



New Alresford Town Council

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Tree Management Policy

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Version Control

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1. Introduction

New Alresford Town Council ('the Council') owns and cares for the tree stock and hedgerows at Arlebury Park Recreation Ground, Sun Hill Recreation Ground, Stratton Bates Recreation Ground and the Memorial Gardens.

Trees on the public highway and other open spaces are generally the responsibility of Winchester City Council or Hampshire County Council.

As a landowner the Council has a duty of care to do all that is reasonably practicable to reduce the risk of damage, injury or death from its trees.

The Council also understands the wide variety of benefits that trees and hedgerows provide to society – providing shelter, stabilising the soil, filtering atmospheric pollution and providing a valuable habitat to wildlife amongst others.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all trees and hedgerows on public open space owned by the Council and sets out the Council's approach to managing these.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Maintain a safe tree stock
- Ensure consistency with regard to requests for work to Council owned trees
- Preserve trees and hedgerows and enhance habitats

The Council will allocate sufficient resources to manage its tree stock in line with this policy.

4. Maintaining a safe tree stock

4.1 General approach to Risk Management

The risk of death by a falling tree is extremely low. However, it is not always perceived this way because when an incident does occur it attracts a lot of attention.

The legal framework does not require the elimination of risk altogether, but that the risk is minimised to an acceptable level.

The Council will seek to preserve trees where possible and will take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree safety management while also striking the appropriate balance to ensure trees are not lost unnecessarily from the landscape.

4.2 Formal tree surveys

All trees on Council owned land will be surveyed biannually by a qualified Tree Inspector/ Surveyor. Any recommendations made will be considered by the Council in line with this policy, and any work will be undertaken in accordance with the priority indicated in the survey.

4.3 Informal tree surveys

Informal tree surveys will be undertaken by a designated Councillor(s) or a Council employee every six months, and following exceptional weather or a report by a member of the public.

Informal surveys will be visual inspections from ground level only. Councillors and Council employees will use the 'Obvious Tree Risk Features Guide' produced by VALID, (attached as Appendix 1) to support them in undertaking the survey. If risks are identified and it is deemed appropriate, a formal survey with a qualified arboriculturalist will be arranged. Any remedial works will be considered by the Council in line with this policy.

4.4 Works to potentially hazardous or dangerous trees

Where an inspection has identified the tree as potentially hazardous or an immediate danger then as a guide, tree works will be undertaken by a qualified arboriculturalist in the timescales specified.

4.5 Dead, dying or diseased trees

Because a tree is found to be dead, dying or diseased this does not necessarily mean it is dangerous. Tree works will only be undertaken to such trees when deemed appropriate or necessary by a qualified arboriculturalist.

5. Requests for work to Council owned trees

5.1 General approach to requests for work

The Council will consider requests by members of the public to work on trees on an individual basis, via an informal survey in the first place and if deemed appropriate an inspection by a qualified arboriculturalist.

5.2 When tree works will normally be approved

Tree works will normally be approved and undertaken by the Council:

- If the tree is found to be potentially hazardous or immediately dangerous;
- To abate an actionable nuisance where branches are touching buildings or utility equipment e.g. touching windows or walls;
- Where tree branches are obstructing footpaths, the carriageway, highway signage street, lines of sight of highways or street lighting; or
- Where tree works will help ensure the long-term survival of trees

5.3 When tree works will not normally be approved

Tree works will not normally be approved for non-arboricultural reasons, apart from in

exceptional circumstances. Non-arboricultural reasons include:

- To alleviate natural and or/ seasonal problems e.g. falling leaves, seeds, pollen or bird droppings
- To increase sunlight or views
- To reduce interference with television or satellite reception. In most cases this can be addressed through the TV provider.

5.4 Right to prune back overhanging trees

Adjacent landowners have a common law right to prune back tree branches to their boundary, providing that it is not detrimental to the health or stability of the tree and providing that the tree is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (see 5.5).

Adjacent landowners should note that branch removal can lead to tree failure due to disease, a change in the balance of the tree, or different wind loading that may cause the tree to blow over. If they (or their contractors) cause damage to the Council's trees, they would be liable in law. Therefore, landowners are advised to obtain advice from a qualified arboriculturalist in advance of undertaking any work and consider engaging a competent tree surgeon or arboriculturalist who would minimise this risk.

Adjacent landowners should also note their duties under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Amongst other things, this provides that it is a criminal offence to damage or destroy bat roosts or the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. Therefore, they should check old trees for cracks and holes before doing tree work and any such work should only take place outside of the bird nesting season which is from March to the end of August each year.

If a property owner needs access to the Council's land to prune back tree branches to their boundary, permission must be sought from The Council. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

Cut branches and any other arisings will be the responsibility of the adjacent landowner who must dispose of them appropriately and must not be left on the Council's land.

5.5 Tree Preservation Orders

Some trees on the Council's land are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). This order has been made by Winchester City Council and protects the tree because it makes a significant impact on the surroundings and/or the tree may be under threat.

The TPO is a legal protection and if a tree is protected by a TPO then it is an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy any of the tree, even the parts that overhang private property. Permission to undertake any work to these trees will need to be obtained from Winchester City Council.

Trees on Council land with a TPO are:

- All the trees on the Western boundary of Sun Hill Recreation Ground

6. Tree management to preserve trees and hedgerows and enhance biodiversity

6.1 General approach

The Council's approach to tree and hedgerow management means that only essential or minimal work will be undertaken in order to preserve them and minimise the impact on local wildlife. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Council remove or carry out significant work on any of its trees or hedgerows in order to allow for maintenance of or improvements to the Council's land to enable the Council to fulfill its duty to provide recreational and other facilities for the town's residents. In such circumstances, it will only do so where this is deemed essential, and suitable trees will be planted in order that, in time, the loss of trees and hedgerow will be mitigated.

The Council will also seek to increase the tree and hedgerow cover where appropriate, to encourage a greater biodiversity and help address the impacts of Climate Change as identified in the Council's Environment Statement.

6.2 Tree work undertaken by a qualified arboriculturalist

The Council will ensure all work is carried out under the supervision of a qualified arboriculturalist, and tree pruning will be undertaken in accordance with good practice to ensure minimal harm to the tree or hedgerow and to retain the general shape and character.

6.3 Tree work to increase long term survival

Where identified via a survey, tree works may be approved by the Council to ensure the long-term survival of a tree or hedgerow. Such works will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

6.4 Ongoing maintenance regimes

The Council may also approve work which has been determined by previous regimes and will maintain the trees and hedgerows to the same specification e.g. pollarding, crown reduction, hedge cutting.

6.5 Minimising the impact on wildlife

Tree or hedgerow felling or pruning will only take place outside the bird nesting season of March to August, apart from when there is a risk of immediate danger.

Old trees will be checked for cracks and holes before any tree work is undertaken, so as not to cause damage to, or destroy, bat roosts.

6.6 Fallen wood

Where appropriate, dead and fallen wood will be left on site to provide additional habitats.

6.7 Tree and hedgerow planting

The Council aims to create a varied and sustainable tree population in its open spaces for

both aesthetics and for the wide-ranging benefits that trees bring to society. The Council will seek to maintain the overall number of trees in our parks, and where appropriate and when the opportunity arises, undertake additional tree and hedgerow planting to increase the number of trees and hedgerows. To support this, the Council will maintain a register of trees planted and removed from its overall stock.

The Council will seek advice from an arboriculture specialist to plant trees and hedgerows that are appropriate for their location and the anticipated maintenance needs throughout their life.