Tree Strategy









Good Practice Guide 2
Tree Management

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Good Practice Guide 2 Tree Management

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1. Purpose of the guide

These guidelines are intended as a supplementary note to accompany the Policy section of this Tree Strategy, and aim to demonstrate 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 Staffordshire Moorlands District 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 work appropriate. The types of tree work that are normally considered acceptable as good practice within the authority are described in more detail in Good Practice Guide 1 –Tree Work.

2. Introduction

Work to trees is often necessary to ensure they are maintained in as healthy and attractive a 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 normally be carried out by our appointed specialist arboricultural contractors, or occasionally by grounds maintenance staff, and will be in accordance with current UK and EU legislation, guidance, British Standards and Codes of Practice, where they apply.

3. Management programs for Council trees

Trees in urban areas require careful management. Tree management includes regular prioritised inspections and programmed maintenance work. This maintenance 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 and healthy condition.

The Council has an Arboricultural Officer based within the Operational Services Department who is responsible for inspection and management of Council trees. The programmed management of Council owned trees is based on a combination of regular inspections and maintenance of some trees, together with work carried out in response to requests for tree inspection and maintenance. The Council is working towards a situation where most trees in our ownership are recorded and included within a prioritised inspection and maintenance regime.

There is also occasionally the need to carry out non-scheduled work, particularly as a result of trees being damaged by severe weather.

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

Requests from the public for tree inspections and work to trees are made directly to the Arboricultural Officer or received via the Customer Services call centre and website online transactions. Other requests for inspections of trees may be received from other Staffordshire Moorlands District Council officers and Councillors, Parish Councils and utility companies amongst others. All requests are recorded and prioritised according to urgency, with safety issues given the greatest weighting.

Response times to requests and enquiries vary dependent on the number of requests received at any time. The aim is to respond to all initial enquiries within 5 days. However, where a site visit is required, the time to provide a detailed response and an indication of what work may be undertaken, or an explanation of why work will not be undertaken, will be longer is some cases. Nevertheless, the aim is to undertake most inspections and respond within 4 weeks of the initial request. Where longer response times are anticipated the enquirer will be informed.

Any tree works required will be programmed dependent on their urgency, appropriateness and availability of resources. It may be the most cost effective or time efficient solution to include tree works arising from requests and complaints within existing programs, which may not be scheduled for some time. In other cases, it will be inappropriate to carry out some types of work at certain times of year, for instance to avoid weakening trees during bud-burst or to avoid disturbing nesting birds.

All tree works recommended will be guided by the policies of this Tree Strategy and the supporting Good Practice Guides. However if an individual is unsatisfied with the decision and following further discussion with the Arboricultural Officer an agreement cannot be reached, a formal complaint can be made using the Council's existing complaint procedures. The case will then be investigated by the appropriate Service Manager and a response provided.

5. Consultations regarding works to Council managed trees

The aim of the tree policy is to set a standard and guidelines that the Council will work to when managing trees. The policy has been subject to consultation within the Council, its partners and the public, and subsequently approved for adoption. However where there are tree works that are considered to be of particular public interest, or where there are special circumstances and the proposed works deviate from guidelines outlined in the policy, additional consultation may be undertaken.

Generally, pruning works in accordance with the guidelines set out in this Good Practice Guide and in Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work are unlikely to be considered contentious, and will rarely require additional consultation.

The felling of prominent mature trees is more likely to be of public concern. Where mature trees are to be felled as part of an improvement program - for example to thin out a mature stand of trees, to improve the species composition of a group or create replanting opportunities, and there is no immediate concern that the trees are unsafe, consultation will be undertaken. Notices may be placed in the vicinity of the tree(s), ward Councillors notified along with relevant local groups such as Friends of Parks, Parish Councils and Amenity Societies, and/or residents informed directly. The responses of interested parties will be considered prior to works commencing.

Where trees are posing a hazard and felling is the only reasonable solution it will not generally be practical to undertake prior public consultation. However where the tree is in a prominent location and timescales allow, notification of the Council's intention to fell the tree and the reasons why it is necessary will be made public as outlined above.

When to undertake consultations will be at the discretion of the Arboricultural Officer in consultation with the Operational Services Manager.

