

Tree Safety Management Policy

Version 001

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1. Policy Statement

Ashfield District Council ('the council'), as a tree owner, has a direct 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 will therefore ensure that:

- the risk to life and property, as a result of tree deterioration, is kept to as low a level 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.

2. 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 structural faults or be suffering from decay or pests and diseases. Many of these signs can be recognised by trained inspectors who can then instigate further investigations by an external qualified arboriculturalist.

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 requires the inspection of trees belonging to the council to assess whether they represent a risk to life or property, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

3. Prioritisation of Tree inspection

A review of council owned land was undertaken to prioritise the initial inspection regime and establish an ongoing inspection frequency for all trees within the council's ownership. This prioritisation was completed using the following risk table.

Risk Zone	Initial Inspection Period	Criteria
High	To be undertaken by ????? and thereafter every 1 years	A mature/ veteran tree where there is public access via the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Dwellingo pathso car parks
Medium	To be undertaken by ????? and thereafter every 3 years	A semi-mature tree where there is public access to an area as defined in high risk
Low	To be undertaken by ????? and thereafter every 5 years	A young tree where there is public access to an area as defined in high risk or no trees present.

The above review was undertaken as a desk-top exercise based on officer knowledge. The physical inspection of each risk area will identify trees that have defects that need to be monitored further in accordance with the individual tree inspection programme noted below.

4. Individual Tree Inspection Programme

This procedure is summarised in the flowchart in appendix 1.

When a site is inspected according to the frequency determined by the risk zones table shown above, the tree inspector will fill in a site tree inspection form, FORM A, (appendix 2). If no trees with significant defects are found, this will be stated on the form. Those trees that appear to be sound during formal inspection require no further documented record of their condition at this stage and will be re-inspected in accordance with the risk table.

Where a tree with significant defects is identified as being potentially hazardous this must be documented and a tree defect report form, FORM B, (appendix 3) must be filled in, in addition to FORM A.

The inspection should be recorded in the record book / database to enable individual tree information to be viewed, providing a means of monitoring changing tree condition.

The assessment of risk on FORM B is designed to give an indication of the risk posed by the defect. The assessment of risk is based on 3 factors:

- o designated risk zone of the site (i.e. high, medium or low);
- o overall condition of the tree;
- o urgency of works required.

Tree inspectors must consider these factors when inspecting a tree and calculate the total hazard rating in order to rate the tree as high, medium or low. This is done by using the following scoring system as shown on FORM B:

				Score
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Factor 1	Risk Zone	A mature or veteran tree where there is public access via the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dwelling ○ Paths, including footpaths and bridleways ○ Car parks 	High	5
		A semi-mature tree where there is public access to area as defined in high risk	Medium	3
		A young tree where there is public access to area as defined in high risk or no trees present.	Low	1
Factor 2	Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dead ○ Very low vigour ○ Short life expectancy ○ Sparse leaf cover ○ Significant defects 	Poor	5
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generally healthy ○ Some thinning of crown ○ Some defects of low significance ○ Limited life expectancy 	Average	3
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Healthy ○ Full crown ○ Long life expectancy ○ No significant defects 	Good	1
Factor 3	Priority	Within close proximity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Major footpaths ○ Play areas ○ Picnic areas ○ Main public areas ○ Work yards ○ Car parks ○ Any areas with high footfall ○ Land used for regular events 	High	5
		Within close proximity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bridle ways ○ Quieter areas of parks and gardens ○ Woodlands (moderate use) ○ Any areas in regular but not intensive public use 	Medium	3
		Within close proximity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low intensity land use i.e. arable ○ Other woodlands and open spaces ○ Surplus land ○ Any areas away from public footpaths and only lightly used 	Low	1

The scores for each risk factor are then added together to produce the overall risk score for that particular tree. This will then determine the frequency of inspection for the tree.

N.b. all trees will be inspected in accordance with the tree inspection programme; only trees that have significant defects identified will be inspected in accordance with the following until the defect has been rectified.

Score	Frequency of Inspection
11-15	Immediate works (within 30 Days)
8-10	Every 12 months
7 or below	Every 2 years

6. Immediate Works

Where the scoring is 11-15 and immediate works are identified within FORM B, at the time of inspection the tree inspector must provide a description of the works required, any safety considerations and equipment requirements.

The completed form must be presented to the Grounds Maintenance Manager/ Supervisor on return to the office/head of service. The arboreal officer should assess whether the works can be carried out by the in-house team or whether a contractor is required and record this on the form.

In cases where the work is within the capabilities of in-house resources the Grounds Maintenance Manager/ Supervisor must ensure that all work can be carried out safely, prior to the works commencing. All staff must be issued with the appropriate safety equipment and be suitably qualified to carry out the task.

When in-house resources are not qualified to carry out the work or are unavailable, a specialist tree surgeon may be used to undertake the work. A list of approved arboricultural contractors will be used to commission the works and such works should comply with contract and financial procedure rules and adhere to health and safety legislation.

Once all remedial works have been carried out on the tree, either in-house or by a contractor, the tree should be reassessed using FORM C (appendix 4).

Rectification of all defects will result in the tree being removed from the individual tree inspection programme and the monitoring of this tree will then continue in accordance with its high, medium or low risk location area.

