

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

As Amended 2020

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## **1. TREES IN TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS**

Trees play an important role in enhancing the urban environment and bring many benefits as they:

- screen unsightly structures and activities.
- give privacy.
- soften the hard lines of buildings.
- bring colour and contrasts into the urban environment.
- improve air quality by acting as natural air filters removing dust, smoke and fumes from the atmosphere.
- reduce the 'greenhouse' effect by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen.
- act as an effective sound barrier and can limit noise pollution.
- help to reduce the stress of modern life.
- provide habitats for native ground flora such as bluebells, fauna, particularly birds, bats and invertebrates.

Despite all these benefits that trees bring to our urban areas, this environment is often a hostile one for a variety of reasons:

- many urban trees show signs of stress, grow slowly and become more prone to disease.
- they are subjected to a variety of pollutants such as car fumes, herbicides, salt and other de-icing agents from roads.
- vandals rip off branches, strip bark and even set fire to trees.
- urban trees are more susceptible to drought. Many of the surfaces that they grow in are impervious to water and air; because the soil is compacted, and any excess rainwater is drained away.
- tree roots are frequently severed during installation of underground services or to allow for construction work. This can lead to the premature death of trees.

Even under the guise of tree care there can be subconscious acts of vandalism. For example, tree ties that are left in place can strangle the tree that they were once intended to support. Also, incorrect pruning can leave unsightly trees struggling to survive.

## **2. PURPOSES AND AIMS OF TREE POLICY**

### **2.1 Trees in Northampton**

This document has been created, as there is a need for regular inspections and careful planning of: pruning, felling, planting and the encouragement of private landowners to manage their trees appropriately.

### **2.2 Scope of Policy**

Much of the policy is aimed at the management of Northampton's 'Urban Trees'. These are classed as trees that are within built up areas of the town. This definition includes trees adjacent to the highways, in residential and commercial areas as well as parks and open spaces.

The policy also provides for the management of Northampton's rural trees and woodlands in its control. In order to find out if a tree is owned by Northampton Borough Council (NBC) please contact [streetcare@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.

### **2.3 Aims of Policy**

The aims of the tree policy are addressed in the following five sections:

- to ensure the management of trees contributes to making Northampton Borough's environment attractive and healthy for people who visit, live and work in the Borough.
- to ensure trees enhance the environment.
- to ensure the efficient management and sustainability of the trees.
- to ensure an increasing and varied tree population within the borough which is in harmony with other land uses.
- to promote awareness of the importance and value of trees to the residents of Northampton.

### **2.4 Biodiversity**

Is the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat. A high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable by not removing the wood from site after taking a tree down. This assists with biodiversity by

- reducing our carbon footprint as we do not have to move the material about.
- woodchip is beneficial to the surrounding area, nutrients are able to go back into the soil.
- woodpiles and standing timber are ideal habitats for insects, birds and bats.

### **3. TREE MAINTENANCE POLICY**

#### **3.1 Common Law Right**

You have a common law right to remove nuisance with trees infringing onto your property. If this were the case, we would advise the following:

- you can only remove any parts of a tree that overhang your property. You have no legal right to remove anything that does not overhang the boundary of your property.
- a tree surgeon should be consulted when pruning back any part of a tree that overhangs your property, unless the pruning can be reasonably carried out with hand secateurs.
- to find out if the trees are owned by Northampton Borough Council please contact [streetcare@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.
- Before carrying out any work you should also find out if the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are in a designated Conservation Area. In order to do this please contact [streetcare@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.
- If the trees are protected then you will need to gain consent by making an application and giving notice to the council. For more information on how to do this please email [planning@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:planning@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.
- you should speak with your neighbour before pruning any overhanging branches and offer to return any that are pruned back to your neighbour, as legally you do not own them. It is most likely that your neighbour will ask that you dispose of them yourself but it is good practice to ask them first.
- if the overhanging branches belong to a Council owned tree then you should dispose of the prunings yourself and not return them to Council owned land.

#### **3.2 Emergency Procedures for Dangerous Trees**

Northampton Borough Council will remove trees that are posing a hazard and make safe trees that are imminently dangerous. To notify us of an emergency situation please contact [streetcare@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.

