

Bitteswell with Bittesby Parish Council - Tree Safety Policy

Adopted November 2021 | Reviewed May 2024

Bitteswell with Bittesby Parish Council (BBPC) accepts that it has a duty under health and safety legislation to provide the public with safe access to open spaces and this policy sets out the framework to ensure that the trees on Village Greens owned by the Parish Council are as safe as is reasonably practicable. Trees are functioning biological systems subject to the unpredictable influences of the climate, and no tree can ever be declared categorically safe.

The main area of trees that are the responsibility of Bitteswell Parish Council are those on the Village Green areas.

Conservation Area and Tree Preservation Orders

A Tree Preservation Order is a form of planning control. It prevents cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or destruction of trees without permission from Harborough District Council.

The same protections apply to trees in a Conservation Area and also require permission from Harborough District Council Planning Department. The centre of Bitteswell village is a designated Conservation Area.

Consent is required to work on trees in a Conservation Area or that are protected by a TPO. Planning applications to Harborough District are usually dealt with in 6 weeks.

Tree Risk Assessment & Level of Residual Risk

It is not possible to eliminate all risks from trees however there are often indications that a tree may be in decline. BBPC employs a professional and independent arboricultural consultant to undertake a Risk Assessment every 2 to 3 years, or more frequently where an individual tree has been found to require closer attention. The assessment records the condition and required maintenance schedule for BBPC owned trees and identifies any which pose a risk to health and safety.

The tree maintenance schedule aims to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. The legal framework does not require the elimination of risk altogether, but that the residual risk is minimised to a tolerable level.

Inspection Regime

There will be three types of inspections:

1. Casual observation
2. Formal inspections
3. Detailed inspections

The different levels of inspection require differing level of competence.

1. Casual observation

Members of the public may report concerns about the state of a tree to the Parish Clerk. This will instigate a higher level of inspection dependant on the observation.

2. Formal Inspection

A member(s) of the Parish Council, the Parish Clerk or the Parish Tree Warden(s) will undertake a visual assessment of the trees annually in late summer to identify dead or diseased parts. In addition, a formal inspection will be performed after strong winds and/or heavy rain or similar adverse weather.

There will be no requirement for specific qualifications for the persons mentioned above but they should have an understanding of the basic signs of poor health.

These inspections will include the following:

1. Looking for signs of immediate serious structural failure.
2. Assessing the general health and shape of the tree.
3. Looking for signs of disease and decay especially fungal attack.
4. Looking for dieback and dead or dying branches (often picked up when trees are in leaf).
5. Damage to bark.

The Formal Inspection will provide one of the following three outcomes:

1. The tree(s) has no observed significant defects and therefore requires no further action.
2. The tree(s) requires a more detailed inspection; the tree will be prioritised risk.
3. Work is required as an emergency.

3. Detailed Inspections

The Council will commission a full tree survey by a suitably qualified person every 2 to 3 years (depending on recommendation of previous survey). The person completing the full tree surveys will be a professional and independent arboricultural consultant. The extent of the assessment (visual or more sophisticated) will be determined by the risk level of the area of trees.

The detailed inspection will provide recommendations for works and future management and will be prioritised according to their relative urgency. This is based upon the tree's location; potential targets close by and the significance of the defects identified.

Recording of Inspections

All formal and detailed tree inspections must be recorded in writing and these documents held by the Parish Council.

Information recorded must include the date of the inspection, by whom it was carried out and the prevailing conditions at the time of the inspection.

It is important to note that not all trees surveyed need to be recorded. The vast majority of the trees managed by the Council will either be in good or excellent health or be too young or small to pose any significant risk. Only those trees that show some signs of damage or disease require notification. This information can then be used when maintenance work is due to be carried out.

Remedial Works

If any defects or concerns are identified, the Clerk will instruct a suitably qualified arboriculturalist to assess the tree and provide a written report as to its condition and any remedial works required. The Council will instruct a suitably qualified contractor to complete the works. Necessary consent shall be obtained before any tree work starts.

In emergency situations, the area around the tree(s) will be cordoned off to ensure public safety. The Clerk has delegated powers to instruct a suitably qualified contractor to make safe trees that are dangerous and pose high risk to life or property.

Consent for work on a tree in the conservation area and/or with a TPO must be sought from Harborough District Council, but not at the detriment of safety. Any emergency work should be documented and submitted to Harborough District Council at the next opportunity.

The Trees

The eight individual trees and one small group of trees on the Village Green areas maintained by the Parish Council is listed below and the approximate locations are shown on the plan at Appendix 1.

T1: Horse Chestnut

G1: Elm Group

T2: Lobel Elm

T3: Whitebeam

T4: Whitebeam

T5: Weeping Ash

T6: English Oak

T7: Horse Chestnut

T8: Indian Horse Chestnut

THE VILLAGE GREENS

APPROXIMATE TREE LOCATION PLAN

