

Alvecote Wood Tree Safety Policy – 9th December 2011

This policy has been written in response to the publication of "*Common Sense Risk Management of Trees*" by the National Tree Safety Group in December 2011

Main aim and objectives of woodland (in order of priority)

1. To develop the site as a habitat for wildlife
2. To allow the public to enjoy this site as a resource for community groups and for education
3. To provide a sustainable source of wood for fuel and crafts

General Assessment of Risk

Alvecote Wood can be classified as an area of low risk. This is because Alvecote Wood is closed to the public, except on specific occasions:

1. Public Open Days – 9 per year, open for 6 hours at a time, visitor numbers 0 to 50 per day, average 10.
2. Public Open Evenings – 20 per year, open for 2 hours at a time, visitor numbers 0 to 8, average 2
3. Specific visits for members of wildlife groups such as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Butterfly Conservation, Pond Conservation, naturalists' groups and individual naturalists and other interested parties. Variable duration and numbers, usual average 5 visitors, on up to 20 occasions per year.
4. Visits by invitation from family and friends.
5. Visits from small numbers of volunteers to assist with tree planting and coppicing (coppicing covered by separate risk assessment for volunteer work parties).
6. Visits from school groups, Beavers, Scouts – average 1 to 2 days per year, may increase to up to 10 days per year.
7. Photography workshops – 3/4 per year, 8 hours each, maximum 5 participants.

In general, visitors are accompanied on guided tours, and/or remain on marked paths through the woods. All visitors are provided with a leaflet with general safety guidance. We are aware that poachers and trespassers occasionally visit the site (seen on security cameras).

Alvecote Wood has a boundary with a minor road (national speed limit) that has light traffic to farms, marina, pub, village, equestrian and small industrial units. This poses a higher risk and management should reflect this.

The trees in Alvecote Wood (11 acres) are mainly mature oaks with a few other trees (ash, hazel, willow, rowan, holly, hawthorn, elder, birch, field maple and aspen). The oak trees are between 100 and 200 years old. There are some standing dead trees, and some trees with branches overhanging the paths. These are very important habitat for a wide variety of creatures. Overhanging

branches are important for dormice, although these have not been recorded on site but we are trying to encourage them. We also encourage standing and fallen dead wood habitat.

Betty's Wood is an additional 9 acre former arable field. This has been planted with 4500 trees and a new 800-tree hedgerow. These trees are as yet very small and pose no risk to visitors from falling or fallen branches.

Zoned Risk

There are four tree risk zones

1. Roadside (higher risk due to traffic density and speed and year-round exposure)
2. Paths, clearings, parking areas and woodland work areas – intermittent and infrequent use by public
3. Other areas of Alvecote Wood not adjacent to paths
4. Betty's Wood – currently a meadow with trees under 2m tall.

Inspection Regime

1. Roadside – formal inspection by woodland owner once a year, backed up by opinion of arboriculturist and action to reduce risk if required. Ad hoc inspections at other times.
2. Public areas – informal inspection by woodland owners throughout year. Inspection of paths and car parking areas prior to each public open day. Action to reduce risk if required. Formal walk round inspection once a year, with opinion of arboriculturist and action taken to reduce risk if required. Public functions are cancelled in high winds.
3. Other areas – ad hoc inspection and action as and when issues with tree safety that are likely to impinge on public or trespassers are noted.
4. Betty's wood is currently a meadow with small trees under 2 metres – no formal tree inspection is likely to be required before 2015. The policy will be reviewed after that time.

Additional precautions

1. All paths are inspected prior to opening the wood for public open days and photography workshops, where visitors may be in the woods unsupervised.
2. Risk assessments are undertaken for all public activities, and agreed in advance with leaders of Scouts, Schools and other groups involving children
3. Camping area is away from the drip line of trees in a clearing
4. Public are advised to keep to the paths at all times
5. Event cancelled in the event of high winds
6. Areas away from paths are not mown and undergrowth deters entry to these areas from spring to autumn. Woods are closed in winter.