

## Guidance Note 2: Guidance for Tree Management





## 3.2 Guidance Note 2: Guidance for Tree Management

### 1 Purpose of the guide

These guidelines are intended as a supplementary note to accompany the Tree Strategy demonstrates in a transparent manner how the Council acts in caring for our own trees and our dealings with private trees protected by legislation. We outline the Council's approach to tree management and describe in broad terms, situations where we are likely to consider pruning, felling or other forms of tree management appropriate. The types of tree work that are normally considered acceptable as good practice within the authority are described in more detail in Guidance Note 1, Guidance for works to trees.

### 2 Introduction

Work to trees is often necessary to ensure they are maintained in a healthy and attractive condition as possible. The guidance identifies typical situations where the different types of tree work are applicable, though each tree will always be assessed on its merits. Work to our trees will be carried out by appropriately qualified and experienced staff or by an approved Council contractor and will be in accordance with current UK and EU legislation, guidance, British Standards and Codes of Practice, where they apply.

### 3 Management programmes for Council trees

Trees in publicly accessible areas may from time to time require management. This should include regular prioritised inspections and where necessary programmed maintenance work. This work may include the removal of some trees, pruning of others and replacement planting, with the aim of maintaining the overall tree cover in a safe, healthy and sustainable condition.

The Council has an Arboricultural Team based within its Parks Section. The Team leader is responsible for inspection and management of Council owned trees. The management of Council owned trees is based on a combination of regular inspections and maintenance of some trees in response to requests for tree inspection and maintenance works. The aim is to gradually move towards a situation where most trees in Council ownership are recorded and included within a prioritised inspection and maintenance regime; however resources are limited and this may take some time to fully achieve.

### 4 Dealing with requests for work to trees managed by the Council

Requests for tree inspections and work from the public are received via the call centre. Other requests for inspections or works to trees come from other Council Officers and Councillors. All requests are recorded and prioritised according to urgency; with safety issues given the greatest weighting. Response times to a request vary dependent on the number of requests received at any time. The aim however is to undertake most inspections within 4 weeks of the request and the enquirer advised of the decision within 2 weeks of a visit. Where longer response times are anticipated the enquirer will be informed. Any tree works required will be programmed dependent on its urgency, appropriateness and availability of resources. Some tree works may be recommended for inclusion within existing programmes of works.

All tree works recommended will be guided by Council policy and the Council's Guidance Note 1: Guidance for works to trees.

However, if an individual is unsatisfied with the decision and following further discussion with the Arboricultural Team leader an agreement cannot be reached a formal complaint can be made using the Council's existing procedures - *How to make a complaint to the Council*.



## 5 Consultations regarding works to Council managed trees

The aim of the Tree Strategy and its policies is to set the standards and guidelines that the Council will work to when managing trees.

However, where proposed tree works are considered to be of particular public interest or where there are special circumstances and the proposed works deviate from the normal standards public consultation may be undertaken. Generally pruning works within the Councils guidelines will not require public consultation.

Where large scale work is to be carried out, such as woodland felling or the thinning of a shelter belt as part of routine management local residents, Ward Councillors, and any other local groups such as Parish and Town Councils will be informed before works commence. Any responses will be considered prior to works commencing.

Where trees present an immediate hazard such that felling is the only practical urgent solution it may not be possible to inform interested parties before the work is carried out. However, when tree removal is proposed as part of planned management or as an agreed request for work, the local ward Councillors, Parish Councils and residents who live close to the tree/s to be felled will be informed before works start.



## 6 Dealing with Tree Preservation Order applications and Conservation Area notifications

When dealing with trees which are protected by the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 by virtue of a Trees Preservation Order or location within a Conservation Area, the Council will follow the statutory procedures and timescales for dealing with applications and notifications. Existing national procedures exist for the right of appeal in relation to these trees, and no other local procedure is required. Refer to guidance: Tree Preservation Orders and Trees in Conservation Areas.

When the Council receives an application to undertake work to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order it has 8 weeks to make a decision and in the case of Conservation Area notifications it has 6 weeks from the date they are received to form a view on the appropriateness of the work. These applications and notifications are entered on a register which is available for the public to view and the applications are circulated on the weekly list of planning applications. Applications can be viewed on the Council's Public Access system.

