

WALTHAM PARISH COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

To value trees for the significant contribution they make to wellbeing and quality of life within the area. Trees are managed to promote biodiversity, climate mitigation, and visual amenity whilst being managed and maintained in a way which promotes their safety and health.

Introduction

The Parish Council has a responsibility to ensure the Council's tree stock is regularly inspected and managed to ensure public safety and to minimise risk to property particular in areas where the public may walk or sit beneath trees. The Parish Council does this with the following objectives in mind:

- Ensure tree stock is maintained in a cost effective manner, maximising visual amenity and associated environmental benefits whilst minimising risks to public safety and property
- Ensure that the work undertaken on Parish Council trees is done to a high standard, is appropriate and in line with best arboriculture practice
- Ensure appropriate management of trees which are important for biodiversity, as wildlife corridors or as landscape features
- Promote the positive contribution made by trees to open spaces, including the value which they have for wildlife

Tree Inspections and Works

The Parish Council's tree stock will be visually inspected by a qualified arboriculturist every three years depending on the location and risk assessment. The Parish Council also conducts its own routine annual visual assessment for dead branches, plus additional checks are carried out after periods of bad weather to identify damaged trees.

Any works required to trees will be identified and recommendations made through the inspections and undertaken by qualified contractors. Potential works that are raised outside of the inspection process via regular maintenance checks, emergencies or complaints will be assessed to consider what action may be appropriate before they can be authorised and approved. If urgent works to trees are required due to an imminent health and safety risk then the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman can authorise works.

Dead, Dying and Dangerous Trees

The Parish Council has a duty of care to ensure that the trees that it has responsibility for are in a safe condition, and therefore would seek to remove any dangerous trees, and to monitor trees which are in decline, to ensure they do not become dangerous. In the case of dead trees it may be possible to retain these where they have high wildlife value and they do not represent a danger. In some instances a dead tree could be reduced to a standing trunk to provide habitat for wildlife.

Replanting and Replacement of Felled Trees

Where the Parish Council is required to fell a tree—whether due to disease, safety concerns or declining condition—it will commit to replanting a replacement tree of a native species

appropriate to the location. This ensures the continued contribution of trees to local wellbeing, biodiversity, climate mitigation, and visual amenity, which are core principles of the Council's tree management approach.

Replacement planting will follow these guidelines:

- **Native Species Requirement:**

A suitable native species will be selected to support local wildlife, maintain ecological value, and reflect the natural character of the parish landscape. Species choice will consider site conditions, long-term growth potential, and the surrounding environment.

- **Location of Replacement:**

Wherever practical, the new tree will be planted in the same or an adjacent location. Where this is not possible—such as in cases where the original site becomes unsuitable—the Parish Council will identify an alternative planting location within parish-managed land.

- **Timing of Replanting:**

Replanting will typically take place during the recommended planting season to maximise establishment success. Temporary delays may occur only where ground conditions, safety considerations, or ecological factors (such as nesting wildlife) require it.

- **Long-Term Management:**

Newly planted trees will be included within the Parish Council's routine inspection and maintenance regime to ensure successful establishment and ongoing health, consistent with existing inspection and management standards.

This approach reinforces the Parish Council's commitment to maintaining and enhancing tree cover across the parish, ensuring that any loss of tree stock is offset and that the environmental, landscape, and wildlife benefits provided by trees continue for future generations.

Dangerous Branches

A dangerous branch is one which is dead, shows signs of decay or damage, or weak attachment to the tree and which could cause harm or damage if it fell. Where a dangerous branch is identified the Parish Council has an obligation to make it safe.

Damage to Property

Where it can be demonstrated that a tree is the primary cause of direct or indirect damage to property the Parish Council has an obligation to rectify the problem. Direct damage may include tree roots lifting paving stones, or trunks or branches damaging garden walls or fences. Indirect damage may include subsidence due to soil shrinkage resulting from water extraction by tree roots. In cases of damage to property it should be clearly demonstrated, by the property owner, that the tree is the principal cause of the damage. (The effects of tree litter such as leaves, twigs,

fruit etc. will not be considered as direct damage and no action will be taken by the Parish Council.)

Falling Leaves or Debris and Aphid Problems

The Parish Council is not legally responsible for fallen leaves or other tree debris such as cones, seeds, berries, fruit, blossom etc. Pruning of trees is not a solution to this occurrence and felling a tree to address issues of leaf litter etc. would be difficult to justify. The same criterion applies to trees which host aphids with associated honeydew. There is little that can be done about the aphids which cause this problem, and pruning the tree will only offer temporary relief and any re-growth is more likely to be colonised by aphids.

Obstruction of Light to Houses or Gardens

It is usually very difficult to prune a tree in order to give a lasting improvement in light levels to a property. Often the extent of pruning required to alleviate light obstruction can be damaging to the tree or destroy its amenity value, and thick re-growth following pruning can make shading problems worse. There is no obligation on the Parish Council to carry out work on trees to address shading issues. However in exceptional circumstances, for example where light levels in a room that is occupied for a large part of the day are severely restricted by the presence of a tree, the Parish Council may wish to act to alleviate the problem.

Branches Affecting Telephone and Power Lines

Effective use of telephone lines and power supplies is the responsibility of the service provider. If residents are experiencing problems with telephone reception or suspect a tree is interfering with a power line, they are advised to contact their service provider for advice.

Television Reception

The Parish Council would not normally carry out works to trees, or remove trees in order to improve television reception. Aerials and satellite dishes should be carefully sited at the time of installation, with consideration being given to how neighbouring trees may grow in the future.

Overhanging Branches

The Parish Council has a similar responsibility to a private land owner or neighbour in respect of overhanging branches, and is only obliged to cut them back in circumstances where damage is being caused to adjacent structures or the tree is dangerous.

Under common law a property owner has a legal right to cut back overhanging branches to their boundary. This work should be done to a good standard (British Standard 3998:1989 'Recommendations for Treework') by a competent person

Branches Obscuring Signs or Street Lighting Columns

Where trees are blocking street lights, road signs etc. and jeopardise public safety the Parish Council is obliged to alleviate the problem. In most cases this can be done whilst retaining the tree. In extreme cases removal of the tree and replacement with a more suitable species may be necessary.

Development Priorities

From time to time it may be necessary for the Parish Council to carry out work on trees in response to its development priorities. Development priorities may include maintenance and improvement or the redevelopment of parks, gardens and other green spaces. Where trees are removed the Parish Council would normally seek to replace them with species appropriate to the location and site conditions.

Trees in woodlands and other heavily wooded areas may also need to be thinned out periodically to encourage the growth of the most appropriate specimens and species.

Wildlife

It would be unreasonable to expect the Parish Council to carry out work on trees in order to address the issue of bird droppings. Nesting birds are protected by the Countryside and Wildlife act (and other related wildlife law) and only health and safety works would normally be considered during the nesting season in order to avoid causing unintended disturbance to nesting birds. It may be necessary to obtain a license from DEFRA to carry out essential Health and Safety works to a tree in which birds are nesting, or on sites where badgers and other protected species are present. When carrying out tree works, the Parish Council is obliged to comply with all legislation relating to the protection of wildlife.

Standards

All works to Parish Council trees is carried out in line with British Standard 3998: 2010 'Recommendations for Treework'. In addition any contractor carrying out work on behalf of the Parish Council should be Arboricultural Association approved, or able to demonstrate that they have achieved a similar standard of competency. All personnel undertaking tree works must wear the appropriate Personal Protective Clothing and be adequately trained.