6. Dealing with Tree Preservation Order Applications and Conservation Area Notifications

When dealing with privately owned trees which are protected by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the Council will follow the statutory procedures and timescales for dealing with applications and consultation. The right of appeal in relation to these trees is a statutory matter and therefore differs from dealing with the Council's own trees.

When the Council receives applications to undertake work to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) it has 8 weeks to make a decision. In the case of Conservation Area tree work notifications it has 6 weeks from the date they are received. Such applications and notifications will be entered on a register available for the public inspection on the Council's website.

Where work is proposed to non-TPO trees within a Conservation Area which is not considered appropriate, the Council cannot refuse consent and so must make a TPO if it wishes to prevent the work proceeding. Such action is only likely to be appropriate where the trees in question are considered to be of sufficient amenity value to warrant inclusion within an Order, and agreement on acceptable work cannot be reached. In most cases, however, Conservation Area tree work proposals can be agreed and consent granted under officers' delegated powers.

Where applications are received to undertake work to trees protected by TPO, consent will normally be granted under officers' delegated powers for tree work proposals which are in accordance with the policies and guidance of this Tree Strategy. However, where the requested felling or pruning is not considered acceptable the Arboricultural Officer will, where appropriate, advise the applicant on the type of tree work that would be likely to receive consent and invite them to submit a revised application. If an application is still not considered acceptable and is subsequently refused, the applicant will be advised of their right of appeal against the Council's decision to the Planning Inspectorate. Where an appeal is made, the Inspector will review the case and may uphold or overturn the Council's decision by dismissing or allowing the appeal.

Applications to undertake works to protected trees will be assessed against the same guidance which applies to work to Council trees, as set out in this guide and Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work, and in accordance with the policy document of this Tree Strategy.

7. When can trees be felled?

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council will avoid felling trees unless it is necessary, and pruning solutions will always be considered first. Each case will be carefully judged on its merits. Tree felling will not be 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.

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

8. When can trees be pruned?

Pruning, particular heavy pruning, should not be carried out if it is not necessary since any cutting can weaken the tree and allow decay organisms to enter exposed and vulnerable tissue. 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 regrowth. 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 Officer. 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 on 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 the table 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 describe in Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work, which should be read in conjunction with this guide.

9. Guide to Tree Management

	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	mally advised
9.1	Risk reduction		Pruning	Felling
9.1.1	Removal of hazards or reduction of risks. For example the removal of dead or diseased material, broken branches and storm damage to make a tree safe, or to reshape and balance the crown.	The two main hazards from trees are from falling branches, and the risk of the stem or root plate failing and the whole tree collapsing. Dead and dying trees can be a hazard as the branches become brittle and are more prone to failure. How the level of risk is assessed is detailed at Good Practice Guide 4 – Tree Risk Management. Dead trees provide a valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife and should therefore not necessarily be automatically felled, and an assessment of each tree needs to be made. The pruning of the tree to reduce risk will be considered in the first instance. In informal areas with low occupancy, dead and dying trees may be rendered into a safe condition by reducing or removing the branch structure.	A variety of pruning may be appropriate Removal of deadwood /crown cleaning Crown reduction Removal of selective branches. In some cases 'topping' may be appropriate if the stem can be retained safely for its biodiversity and wildlife value.	If the risk assessment indicates that retaining the tree is an unacceptable risk, or if any pruning solution would be unacceptable in amenity terms.
9.1.2	Trees causing a legal nuisance	A "legal nuisance" is one that is actionable in law and therefore a tree cannot be a "legal nuisance" to its owner. Examples include physical damage to another owner's property caused by roots or branches. Structural problems must always be carefully investigated and property owners will be expected to provide proof that a	Any or occasionally a combination of the following dependent of circumstances Crown thinning Crown lifting Crown reduction Removal of selected branches	Felling only considered as a last resort if the nuisance is severe and cannot be addressed by pruning and alternative solutions have been considered. Also if the tree is relatively young and has a high

