

# WIMBLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL TREE POLICY

## GENERAL POLICY

This policy defines the Council's approach to tree management on its land. It is intended to be a point of reference for the Public, Councillors and Officers to ensure a consistent and structured approach to the management of the Council's trees. This policy sets out a proactive and systematic method of management that will both conserve and enhance our tree population and the amenity value of our land. For sites of special character, or that have trees of particular significance, this general policy will be supplemented with the site's particular management needs.

## TREE PROTECTION

Due care will be taken by the Council to ensure that damage to trees by mowing and strimming is prevented. Longer grass margins around trees may be left. Protection will be provided for newly planted or young trees where appropriate, e.g. timber-sided planting boxes and strimmer guards.

## TREE INSPECTIONS

The Council has a duty of care for its trees, and will inspect them on a regular basis. In high risk areas this will be done by a recognised tree surgeon. High risk areas will include council owned land with trees adjacent to the public highways, footpaths and other areas of high use such as Council owned recreational areas.

The Council will also consider requests to conduct tree work on the Council's land from members of the public. If the request concerns a potentially dangerous tree, the tree will be inspected on the same or next day. If the request is of a non-urgent nature, an inspection will be undertaken within 30 days. In all cases, the member of the public will be informed of this inspection policy and will be informed of any action to be taken resulting from the inspection.

## TREE FELLING

The Council will avoid felling trees unless it is necessary. This will usually be for health and safety purposes, or to prevent the spread of serious tree diseases and pests. However, the Council reserves the right to fell trees to prevent overcrowding, to improve habitats or restore landscapes in line with site management or where a tree is inappropriate to its location and has a significantly detrimental impact on the appearance or amenity of a site.

## HEDGES WILDLIFE

Defra regulations state that hedges must not be cut between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> September; this is to protect nesting birds. (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-hedgerows-regulation-and-management>) Hedges are an attractive feature on our sites and provide an important habitat for a wide range of species, offering food, shelter, protection from predators, wintering and nesting sites, and act as transit corridors. It is recognised that trimming hedges too severely can have a detrimental impact on their wildlife value.

## MAINTENANCE

Tree work will be prioritised and carried out according to identified hazard and risk. After investigation and inspection, the Council will produce a programme of works within the available budgets. The emphasis will be on planned, rather than reactive, tree maintenance.

The following categories will be used to categorise our tree works:

Emergency: Dangerous trees requiring immediate attention

Timescale for works: Same day or next day wherever possible

Category One: Essential works to mitigate hazard

Target timescale for works, within 12 weeks of identification

Category Two: Desirable works, e.g. to improve tree health, loosening/removing tree ties at the tree grows

Target timescale for works: Within 6 months of identification

Category Three: Non-essential works, e.g. thinning out, formative pruning

Target timescale for works: Within 12 months of identification

Tree maintenance will be conducted by qualified tree surgeon. All tree works will be conducted to comply with BS 3998: 2010 Trees Works – Recommendations.

Tree pruning will be carried out when deemed necessary following an assessment.

Pruning will be carried out:

- for health and safety reasons e.g. to remove some of the lower branches of a tree located near a road to enable traffic to pass safely - where it benefits the health of the tree e.g. pollarding will be conducted regularly on certain species where it extends the lifespan of the tree and prevents splitting - where it is in-line with site-specific management plans

There may be time when the tree maintenance the Council conducts does not meet the expectation of members of the public requesting works. In this situation, members of the public are advised to write formally to the Council and their comments will be reviewed.

### *When the Council will not undertake tree pruning or removal maintenance:*

- in response to natural occurrences that do not pose a health and safety risk, such as falling nuts, bird droppings, falling leaves, or sap exudation - where trees have a negative impact on television reception, where the canopy is blocking lighting, with the exception of street lighting - where the tree is blocking views from a residence - during the nesting season (March to July), unless the work is for urgent health and safety reasons. It is an offence to intentionally damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is

in use or being built; therefore tree works will avoid this - if a tree contains roosting bats (it is a criminal offence to recklessly or intentionally disturb bats, or to damage or destroy a roost). If work is required for health and safety reasons, the advice of English Nature will be sought - trees overhanging an adjacent property unless it poses a health and safety risk - removal of dead branches (conduct crown cleaning) from trees located in relatively quiet locations due to their ecological value. However, if the dead or diseased branches pose a health and safety risk, or are felt to be impacting upon the tree's health, crown cleaning will be conducted

Although the Council will not automatically undertake maintenance work on its trees under the above circumstances, it will provide advice to members of the public, if they wish to carry out their own works on trees which belong to the Council and overhang their property. This does not mean that the Council accepts any financial responsibility for work carried out by the members of the public, but merely offers best advice on what is allowed under common law. This advice is shown on Appendix A – Common Law – Advice on Cutting of Trees Branches.

### [TREE PRESERVATION ORDER – Fenland District Council responsibility](#)

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is a form of planning control that protects trees that make important contribution to their local surroundings. TPOs are made when trees are under threat of being cut down or damaged.

It is illegal to cut down or prune a tree protected by a TPO without Fenland District Council's consent. The unauthorised lopping or felling of a tree is a serious criminal offence and can result in a large fine and a criminal record.

Consent is needed to work on a protected tree, if you wish to undertake felling or crown reduction, please discuss your proposals with Fenland District Council.