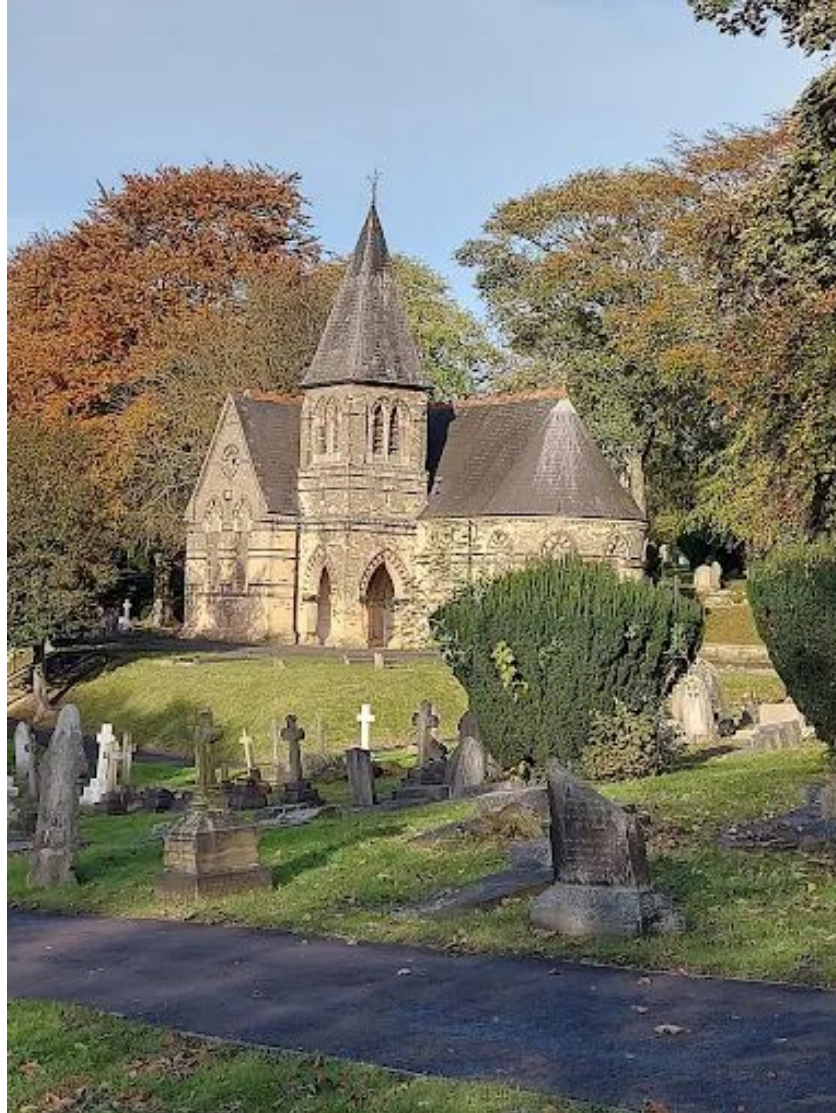


Tree Management Strategy



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Document History

Adopted by Council – 2 September 2025

Reviewed & Adopted –

1. Introduction

Gainsborough Town Council has a statutory duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to ensure that members of the public and employees are not to be put at risk because of any failure by the Council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety.

An assessment of risk is required under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999, in relation to the Tree Management Strategy there is a need to inspect trees in or near public places, or adjacent to buildings or working areas to assess whether they represent a risk to life or property, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

Gainsborough Town Council, either in its capacity as owner or manager, is responsible for trees located on land for which it manages or has control over. As such, the Council has a statutory duty of care in relation to its trees. Compliance with the duty requires the operation of a reasonable systematic inspection of all trees.

This document sets out minimum standards of inspection, competence and record keeping that the Council will commit to and is in accordance with the industry guideline. This document also includes replanting guidance that supports sustainable urban and rural ecosystems. This strategy aligns with UK climate goals, biodiversity needs, and local government policies.

The Nature of Tree Failure Risks

Where land is constantly occupied by people or by valuable property, a moderately small tree might, by virtue of its position, represent a significant “Risk of Harm”. On the other hand, a large tree in an area of low access such as a remote woodland or country park will represent only a very low “Risk of Harm” even where its stability is substantially compromised.