		particular tree is causing damage to their property.		growth potential and the nuisance is likely to be recurring.
	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	mally advised
9.1	Risk reduction (continued)		Pruning	Felling
9.1.3	Trees giving rise to justifiable fears about the risk of crime or trees which have provided access and/or cover for criminal acts, vandalism or harassment of local residents.	The management of trees in instances such as this may be one of a variety of solutions considered.	The type of work that will be required fro this type of case will vary greatly with circumstances.	Felling will only be acceptable as a last resort and where other solutions have been considered.
9.2	Good maintenance and aesthetics		Pruning	Felling
9.2.1	Structural or formative pruning to improve crown shape and branch structure. Usually to avoid future more harmful pruning in the future or loss of tree.	Usually works for this reason are undertaken to young or semi-mature trees, however in some cases structural pruning may be undertaken to more mature trees to restore the crowns of trees that have been badly pruned in the past or storm damaged, or to remove weak structural points in the tree which may become a hazard. 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%.	Usually one of the following types of pruning will be specified dependent on the circumstances. • Formative pruning • Restoration pruning • Selective branch removal	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	From time to time diseases may affect a proportion of the tree population which require control. In such instances it may be necessary to fell diseased trees for the benefit of the general population In these cases the guidance of	Removal of infected limbs	Felling of diseased trees as appropriate and in accordance with guidance.

		appropriate bodies such as the Forestry Commission, Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs, or the Arboricultural Association will be followed		
	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	
9.2	Good maintenance and aesthetics (contin		Pruning	Felling
9.2.3	Woodland /group management Thinning, coppicing and other similar operations being undertaken as part of an approved management plan to maintain woodland and promote good sylvicultural or arboricultural practice.	The felling of trees to thin out a small copse or woodland may be necessary for the overall maintenace of the group This type of work is often necessary during the early years of woodland or tree group establishment in order to reduce the number of young trees and allow more space for retained trees to develop fully. This is best carried out gradually by progressively removing suppressed, unhealthy or poorly formed individuals and allowing the best trees to flourish, encouraging healthy growth and natural crown development. Sometimes tree removal from mature stands may be necessary to promote regeneration and improve the age structure. Sometimes it is necessary to selectively thin groups of trees to remove non-native or invasive species to benefit the group as a whole in the longer term.	Removal of lower limbs of trees	If the removal of selective trees will benefit the health, structure or biodiversity value of the group as a whole
9.2.4	Wildlife habitat improvement	Occasionally it may be necessary to fell trees to properly manage or promote particular habitat types, for example to prevent loss of moorland, meadowland or unimproved grassland by gradual tree and scrub encroachment, and to	The type of pruning will be dependent on the circumstances and should be justified. Innovative techniques such as cornet pruning	The felling of trees must be clearly justified for each situation and the wildlife value of the trees also taken into account.

encourage native tree species or ground flora.	and "natural fracture" pruning may also be used	
Other maintenance practices such as hedge laying and the creation of deadwood habitats may be appropriate to improve the biodiversity value of wooded areas.		

	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	mally advised
9.2	Good maintenance and aesthetics (contin	ued)	Pruning	Felling
9.2.5	Removal or pruning to allow authorised development or redevelopment.	It may sometimes be necessary to fell trees to permit development to take place. Every effort will be made to retain trees on development sites in accordance with current planning guidance and Good Practice Guide 3 – Trees and Development. Where trees are removed replacement planting will normally be required as a condition of the planning consent.	Pruning will normally only be allowed in accordance with the guidance in Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work and Good Practice Guide 3 – Trees and Development.	Normally only allowed in accordance with an approved scheme and planning guidance, when alternative options have been considered or the condition and/or quality of the trees is not sufficient to substantiate their retention and the refusal of planning permission.
9.3	Prevention of damage		Pruning	Felling
9.3.1	Trees physically in contact with buildings and roofs or where trees are restricting access for repairs and maintenance of property, or authorised construction work.	When assessing planning applications the proximity of trees to proposed buildings will be a consideration. However in some cases planning consent may be granted where it will be necessary to prune trees to allow construction.	Crown or selective branch reduction or lifting as appropriate.	Felling only considered as a last resort if the obstruction cannot be address 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	As trees grow the increasing girth of	Removal or reduction	If the tree is a relatively

fences, and which are causing damage.	the stem and roots can displace walls and fences. Also the movement of branches may cause damage.	young tree with a high growth potential and damage is foreseeable and unavoidable as it
	In some cases it is possible to realign walls/fences or to create a bridge over the root buttress or gap in the boundary to accommodate the tree. Solid boundary structures may also be replaced with hedges.	Where the wall or fence has been made unsafe or is likely to become so in the near future and alternative remedies are not possible.