If the Council believes that the work proposed by a Conservation Area notification is inappropriate it may negotiate an agreed compromise or, to prevent inappropriate works proceeding, the Council can make a Tree Preservation Order in respect of the tree or trees in question. The Council is only likely to undertake this action where appropriate tree works cannot be agreed with the applicant and the trees in question are of sufficient amenity to warrant inclusion within a Tree Preservation Order. When a Tree Preservation Order is made the tree owner has the right to object to the order. If the objection cannot be



resolved with the Arboricultural Officer the matter will be referred to the Development Management Trees-Sub Panel who decide whether the TPO is confirmed, confirmed with modification or allowed to lapse.

If an application to undertake works to a tree subject to a Tree Preservation Order is refused by the Council, the applicant has the right of appeal to the Secretary of State. If the appeal is valid a government inspector will visit the site to assess the case and decide on behalf of the Secretary of State whether the appeal is successful. The Council must abide by the Secretary of States decision in such cases.

Applications to undertake works to protected trees will be dealt with using the same guidelines as for those set out for Council trees as outlined in this guide and Guidance Note 1: Guidance for works to trees.

## 7 When can trees be felled?

Huntingdonshire District Council will resist the felling of trees unless pruning and site management solutions have been considered and discounted as an alternative to felling. Each case will be judged on its merits. Tree felling will not be normally permitted for mature trees of high amenity value unless there is very clear justification for the work. There may be cases where the value of the tree, in terms of amenity value, cultural importance or biodiversity may override the reason to fell. Conversely, where a tree is of limited amenity value or a relatively young specimen, the justification for felling will not need to be as vigorous as for a mature tree of high amenity. Trees in groups or in woodlands may be felled as part of a regime of thinning to provide more space for the retained trees to grow and provide more light so that ground flora and the shrub layer within the woodland can flourish.

The table at section 9 gives guidance on common situations where felling may be considered.

## 8 When can trees be pruned?

Pruning, particularly heavy pruning, should be avoided for the tree health reasons stated in Guidance Note 1, since any cutting can weaken the tree and allow decay organisms to enter exposed and vulnerable tissue, causing significant decay. Pruning of a healthy tree may cause it to respond by producing vigorous new growth and in certain species the harder the pruning, then the more vigorous will be the re-growth. Older trees do not tolerate pruning as well as younger ones and substantial pruning can be very damaging particularly in species which are not naturally tolerant of cutting. Tree pruning will not be permitted where the tree is of high amenity value and there is no justification for the work. Work will also be resisted if the tree has been pruned during the previous 2 years, unless there are special circumstances agreed by the Arboricultural Team Leader. As with felling, each case will be carefully judged on its merits.

The table at section 9 gives guidance on common situations where pruning may be considered and the type of pruning that is likely to be advised.

## 9 Guide to tree management

The intention of the following table is to provide a guide to the types of pruning that will be acceptable to resolve common issues that arise in relation to trees. It also gives guidance of when trees may be considered for felling. It is impossible to be entirely prescriptive or to consider in detail all situations that may arise but it outlines the Council's general approach and will act as the basis of all day to day decisions in response to requests for tree work.



The types of tree pruning recommended are described in **Guidance Note 1: Guidance for works to trees**, which should be read in conjunction with this guide.

