

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPLETING HIGH HEDGES COMPLAINT FORM.**

### *General Notes*

These guidance notes are to help you fill in the form to make a complaint about a neighbouring high hedge. You should also read the leaflet '*High hedges: complaining to the Council*'.

Consideration of your complaint will be delayed if you do not complete the form properly or do not provide the information requested.

### **Section 1: ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE COMPLAINT**

Please keep the descriptions brief but say how you made the approach (eg face to face, phone, letter) and what the result was.

#### **Example 1**

- 12 March 2005 - phoned neighbour [Mr Bloggs of 12 High Street] to ask if we could discuss hedge. Met on 19 March but we couldn't agree a solution;
- 15 April - mediators visited;
- 29 April - met neighbours [Mr Bloggs] and mediators. But still couldn't find an answer we were both happy with;
- 14 May - wrote to inform neighbours [Mr Bloggs] would be complaining to Council

#### **Example 2**

- 12 March 2005 - wrote to neighbours [Mr Bloggs of 12 High Street] to ask if we could discuss hedge. 2 weeks later still no reply;
- 9 April - wrote to ask if would speak to mediator. 2 weeks later still no reply;
- 7 May - wrote to inform neighbours [Mr Bloggs] would be complaining to Council.

#### **Example 3**

- 12 March 2005 - saw neighbours [Mr Bloggs of 12 High Street] in their garden and asked if we could discuss hedge. Neighbours [Mr Bloggs] came round on 19 March. Saw the effect of the hedge for themselves. Sympathetic but unwilling to reduce the hedge as much as we wanted;
- Neighbours [Mr Bloggs] willing to try mediation but discovered that neighbour mediation not available in our area. We live too far from the nearest service;
- 23 April - saw neighbours [Mr Bloggs] again and told them that, if we couldn't agree a solution, we would make a formal complaint to Council. Left it for a couple of weeks then confirmed in writing that we would be going ahead with the complaint.

It is not necessary to send copies of all correspondence with your neighbour about the hedge - especially if the dispute is a long-running one. You need only provide evidence of your latest attempts to settle it.

### **Section 2: CRITERIA FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT**

If you have answered 'No' to any of the questions in this section we cannot consider your complaint and will return your form and fee.

### *Who can complain*

#### Q2.6

You must be the owner or occupier of the property affected by a high hedge in order to make a formal complaint to the Council.

If you do not own the property (eg because you are a tenant or a leaseholder), you can still make a complaint. But you should let the owner (eg landlord or management company) know what you are doing.

#### Q2.7

The property does not have to be wholly residential but must include separate living accommodation otherwise we cannot consider the complaint.

### **Section 3: GROUNDS OF COMPLAINT**

It will help if you provide as much information as you can but keep it factual. Remember that a copy of this form will be sent to the person who owns the property where the hedge is growing and to the person who lives there if they are different people.

You must relate only to a problem with the height of a hedge which is affecting light and/or outlook in relation to a residential property – the dwelling and/or its garden. Issues regarding hedge width and/or roots are not covered by this legislation and such issues will not be considered.

Please include copies of any professional reports that you may have had prepared and of any other documents that you want the Council to take into account.

Please also provide photo(s) of the hedge and a plan showing the location of the hedge and surrounding properties.

When drawing your plan please look at the example below and make sure that you:

- Mark and name surrounding roads;
- Sketch in buildings, including adjoining properties. Add house numbers or names;
- Mark clearly the position of the hedge and how far it extends;

If you are complaining about the hedge blocking the light, please also show on your plan:

- Which way is North;
- The position of windows that are affected by the hedge (eg whether they are located on the front, side or rear of the house);
- Relevant measurements (eg size of garden, distance between the hedge and any windows affected);

All measurements must be in metres (m).



#### **Section 4: PREVIOUS COMPLAINTS TO THE COUNCIL**

We only need to know about formal complaints, made under the high hedges Part of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. You don't need to tell us about telephone calls or other informal contact with the Council about your hedge problems.

#### **Section 5: WHO'S WHO/THE PARTIES**

##### **Q5.1**

Even if someone else is submitting the complaint on your behalf, it is important that we have your contact details.

##### **Q5.2**

You need to complete this section only if the complainant does not live in the property affected by the hedge. We need this information because we will have to get in touch with the occupier to arrange to visit the property so that we can see for ourselves the effect of the hedge.

##### **Q5.3**

Complete this section if you are a professional adviser, relative, friend or other representative. You will be our main contact on all matters relating to the complaint and we will direct all queries and correspondence to you.

#### Q5.4

This will normally be the person you have talked to when you tried to agree a solution to your hedge problems. If the site where the hedge is growing does not have a postal address, use the box to describe as clearly as possible where it is, eg 'Land to rear of 12 to 18 High Street' or 'Park adjoining Tower Road'.

#### Q5.5

If you are in any doubt about who owns the property where the hedge is situated, you can check with the Land Registry. Alternatively, you can also use Land Register Online at [www.landregisteronline.gov.uk](http://www.landregisteronline.gov.uk) which provides easy access to details of registered properties in England.

### **Section 6: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Please make sure you have ticked all the relevant boxes. If you have ticked the last box please list these documents by date and title (eg 12<sup>th</sup> January 2005 – surveyor's report).

If you are submitting this form by email but will be posting supporting documents to us separately, put a reference number or title on them (eg Hedge Complaint, Joe Bloggs, 12 High Street) so that we can match them up with your complaint.

### **Section 7: SENDING THE COMPLAINT**

The fee has been provisionally set at a level which is estimated to cover the Council's cost of providing the service. This is £250 and you should make out your cheque to 'Telford & Wrekin Council'.