

# Tree Management Safety Plan

## What this plan will cover

1. Introduction
2. Tree Risk Assessment
3. Hazard risk assessment and zoning of
4. Cyclical Inspection Recording
5. Tree inspection methods
6. Reactive and emergency tree inspections generated from enquires
7. Principles of tree removal and Standing Deadwood
8. Monitor work and review contractors' performance.
9. Identifying the unknowns including planning
10. Document review

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As trees grow and mature they may be affected by pests and diseases, extremities of weather and the impact of human activities. This could result in work needing to be done.
- 1.2 In areas where trees have been there before houses or as a result of planning consent leaving trees close to boundaries.
- 1.3 Statistically, the risk posed by trees to human safety is extremely low, however, where trees and people co-exist there is a need to evaluate the potential risk a tree poses.

### 2.0 Tree Risk Assessment

- 2.1 From a mix of enquiry based, high, medium, low risk areas a cyclical inspection program will be generated to reduce the need for reactive works and customers will know that trees in their area will be maintained on a rotation basis, reducing enquiry handling.
- 2.2 Risk assess the tree stock and as a result of those assessments take appropriate action relative and proportionate to the risk posed.
- 2.3 Maintain the trees in a robust and auditable way within reasonable bounds, to prevent harm and damage occurring as a result of tree damage or failure.
- 2.4 Undertake a proactive tree management service across all client areas on land managed by the council, thereby enabling the Arboricultural Officer to prioritise work, action work and record inspections.

### 3. Hazard risk assessment and zoning

3.1 An overall assessment of risk is completed to find high, medium and low risk tree zones.

- A system of Cyclical tree inspections is in operation in relation to risk.
- A record of trees and inspections are recorded electronically.
- Systems and processes are in place that control and mitigate risks arising from inspections.
- Staff who conduct inspections are competent to do so.
- Inspections recorded electronically.
- Enquiry handling will be linked to cyclical tree inspection and works.
- Contractors are completing work and adhering to our framework.

3.2 The system for calculating the risk a tree poses is an assessment of three values:

3.3 Using common sense risk management of trees guidance advised on by The National Tree Safety Group

#### Target

The target can be anything of value, such as people or property.

#### Hazard impact potential

The size of the tree or the size of the part of the tree that has been identified as likely to fail.

#### Probability of failure

The likelihood that part of the tree, or the whole tree, has, of striking a target.

3.4 Where there is a 'hazard' and a 'target', there is a quantifiable risk that requires assessment and management.

3.5 Frequency of inspections will be set according to the frequency of use of an area. In the highest use areas a more frequent inspection programme will take place. In locations without structures or that have low public access an assessment of tree hazard maybe unnecessary i.e woodlands.

3.6 If a tree is found to pose an imminent risk to public safety urgent tree work will be recommended to address the risk in an appropriate timeframe.

### 4.0 Cyclical Inspection Recording

#### 4.1 Baseline information

4.1.1 Information relating to the ownership and current condition of the tree stock is fundamental to an effective tree management regime. Information on tree numbers, age, location, species, health and condition is necessary to inform relevant policy and resource decisions i.e. carbon storing.

## 4.2 Data management

4.2.1 Tree survey data needs to be accessible and regularly updated. Historical tree safety inspection records are held on paper files. The tree safety inspection information is now recorded and works ordered using Ezytreev, tree management software where records of individual tree inspections are held. The information captured includes the name of the inspector, the date of the inspection any recommendations, condition detail and work history as relevant. Tree locations are plotted on the corporate mapping system.

## 5. **Tree inspection methods**

5.1 Visual tree inspections from ground level will be undertaken to assess the condition of the tree. The roots, trunk, scaffold limbs, crown structure, buds and leaves will be assessed to inform work requirements and to give an indication of general tree health and condition.

5.2 On occasion an aerial inspection may be necessary to enable defects in the upper part of the tree to be investigated in more detail. Where this involves climbing the tree it would be carried out by appropriately trained and qualified staff in accordance with a safe system of work.

5.3 In certain situations an external consultant may be employed to carry out non-invasive detailed decay mapping or to identify unknown pests and diseases.

5.4 What to consider for tree inspections?

- The inspection period is when trees are in leaf between April and December.
- The frequency of tree inspections, based on factors such as the tree species, age, location, size, soil type and soil mapping (e.g. identifying trees that are on clay soil), claims history and the types of third parties that might be affected.
- How you will inspect all aspects of the trees (including long branches, cavities and roots) also the creation of pollards for rotational pruning on Willows, Acer's and ash due to location.
- Landscape character and history.
- Proximity of trees to buildings and structures.
- Trees overhanging gardens will only be reduced if either the whole tree or large branches over 20cm and 1.5 metres and over a structure or play area as it is not a legal requirement.
- Risk to public and staff i.e deadwood or cavity or split and hanging.
- The type of inspection that is correct for the type of trees you are responsible for, and the risks they pose.
- How you would respond to an emergency such as severe weather or falling trees or branches, and putting in place plans and procedures, in the event that incidents happen.
- Visual cavities on the trunk may require a Picus test or a Resistograph test and further action or monitoring as required.

