

Tewkesbury Borough Council

Tree Safety Management policy



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Policy Statement

Tewkesbury Borough Council ('the council'), as a tree owner, has a responsibility to ensure that its trees do not pose a danger to the public or property. The council has a statutory duty of care to members of the public and staff who must not be put at risk because of any failure by the council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety. In the National Tree Safety Group publication, "Common Sense Risk Management of Trees", statistics show that there is about a one in 10 million chance of an individual being killed by a falling tree or part of a tree in any given year.

Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline and collapse and they can be damaged physically or invaded by pathogenic organisms. As trees deteriorate they are increasingly likely to shed limbs or fall in strong winds and the potential to cause harm increases.

Ancient and decaying trees are often beautiful and uniquely valuable as habitat for wildlife and, however poor the physical condition of a tree, remedial action is only necessary where there is a clearly perceptible risk to life or property. This might mean removing part of the tree or reducing the level of public access in the vicinity.

This Tree Safety Management Policy address the risk and responsibilities on the authority for the management of falling trees, branches and limbs which is managed by ensuring that:

- the risk to life and property, as a result of tree deterioration, is kept to a minimum as is reasonably practicable;
- a system of tree inspections is in operation in relation to the above risk;
- a record of trees and inspections is retained;
- staff who carry out inspections are competent to do so;
- work identified through the inspection programme to be undertaken by suitably qualified staff or contractors.

Introduction

The council recognises that trees are an important conservation and amenity resource to the area, but that they can present risk to the public if they are not managed properly.

Owners of trees have a legal duty of care and are obliged to take all reasonable care to ensure that any foreseeable hazards can be identified and made safe. Although it is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of a tree falling, there are often indications that a tree may be in decline, have physical faults or be suffering from decay or pests and diseases. Many of these signs can be recognized during periodic inspections by a competent person who can then instigate further works by qualified arboriculturist.

The safe and appropriate management of its trees is important to the council who want to ensure that a balance is maintained between public safety and sustaining a healthy tree population with the benefits it provides. Trees are integral to most natural land-based ecosystems, providing a wide range of ecosystem services to humankind, including mitigating the harmful effects of climate change as well as assisting with climate adaption. Trees are an important part of the economy providing timber and non-timber forest products. They also bring communities together, playing a part in their cultural and spiritual values and aesthetic appreciation.

Their importance is recognised in international, national and local government policies, and many non-governmental organisations have policies dedicated to conserving trees and their biodiversity.

This policy seeks to manage the risks associated with trees using a risk-based approach which both identifies with the risk presented to the public and buildings by their location and size and then through periodic inspections of the trees to assess whether they represent any additional risk to life or property as a result of structural faults or suffering from decay or pests and diseases, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

Periodic inspections programme

In 2016 a review of council owned land was undertaken to prioritise the periodic inspections and establish an ongoing inspection frequency for all trees within the council's ownership. The following matrix is designed to take account of the probability and severity to give a risk value which in turn establishes the inspection frequency. The severity is determined through the size of the tree whilst the probability is determined by the location to buildings, vehicles and pedestrians.

The above review was undertaken as a combination of a desk-top exercise and site visits. All Council owned trees must be identified and scored within the matrix which establishes a periodic inspection programme. The periodic inspector will identify trees that have defects (findings) record them, assign a hazard rating and report their findings within the council tree management system.

PERIODIC INSPECTION MATRIX	Severity by size of tree	Small tree less than 3m	Small Tree estimated size 3m to 9 m	Medium tree estimated size 9m to 15m	Large old tree estimated to be in excess of 15m	Large tree on unstable land i.e. on steep slopes high wind area
Probability population and usage		1	2	3	4	5
No access i.e. in wooded area with very little or no access no buildings in the area	1	Score 1 very low	Score 2 very Low	Score 3 very low	Score 4 low	Score 5 low
Light foot and vehicle traffic, no buildings within fall parameter of the tree	2	Score 2 very low	Score 4 low	Score 6 low	Score 8 medium	Score 10 medium
Medium foot and vehicle traffic unoccupied building within fall parameter of the tree i.e. bus shelter and scout hut	3	Score 3 very low	Score 6 low	Score 9 Medium	Score 12 medium	Score 15 high
high volume foot and vehicle or occupied building within fall parameter of the tree i.e. located on route to a large school or factory	4	Score 4 low	Score 8 medium	Score 12 Medium	Score 16 high	Score 20 high
Extremely High volume foot and vehicle traffic or occupied building within fall perimeters of the tree i.e. on major trunk road or on route to multiply commercial units or large town location	5	Score 5 low	Score 10 medium	Score 15 high	Score 20 high	Score 25 very high

