

## **Dronfield Town Council**

### **Policy on the Management of Trees and Hedges owned by Dronfield Town Council (March 2024)**

#### **Document Control**

<b>Owner</b>	Outside Services Manager
<b>Document History</b>	
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Approved by	Town Council
<b>Version 1.1</b>	October 2021
Updates	Various; ash dieback, potential tree planting, hedgerow management
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<b>Version 1.2</b>	
Updates	“Cliffe Park Hedgerow” replaced with “Replacement Trees”
Minute Reference	8 <sup>th</sup> April 2024 - Minute 393/23-24
Approved by	Town Council

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Dronfield Town Council Tree Policy sets out a proactive method of management that will both conserve and enhance Dronfield's tree population and the amenity value of its land.

1.2 This policy is intended to provide a guideline for the management of trees in Dronfield Town Council owned locations. It is not exhaustive and is subject to change. The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Environmental Committee and proposed amendments will be submitted to the Town Council for approval.

## **2. The value of trees**

2.1 Trees are essential to life and have many positive impacts on many aspects of our lives and on the environment, including:

- Contributing to and improving the amenity value and appearance of our town, contributing to residents' quality of life and sense of well-being
- Reducing air pollution and releasing oxygen for us to breathe
- Reducing wind speed
- Providing shelter and a haven for all sorts of wildlife, including birds, bats and insects
- Reducing noise levels
- Providing shade
- Reducing flooding.

2.2 Dronfield Town Council acknowledges the importance of maintaining a healthy tree population that is appropriate to the character of all Council-owned land and will allocate sufficient resources to ensure that it is able to manage the trees that it owns. A programme of annual work will be undertaken on the trees to line up with the budget allocated.

## **3. Policy sections:**

- (i) Risk zones
- (ii) Frequency and method of inspection
- (iii) When tree maintenance will be undertaken
- (iv) Ash dieback
- (v) When tree maintenance will not be undertaken
- (vi) Potential Tree Planting
- (vii) Claims for subsidence and damage
- (viii) Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas and the management of ancient trees
- (ix) Management of Hedges
- (x) Further information/resources

**(i) Risk zones**

<b>ZONE</b>	<b>RISK LEVEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>AREAS INCLUDED</b>
Zone 1	High	High use areas including intensively used footpaths, bridle paths, car parks, sports clubs and areas adjacent to public highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cliffe Park</li><li>• Sindelfingen Park</li><li>• Dronfield Cemetery</li><li>• Alma</li><li>• Lea Brook Valley</li></ul>
Zone 2	Medium	Lesser used footpaths/bridle paths, general recreation/common land areas, allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gomersal Lane Allotments</li><li>• Coal Aston Allotments</li><li>• Jubilee Park</li><li>• Birches Fold Park</li><li>• Stonelow Playing Field</li><li>• Coal Aston Playing Fields</li><li>• Hilltop Recreation Area</li></ul>
Zone 3	Low	Areas in which there are no formal public footpaths, densely wooded areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quoit Green</li></ul>

**(ii) Frequency and method of inspection**

<b>ZONE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY OF INSPECTION</b>	<b>METHOD</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>
Zone 1	Annually and after winds in excess of 40 mph or heavy snow fall  Note: To be pruned every 3 years	Visual inspection  Formal health and safety survey	Town Council Officers* and Arboricultural consultant
Zone 2	As required and after wind speeds in excess of 40 mph or heavy snow fall  Note: To be pruned every 5 years	Visual inspection and/or formal health and safety survey	Town Council Officers in the first instance, and/or Arboricultural Consultant
Zone 3	No routine inspection procedure/as required		

\* Town Council Officers: Outside Services Manager or Outside Services Assistant. Each has attended Lantra Awards Basic Tree Survey and Inspection training, which are refreshed every 5 years.