5.5 Tree Inspection Process Trees will be visually assessed from ground level using Visual Tree Assessment (VTA); this involves the systematic assessment of all parts of the tree including the rooting area, base, stem, limbs, branches, twigs to the leaves and buds.

5.6 Trees will be inspected at a minimum of every three years by the arboriculture team. Tree safety inspectors will be trained to a minimum standard of level 3 as described in the National Qualifications Framework.

### 5.7: Indicative inspection cycles

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|---|---|--|
| <p><b>High use / risk roads</b></p> <p>Inspector will be trained to level 3 standard</p>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street trees, major or arterial roads and pedestrian pathways</li> <li>• Play Areas</li> <li>• Car Parks</li> <li>• The Walks pathways for events</li> <li>• Dead pine trees Mintlyn Crematorium due to boring Beetle</li> </ul> | <p>Annual inspection</p>               |
| <p><b>Medium Risk</b></p> <p>Inspector will be trained to level 3 standard</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All other highways</li> <li>• Designated routes through woodlands, parks and open spaces, churchyards and housing common land</li> <li>• Trees in falling distance of property</li> </ul>  | <p>Once every 3 years</p>              |
| <p><b>Low Risk</b></p> <p>Casual inspections will be undertaken by staff managing the asset or that warden the area</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodland areas away from paths</li> <li>• Areas with no or very limited public access</li> <li>• Agreed Biodiversity areas</li> </ul>  | <p>Informal inspection carried out</p> |

## 6. Reactive and emergency tree inspection generated form enquires.

6.1 Additional tree safety inspections will be undertaken outside the tree safety inspection programme, as a result of customer enquiries, or as a result of damage to a tree from accidental or environmental causes.

6.2 Tree enquiries will be allocated in priority order on the information obtained at the point of contact and existing site knowledge. If necessary, a follow up call will be made by the Arboricultural Officer to clarify the likely level of risk posed by the tree in question. Any

report of a fallen tree or branch will be attended to assess any other damage in the tree or further risk to the public.

- 6.3 There will be formal reactive inspections in response to enquiries from the public or other council staff (resulting from their informal observations). When reactive inspections take place, the inspector will have the opportunity to conduct a brief superficial observation of adjacent trees to observe any obvious defects or action to be taken.
- 6.4 Monitoring of the tree will be recorded and have the time period between inspections reduced in line with the Arboricultural Officers recommendation.

## **7.0 Principles of tree removal and standing deadwood**

- 7.1 Dead, diseased, dying or dangerous trees will be removed where they pose an unacceptable risk to public safety. Dead trees – where the risk posed is low, dead trunks that are upright and stable will be reduced and retained as wildlife habitats with most or the entire branch framework reduced to stubs. Where feasible, felled trunks will be left in situ on the ground. The removal of dead wood from a tree will be specified when essential for health and safety reasons. Where possible it will be recommended that dead branches are stabilised by shortening them to a point where they no longer pose a risk so that they can be retained as a wildlife habitat. Where site conditions allow, deadwood will be left on site below the tree. Where possible branch wood will be retained on site and left stacked or in habitat piles for wildlife (excluding parks and gardens i.e The Walks, Gaywood Park, Hunstanton Gardens) and in agreement with Biodiversity Task group and Arboricultural Officer.
- 7.2 Where landmark, ancient or culturally important trees have been identified as posing an unacceptable risk to public safety we may undertake detailed decay mapping for hidden defects, and where appropriate, professional identification of pathogens to ensure the correct recommendations are undertaken before trees are removed or heavily reduced.
- 7.3 In circumstances, where important or potentially controversial tree management decisions are taken the council officers will brief the elected members, publish information on the council's website or post information notices on the tree to inform local residents of the proposed work.

## **8.0 Monitor and Review work and contractors.**

- How do they manage their risk assessments?
- Do they have proper insurance?
- Do they have the right qualifications and experience?
- Can they be available for out of hours emergency work?
- How can you check and review the work conducted by contractors?

## **9.0 Identifying the unknowns**

If it cannot be dealt with as part of the response to the enquiries flow diagram in 9.1 then efforts will be made to compare tree knowledge of corporate land assets with other departments.

Finding gaps in tree ownership across departments is ongoing, due to assets being developed sold or leased.

Ongoing support is given by our legal team with areas that Openspace maintain but do not own to advise residents of any legal obligation.

## **9.1 Planning information**

All of the details on how to make tree works applications or notifications are available on the Council's website. Applications or notifications are required where works are proposed to trees that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or located within a Conservation Area.

We encourage applications and notices to be submitted through the Planning Portal. It's quick to set up an account, and once an account is created the process of submitting and tracking applications is straightforward. Applications may also be submitted by e-mail or by post, as long as the standard form is used for TPO applications.

Applications or notifications are required where works are proposed to trees that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or located within a Conservation Area.