	Severity by size of tree	Small tree less than 3 metres	Small Tree estimated size 3m to 9 m	Medium tree estimated size 9m to 15m	Large old tree estimated to be in excess of 15m	Large tree on unstable land i.e. on step slopes high wind area
Probability population and usage		1	2	3	4	5
No access i.e. in wooded area with very little or no access no buildings in the area	1	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Light foot and vehicle traffic, no buildings within fall parameter of the tree	2	Score 2	Score 4	Score 6	Score 8	Score 10
Medium foot and vehicle traffic unoccupied building within fall parameter of the tree i.e. bus shelter and scout hut	3	Score 3	Score 6	Score 6	Score 12	Score 15

high volume foot and vehicle or occupied building within fall parameter of the tree i.e. located on route to a large school or factory

4

Score 4

Score 8

Score 12

Score 16

Score 20

Extremely High volume foot and vehicle traffic or occupied building within fall perimeters of the tree i.e. on major trunk road or on route to multiply commercial units or large town location

5

Score 5

Score 10

Score 15

Score 20

Score 25

Score 1 to 3	Very low risk zone 1	To be inspected every 5 years
Score 4 to 7	Low risk zone 2	To be inspected every 4 years
Score 8 to 12	Medium risk zone 3	To be inspected every 3 years
Score 13 to 20	High risk zone 4	To be inspected every 2 years
Score 21 to 25	Very high risk zone 5	To be inspected every year

Periodic Inspectors qualifications

Periodic inspections must be carried out by a competent person, experienced in tree inspections including and not limited to visual signs of serious ill health or significant structural problems, such as substantial fractured branches or rocking root plate, record them, assign a hazard rating and report their findings within the council management system.

The council officer commissioning these inspections must be satisfied that the person carrying out these inspections is suitably qualified, experienced and has the necessary public liability insurance

Findings and remedial works through inspections

All trees will be inspected according to the frequency determined by the risk zones table above using the council tree management system. All inspection must be recorded on the tree management system along with any findings.

Future inspections of trees with no findings (defects) will be inspected in line with the periodic inspection programme.

Where a tree with defects is identified as being potentially hazardous the finding must be recorded on the tree management system and the risk assessed. This risk score will determine when the remedial works or next inspection should take place by recording a task within the system; this will override the periodic inspection programme.

Trees must be recorded as assets within the tree management system and where there a number of trees within a location with the same periodic inspection score these can be inspected on mass and recorded as inspected although any defects (findings) must be recorded as individual trees within the asset.

Tewkesbury Borough Council will commission suitably qualified contractors to carry out the remedial works who will be required to update the tree management system when they complete the remedial works or inspections are completed.

The inspector must risk score the finding in line with the matrix below to ensure TBC commission the complete the remedial works within a timely manner to reduce the risk of injury.

FINDINGS MATRIX	Probability by finding	Highly unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Highly likely
Severity by zone		1	2	3	4	5
Tree within risk zone 1	1	Score 1 very low	Score 2 very Low	Score 3 very low	Score 4 low	Score 5 low
Tree within risk zone 2	2	Score 2 very low	Score 4 low	Score 6 low	Score 8 medium	Score 10 medium
Tree within risk zone 3	3	Score 3 very low	Score 6 low	Score 9 Medium	Score 12 medium	Score 15 high
Tree within risk zone 4	4	Score 4 low	Score 8 medium	Score 12 Medium	Score 16 high	Score 20 high
Tree within risk zone 5	5	Score 5 low	Score 10 medium	Score 15 high	Score 20 high	Score 25 very high

Score 1 to 3	Very low risk	No task assigned return to periodic inspection programme
Score 4 to 9	Low risk	Task to be completed within 1 year
Score 10 to 15	Medium risk	Task to be completed within 3 months
Score 16 to 20	High risk	Task to be completed within 1 month
Score 25	Very high risk	Task to be completed immediately

Please note: - Trees will be inspected in accordance with the periodic tree inspection programme; only trees that have findings identified and tasks will be inspected in accordance with the above matrix until the defect has been rectified.

Tree findings reported by the general public

All tree findings reported via the council reporting system will initially be checked for ownership and responsibility. Once ownership is established the finding will be recorded on the tree management system and risk scored in line with the findings matrix. The remedial works will then be commissioned with a suitably qualified contractor who will be required to update the tree management system when they complete the remedial works or inspections are completed.

Tree Replacements

Any tree that is felled as result of the tree inspection programme and where particularly possible must be replaced with a tree of an appropriate species. If possible the replacement tree should be the same species as the tree removed or an alternative species chosen in consultation with the Conservation Officer, Gloucestershire Archaeology and/or English Heritage.

Monitoring

In order to ensure adherence to the Tree Safety Management policy, adequate tree inspection records must be kept for a minimum of 10 years and systems demonstrating compliance with the policy must be in place