	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	mally advised
9.3	Prevention of damage (continued)		Pruning	Felling
9.3.3	Trees growing close to and likely to obstruct or interfere with above ground service equipment such as street lighting, CCTV, overhead cables and road signs.	Tree branches may obstruct or become entangled with utility services equipment such as electricity lines, telephone cables or street lighting and signage. Utility service providers have statutory authority to clear their operational equipment. Where this is required the Council will liaise with them to agree the most sensitive pruning regime possible.	Any or occasionally a combination of the following dependent of circumstances	If a relatively young tree with a high growth potential is in the immediate proximity of the equipment and regular and harmful pruning will be required to retain it in that location. In the case of a mature and important amenity tree, only if alterative solutions cannot be found such as pruning or relocation of the service in question.
9.3.4	Trees growing close to and likely to obstruct or interfere with underground services such as drains, electricity, telephone cables and gas mains.	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	Root pruning should only be undertaken where it is unavoidable and specified in agreement with the	Felling will only be allowed where essential works to services are required and access cannot be achieved without damage

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	repaired without the need to remove	Arboricultural Officer.	to the root system that will
	the tree or undertake drastic root		undermine the future
	pruning.		health and stability of the
			tree.
	Damage to underground cables is rare		
	but access to these for maintenance		In some case where a
	sometimes requires excavation in the		young tree with a high
	vicinity of the tree roots. Also damage		growth potential has
	may occur during the installation of		established in close
	new services in close proximity to		proximity to an
	existing trees. The guidelines of the		underground service
	National Joint Utilities Group		access point such as a
	publication NJUG 10 should be		manhole.
	followed where these works are		
	required.		
	'		

	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	mally advised
9.4	Highway safety		Pruning	Felling
9.4.1	Obstruction to the public highway, or where trees are growing low over a carriageway, pavement, public right of way or access to property, gardens or open spaces where the public have access.	The Highway Authority can enforce the pruning or removal of a tree, including privately owned trees, obstructing the highway. Guidance recommends that a minimum clearance of 2.1m should be maintained over pavements, and 5.2m above the carriageway, of adopted/public highways.	Crown lifting or selective branch reduction.	Felling only considered if the obstruction is severe and cannot be addressed by pruning.
9.4.2	Obstruction to highway sightlines	The Highway Authority can enforce the pruning or removal of a tree, including privately owned trees, obstructing sightlines at road junctions.	Crown lifting or selective branch reduction.	Felling only considered if the obstruction is severe cannot be addressed by pruning, or where a young tree will clearly be an ongoing problem.

9.4.3	Root and buttress damage to footpath surfaces and causing a trip hazard	Tree roots which grow under footpaths can cause the surfaces to lift and in some cases where this is severe they can cause a tripping hazard.	only be undertaken	Felling will only be considered where the repair is essential and all other solutions have been considered and a
		In many cases it is possible to lift the surface and remove the soil displaced by the roots and relay the surface to provide a satisfactory result. It may also be possible to raise the levels over the root system to accommodate the roots.	Arboricultural Officer	satisfactory result cannot be achieved without damage to the root system that will undermine the future health and stability of the tree.

	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	mally advised
9.5	General nuisance		Pruning	Felling
9.5.1	Trees blocking daylight from habitable rooms and gardens to a severe and unreasonable degree	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. Pruning will normally only be carried out where the trees are 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 the tree. Although this will not increase the amount of light to the maximum level possible, it is usually a satisfactory compromise. Shading of habitable rooms of property will be given more weight than the shading of the garden.	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.
9.5.2	Trees causing a general nuisance which prevent the reasonable enjoyment of the home and garden.	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. Also insects and birds associated with trees can be a cause for concern – for instance honeydew (a sticky substance produced by aphids) tends to adhere to surfaces below the tree and sometimes attracts wasps; also bird droppings can be an issue where the tree tends to attract large numbers of	Any or occasionally a combination of the following dependent of circumstances Crown thinning Crown lifting Crown reduction Removal of dead wood	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.