In the latter scenario, access to a remote area will be considerably reduced during the high wind events that are most likely to result in failure of trees and as a result the risk from tree failure in these areas is further reduced.

The System

Gainsborough Town Council appoints a qualified arboriculturist to carry out 18 monthly safety surveys of all trees within its management.

Frequency of Inspections

Any recommended timetable for tree and woodland safety inspections will depend on tree numbers, age-spread and general health, the category of site and the extent of occupation. Inspection timings can sometimes also be determined by insurance companies’ specific requirements and may vary from annually to a three or five-year cycle. If there is a large or ageing tree population and a significant occupation, then the frequency should be increased.

It is recommended that the Council’s now regular inspection frequency of 16 to 20 months should be continued, this allows inspections to be carried out whilst observing changing seasonal and growth conditions.

2. Definitions

Hazard

A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm. A tree-failure hazard is present when a tree has potential to cause harm to people or property.

Risk

Risk is the likelihood of potential harm from a hazard being realised.

Probability

Statistical probability is a measure of the likelihood of something happening.

Acceptable Risks

Gainsborough Town Council is constantly exposed to risk and accepts or rejects risks of varying degrees.

When evaluating tree-failure hazards, two types of risk will be considered. Consideration is given to the person upon whom a risk is imposed. Each year between 5 and 6 people in the UK are killed when trees or branches fall on them. Around 3 people are killed each year by trees in public spaces. Thus, the risk of being struck and killed by a tree or branch falling is extremely low (in the order of one in 10 million for those trees in or adjacent to areas of high public use). However, the low level of overall risk may not be perceived in this way by the public, particularly following an incident.

Reasonable Practicability

The term “so far as is reasonably practicable” refers to the degree of risk in a particular situation and should be balanced against the time, trouble, cost and physical difficulty of taking measures to avoid the risk.

The concept of “reasonable practicability” is a central tenet of English law, which is evident throughout the English Health and Safety legislation and guidance (e.g. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974), and in judgements of the higher courts in relation to tree failure.

Cost and Benefit

The benefits of trees are always under-estimated; they are essential to our well-being and generally enhance our built and natural environments. It is essential within our management principles to maintain a balance between the benefits of risk reduction and the cost of risk reduction; not only financially but also in terms of the lost amenity and other tree related benefits.

Tree Inspection Programme

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that tree safety inspection procedures are in place and that they are undertaken only by employees or others who meet the requirements of competence set out within the following sections.

The tree inspection programme has four stages:

1. An assessment of risk
2. An assessment of hazard
3. A prescription for remedial action
4. A plan for the recording and re-inspection process

Assessing the Level of Risk

This is undertaken by the appropriately qualified arboriculturist with sufficient local knowledge and with advice from relevant members of the ground's maintenance team. However due to the fact that over 80% of the trees that fall under the responsibility of the Council border pathways, roads and highways and also taking in to account that the areas in which the trees are situated are also well visited by employees, contractors and members of the public an inspection frequency between 16 – 20 months carried out by a competent and accredited person is advisable.

Assessing Hazards

This is undertaken by an appropriately qualified arboriculturist. It is the responsibility of the arboriculturist to ensure that the hazard is assessed to the best of their ability and is recorded accurately by themselves, and records kept by the Council's Operations Manager. Many trees are potentially hazardous but only the conditions most likely to lead to injury or damage to people or property can reasonably be addressed unless a more detailed individual inspection is recommended. In practice only, visible defects are likely to be identified during an initial survey.

Recording Information

A full Tree Safety Survey is carried out approximately every 18 months, this includes species, height, condition and age of all trees within Gainsborough Town Council's areas of responsibility. A Tree Safety Survey Report will be issued by the arboriculturist once collated, within the safety survey there will be an action plan of advised works included and an assigned category of risk. Visual tree inspections are also carried out on a regular basis by the Grounds Maintenance Team, Communities Officer and Operations Manager who have all attended a Lantra Tree Inspection course. All findings are logged and reported on hard copy and are held within the Operation Manager's office. Currently all trees that are identified in-house as being in poor condition, be it signs of fungal fruiting bodies, substantial loss of bark/branches or failure to fully leaf in season are then inspected by external arboriculturist contractors.