	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.1	<b>Risk reduction</b>		<b>Pruning</b>	<b>Felling</b>
9.1.1	<p>Removal of hazards or reduction of risks</p> <p>For example the removal of the entire tree, or dead or diseased branches, broken and hanging branches, or storm damage to make a tree safe, and to reshape and balance the crown</p>	<p>The two principal hazards are falling branches or the whole tree failing due to structural failure or root failure</p> <p>Dead and dying trees can be a hazard as the branches become brittle and are more prone to failure. This risk is detailed in Guidance note 6: Tree Risk Management</p> <p>Dead trees in suitable locations provide a valuable habitat, and may be made safe and retained, following a risk assessment. Risk reduction pruning will be considered before felling and removal. In informal areas dead and dying trees may be rendered into a safe condition by reducing the branch structure</p>	<p>A variety of pruning may be appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Removal of dead wood/ crown leaning</li> <li>- Crown reduction</li> <li>- Removal of selective branches</li> <li>- In some cases ‘topping’ may be appropriate if the stem can be retained safely for its biodiversity and wildlife value</li> </ul> <p>Any or occasionally a combination of the following, dependent of circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crown thinning</li> <li>- Crown lifting</li> <li>- Crown reduction</li> </ul>	<p>If the risk assessment indicates that the tree is an unacceptable risk</p>
9.1.2	Trees causing a legal nuisance	<p>A “legal nuisance” is one that is actionable in law. A tree cannot be a “legal nuisance” to its owner. Examples include physical damage to another owner’s property caused by roots or branches.</p> <p>Alleged structural problems must be carefully investigated, and evidence will be expected if it is alleged that a tree is contributing to damage to a property</p>	<p>Any or occasionally a combination of the following, dependent of circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crown thinning</li> <li>- Crown lifting</li> <li>- Crown reduction</li> </ul>	<p>Felling only considered if the nuisance is severe and unlikely to be addressed by pruning</p> <p>Felling may be an acceptable management action, such as in a wooded area or if the tree is young and unsuitable for the location, and has high growth potential</p>
9.1.3	Trees giving rise to real or perceived fear of crime, trees which have provided access/cover for criminal acts, vandalism and harassment for local residents	The management of trees in instances such as this may be one of a variety of solutions considered	Typically making areas visible through crown lifting, thinning and coppicing may be required. This will vary depending on circumstances and location	Felling will only be acceptable as a last resort and where other solutions have been considered



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.2	<b>Good maintenance and aesthetics</b>		<b>Pruning</b>	<b>Felling</b>
9.2.1	Structural or formative pruning to improve crown shape and branch structure. To avoid having to carry out more harmful pruning in the future or loss of tree due to poor form or structural weakness	<p>Works shall only be carried out to young or semi-mature trees. In exceptional cases structural pruning may be carried out on maturing trees, when there is a desire to retain trees with significant structural weaknesses to remove a risk of branch failure, or following storm damage</p> <p>Pruning for purely aesthetic reasons such as to balance the shape of the crown will only be undertaken in formal areas and only be a very light removal of the crown area - usually less than 15%</p>	<p>Usually one of the following types of pruning will be specified dependent on the circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formative pruning</li> <li>- Restoration pruning</li> <li>- Selective branch removal</li> </ul>	Only if tree is of a very poor form and of low amenity value and pruning cannot achieve a desirable result
9.2.2	Disease prevention and control	<p>Occasionally diseases or other disorders may affect part of the tree population, and will need controlling. Trees may then need to be felled to prevent the spread of disease or disorder, such as Dutch Elm Disease, and ash dieback, to benefit the wider tree population</p> <p>In these cases the guidance of appropriate bodies such as Forest Research, and the Arboricultural Association will be followed</p>	Removal of infected limbs	Felling of diseased trees as appropriate and in accordance with guidance



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.2	Good maintenance and aesthetics		Pruning	Felling
9.2.3	<p>Woodland or tree/shelterbelt /group management</p> <p>Thinning, coppicing and other similar operations being undertaken as part of an approved management plan to maintain woodland and promote good woodland and arboricultural practice</p>	<p>The felling of trees to thin out a small copse or woodland is desirable for maintenance of the area. This type of work is essential during establishment to reduce the number of young trees and to allow the best trees to flourish, encouraging healthy growth and development</p> <p>Sometimes tree removal from mature stands may be necessary to promote regeneration and improve the age structure</p> <p>It may be necessary to selectively thin groups of trees to remove non native, invasive, or just undesirable species to benefit the group as a whole in the longer term</p>	Removal of lower limbs of trees	Thinning by felling typically benefits the health, structure or biodiversity value of the group of trees as a whole
9.2.4	Wildlife habitat improvement	<p>Occasionally it may be necessary to fell trees to promote a particular habitat, for example to improve grassland or to encourage native tree species or desirable ground flora</p> <p>Other maintenance practices such as hedge laying and the creation of deadwood habitats may be appropriate to improve the biodiversity value of wooded areas</p>	<p>The type of pruning will be dependent on the circumstances and should be justified</p> <p>Innovative techniques such as coronet pruning may also be used</p>	The felling of trees will only be carried out when it is clearly justified. The wildlife value of the trees will always be taken into account