## **4. TREE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 Tree surveys**

Northampton Borough Council aims to establish an on-going maintenance plan to assess their current tree stock, with a long-term view to improving public spaces. The plan will establish high quality trees and with the expertise of approved contractors, works carried out will focus on improving the existing tree stock, using various types of arboricultural practices to achieve this (see section 5-Maintenance Plan).

### **4.2 Standard of work**

Northampton Borough Council will:

- appoint private arboricultural contractors through a tendering process.
- regularly review the specifications in the contract to ensure that they are precise and meet with currently accepted standards (British standard 3998:2010 'Tree Work- Recommendations').
- supporting the development and training of all arboricultural staff involved in NBC tree work.

### **4.3 Timeline of service**

Northampton Borough Council will;

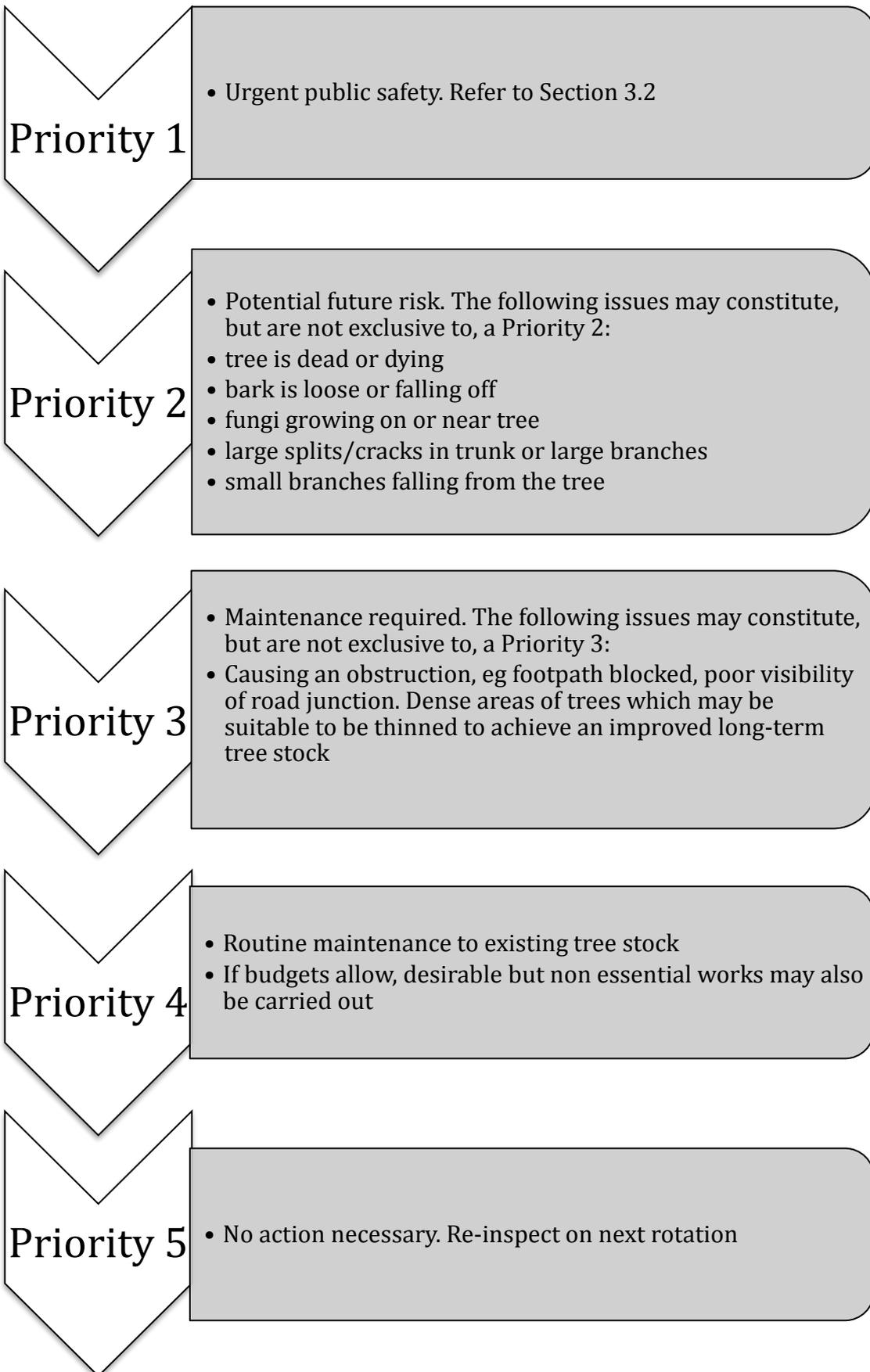
- support a policy that allows residents to request work on a Northampton Borough Council owned tree
- inspect the aforementioned tree and specify work required.
- ensure that if work is required, money is allocated from the appropriate budget and work is issued to a contractor.