**(iii) When tree maintenance will be undertaken**

Tree work will be prioritised and carried out on pre-planned basis and according to hazards and risks identified. After inspections and investigations we will produce a programme of works informed by our available budgets. The emphasis will be on planned, rather than reactive, tree maintenance.

The following categories will be used to categorise our tree works:

- **Emergency: Dangerous trees requiring immediate attention e.g. blown over, struck by lightning, a large branch has snapped off, it is blocking access**  
Timescale for works: Same day or next day wherever possible and within one week at latest, with the remains of the tree to be removed from site when possible.
- **Category One: Essential works to mitigate hazard e.g it is dead/dying or small branches are falling off**  
Target timescale for works: 1 to 3 months depending on risk and time of year
- **Category Two: Desirable works, e.g. to improve tree health, loosening/removing tree ties as the trees grow.**  
Target timescale for works: Within 6 months of identification
- **Category Three: Non-essential works, e.g. thinning out, formative pruning**  
Target timescale for works: Within 12 months of identification, where possible

Tree maintenance will be conducted by trained Council Officers, or by contractors, subject to the nature of the work.

All tree works will be conducted to comply with British Standard 3998 (1989): Recommendations for Tree Work.

Tree pruning will be carried out when deemed necessary following an inspection.

Pruning will be carried out:

- for Health and Safety reasons e.g. to remove some of the lower branches of a tree located near a road to enable traffic to pass safely
- where it benefits the health of the tree e.g. pollarding will be conducted regularly on species such as crack willow, where it extends the lifespan of the tree and prevents splitting
- where it is in-line with site-specific management plans e.g. to improve light levels.

There may be times when the tree maintenance we conduct does not meet the expectations of members of the public requesting works, for example a tree may be pruned rather than felled. There are circumstances when we will not undertake maintenance.

#### **(iv) Ash dieback**

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is a fungus which originated in Asia. Its introduction to Europe about 30 years ago has devastated the European ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) because the native ash species did not evolve with the fungus and this means it has no natural defence against it.

The fungus overwinters in leaf litter on the ground, particularly on ash leaf stalks. It produces small white fruiting bodies between July and October which release spores into the surrounding atmosphere. These spores can blow tens of miles away. They land on leaves, stick to and then penetrate into the leaf and beyond. The fungus then grows inside the tree, eventually blocking its water transport systems, causing it to die. The tree can fight back, but year-on-year infections will eventually kill it.

A recognition of the impact of the ash dieback disease on trees will reduce long term costs such as having to use MEWP's (Mobile Elevated Work Platforms) in dismantling trees as they can become too dangerous to climb.

In order to monitor ash dieback it is recommended that the outside services teams keep a record of checks on tree conditions, as they go about their normal working operations. This will allow for monitoring change overtime and add another level to the tree safety management programme.

As well as aiming to retain as many potentially tolerant ash trees as possible, letting nature take its course by allowing diseased ash trees to decline and be dismantled, can also improve the resilience of trees to future diseases and climate change. To do this would require an increase in the genetic diversity of trees in existing places. And when planting new trees, a mix of native tree species from UK nursery's would be used.

### **(v) When tree maintenance will not be undertaken**

A sample list of circumstances where Dronfield Town Council will not prune or fell trees can be seen below - this list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed regularly;

- Tree pruning or removal WILL NOT be undertaken in response to **natural occurrences that do not pose a health and safety risk**, such as falling leaves, fruit, flowers, pine cones or the build-up of algae on paths. Highway pavements badly affected by leaves or other tree debris can be reported to Derbyshire County Council Highways for clearance.
- Tree pruning or removal WILL NOT be undertaken where trees have a negative impact on television reception, where canopy is blocking light, or where the tree is blocking views from a residence. Property owners have a common law right to cut back overhanging branches as far as their boundary unless the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is in a Conservation Area.
- Tree works are generally planned to limit their impact on wildlife such as nesting birds (season runs from March to August although some birds may nest earlier or later than this), unless the work is for health and safety reasons. Contractors will always refer to BS3998.
- Tree work WILL NOT be conducted if a tree contains roosting bats (it is a criminal offence to recklessly or intentionally disturb bats, or to damage or destroy a roost). If work is required for health and safety reasons, the advice of the Bat Conservation Trust or Natural England will be sought.
- Trees will generally not be pruned where they are overhanging an adjacent property unless it poses a health and safety risk.