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.3	<b>Prevention of damage</b>		<b>Pruning</b>	<b>Felling</b>
9.3.1	Trees too close to adjacent structures; branches growing and in contact with buildings, trees that are restricting access for repairs and maintenance of buildings, or authorised construction work	<p>When assessing planning applications the proximity of trees to proposed buildings will be a consideration</p> <p>However in some cases planning consent may be granted where it will be necessary to prune trees to allow construction, especially to allow access to site under the canopy of larger trees</p>	Crown or selective branch reduction or lifting as appropriate	Felling only considered as a last resort if the obstruction cannot be addressed by pruning or if the tree has a high growth potential and would be inappropriate for long term retention in that location
9.3.2	Trees in close proximity to walls and fences which are causing direct damage	<p>As trees grow the increasing girth of the stem and roots can displace walls and fences. Also the movement of branches may cause damage</p> <p>In some cases it is possible to realign, repair, or replace walls/fences bridging over root buttress or leave gap in the boundary to accommodate the tree. Solid boundary structures may also be replaced with hedges</p>	Removal or reduction of selective branches or crown lifting	<p>Where the tree is young and the potential for damage is foreseeable and unavoidable</p> <p>Where the damage is severe and alternative solutions without tree removal not possible</p>



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.3	<b>Good maintenance and aesthetics</b>		<b>Pruning</b>	<b>Felling</b>
9.3.3	Trees growing close to and obstructing / likely to obstruct or interfere with above ground service equipment such as lighting columns, CCTV, overhead cables and road signs	<p>Tree branches may obstruct or become entangled with services equipment such as electricity lines, telephone cables or street lighting and signage</p> <p>Utility service providers have statutory powers to clear their operational equipment. Where this is the case discussion with the Council is advised to agree the most sensitive pruning regime possible</p> <p>New service locations should be agreed with Tree and Landscape Officers, and vice versa, to ensure future conflicts are avoided</p>	<p>Any or occasionally a combination of the following dependent of circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crown lifting</li> <li>- Crown reduction</li> <li>- Selective branch removal</li> </ul>	<p>Where there is a young tree with a high growth potential in close proximity to equipment and regular and harmful pruning will be required to retain it in that location</p> <p>For mature trees only if alternative solutions cannot be found such as pruning or relocation of the service equipment</p>
9.3.4	Trees growing close to and likely to obstruct or interfere with underground services including drains, electricity, telephone cables and gas mains	<p>If drains are damaged and are leaking water, tree roots may be attracted to the moisture source and proliferate in the drains causing blockages. These can often be removed and the drains repaired without the need to remove the tree or undertake drastic root pruning</p> <p>Damage to underground cables is rare but access to these for maintenance sometimes requires excavation in the vicinity of the tree roots. Damage may also occur during the installation of new services in close proximity to existing trees. The guidelines of NJUG Chapter 4 should be followed where these works are required</p>	<p>Root pruning should only be undertaken where it is unavoidable and specified in agreement with the Arboricultural Officer or Arboricultural Team Leader</p>	<p>Felling will only be acceptable where essential works to services are required and access cannot be achieved without damaging roots to such an extent that the health and stability of the tree is uncertain</p> <p>In some cases where a young tree with a high growth potential has established in an unsuitable location close to an underground service access point such as a manhole</p>



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.4	<b>Highway safety</b>		<b>Pruning</b>	<b>Felling</b>
9.4.1	Obstruction to the public highway or growing low over footpaths, public rights of way or access to private property, gardens or open spaces where the public have access	<p>The Highways Authority can enforce the pruning or removal of a tree, including privately owned trees, obstructing the highway</p> <p>A minimum clearance of 2.1m should be maintained over public footpaths and 5.2m above the carriageway of adopted highways</p>	Crown lifting or selective branch reduction	Felling only considered if the obstruction is severe cannot be addressed by pruning



