

Tree Management Policy

Our policies

The benefits of trees are well known. Trees don't just brighten our urban environments, they also help reduce air pollution and have a positive impact on the incidence of asthma, skin cancer and stress related illnesses. This is because they capture particulate pollutants, filter solar radiation and bring a sense of relaxation to our bustling cities. They also help to combat the effects of climate change.

Trees provide valuable refuges and habitats to the wildlife living alongside us. They can add up to 18%* to property values as well as reduce energy consumption by 10%* by modifying microclimates.

In short, trees matter

As we state in our environmental policy, the Council's "overall aim is to continually improve our performance in everything we do..." This includes helping to enhance the built environment, minimising pollution and energy consumption, improving the environment for health benefits, and protecting the variety of wildlife in the city.

We have developed our tree management policies in line with this to make sure we manage trees in the best way and make the best use of our resources.

Our policy includes all the Council's trees, and those for which we are directly responsible. However, school governors are responsible for maintaining their school's grounds and this includes trees. We cannot impose our tree management policy on schools, but we do recommend it to them as a guide for good tree management. If you have any issues about a school's trees, please contact the school directly.

Prioritising tree work

When considering requests for tree works our first consideration will be the impact on the community. For example, we don't usually do any work which will benefit an individual but which means a loss to the community.

Additionally, because of the limited funding available for tree work we need to carefully manage the need for tree pruning and will always give priority to health and safety issues, such as :-

- unsafe trees
- diseased and damaged trees
- trees obstructing footpaths or roads
- trees touching/damaging buildings
- trees obscuring street-lamps or road-signs

This means that there will be requests for pruning or other work on trees that is not considered a priority and will normally be declined. For example, we will not normally carry out work on trees for one or more of the following reasons :-

- to reduce leaf litter
- to improve television reception

* National Urban Forestry Unit publication "Trees Matter".

- to increase light and reduce shading
- to remove branches overhanging private property
- to reduce bird droppings or aphid residue
- to allow installation of or maintain light to solar panels

TREE PRUNING TECHNIQUES

All tree pruning has an impact upon tree health and there needs to be good justification for it. We will do any necessary work in line with current British and European Standards: BS3998 'Recommendations for Tree Work' and the European Tree Pruning Guide. We will not do any work, which exceeds these recommendations.

Where there is no alternative we will carry out pruning works to comply with legal requirements to achieve clearances over roads. Pruning may also be carried out in exceptional circumstances where branches interfere or obstruct street lights, CCTV cameras and overhead cables for example. However, we do expect installation engineers to take account of trees and their future growth before they install their apparatus.

These are some of the tree pruning techniques that we use...

Crown thinning

This involves removing some secondary branch growth to create a less dense crown. Crown thinning is sometimes recommended if there are complaints about a tree blocking the light, but is often unsuccessful because the amount of branch wood we remove without harming the tree is minimal – the European Standard advises a maximum of 15%.

However, crown thinning can enhance a tree's appearance by creating a more visually balanced crown, and we will do this work where necessary.

Crown Lifting

This involves removing some of the lower branches beneath a tree's crown. We often do this to trees near footpaths and roads to allow traffic to pass by safely. We will not usually lift lower branches to more than one third of the tree's total height. However, we may have to do this on roads to comply with legal requirements or to make a clearance around streetlights and vision splays.

Crown reduction

Crown reduction reduces a tree's crown whilst still maintaining its natural shape. This is different to 'topping', which is not acceptable. Crown reduction is often used where part of a tree touches, or is very close to, a building. We will only reduce part of the crown or specific branches in these circumstances.

As discussed earlier, we will not usually prune back trees that overhang a neighbouring property, unless there is particular risk associated with the overhanging branches. Property owners are entitled to cut back any branches overhanging their boundary, as long as they dispose of all the cuttings properly.

We can combine crown reduction with thinning and lifting when trees are blocking daylight, but only in severe cases where it significantly affects residents' quality of life.

Crown cleaning

This involves removing dead or diseased branches. We will only do crown cleaning where there is a real possibility of falling branches causing accidents or injury, or if diseased branches threaten the tree's health. Dead wood has immense ecological value and we don't usually remove it from trees, which are away from very public areas, for example in quiet areas of parks and woodlands.

Pollarding

This is an ancient tree management technique that starts early in a tree's life. It involves pruning back branches to the same point on a regular basis to form 'pollard heads' which store energy.

Pollarding needs to be done at intervals of between one and five years.

Many trees lining Derby's streets have been pollarded and we will continue this for the foreseeable future.

There are instances when we may decide that pollarding is not necessary or appropriate, for example if trees

- have enough space to develop naturally
- have not been pollarded for over five years to allow them to grow on.

We can't pollard older trees if they have not been managed as pollards. Causing extensive decay, this would threaten the tree's entire structure and would be similar to 'topping', which is not acceptable.

Root pruning

Occasionally, tree roots can damage footpaths and pavements. In these cases we can prune the roots. However, if root pruning is likely to threaten the tree's health or stability, felling may be our only alternative.

Tree felling

The Council will not usually cut down healthy trees.

However, there are exceptions, for example if:

- the condition or position of the tree means it must be removed for safety
- the tree has caused damage, or is likely to cause imminent damage, to adjacent structures, but where pruning is not an option
- the tree's roots have damaged the path or road causing potential hazards, but where root pruning is not an option
- we need to remove a tree to allow other trees nearby to develop. This will be determined by the Council's Arboricultural Officer and will usually relate to woodland or copse plantings
- the tree is a species which is known to ultimately outgrow where it is planted, and if it will unreasonably restrict the use of this area

- the benefit or view of the tree is so limited by where it is, that the inconveniences outweigh all arguments in favour of keeping it
- the tree stands in the way of essential development work such as road improvements.

In all these cases, an Arboricultural Officer must give authorisation before a tree can be removed. Sometimes we will need to involve structural or highway engineers in the decision. When we have to remove a tree we will aim to replant another in the same place, or as near as we can.