### **(vi) Potential Tree Planting**

Tree planting can provide a range of benefits for people as well as wildlife, including; reducing noise pollution, improving air quality, and reducing the amount of water running over land in heavy rainfall periods. As we recognize the very severe impact on our lives and future generations, these services will be even more valuable as well as helping capture carbon. These benefits also have economic impacts; increasing the value of homes, reducing demand on health services and encouraging inward investment.

**Potential sites:** As opportunities for funding or similar opportunities arise, having a list of potential sites, a plan of what the Town Council wish to achieve and consulting on them with local stakeholders will enable the Town Council to respond much more quickly to opportunities for funding.

**Cliffe Park:** The soil type for Cliffe Park appears to be freely draining slightly acid loamy soils.

**Individual tree planting in parkland settings:** use the triple staking technique; 3 x fencing stakes in a triangle around a light to medium standard root ball with three loops from the stakes to stem that allows some movement. Ensure the tree does not rub on stakes and damage bark. Screws with appropriately sized washers will help prevent the ties tearing.

An appropriate mulch e.g. properly matured woodchip can reduce weeds and competition for water. As the stakes are reduced as the tree becomes self-supporting after a couple of seasons, the stakes can be cut so stumps can be left to help protect against mower/strimmer damage. Take care over tip hazards though.

**Extending woodland or planting copses:** depending on the situation 20-30% shrubs around standard trees. Spacing is commonly around 3m between stems but shrubs can be closer. Suggest that individuals of the same species are planted in groups of 3's or 5's.

Variation in spaces also encourages a more natural feel along with avoiding straight lines and allowing the edge of planting to undulate to create a scalloped edge. Designs, including species mix, percentages, etc need to be prepared on a site by site basis to incorporate situations specific to the site, e.g. ground conditions, access, etc.

There is the opportunity to incorporate self fertilizing fruit trees, such as cherry, plum, damson, etc. in planting. An assessment of nearby houses would need to be taken to avoid temptation for larger fruit such as apples to be thrown over longer distances. Smaller growth forms such as semi dwarfing and moderate growth forms may be advisable to reduce the likelihood of climbing to reach fruit and resulting damage.

### **Replacement Trees**

If a tree is felled due to it being dead, diseased, dying or dangerous, replacement planting of trees on a "new tree planted for every tree felled" basis is essential to ensure continuity of the tree stock. When it is necessary to remove a tree, the Council will ensure that appropriate replacement takes place. The replacement tree species and size will be determined by professional advice. Replacement trees do not have to be in the same spot as the felled tree: a nearby location may be more practical and appropriate.

### **Claims Of Subsidence And Damage**

When investigating claims of subsidence and damage to properties, paths or piping from tree roots emanating from a tree owned and maintained by the Council, the Council requires the property owner to submit a structural engineers report. This will enable the Council to review the evidence and determine the appropriate course of action. The report must cover:

- Physical damage
- Presence of live roots of a suitable species
- Seasonal movement or variation of the damage during different seasons

All claims regarding subsidence will be referred to the Council's Insurer along with a brief report detailing the age, type, and condition of the tree and any other factors that may be of importance to the claim. If evidence is insufficient any claim will be dismissed.

### **(vii) Tree Preservation Orders, trees in Conservation Areas and ancient trees**

#### **a) Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Areas**

Both Derbyshire County Council and North East Derbyshire District Council has duties and responsibilities under the Town and Country Planning Act, Government Regulations and Circulars to protect trees within its administrative area in the interest of amenity. These duties and responsibilities extend to making Tree Preservation Orders and to special provisions for trees within Conservation Areas.