		birds. Although appropriate pruning solutions can be considered, it may often be the case that pruning will not prevent or significantly reduce these types of problems. Even so, the occurrence of such problems is regarded as an inevitable natural consequence of the presence of trees, and will not normally be sufficient to justify felling.		
0.5	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution nor	
9.5.3	General nuisance (continued) Trees affecting the reception of terrestrial, satellite and digital television signals	Interference with signals is worse when the leaves are on the trees, and in wet and windy weather. Satellite and digital reception is more sensitive to interference than terrestrial television reception. In most cases, the situation can be significantly improved or solved by careful pruning or the relocation of the aerial. Boosters are also available which can improve the reception significantly. These options are often far cheaper and less destructive than the felling or severe pruning of a tree. There is no legal right to TV reception and interference is not at present a legal 'nuisance' as defined in law. Pruning may be carried out if the trees are significant contributory factor, the works are in accordance with good arboricultural practice and there is a reasonable chance that pruning will	If works can be undertaken in accordance with guidance in Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work, the following may be considered	Only if there are other reasons for removing the tree.

		improve the situation The Council has a specific advice note with regards to this issue.		
	Common reasons for tree work	Comments	Tree work solution normally advised	
9.5	General nuisance (continued)		Pruning	Felling
9.5.4	Trees shading solar panel installation	The efficiency and effectiveness of solar panels to generate power can be affected by trees shading them for some of part of the day. There is no legal requirement to prevent or negate the shading of solar arrays by trees and this is not a legal 'nuisance' as defined in law. The one exception is the High Hedges legislation which is enacted under Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003). The planned installation or presence of an existing array is not considered an acceptable justification for the excessive reduction or removal of a protected trees or Council owned trees. Pruning may be carried out to Council trees or approved for protected trees only if the trees are a significant contributory factor, the works are in accordance with good arboricultural practice and there is a reasonable chance that pruning will improve the situation	If works can be undertaken in accordance with guidance in Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work, the following may be considered	Only if there are other reasons for removing the tree.

10. Summary

- The Council will endeavor to provide an initial response to all enquiries and requests for tree inspections or tree work within 5 working days, and a more detailed response if required following any site visit and tree inspection within 4 weeks.
- Work to Council managed trees will follow the guidelines set out in Section
 9 of this guide, and will be prioritised dependent on urgency, appropriateness and availability of resources.
- Public consultation 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.
- The Council will aim to consider and determine all applications to undertake work to protected trees within the statuary timescales, and in accordance with regulatory requirements and the guidance set out in the policy and Good Practice Guides comprising this Tree Strategy.
- Pruning will only be undertaken within acceptable limits, and in accordance with specifications outlined in Good Practice Guide 1 – Tree Work and British Standard 3998:2010 Tree Work – Recommendations.
- Where appropriate a pruning solution will always be sought in the first instance, and felling only considered where a pruning option is not acceptably available.
- Request for pruning will normally be resisted if the tree has had some work done in the last 2 years.
- The amenity and importance of trees will be taken into account when considering the justification for works.

11. Further Information

Arboricultural Officer Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Moorlands House Stockwell Street Leek ST13 6HQ

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Other Useful Contacts

Arboricultural Association	Tel: 01242 522152		
	Website: www.trees.org.uk		
	E-mail: admin@trees.org.uk		
Bat Conservation Trust	Tel: 0345 1300 228 (bat helpline)		
	Website: www.bats.org.uk		
	E-mail: enquiries@bats.org.uk		
British Standards	Tel: 0208 123 5933		
	Website: www.standardsuk.com		
Natural England	Tel: 0300 060 3900		
_	Website:		
	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england		
	E-mail: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk		
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Tel: 01889 880100		
	Website: www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk		
	E-mail: info@staffs-wildlife.org.uk		
The Tree Council	Tel: 0207 407 9992		
	Website: www.treecouncil.org.uk		
	E-mail: info@treecouncil.org.uk		
Woodland Trust	Tel: 01476 581111		
	Website: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk		
	E-mail: England@woodlandtrust.org.uk		