

ELSING PARISH COUNCIL Tree Policy & Report

This policy is based on the Forestry Commission's *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees, 2011*, which included input from the Health and Safety Executive.

Elsing Parish Council owns or is responsible for three locations on which trees grow. This Policy outlines the procedure for inspecting and reporting the condition of trees, the risks they may carry, and the principles behind any action to be taken.

Risk is a combination of consequence and likelihood. In the case of diseased or dying trees, the consequence can be serious – injury, death, or damage to property; but the likelihood is low. The HSE sets its intermediate ‘tolerable’ level of risk at 1 in 10,000. Deaths from trees have a frequency of 1 in 10,000,000, which is in the ‘low’ category, i.e. the level of risk with which ‘all engage voluntarily’. We are here concerned only with serious consequences, ignoring the usual woodland trip hazards for example, for which the consequences are invariably minor. But whether the likelihood of injury is low or intermediate, opportunities for minimising it should be taken.

The benefits of trees are many, but we may ignore the relatively small ecological effect of removing the occasional individual tree. In Elsing, the amenity benefit is paramount. Where so much land is fenced, the freedom to move amongst woodland is precious, especially to children, for whom even a footpath is too constraining.

The law has something to say about the responsibilities of councils, but no attempt is made here to align the policy with any statute or precedent, as we are not experts. The only guiding principle will be the concept of reasonableness.

The Parish Council should therefore proceed, in the words of the Forestry Commission, ‘on a rational and cost-effective basis, so that risk is as low, and as controlled, as reasonably practical’.

We should therefore inspect each of our three locations annually (spring is best), measure them against the tick-boxes overleaf, recommend action if necessary, and circulate this in time for the Annual meeting.

Adopted 19th July 2021

Inspection Form

	100 Yr Wood	Allotment Boundary	Highway Surveyor's Land
Density of growth & Visibility	young growth, not yet dense, good visibility	several mature trees in hedgerow	visibility highly variable, impenetrable in parts
Ground underfoot	fern, bramble, twigs	pasture	some level, some steeply sloping, occasional thick undergrowth
Threat to adjacent property	none	none	none, but this could change
Public Road	100 m bordering Heath Rd, unfenced	Elsing Rd, about 120 m distant	60 – 70 m bordering Heath Rd, unfenced
Public Footpath	1 official footpath, other circular paths cut	none	none
Agricultural scrap	none found	some found, but removed	none found
Level of public use	walkers daily, probably single figures, children at weekends	tenants of 9 allotments, adjacent to boundary	a number of local children at weekends, more in holidays; occasional walkers
Report 2023 - trunks / branches dead / rotten? - fungus growth? - root plate lifting?	one small birch, leaning now cut down some dead branches overhanging bridleway	one large oak, generally alive but hollow – to be watched	a) visible from the road: - two dead trees leaning away from corner house now cut down b) higher up, less frequented - one small tree, leaning - at the summit, one standing, completely dead all dead trees in children's play area now felled

Name C Horncastle Date 15th March 2023

LOGS. As trees are felled, they may be cut into logs. Until further notice, parishioners may take any such logs or wood already on the ground, but may not cut any themselves.