Gary Scutt, following the refusal of the retrospective planning application relating to a replacement retaining wall (Ref. PL/2026/03412). The wall has been constructed alongside a copper beech tree which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (Ref. TPO 280 (2002)).

The Arboricultural Officer's comment on the application (Ref: WC/26/07/381652) stated:

"Insufficient information has been provided to ascertain the impact on the adjacent tree(s). If the work was carried out sympathetically they should not suffer any long term detriment but I cannot comment conclusively without detailed information."

This statement is intended to provide that detailed information. I was on site for an unrelated instruction while the wall was under construction and photographed the works at that time, which I understand was not submitted at the time of the application. This evidence is set out below, together with my assessment of the impact of the works as built, and my concerns regarding the impact of the remedial works currently recommended by Wiltshire Council.

1.2 Background information

The retaining wall replaces a previous wall on the same alignment, which had collapsed. The replacement wall was constructed at a greater height than the original. The owners have confirmed they were unaware that planning permission was required for these works, given a wall already existed in this location.

2 Findings

2.1 Site observations – April 2026

I originally surveyed the trees at 54 Lower Road on 30th April 2026 for an unrelated project. At this time the old wall had already been demolished, and the new one was being rebuilt. I was not aware of the previous condition of the wall, nor was I aware of any previous planning applications that may have related to the wall, or of any previous arboricultural input. Nevertheless, I took the opportunity to inspect and photograph the exposed soil behind the wall. My observations from that visit are as follows:

1. Only one root exceeding the standard 25mm diameter was observed; this was approximately 30mm in diameter. This root was located at a point approximately 1.0m above the road level and 350mm below the tree's ground level. The root had a slightly shattered end as seen in Figure 2.
2. All other roots that I noticed were well below the 25mm threshold.
3. The inner block wall was constructed approximately 200mm further out from the soil bank, but the backfill was not seen.
4. Some lightweight tree protection fencing had been installed beneath the canopy of the tree, but materials were being stored and mixed beneath the dripline. At the time I recommended that these were removed and stored elsewhere and the soil beneath aerated to rectify any compaction that had been caused.



Figure 1: Inner blockwork being laid.



Figure 2: One root 30mm in diameter exposed.

2.2 Recorded root damage

Based on the evidence recorded at the time, the root loss associated with the wall's construction was limited. A single root of approximately 30mm diameter was damaged with a slightly shattered end, and numerous fine, non-structural roots had been partly exposed. I would not expect that root damage of this scale to typically cause significant long-term physiological or structural detriment to a mature tree of this species and size. This directly addresses the concern raised in the Arboricultural Officer's comment on the application, and on this evidence I would not expect the works as constructed to have caused lasting harm to the tree.

2.3 Site observations – July 2026

I later revisited 27th July 2026 to photograph the finished wall; no obvious further damage was found. Furthermore, all building materials had since been removed from beneath the canopy and were stored elsewhere.



Figure 3: New wall.

3 Response

3.1 Council's remedial recommendation

It is my understanding that Gary Scutt may be required to dismantle the new wall to the original (lower) height and reapply for a new wall but built using a new foundation that is set back from the existing wall's position and closer to the tree. I have concerns that compliance with this requirement would cause greater harm to the tree than has resulted from the works already carried out, for the following reasons:

1. Demolition and reconstruction would require an excavation, directly within the edge of the tree's Root Protection Area (RPA), which would easily cause significantly greater harm than any root disturbance that has already been carried out. It is accepted that a low-impact foundation (pile and beam) could be used, but this would not only be a significant expense but would also involve further root disturbance that could otherwise be eliminated by retaining the wall as is.
2. The net effect of the suggested new foundation would cause two separate episodes of root disturbance rather than one, with the second being closer to the tree.

On this basis, I consider the suggestion of constructing a new partially separate wall inside the existing one to cause greater harm to the protected tree than allowing the wall to remain as existing. This point is fundamental to my assessment, and I would ask that it be given weight in any reconsideration of the requirement.

3.2 Conclusions and recommendations

The photographic evidence recorded during construction in April 2026 shows that the retaining wall resulted in very limited root loss, confined almost entirely to fine, non-structural roots, with only one root exceeding 25mm in diameter having been damaged. On this evidence, I would not expect the recent root disturbance to cause long-term detriment to the tree.

I would respectfully ask that the requirement to remove and rebuild the wall be reconsidered on arboricultural grounds, as I consider compliance could cause greater harm to the tree than retaining the wall in its current form.

As a constructive alternative, and to help offset any disturbance already caused, I would suggest that the council consider imposing a condition de-compaction of the root zone beneath the canopy using an air-spade, followed by an application of mulch. This would improve soil aeration and moisture retention to encourage healthy new root growth.