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.5	General nuisance		Pruning	Felling
9.5.1	Trees blocking daylight from habitable rooms and gardens to a severe and unreasonable degree	<p>The seriousness of this effect is as variable as the perception of it. Various factors can affect the light reaching a property or garden including the aspect and other obstructions</p> <p>Pruning will normally only be carried out where the trees are a significant contributory factor and there is a reasonable chance that pruning will improve the situation. The effect of restricting light can sometimes be reduced by crown thinning and crown lifting. Although this may not increase the amount of light to the maximum level possible, it is usually a satisfactory compromise</p> <p>Shading of habitable rooms of property will be given more weight than the shading of the garden</p>	In most cases crown thinning, but occasionally crown lifting or reduction dependent on circumstances	Felling for this reason will normally only be acceptable where there is a dense group of trees and some trees can be removed to benefit the growth of the group as a whole, or when shading is having a significant detrimental impact upon residents use and enjoyment of their property
9.5.2	Trees causing a general nuisance which prevent the reasonable enjoyment of the home and garden	<p>In addition to shading, large trees can cause a number of other common complaints such as leaf fall, dropping of small twigs, seeds, berries etc</p> <p>Also insects and birds associated with trees can be a cause for concern. Honeydew, a sticky substance produced by aphids tends to adhere to surfaces below the tree and sometimes attracts wasps. Bird droppings can be an issue where the tree tends to attract large numbers of birds</p> <p>The same principles apply; pruning will normally only be carried out where the trees are a significant contributory factor and there is a reasonable chance that pruning will improve the situation</p>	<p>Any or occasionally a combination of the following dependent of circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crown thinning</li> <li>- Crown lifting</li> <li>- Crown reduction</li> <li>- Removal of dead wood</li> </ul>	Felling for this reason will normally only be acceptable where there is a dense group of trees and the removal of some will benefit the group as a whole, or when shading is having a significant detrimental impact upon the residents use and enjoyment of their property



	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution	
9.5	<b>Prevention of damage</b>		<b>Pruning</b>	<b>Felling</b>
9.5.3	Trees affecting the reception of terrestrial, satellite and digital television signals	<p>Interference with signals is worse when the leaves are on the trees and in bad windy and rainy weather satellite and digital reception is more sensitive to interference than television reception</p> <p>In most cases, the situation can be significantly improved or solved by the relocation of the aerial or satellite receiving dish. Boosters are also available which can improve the reception significantly. These options are far cheaper and less destructive than the felling or pruning of a tree</p> <p>There is no legal right to TV reception and interference is not, at present, a legal 'nuisance' as defined in law</p> <p>Pruning will normally only be carried out where the trees are a significant contributory factor and there is a reasonable chance that pruning will improve the situation</p>	<p>If works can be undertaken within guidelines in Guidance Note 1: Guidance for works to trees, the following may be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crown lifting</li> <li>- Crown reduction</li> <li>- Selective branch removal</li> </ul>	<p>Only if there are other reasons for removing the tree</p>



## 10 Summary

- The Council will endeavour to respond to all requests for tree inspections within 4 weeks and provide a decision within 2 weeks of the visit by the Arboricultural Officer.
- Work to Council managed trees will follow the guidelines set out in section 9 of this document and be prioritised dependent on urgency, appropriateness and availability of resources.
- Public notification will be undertaken at the discretion of Council officers and generally only when the felling of prominent mature trees is being considered and safety is not an overriding issue.
- All applications to undertake work to protected trees will be considered following statutory guidelines and timescales.
- Pruning only with acceptable limits and to specifications outlined in Guidance Note 1: Guidance for works to trees.
- Where appropriate a pruning solution will always be attempted in the first instance and felling only considered if this fails.
- Requests for pruning will be resisted if the tree has had some work carried out in the last 2 years.
- The amenity and importance of trees will be taken into account when considering the justification for works.

## 11 More information

### For further information

#### Huntingdonshire District Council

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### Useful Documents

[Huntingdonshire District Council Complaints Procedure](#)