### **4.4 Tree Work Priorities**

Priority work levels are split into 5 separate areas. These areas are established and structured around the defect with the chosen tree/s. With each area an action and reason can be given for such works and this will correspond with the arboricultural work levels described below.

It should be noted that the final decision on works to be carried out fall with Northampton Borough Council for the approval of work.

The issues and actions below are a guide and may be subject to change depending on the severity of the issue. If a tree is subject to adverse weather conditions this may affect the condition of the tree, so the priorities act as a guideline only.



#### **4.5 Arboricultural Work Levels**

When works are carried out, it is the contractors' responsibility to carry out these works in accordance with current legal practices statute and common where applicable. Ensuring that the highest possible levels of work standards and safety are adhered to, this should include but is not limited to:

- British Standards BS3998: 2010 'Tree Work- Recommendations.'
- Wildlife and Country Act 1981 as Amended.
- Habitat and Species Regulations 2007 Amended.
- Tree Preservation Orders (Town and Country Planning Act)
- designated Conservation Areas.
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000.

1) Tree Planting- establishing new trees to an existing site:

- appropriate species needs to be carefully considered, taking into account; growth rate, size water demand, soil conditions, exposure of the site, long term maintenance of the chosen species etc.
- formative pruning of new trees.

2) Light Pruning Operations- minor works that include:

- lifting tree crowns to 2.4m over footpaths.
- lifting tree crowns to 3m in parks and open spaces (where appropriate)).
- lifting tree crowns to 4m over car bays (where possible).
- lifting tree crowns to 5.2m over highways.
- clearing lamp column heads by 1m to give adequate light splay.
- removal of secondary limbs to achieve lighting requirements.

3) Selective Pruning Operations- works on individual trees:

- removal or reduction of selected branches.

4) Major Pruning Operations- major works that include:

- full crown reduction.
- crown thinning.
- removal of primary limbs to achieve lighting requirements.

5) Minor Tree Removal

- removal of young trees.
- removal of understory growth.
- coppicing of young trees.
- selecting best specimen trees for retention.

6) Major Tree Removal

- removal of semi mature to mature trees.
- coppicing of mature trees.
- selecting best specimen trees for retention.

## **5. TREES IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

This section looks at some of the most common conflicts that the Council's urban trees cause and how these can be mitigated or overcome without felling or excessive pruning. It is important to strike a balance between removing problem trees and retaining trees in good health.

### **5.1 Damage to Property**

Northampton Borough Council takes into account the long-term effects of planting trees near buildings when designing planting schemes referring to current relevant guidance such as NHBC Standards Chapter 4.2 'Building Near Trees' and British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in relation to construction.'

Should you have concerns about tree-related property damage you should first contact your insurance provider to seek advice.

Should you, or anyone acting on your behalf, wish to make a claim for damage or formally notify the council of concerns about future damage then you should contact us at [insuranceclaims@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:insuranceclaims@northamptonshire.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.

### **5.2 Light**

Northampton Borough Council aims to manage its trees so that they contribute to making the environment attractive and healthy. Equally we aim to keep locality reasonably safe and ensure that trees do not cause an excessive nuisance.

A common complaint about urban trees within housing estates, open spaces and parks is that the available daytime light to properties and footpaths is being blocked.

This also relates to night-time with urban trees blocking lamp columns creating excessive shade in public areas. No one has a direct right to natural light in common law. However, works can be carried out to clear lamp columns and other light sources, by 1m as per our policy.

You can also exercise your Common Law Right to cut back any nuisance branches/ foliage to the boundary of your property. See 3.1 for more details.