The maximum fine for the wilful destruction of a TPO or Conservation Area tree is £20,000 per tree. Wilful damage carries the maximum fine of £2,000 per tree.

Many trees throughout Dronfield and the district as a whole are protected through individual Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or are sited within a conservation area.

Both the Town Council and individual property owners are obliged to seek permission from either Derbyshire County Council or North East Derbyshire District Council before undertaking tree works to any tree covered by a TPO or sited in a conservation area – depending on the exact location of the tree.

The County and District Council has up to eight weeks to determine applications for works to TPO trees. It has six weeks to determine a Conservation Area notification.

This includes the pruning of trees under a preservation order or in a conservation area that are over-hanging a property boundary.

#### b) Ancient Trees

According to the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory, there are currently no ancient trees or woodland sites registered in Dronfield or on Dronfield Town Council owned land. Should an ancient tree or ancient woodland be identified on Town Council-owned land, the Town Council will manage the tree accordingly, under professional guidance. It is anticipated that some trees on Town Council owned land could be identified and managed to become ancient trees of the future. There is one 'notable' tree in Dronfield currently registered on the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory.

#### **(viii) Management of hedgerows and bushes**

Hedgerows and bushes, like trees, can make an important contribution to the character of an area and may be historically (and occasionally archaeologically) important as indications of land use and previous ownership. They also contribute significantly to biodiversity.

Hedgerows are offered some protection under The Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Hedge work will be prioritised and carried out on pre-planned basis and according to hazards and risks identified. After inspections and investigations have been conducted by a qualified tree surgeon, we will produce a programme of works informed by our available budgets. The emphasis will be on planned, rather than reactive, hedge maintenance.

The following categories will be used to categorise our hedge works:

**Emergency: Dangerous hedges requiring immediate attention e.g. blown over, storm damage, it is blocking access.**

Timescale for works: Same day or next day wherever possible and within one week at latest

**Category One: Essential works to mitigate hazards e.g it is dead, dying or spreading**

Target timescale for works: 1 to 3 months depending on risk and time of year

**Category Two: Desirable works, e.g. to improve the health of the hedge**

Target timescale for works: Within 6 months of identification

**Category Three: Non-essential works, e.g. thinning out, formative pruning**

Target timescale for works: Within 12 months of identification, where possible

Hedge maintenance will be conducted by trained Council Officers, or by contractors, subject to the nature of the work.

## **(ix) Further information/resources**

### a) Tree Preservation orders and Conservation Areas

If you are planning to fell or prune a tree in a Conservation Area you are required to give North East Derbyshire District Council six weeks' notice in writing of your intentions. The council may either decide to raise no objections to your proposals or, if it wishes to retain the trees or have strict control over any pruning works, a Tree Preservation Order may be made on the trees. If you have not heard anything within six weeks of the council receiving your notification, you may carry out the works. If you have any queries regarding this please call North East Derbyshire District Council on 01246 231111.

Both Derbyshire County Council and North East Derbyshire District Council are responsible for administering Tree Preservation Orders and you can find out more information about the status of trees in the district by visiting the Derbyshire County Council website by [clicking here](#) to use their Derbyshire Partnership Mapping Service.

### b) Reporting trees causing problems on Highways

Contact Derbyshire County Council on 01629 533190 or [visit their website here](#) to report the problem online.

### c) Managing trees on your property

Assessing whether a tree on your property is safe should be done by a qualified expert. This is not a service offered by the Town Council but details of tree contractors and consultants operating throughout the UK are available from the Arboricultural Association. Reliable and trustworthy tradespersons can also be found via the Derbyshire Trusted Trader website, a Government approved scheme.

## **Dronfield Town Council Contacts**

For further information please contact:

townclerk@dronfield.gov.uk

Or

telephone 01246 418573.