

Wheatley Parish Council Tree Policy

Adopted 06.01.2020 Reviewed 01.02.2021

This policy sets out Wheatley Parish Council's approach to the management of trees on land owned by the parish council.

If a tree falls or causes damage, landowners could be found negligent if they have failed to take sufficient care of the tree.

This document has been written to provide guidance for councillors, the public and council employees to ensure a clear and consistent approach to the management its trees.

Inspection

Trees deemed to be 'high risk' will be surveyed every two years. (High Risk = trees close to roads, buildings, high public usage)

Trees deemed to be 'medium' or 'low risk' will be surveyed every three to five years

Saplings visually inspected every year.

Any identified issues with the Clerk/Ast Clerk or Chair of the Open Spaces Committee and considered by the council/committee.

Requests for Tree Work

The council welcomes support from residents in helping it to identify concerns or issues with its tree stock, however the council will not fell or prune trees on parish council land if it is for any of the following reasons:

1. To alleviate issues caused by natural or seasonal activities e.g. fallen leaves, fruit, berries, droppings of pollen
2. For the increase/reduction of sunlight into gardens or properties, except street lighting
3. Causing issues to television or satellite reception
4. During nesting season (March – July) unless the work is urgent
5. If the tree contains roosting bats
6. Tree overhanging an adjacent property unless not doing so will pose a health and safety issue.

The encroachment of tree roots into gardens or adjacent land is not considered to amount to a nuisance. Should tree roots be thought to be causing damage to footpaths, highways or buildings the council will address these issues with landowners/insurers.

Adjacent landowners are reminded that if access to council owned land is required to carry out pruning you will require written permission from the parish council before carrying out such works. If keys are issued these must be signed for and returned to the council as soon as possible.

The council will seek to recoup any costs from damage to its land or property.

Under normal circumstances the council will consider formal applications for tree works on its land, but these must be made in writing either by letter or mail to:

Wheatley Parish Council, The Parish Office, 89a High St, Wheatley, OX33 1XP or www.wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk. For further assistance or general enquiries please call 01865 875615.

If there are concerns for a dangerous tree the request will be dealt with the same day or next day, wherever possible.

Maintenance

The council acknowledges that regular maintenance will improve the life expectancy of a tree, however only essential/minimal work will be undertaken.

As a guide, tree works will be undertaken in the following circumstances:

1. Where an inspection has identified the tree as potentially hazardous or an immediate danger
2. If the works are vital to the tree's long-term survival.
3. To reduce impact from nuisances, where branches are touching buildings or power/telephone cables e.g. physical contact with walls, windows, gutters.
4. Where identified in previous maintenance regimes e.g. pollarding, crown reduction
5. Impact to local wildlife will be considered when pruning or felling and the impact minimised where possible
6. All tree works to be carried out by a qualified tree surgeon appointed by the parish council.

Adjacent land owners have a common law right to prune back trees and shrubs to their boundary, providing that this does not lead to the death of the tree/shrub and providing that the tree is not protected by a TPO.

During the grass cutting season longer grass margins may be left around the base of trees and strimmer guards may be placed around younger trees to avoid damage by strimmers.

Tree felling

The council will, where possible avoid felling trees unless it is necessary. Reasons for felling trees may include; for health and safety reasons, to prevent the spread of disease or other pests, The council does reserve the right to fell trees in order to improve or restore habitats, landscapes, or where a tree is in an inappropriate location and has a detrimental impact on the site.

Where safe to do so dead or felled timber will be left on site and tree stumps will be allowed to decay naturally.

Tree Preservation Orders

A Tree Preservation Order is an order made by a local planning authority in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity. An Order prohibits the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting, willful damage or willful destruction of trees without the local planning authority's written consent (South Oxford District Council).

Additional consent is required for trees that lie within the Wheatley Conservation Area.

Records

The parish council will maintain records for all work on trees that they have responsibility for. This information will be used to building a detailed register which will be used to co-ordinate regular inspections and maintenance regimes.

Tree planting

The parish council welcomes opportunities to plant more trees in the village. It will seek to plant more trees on its land and to support the community and village organisations in undertaking small or large scale tree planting activities.

Where mass planting activities are arranged site and activity risk assessments will be carried out and available to staff, councillors and the public.

Replacement tree will be native to the UK and purchased according to their suitability to the planting site. If required the parish council will seek the advice of reputable horticulturists/arborists.