### **5.3 Television and Satellite Reception**

Northampton Borough Council requests that you contact your satellite or TV provider who should be able to provide a solution to any problems with reception issues. This will most likely be relocating the satellite dish/ TV aerial or boosting the signal.

You can also exercise your Common Law Right to cut back any nuisance branches/ foliage to the boundary of your property. See 3.1 for more details.

### **5.4 Bird Droppings**

Northampton Borough Council will not fell or prune any trees that cause minor nuisances but strive to find alternative solutions. Bird droppings can be a nuisance but are not considered sufficient reason to carry out pruning works on/ felling a tree. Bird droppings can be removed with warm water and soap.

Nesting birds are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended, which means that it is illegal to carry out tree works where there are nesting birds.

### **5.5 Blossom and Fruits**

Northampton Borough Council will not fell or prune any trees that cause minor nuisances but strive to find alternative solutions. Tree blossom and fruits are a natural occurrence and cannot be prevented with pruning.

Roads and pavements are swept regularly to prevent build-up of blossom or fruit as part of normal cleaning cycles. However if you see an area in need of cleaning you can request a street cleanse using our online form <https://mycouncil.northampton.digital/reportlt.html> ,by downloading the Northampton Borough Council app. Or alternatively contact [streetcare@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.

You can also exercise your Common Law Right to cut back any nuisance branches/ foliage to the boundary of your property. See 3.1 for more details.

### **5.6 Insects**

Northampton Borough Council will not fell or prune any trees that cause minor nuisances but strive to find alternative solutions. It should be noted that bees are a protected species so advice should be sought before considering removal. You can also exercise your Common Law Right to cut back any nuisance branches/ foliage to the boundary of your property. See 3.1 for more details.

Honeydew can occur as a result of aphids feeding on a tree. The aphids then excrete honeydew, which is a sugary sap. Honeydew is a natural and seasonal problem. Pruning will only offer temporary relief and the regrowth has potential to be colonized by an increased number of aphids, exacerbating the problem. Any cars affected should be washed with warm and soapy water to remove the honeydew.

### **5.7 Leaves**

Northampton Borough Council will not fell or prune any trees that cause minor nuisances but strive to find alternative solutions. The falling of leaves is part of the natural cycle that occurs each autumn and cannot be avoided by pruning.

Property owners are encouraged to regularly maintain their gutters to avoid blockages. Guards can be fitted where regular blockages of gutters occur.

Roads and pavements are swept regularly to prevent build-up of blossom or fruit as part of normal cleaning cycles. However if you see an area in need of cleaning you can request a street cleanse using our online form <https://mycouncil.northampton.digital/reportlt.html> ,by downloading the Northampton Borough Council app. Or alternatively contact [streetcare@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@northampton.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 330 7000.

You can also exercise your Common Law Right to cut back any nuisance branches/ foliage to the boundary of your property. See 3.1 for more details.

## **6. TREE PLANTING, ESTABLISHMENT AND DESIGN**

Northampton Borough Council aims to improve the quality of life and the environment in Northamptonshire through proactive and appropriate tree planting. Our aim is to get the right tree in the right location so that urban trees are in harmony with the environment and community.

### **6.1 Tree Replacement**

Northampton Borough Council will endeavour to plant at least one tree of a suitable species and size at the most appropriate site in the locality. Should this not be possible then an alternative site will be sought.

### **6.2 Species and Site Selection**

Northampton Borough Council aims to reduce conflicts between trees and the urban environment by agreeing to:

- plant trees that will grow to a size appropriate for their location.
- plant a variety of species to help avoid the environmental damage of disease.
- plant tree species, which are native to Britain where conservation and biodiversity are a priority as they hold the greatest wildlife value. However, the we will plant a variety of native and non-native species throughout the borough to ensure they select the most appropriate tree for the location.
- all works are to be carried out the standards set out in BS8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape.
- work with developers to advise on trees and sites on new housing developments within the borough.

### **6.3 Highways Trees**

If you have an issue regarding a Highways Tree please contact Northamptonshire County Councils Street Doctor <http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/roads-and-streets/Pages/report-highway-problem.aspx> or telephone 0300 126 1000