

Appendix 1

Tree and Woodland Management Policy 2021 Telford & Wrekin Council



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Protect
Care and Invest
to create a
better borough



Telford & Wrekin
COUNCIL

Executive Summary

Telford & Wrekin has significantly more trees than many other towns and cities. It is estimated that the Council is responsible for around 15 million trees. Most of these trees and whips were planted in the New Town during a 10 year period in the 1960/70s and many close to dwellings.

The Trees and Woodland Policy has been updated to reflect changes made since the first document 2016 – 2021 and which was approved in March 2016. This updated policy document (**Appendix 1**) takes account of four significant changes that have occurred since the 2016 document.

1. The rapid spread of Ash Dieback and the high number of trees requiring management intervention.
2. The Council's resolution to declare a climate emergency and to become carbon neutral by 2030.
3. The Council's new 4 year plan, "Care, Protect and Invest" launched in 2019.

The policy supports on-going work to manage Ash Dieback.

1 Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 The document sets out the Council's policies for operational tree and woodland management in line with health and safety, national legislation, national Best Practice and relevant Council strategies and objectives, including the direct link to planning policy and climate change.
- 1.2 The policy will foster and support the policy of the "Right Tree in the Right Place for the Right Reason" <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual> to ensure the tree population thrives and provides sustainable, functional climate benefits.
- 1.3 The overarching aims of this policy document is:
 - To set guidelines to ensure trees and woodland are maintained as an attractive, safe, healthy, community resource for future generations.
 - To set out policy and standards to deliver a consistent approach, enabling the Council and key stakeholders to care and manage the trees and woodland resource in a timely and efficient way.
 - To ensure that clear information is available for residents.
 - To detail how the Council will manage the trees and woodland stock across its land holdings to address the challenges of climate change and pests and diseases.

2 Trees and Woodlands in the Borough

- 2.1 One of the key landscape design principles when Telford as designated a New Town was to create a "Forest City". This saw the planting of millions of trees, and created woodland and tree cover in excess of 384 hectares.
- 2.2 Much of the massed structural planting undertaken by Telford Development Corporation (TDC) has reached up to 50 years of age. This is the phase at which a tree grows most rapidly and consequently the borough's trees and plantations are becoming ever more obvious to the public.
- 2.3 It was envisaged that many of the trees in this initial planting, "the nursery crop", would be removed during the first 20 to 30 years to allow the slower growing native tree mix to flourish and develop a lasting woodland across the borough; many of the nursery crop trees have not been removed as originally intended. This continues to hinder the slower growing native trees.
- 2.4 Climate change is significantly affecting the tree stock across the borough. The lack of long cold winters has enabled pests and diseases to become prevalent e.g. Oak Processionary Moth, Chalara (Ash Dieback) and

Phytophthora, brought in from abroad, to become established and are attacking a wide range of the UK's native tree stock, which have no natural defence. The end result of such pests and diseases leads to the weakening of the tree, and in a significant proportion, they die.

2.5 Of particular concern, is the rapid spread of Ash Dieback, the incurable disease was introduced via contaminated nursery stock about 7 years ago. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback and creates the danger of falling branches as the trees weaken as they begin to die. For this reason many ash trees will need to be removed to ensure public safety.

2.6 By far the greatest majority of the Council's trees and woodland are located within the Telford urban area and although the rural hinterland makes up two-thirds of the borough, the Council has very few rural trees to manage in comparison.

2.7 It is widely recognised that trees and woodland make a wide-ranging and positive contribution to the quality of modern life. The diverse benefits that the woodlands can bring to the borough include:

- Environmental benefits including carbon sequestration, enhancing biodiversity, reducing risk of flood by slowing down storm water run-off, providing summer shade and winter shelter and improving air quality.
- Health benefits by providing green spaces to exercise and meet socially for recreational activities, improving mental health, and for use as outdoor classrooms for create a positive environment for child development.
- Economic benefit by providing a timber resource to sell on to local markets eg for renewable energy, and it is also recognised that a tree rich environment can add value to house prices.

3 Summary of policies

3.1 Trees growing within the borough are vital and important, yet at the same time can be seen as highly emotive, both in terms of perceived nuisance and of the benefit they provide. As many of the trees and woodlands in the area are under the ownership of the Council, it is essential for the Council to work towards creating places where tree species can thrive and deliver their full range of benefits without causing harmful nuisance. The Council needs to ensure the quality of the tree and woodland assets to enjoy the benefits now, but also help to pass on these benefits to future generations; recognising the importance of maintaining safe green spaces and woodlands alongside enhancing biodiversity and combating climate change. To achieve this, the policies presented in Appendix 1 are set out in the following themes:

- a) Maintenance, management and duty of care. This includes how the Council will:
 - Manage trees to safeguard health and safety;
 - Manage dangerous trees which have been damaged in times of high winds and storms which are high risk to people, property and highways;
 - Manage trees which have been effected by increasing pests and diseases. Of particular concern is the rapid spread of Ash Dieback which causes leaf loss and crown dieback and creates danger of falling branches as the trees weaken as they begin to die. The end result being that many ash trees will need to be removed to ensure public safety;
 - Manage our woodlands sustainably including thinning and replanting

- b) Urban liveability. This includes how the Council will:
 - Respond to customer enquiries in relation to Council owned trees. The policies take into account liveability factor associated with “right tree, right place and right reason”

- c) Addressing Climate Change. This will include how the Council will:
 - Ensure new planting schemes are designed in sustainable manner
 - Recover felled timber for biomass fuel and other sustainable uses
 - Monitor felling and planting of trees to ensure continuous improvement in carbon sequestration.
 - Communicating the positive benefits of trees to the environment

- d) Tree protection. This will include how the Council will
 - Ensure the “right tree, right place, right reason” principle is adopted to ensure there are no future maintenance and management issues
 - Ensure the council maintains appropriate canopy cover
 - Protect ‘valued’ trees.

4 Local Policy & Legislation context

- 4.1 It is important to be aware of the strategic context in which care and management of Trees and Woodlands operates. Maintenance of the Council’s trees and woodland contributes to, or is affected by a number of relevant strategies, polices and good practice documents.
- 4.2 These links are being made and this will inform the development of both Council strategy and operational policy.

Appendix 1 Telford and Wrekin Council Tree Management Policies

Tree maintenance, Management & Duty of Care (TM)	
TM1	The Council will foremost consider its obligation to ensure the health and safety of both people and property when undertaking management decisions in relation to trees and encourage other landowners to do the same.
	TM1a: The Council will undertake work to a Council owned tree to maintain a minimum (where reasonably feasible) 2.5 metres height clearance over a footpath associated with a street, road or highway (3 metres where there are cycling rights). Any works necessary to prevent an obstruction in the width of a footpath associated with the highway due to the presence of a Council owned tree would be considered on a case-by-case basis but may not always be possible.
	TM1b: The Council will undertake work to a tree in Council ownership to maintain clear sight lines (where reasonably feasible) at junctions and access points associated with a street, road or highway.
	TM1c: The Council will undertake work to a tree in Council ownership to maintain a minimum 5.5 metres height clearance over the carriageway – where reasonably feasible (associated with a street, road or highway).
	TM1d: The Council will undertake work on a tree in Council ownership to ensure that trees do not unduly obstruct street light.
	TM1e: The Council will undertake work on a tree in Council ownership to maintain clear sight lines (where reasonably feasible) for traffic signals and street signs (associated with a street, road or highway).
	TM1f: The Council will look into any reports of vandalism to a Council owned tree and try to correct any damage where it is possible.

	TM1g: The Council will not prune, fell or cut the roots of a Council owned tree to prevent roots entering a drain that is already broken or damaged.
Amended	TM1h: The Council will undertake measures to make safe an unacceptable trip hazard in street, road or highway caused by the growth of a Council owned tree in conjunction with highway resurfacing works.
TM2 Amended to cover all dangerous trees at any time include Ash dieback	To follow the Council's tree safety policy and guidance in order to ensure the elimination of high risk trees, which includes trees damaged in times of high winds and storms, and diseased trees (e.g. from Ash Dieback and other pests) to ensure the Borough's trees and woodlands are well managed and safe.
	TM2a: If a Council owned tree is in such a condition that it poses a very high risk to people or property or a public highway and is considered to be an emergency situation, an instruction will be given to our contractor to make the tree safe within 2 hours.
	TM2b: If a tree is identified as dangerous, but the risk to the public is not high then the tree will be made safe depending on the degree of risk identified at the time of inspection. Our standards are 'within 6 months if High Risk', or 'within 18 months if Medium Risk'.
	TM2c: if a tree in private ownership is shown to be an imminent danger to the highway it will be identified for work to make it reasonably safe. The landowner will be contacted (but only if known in an emergency situation) and instructed to make the tree safe under the Highways Act 1980. If the owner fails to carry out work to make the tree safe and it is necessary that the Council undertake this work then the owner will be charged in full for the Council's costs.
	TM2d: if a tree in private ownership is shown to be an imminent danger to non-highway land it will be identified for work to make it reasonably safe. The landowner will be contacted and instructed to make the tree safe under section 23(1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976). If it is necessary that the Council undertake this work then the owner will be charged in full for the Council's costs.