3. Sustainability and Replanting



The Council recognise that the natural beauty of the Cemetery grounds is deeply enhanced by the presence of mature trees and green spaces. As Managers of Gainsborough's Cemeteries, the Council are committed to preserving and enhancing the landscape and natural habitats through responsible environmental practices.

Because of ongoing maintenance needs, age-related decline, or weather damage that may necessitate the removal of trees, we are dedicated to a proactive and sustainable replanting program. This program includes:

Replanting with Native and Resilient Species

We prioritise the selection of native, disease-resistant, and climate-resilient tree species that are well-suited to the local ecosystem. This supports biodiversity and ensures long-term ecological health.

Maintaining Canopy Coverage

For every tree removed, we aim to plant one or more replacements, ensuring the long-term preservation of tree canopy coverage across the Cemetery grounds.

Preserving Historic and Memorial Integrity

Tree planting and removal will be carefully planned in a way that respects the historic layout of the Cemetery and ensures the dignity of all individual burial plots.

Community and Environmental Partnership

Where appropriate, we will work in collaboration with local environmental groups, arborists, and the community to ensure that our practices align with best ecological standards and reflect shared values.

Through these efforts, we strive not only to preserve the Cemeteries tranquil atmosphere that visitors and families find comforting, but also to contribute meaningfully to environmental sustainability and legacy for future generations.

4. Poplar Tree Management Plan



Poplar trees are fast-growing, tall trees commonly found in parks, urban landscapes, and along roadsides or rivers. Due to their size, brittle wood, and susceptibility to disease and storm damage, poplar trees require structured management to ensure public safety and legal compliance.

Objectives

- Minimise risk to the public and property
- Ensure legal duty of care is met
- Maintain tree health and longevity where possible
- Maintain the Tree Safety Survey and a Tree Management Strategy

Legal Framework & Responsibilities

- **Occupiers' Liability Acts (1957 & 1984)** – Duty of care to Cemetery visitors
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** – Protection for employees
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** – Protection of wildlife inhabiting trees
- **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)** – Ensure compliance before works
- **Local Authority Guidance** – Consult regularly with West Lindsey District Council Tree and Landscape Officer

Risk Assessment Framework

Tree Risk Zones

Categorise land into zones based on usage and risk

Zone	Description	Examples
High	Frequent public access	Roads, paths, playareas
Medium	Occasional access	Open parkland, car parks
Low	Rare access	Remote woodland

Risk Factors for Poplars

- Age and size (larger trees pose higher risks)
- Species (e.g. Lombardy poplar is prone to structural failure)
- Wood decay and fungal infection (e.g. *Ganoderma*, *Phellinus*)
- Limb drop
- Windthrow (especially after heavy rain)

Inspection Regime

A full Tree Safety Survey is carried out approximately every 18 months, this includes species, height, condition and age of all trees within Gainsborough Town Council's areas of responsibility. A Tree Safety Survey Report will be issued by the arboriculturist once collated, within the safety survey there will be an action plan of advised works included and an assigned category of risk.

Visual tree inspections are also carried out on a regular basis by the Grounds Maintenance Team, Communities Officer and Operations Manager who have all attended a Lantra Tree Inspection course. All findings are logged and reported on hard copy and are held within the Operation Manager's office. Currently all trees that are identified in-house as being in poor condition, be it signs of fungal fruiting bodies, substantial loss of bark/branches or failure to fully leaf in season are then inspected by external arboriculturist contractors.