In terms of statutory timescales:

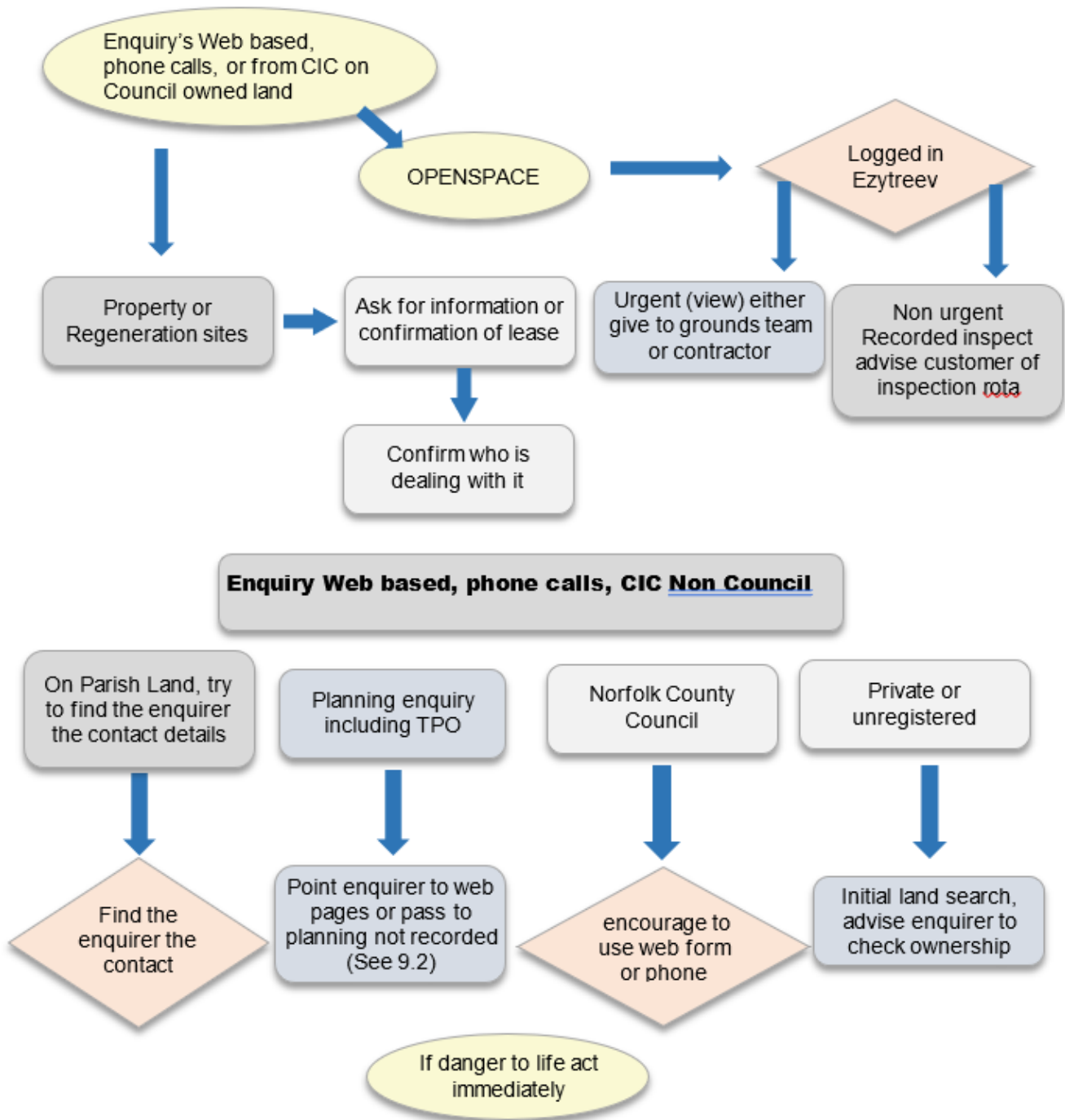
- Conservation Area notifications (Section 211 notices) are subject to a six-week notification period from receipt of a valid notice.
- Tree Preservation Order applications must be determined within eight weeks of validation.

In practice, we aim to determine both types of submission within a shorter timeframe where possible, subject to workload and priorities.

There are limited exemptions from the requirement to apply or give notice. Works may be carried out without prior consent where a tree is dead, or where works are urgently necessary because a tree presents an immediate risk of serious harm. In such cases, only the minimum works necessary to remove the risk should be undertaken, and the onus is on the person carrying out the works to demonstrate that the exemption applies.

For trees within Conservation Areas, the Local Planning Authority should be given at least five days' written notice of the proposed works to dead or dangerous trees, unless the situation is genuinely urgent. Photographic or other supporting evidence is recommended for the avoidance of doubt.

## 9.2 Response to enquiries



## **10. Document review**

The Tree Management Safety Plan will be under constant review by the Arboricultural Officer and formally reviewed every five years.

Acknowledgements Written By Ed Johnson Arboriculture Officer (Openspace)

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