7. Tree Replacements

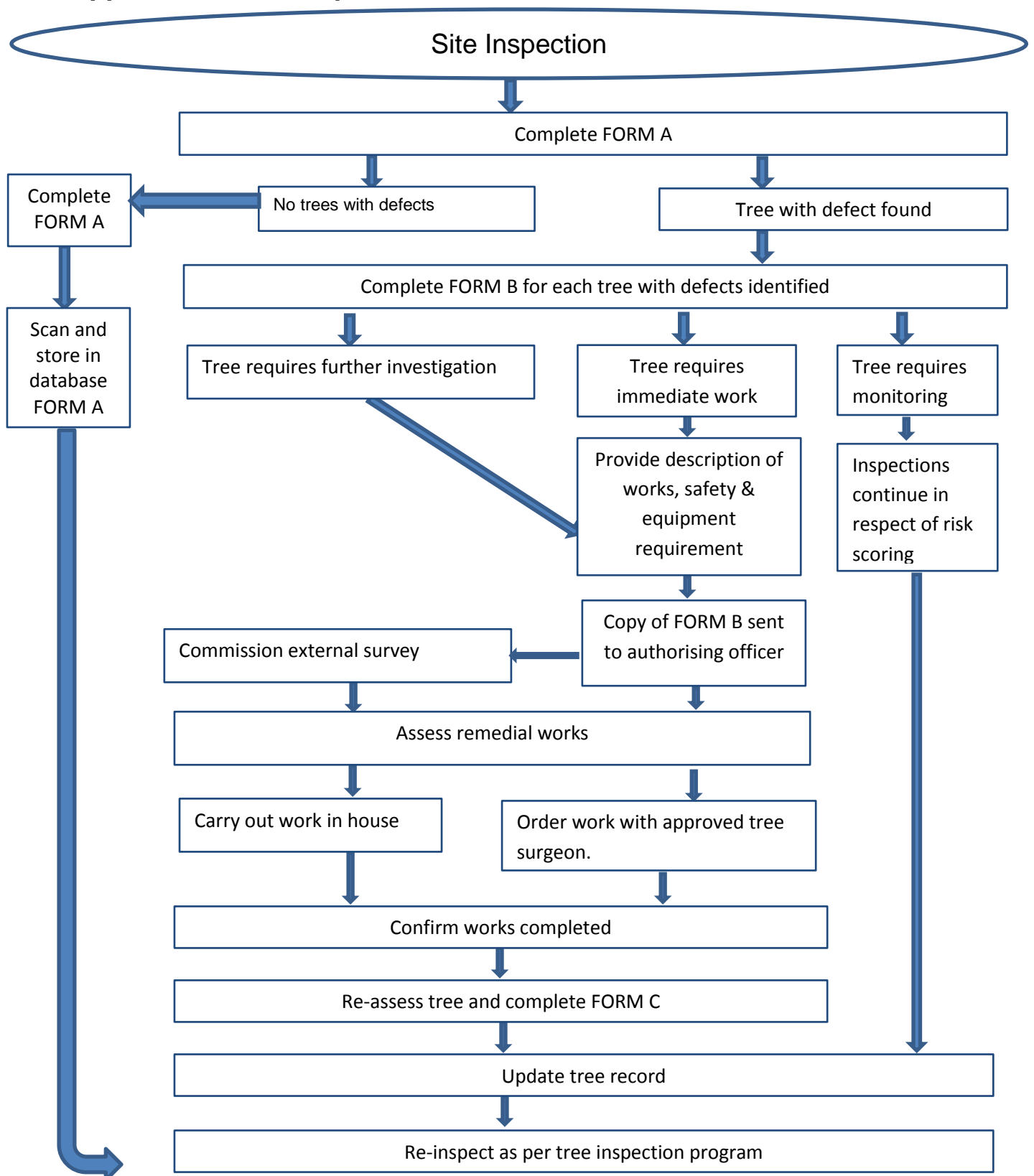
Any tree that is felled as result of the tree inspection programme must be replaced with a tree of an appropriate species.

8. Monitoring

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

The Grounds Maintenance Manager/ Supervisor will ensure that the Tree Safety Management Policy is kept under constant review and is formally reviewed every 5 years.

Appendix 1- Tree Inspection Procedure



Appendix 2 - Site Tree Inspection - FORM A

Location:		Site Reference:	
		Risk Zone:	
Date:	Time	Weather	
Inspectors name			
Type of inspection			
Planned (as per inspection program)			
Reactive (as a result of complaint or storm)			
If only covering part of site, please state which areas covered			
Findings			
Number of trees with significant defects			
Additional comments			
For each tree with significant defects fill out one FORM B			
Confirm risk Zone	High	Medium	Low
Signed			
Date scanned into data base:			
Scanned by			

Appendix 3 - Site Tree Inspection - FORM B

Location:		Site reference:		Tree Number:	
Date:		Time:			
Inspectors Name:					
Species:		Age	Young	Semi-mature	Mature over mature
Tree Assessment					
Risk Zone Score:		Total Score			
Condition Score:					
Priority Score:					
Frequency of inspections					
Total Score 11-15	Immediate works needed				
Total Score 8-10	Inspect in 12 months				
Total Score 7 or below	Inspect every 24 months				
Complete following information for IMMEDIATE WORKS ONLY					
Description of works needed, safety considerations and equipment requirements:					
<div></div>					
Name:			Signature:		
TO BE COMPLETED BY AUTHORISING OFFICER					
Date sent:					
Date returned:					
Name:		Signed			
Authorised:		Y/N			
Cost code					
Date recorded in Data Base:					
Recorded by:					

Appendix 4 - Site Tree Inspection - FORM C

Location:		Site reference:		Tree Number:	
Date:		Time:			
Inspectors Name:					
Species:		Age Young Semi-mature Mature over mature			
Remedial works					
Date works undertaken:		Order no.		In-house: team	
				Contractor: Name	
Decryptions of works undertaken:					
Re-assessment					
All defects rectified: Y/N					
Tree can revert to routine inspection program Y/N					
Defects still remaining Where further defects identified complete FORM B					
Signed:					
Date scanned in data base:					
Scanned by:					