

# WINDLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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| Version & Date | Amendments made  |
|----------------|--|
| V1.0-221025    | Adopted at Full Council meeting                                |
| V1.0-231128    | Adopted at Full Council meeting 28 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 |
| V1.0-241029    | Adopted at Full Council meeting 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2024  |
|                |  |

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Windlesham Parish Council owns public open space over several separate locations.
- 1.2 A prominent feature are the trees that grow there. Trees provide a wide variety of benefits to society and a balance needs to be reached between the benefits provided and the risks posed. Tree management does not seek to eliminate all risk, this would not be practicable and would remove all the benefits trees offer:
- Trees produce oxygen to help us breath, and sequester (lock away) carbon dioxide, providing a critical role in tackling climate change.
  - They help to remove particles and pollutants from the air, improving air quality.
  - They provide shade in urban areas, reducing the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation, making streets and buildings cooler in summer.
  - They help to reduce traffic noise, absorbing and deflecting sound.
  - They help to promote increased biodiversity and provide habitat and food for wildlife.
  - They have been proven in studies to promote wellbeing, having a positive impact on both physical and mental health.
- 1.3 The aim of this policy is to set out how Windlesham Parish Council will manage risk and maintain its tree stock and provide guidance to those whose activities bring them in to contact with them and ensure that the Council is fulfilling its statutory duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1999 to ensure that members of the public, and staff, are not put at risk because of any failure by the Council to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety.

## 2 HAZARD AND RISK

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- 2.1 Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline in old age, and to physical damage, or invasion by pathogens. As trees age, their value and the visual amenity they provide tends to increase. A hazard is something that could cause harm i.e. in trees, the failure of parts of or the whole tree. For a tree to become a hazard, there must be a target that can be affected by the hazard. The target could be an object, structure, person or anything else in the area. Risk is the level of likelihood that a hazardous tree will cause actual harm. Risk is relative to the

location of the tree, the intensity of use/occupancy of the location and the proximity of possible targets.

- 2.2 The risk of being struck and killed by a tree or branch falling is extremely low (in the order of one in ten million for those trees in or adjacent to areas of high public use)<sup>1</sup>. It would therefore be disproportionate to record every tree as part of a tree risk management regime.

### **3 INSPECTIONS**

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The council will take proportionate and reasonable steps to prevent or minimise the risk arising from the presence of trees on its land. It will ensure a process of inspection is conducted to assess trees for their potential to cause harm, and act on the results (see section 4). Inspections may be programmed or ad hoc (as a result of a report from a resident, for example). Ad-hoc inspections can be undertaken in the first instance by a member of staff or contractor who has a good general tree knowledge or has undertaken a basic tree survey and inspection course. The person must be aware of their own limitations and if in any doubt request a detailed inspection from a suitably qualified person.

Programmed inspections will form part of the routine formal inspection process commissioned by the council. The council will be satisfied that the inspector is suitably qualified (minimum Level 4 Arboriculture with modules covering tree inspection and the recognition and treatment of defects, LANTRA Professional Tree Inspection) experienced and holds professional indemnity insurance of £2,000,000 and public liability insurance of £10,000,000.

#### **3.1 Regular Inspections**

- 3.1.1 Windlesham Parish Council will undertake professional inspections of all its tree stock every 5 years, unless previous surveys stipulate a reduced inspection period.
- 3.1.2 The Clerk will be responsible for ensuring this is carried out and reviewed by a member of staff with good working knowledge of the council's land and its usage.
- 3.1.3 All identified works, including those arising between inspections, will be prioritised by assessing the likelihood of tree failure in conjunction with the likelihood and consequences of impact.
- 3.1.4 Timeframes to undertake identified works according to risk can be found in section 4 of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> HSE Management of the risk from falling trees or branches, 2013  
Version V1.0-41029  
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Next Review Date: October 2025

## **3.2 Scope of Inspections**

3.2.1 All formal inspections will be carried out from ground level and will look at the following:

### **3.2.2 Roots**

- Lifting of rootplate indicated by changes in soil level, or cracking of the soil around the roots
- Included bark between buttress roots
- Fungal fruiting bodies growing on, or from the roots
- Physical damage of roots
- Cavities, or decayed areas on the buttress roots
- Lack of root flare
- Loose dead bark on the buttress roots
- Ooze, or exudate from roots

### **3.2.3 Trunk**

- The presence of fungal fruiting bodies on the trunk
- Wounds on the trunk
- Splits within the trunk
- Cankers on trunk
- Areas of dead bark on the trunk
- Epicormic growths on the trunk
- Abnormal swellings on the trunk
- Swelling of the trunk indicating possible internal decay
- Cavities within the trunk
- Ivy on trunk
- Ooze, or exudate from trunk
- Evidence of lightning strikes on the trunk
- Sheer cracks along the plane of the stem from co-dominant stems
- Signs of physical damage to the trunk from vehicular collisions or vandalism

### **3.2.4 Main branches**

- Signs of included bark between tight branch unions and signs of incipient cracks
- Presence of fungal fruiting bodies on branches
- Presence of longitudinal cracks on large branches
- Cracks on large branches
- Hanging branches
- Presence of dead, or broken branches
- Cavities within large branches
- Ooze, or exudate from branches
- Signs of physical damage to branches from vehicular collisions or vandalism

- Sudden changes in direction of branches.
- Presence of extensive growth of ivy on branches
- Unbalanced asymmetrical crown shape

#### 3.2.5 Canopy

- Density of leaf cover
- Check leaf size, colour and condition
- Dieback of the outer canopy
- Dead smaller branches within the canopy
- Gaps within the canopy indicating weakened or broken branches
- Broken branches within the canopy.