Record Keeping

Maintain a Tree Safety Survey that contains:

- Tree ID/Location
- Species and age estimate
- Date of inspection
- Risk rating
- Recommended actions
- Date of completed works

Maintenance and Risk Mitigation

Pruning

- Remove dead, dying, or dangerous limbs
- Reduce end-weight on long lateral branches
- Crown reduction for structurally weak trees

Felling and Removal

- Remove trees that pose immediate and unmanageable risk
- Consider replanting with safer, more durable species

Monitoring

- Use decay detection tools (e.g. Resistograph) for high-value or high-risk trees
- Monitor fungal fruiting bodies

Storm Damage

- Inspect all high-risk trees after storms or extreme weather
- Prioritise trees in high-use areas

Communication and Training

- Train grounds staff in basic tree risk recognition
- Display warning signage near hazardous areas if needed
- Engage qualified arboriculturists for detailed inspections

Contingency and Emergency Planning

- Maintain a list of emergency tree contractors
- Have a rapid response plan for dangerous tree failures
- Notify insurance providers of known risks and management actions

Review and Update

- Review plans every 2–3 years or following a reportable incident
- Update after major tree work

5. Beech Tree Management Plan



Beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) are magnificent but can become hazardous if not monitored properly due to their susceptibility to root and branch failure, especially as they age. Gainsborough Town Council have responsibility for several Beech trees throughout their parks and Cemeteries, and it has been identified that many of the Cemetery Beech trees are becoming very mature, and the virulent fungal decay agent *Meripilus giganteus* is known to be present. A number of large mature trees have already been removed due to disease, and it is recommended that the remaining Beech tree stock are closely managed to identify issues as early as possible.

Objectives

- Minimise risk to the public and property
- Ensure legal duty of care is met
- Maintain tree health and longevity where possible
- Maintain the Tree Safety Survey and a Tree Management Strategy

Legal Framework & Responsibilities

- **Occupiers' Liability Acts (1957 & 1984)** – Duty of care to Cemetery visitors
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** – Protection for employees
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** – Protection of wildlife inhabiting trees
- **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)** – Ensure compliance before works
- **Local Authority Guidance** – Consult regularly with West Lindsey District Council Tree and Landscape Officer

Risk Assessment Framework

Tree Risk Zones

Categorise land into zones based on usage and risk

Zone	Description	Examples
High	Frequent public access	Roads, paths, playareas
Medium	Occasional access	Open parkland, car parks
Low	Rare access	Remote woodland

Risk Factors for Beech Trees

- Age and size (larger trees pose higher risks)
- Bark stripping by Grey Squirrels causing severe damage
- Fungal infection (e.g. Phytophthora root rot, Beech bark disease, Honey fungus, Meripilus, Ganoderma, Armillaria)
- Drought sensitivity due to shallow root systems
- Wind damage

Inspection Regime

A full Tree Safety Survey is carried out approximately every 18 months, this includes species, height, condition and age of all trees within Gainsborough Town Council's areas of responsibility. A Tree Safety Survey Report will be issued by the arboriculturist once collated, within the safety survey there will be an action plan of advised works included and an assigned category of risk.

Visual tree inspections are also carried out on a regular basis by the Grounds Maintenance Team, Communities Officer and Operations Manager who have all attended a Lantra Tree Inspection course. All findings are logged and reported on hard copy and are held within the Operation Manager's office. Currently all trees that are identified in-house as being in poor condition, be it signs of fungal fruiting bodies, substantial loss of bark/branches or failure to fully leaf in season are then inspected by external arboriculturist contractors.

Record Keeping

Maintain a Tree Safety Survey that contains:

- Tree ID/Location
- Species and age estimate
- Date of inspection
- Risk rating
- Recommended actions
- Date of completed works

Maintenance and Risk Mitigation

Pruning

- Remove dead, dying, or dangerous limbs
- Reduce end-weight on long lateral branches

- Crown reduction to reduce the tree's size and wind resistance

Felling and Removal

- Remove trees that pose immediate and unmanageable risk
- Consider replanting with species that are less susceptible to disease

Monitoring

- Inspect tree's regularly for signs of disease, pests, damage or weakness
- Pay close attention to crown health, trunk condition, and root stability

Storm Damage

- Inspect all high-risk trees after storms or extreme weather
- Prioritise trees in high-use areas

Communication and Training

- Train grounds staff in basic tree risk recognition
- Display warning signage near hazardous areas if needed
- Engage qualified arboriculturists for detailed inspections

Contingency and Emergency Planning

- Maintain a list of emergency tree contractors
- Have a rapid response plan for dangerous tree failures
- Notify insurance providers of known risks and management actions

Review and Update

- Review plans every 2–3 years or following a reportable incident
- Update after major tree work