

TREES ON COUNCIL LAND: POLICY

Aim

The Council's aim is to manage the existing trees on its estate in order that they should provide maximum public benefit and amenity whilst paying due regard to issues of safety and nuisance. The Council is also committed to a programme of additional and replacement planting in order to achieve an ongoing net gain in the number and quality of trees on Council land.

Tree Inspection

All trees on Council Land will be regularly inspected on a frequency suitable to the trees age and condition. Any recommendations for works that are necessary will be acted upon.

New Trees

Wherever appropriate sites become available, the Council will look to plant new trees. In planting such trees the following principles will be applied:

1. Space – when planting trees careful consideration will be given to ensuring that they have adequate space to grow to maturity and to provide a public benefit not a nuisance.
2. Species – the Council will make full use of both native and exotic species. The choice of species will be carefully suited to the location in which planting is taking place.
3. Stock size – priority will be given to the planting of the smallest stock size possible (in accordance with recognised practice). Priority will be given to the planting of whips, particularly where mass planting of native species is undertaken, and the use of light standards only where these are being planted for specific individual amenity purposes. Standard and Heavy Standard may be used where specimen trees or immediate impact are required.
4. Protection – new trees will be provided with suitable protection against both animals and, where necessary, people. The primary means of protection will be by planting in the right place and by using stock of a suitable size as opposed to using physical guards.
5. Weed control – all new planting will be subject to weed control to prevent the growth of grass or weeds within 50cm of the base of any tree. This is to ensure best possible growing conditions and to prevent physical damage from mowing and cutting machinery.
6. Staking – wherever practicable the Council will look to plant with stock which does not require staking. Staking will only be considered on large standard trees – and here only for a maximum of 18 months.

Existing Young Trees

Where young trees are present on Council land the aim will be to manage them to maximise their healthy and rapid growth. The Council will apply the following principles:

1. Formative pruning – this is to ensure clean and healthy growth from an early age with the aim of minimising long-term tree health problems.
2. Weeding – during the first 5 years of growth young trees will be kept in a weed free circle of 100cm diameter in order to minimise competition from grass and weeds.
3. Maintenance – any stakes or protective materials will be checked at least annually and removed as soon as they are no longer necessary.
4. Mulch – where mulch has been used to suppress weeds this will be replenished at least annually for the first 5 years.

Mature Trees

The Council's primary aim will be to allow mature trees to grow unhindered and without unnecessary interference or tree surgery. It does however accept that in certain circumstances works may be appropriate.

When considering whether tree surgery or works are appropriate to mature trees the Council will normally only undertake works where they meet one of the following tests:

1. That the work is necessary in the interest of public safety.
2. That the works are required to remove nuisance or damage caused by a tree where that nuisance or damage is likely to be actionable in law and is likely to lead to a claim against the Council.

Any works should accord with good arboricultural or silvicultural practice and preserve the health and amenity value of the individual tree involved.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the Council consider requests from individuals to undertake works which are not in accordance with the above tests. If works are agreed under this exception then the Council may seek a contribution towards the costs of the works from the individual requesting the works.

When considering requests to undertake works where a nuisance or damage is claimed, or anticipated, the Council will give due regard to both the likely level of any nuisance or damage and weigh this against current, or future, public benefit of the tree involved.