### 3.3 Inspection Reports

3.3.1 The outcome of inspections will be recorded as a written report and will detail:

- Those trees which pose risk
- The level of risk
- The required action
- Priority level for completion
- They must be dated and signed by the inspector

3.3.2 Response times for completion of the work is detailed in the table in Section 4.

3.3.3 All inspection records must be retained to evidence that trees have been subject to systematic inspection, records are to be kept as per the council's retention schedule.

## 4 TREE MAINTENANCE

**4.1** Tree maintenance and remedial work will be conducted as a result of information gathered during programmed inspections (detailed above), however reactionary maintenance will always form a key element of overall tree maintenance operations following ad-hoc inspections due to reports from residents, partner organisations and utility companies or storm damage etc.

The following categories will be used when prioritising tree work:

| Priority | Response  |
|----------|---|
| High     | From 24 hours to one month depending upon identified risk |
| Moderate | Between 1 to 6 months depending upon identified risk      |

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Low          | 6-12 months where possible depending upon identified risk |
| Non-Priority | No action proposed  |

**4.2** Trees will be made safe via pruning or felling, or other options advised by a suitably qualified person. If a delay is anticipated in securing a permanent solution, measures will be put in place to temporarily reduce the risk i.e. closing footpaths, fencing or cordoning off trees etc.

**4.3** Work to trees will only be undertaken by contractors competent to carry out the work i.e. they are fully trained and experienced in the work that they are undertaking and hold appropriate qualifications. They must hold Public Liability insurance of at least £10,000,000.

**4.4** Windlesham Parish Council will seek to ensure that tree works are carried out to the highest standards. All tree works should conform to British Standard 3998:2010 (Tree Work-Recommendations). We will carry out stump grinding where necessary to enable new trees to be planted or remove a significant hazard. Where stump removal is not necessary tree stumps will be left at an appropriate height for the location.

## 5 TREE CARE

Whilst works are sometimes necessary to ensure that trees are in a safe and healthy condition, we often receive requests and complaints regarding trees. It is important that such issues are dealt with consistently and that decisions are balanced and proportionate taking into account the positive contribution trees make to the environment and street scene and the use of public funds.

### 5.1 Overhanging/Obstructing Branches

5.1.1 Tree branches can cause obstructions to public footpaths, roads, signs and open spaces. Appropriate pruning to eliminate hazards will be undertaken in line with statutory requirements.

5.1.2 We will not prune trees that overhang neighbouring properties unless they have been assessed as dangerous by a suitably qualified person.

*NB. Adjacent landowners have a Common Law right to prune overhanging branches back to the boundary only, but not beyond and may not enter adjacent land to carry out the work with seeking the landowner's permission. Any such works should be carried out carefully ensuring the tree remains in a safe, healthy condition. It is essential that the relevant local authority is contacted prior to any works being carried out, to ascertain if the tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order or situated*

*within a Conservation Area (in these circumstances permission to undertake any work to the tree must be obtained from the local planning authority)*

## **5.2 Loss of Light**

- 5.2.1 We will not prune or fell trees if they are being perceived to be blocking light. Consideration will only be given to the matter in exceptional circumstances, where the loss of light is severe, such as where branches obstruct windows.
- 5.2.2 Pruning of evergreen trees which would fall under the high hedge legislation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## **5.3 General/Minor Nuisances**

- 5.3.1 We will not prune or fell trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena, most of which are minor and considered to be normal and acceptable consequences of living near trees. Examples are:
- Falling leaves, sap, blossom, fruits, nuts, bird and insect droppings
  - Insects associated with trees
  - Reduction or increase of moisture to gardens
  - Suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens
  - Leaves falling into gutters, drains or roofs
  - The build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structures
- Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways, weeding of set seeds and cleaning affected surfaces is, considered to be, normal routine seasonal maintenance of owning a property.

## **5.4 Trees Considered too Big or too Tall**

- 5.4.1 We will not prune or fell a tree because it is considered to be ‘too big or ‘too tall’ for its surroundings. Trees grow adaptively to support themselves in relation to their surroundings and the typical loads they can be expected to experience. All trees have the potential to fall and whilst we understand that living near a tall tree can worry some people we will not remove or drastically reduce the height of trees simply because they would hit a structure ‘if’ it were to fall.

## **5.5 Ivy**

- 5.5.1 Ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a native species which provides important habitat to a wide range of wildlife. Ivy does not kill, or damage trees and its presence doesn’t indicate that a tree is unhealthy or create a tree safety issue in its own right<sup>2</sup>. We will only consider the severing of Ivy if we believe it may be concealing a defect on a tree or

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<sup>2</sup> [Ivy \(Hedera helix\) - British Wildflowers - Woodland Trust](#)

producing a sail effect which could affect the stability of an old or otherwise compromised tree.

## 6 INSURANCE

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- 6.1 The council accepts that even with this policy in place there will always be residual risk which could lead to harm or damage. Therefore, the council will hold adequate public liability insurance (currently £10,000,000) to cover such eventualities.

## 7 REVIEW

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This policy will be reviewed by the council on an annual basis or as legislation dictates.

**Adopted:**

**Review Date:**