

David Aspinall

Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 6NQ.

7th February 2023

Dear Sir,

I should like to formally complain at the the clearfelling of a local wood by Newcastle City Council recently. I believe this work was carried out without a Felling License, which should have been necessary due to the volume of timber felled and the importance of this natural woodland to the local area.

Elswick Wood was between Elswick Road and Gloucester Terrace and was bordered by Ashleigh Nursery, Hawthorn Primary School and Elswick Hall Care home, now known as lifeways. It was overlooked by apartments named Cherry Tree View, across Gloucester Terrace, and was about an acre in size. It was informally known as Elswick Wood and was naturally regenerated native scrub woodland. It wasn't managed in any way other than boundary maintenance and was a popular site for fly-tipping. The dense trees provided habitat for a plethora of common small bird species. With careful management it might have been regarded as a nature reserve and it probably has the postcode NE4 6JR.

There was a large ash tree there that had died, of dieback, and was ready to shed boughs, the largest of which overhung the nursery zebra crossing. I posted a photo of this tree on a social media website, pointing out the potential danger, and this provoked some angry comments. The next thing I knew was that the whole site had been felled. No timber was removed from the site and the cut wood was mostly chipped and left in piles about the place. The birds were lost. This happened probably in January 2022 and another tree - a large ash across Elswick Road - was felled later. This was a healthy tree, with a pronounced lean, and was also part of the wood.

I have enclosed several photos on a data DVD and these are self-explanatory. The picture exif tags are original and will show when they were taken as well as the camera settings. There is also a bunch of short video files that were captured shortly after the felling took place. The workers had left behind a couple of wheelbarrows, that are not present in the later pictures. I shall be pleased to hear your determination in this matter. One thing I should like to emphasise is the names of the adjacent premises - they have tree names - and also the observation that a nature site, with its birdsong and activity, is immensely valuable beside a school, a nursery and a care home. This has been lost in an extended act of vandalism. Thank you.

David Aspinall BSc.