TM3	The Council will encourage residents, parishes and business to plant suitable trees upon appropriate land through promoting suitable trees species to ensure “right tree, right place, right reason”.
TM4	All newly planted Council owned trees are subject to a three year maintenance programme to ensure that they become established. This includes watering which is done between early April and late summer according to climate conditions in any one year. In dry summers trees may need to be watered ten or more times but in wet summers perhaps not at all. Trees planted as small 1 or 2 year seedlings are not usually watered because being small (typically 60-90cm tall) they are more drought resistant.
TM5	The Council has clear procedures for dealing with insurance and subsidence claims. In the event that a council owned or protected tree is alleged to be causing damage to a building, the council will agree to the removal of the tree provided that, on the balance of probabilities, there is sufficient evidence from the claimant to demonstrate that the tree is an influencing cause. Where it is proven that tree roots are causing damage to property other than buildings, the council will take measures to abate the nuisance.
Urban Liveability (TL)	
TL1 Amended	Tree pruning, height reduction or removal of trees in direct response to any natural or seasonal phenomena will not be undertaken. Consideration will be given to the “liveability” associated with the tree to ensure “right tree, right place, right reason”.
	TL1a: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce leaf fall or remove fallen leaves from private property.
Amended	TL1b: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to improve natural light in a property or to mitigate the growth of algae or garden plants due to the affects of shading. Unless the garden is small and in constant shade where we will consider appropriate actions that could be taken.

	TL1c: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce bird droppings from trees, or remove bird droppings from private land.
	TL1d: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce blossom / fruit / seeds from trees or remove fallen blossom / fruit / germinating seeds from private land.
	TL1e: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce the release of pollen.
	TL1f: The Council have no general policy to remove trees bearing poisonous fruit/foilage (such as yew trees), however where it is claimed or known that unsupervised young children are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated and appropriate action considered.
	TL1g: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees.
TL2	Tree pruning, height reduction or removal of trees directly attributable to loss or interference with TV or satellite signal reception will not be undertaken.
	TL2a: The Council will not prune, reduce its height or fell a Council owned tree / trees to prevent interference with tv/satellite installation/reception.
	TL2b: The Council will not prune, reduce its height or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce interference with telephone wires.
TL3 Amended to improved efficiency to solar panels	Tree pruning, height reduction or removal of trees directly attributable to efficiency of solar panels may be undertaken. Where a tree(s) can be pruned in the best interests of the tree (excluding height reductions) and this would result in the improvement of the efficiency of solar panels, the council may consider pruning requests and prioritise in line with the outstanding reactive and routine work.
TL4 Amended	Removal of any apparently healthy tree, or tree branches which are subject to a complaint, will be investigated and assessed for suitability and retained where appropriate. Work may be undertaken to improve the “liveability” associated with the tree.

	TL4b: the Council has no authority to intervene in a dispute between neighbours. However, we can provide advice in the form of leaflets/website information on what action can be taken. If the problem is due to a 'high hedge' information can be found on the Planning webpage.
Amended To include liveability aspect	TL4c: Pruning or felling will not normally be undertaken on a tree in Council ownership to alleviate the nuisance of overhanging branches unless this forms part of woodland or shelter belt thinning operations or forms part of a recognised council 'Urban Tree Programme' and is appropriate for the health and form of the tree. Where the tree has been assessed as posing a "liveability" issue the council may prune back overhanging branches where this is possible or affordable.
	TL4d: The Council will not prune or fell a council owned tree because it is perceived to be 'too big' or 'too tall'.
	TL4e: Where a Council owned tree is associated with criminal activity and/or anti-social behaviour, measures to reduce the problem will be considered on a site-by-site basis, felling should be seen as a last resort and replanting necessitated.
Amended	TL4f: If a tree in Council ownership is touching your property (dwelling house, garage etc) we will take action to remove the nuisance by pruning the overhanging branches to a minimum distance of 2.5 metres where possible.
	TL4g: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to improve the view from a private property.
	TL4h: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce incidence of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals.
	TL4i: The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree where a request has been made to do so because of a personal medical complaint.
Addressing Climate Change	
TCL1	The Council will implement a 50:50 mix of native and non-native trees as part of replanting schemes to ensure the sustainability of trees through climate change and pests and disease.

New	
TCL2 New	The Council will recover felled timber and woodchip products where possible and sell for biomass fuels and other sustainable uses.
TCL3 New	The Council will measure canopy cover in its ownership to enable carbon impact to be monitored and will also maintain records of trees felled and trees planted.
TCL3 New	The Council will communicate the benefits of trees and their role in reducing air pollution, flooding, biodiversity and CO2 capture.
Tree Protection (TP)	
TP1	The Council will always seek to plant the right type of tree in the right place to avoid problems and possible insurance claims in the future. We will look at the constraints and opportunities of the proposed planting site and the desired features of the proposed trees when choosing the best tree for the location.
TP2	The Council wishes to maintain and increase the tree cover across the borough, to a target of around 25%, however we will undertake tree planting in areas of the borough where the canopy falls below 25% as a priority
TP3	The Council will evaluate an “at Risk” tree (or group of trees) by completing a Tree Evaluation Method for Preservation Orders (TEMPO) assessment to establish the suitability of a tree for protection.
TP4	The Council will recognise the significance of Ancient and Veteran trees in the historical landscape and apply a recognised evaluation method to trees.