

Hartest Parish Council - Tree Safety Policy

Hartest Parish Council recognises its duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and otherwise under the law to protect employees and members of the public, so far as is reasonably practicable, from danger arising from trees on its premises for which Hartest Parish Council has a duty of care.

The main area of trees that are the responsibility of Hartest Parish Council are those on or around The Green and at the cemetery. As the landowner for these two parcels of land Hartest Parish Council has a responsibility to reasonably protect members of the public, contractors and staff that enter these areas.

Managing Risk

Hartest Parish Council will manage the risks from trees in a balanced way to maximise the benefits from trees whilst taking reasonable precautions to protect the safety of its members, employees, contractors and members of the public. It will achieve this by adopting procedures for the inspection, management and maintenance of trees proportionate to the risks as suggested by the National Tree Safety Group¹.

Trees form a dynamic biological resource subject to the vagaries of pests and diseases, extremes of weather and the influence of human activities. Furthermore, as trees grow and mature they may develop dead wood, cavities or other potential defects as a part of the natural aging process. Where a tree's condition has some weakness that renders it significantly likely to fail, it becomes a 'hazard'. Where there is both a hazard and a target (i.e. people or property) that may be damaged by failure of a tree or part of a tree, then there is a quantifiable risk that requires assessment and management.

Zoning by level of Risk

The highest risk areas are adjacent to the highway and to neighbouring properties and structures. The lowest risk areas are in the middle of the green areas that are less frequently accessed by people and where falling trees or parts of trees will not interfere with the high-risk areas.

Inspection Regime

There will be tree types of inspections:

1. Casual observation
2. Formal inspections supported by detailed inspections, and
3. Detailed inspections

The different levels of inspection require differing level of competence. Written records will be kept.

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 of the Parish Council, or the Parish Clerk, and the Parish Tree Warden will undertake a visual assessment of the trees annually in late summer to identify dead or diseased parts. In addition, 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. The annual 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. The area around the tree(s) will be cordoned off to ensure public safety. In emergency situations, the Clerk should instruct a suitably qualified contractor to complete the work required and make the tree(s) safe. (See note below regarding consent).

3. Detailed Inspections

The Council will commission a full tree survey by a suitably qualified person every three to five years (depending on recommendation of previous survey). The person completing the full tree surveys will be trained to a minimum of Level 3 arboricultural qualification with at least two years' practical experience of tree management and surveying. 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 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, and/or more frequent monitoring.
3. Work is required.

Remedial Works

If there 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 Clerk will obtain three quotes for all tree works required and will present them to the Parish Council prior to instructing the 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 sort from Babergh District Council but not at the detriment of safety. Any emergency work should be documented and submitted to Babergh District Council at the next opportunity.

Records

Records, including maps, provide the basis for safety management reviews and, in the extremely rare event of an accident, can support evidence of reasonable tree management. It is may not be necessary to record every tree inspected. However, records of trees presenting a serious risk and requiring treatment are useful, as is a record of how they have been treated.

Hartest Parish Council will keep records of inspections: when carried out, by whom and any recommendations made. In addition, records of action (including remedial work) should be recorded (when and by whom).

This policy document was adopted by the Hartest Parish Council on 5th July 2017

Parish Clerk: Mrs P M Lamb,
Tel No: 01359 233288
email: parishclerk@hartest.com