

## A to Z Policy Details

### TREES - Guidelines for Pruning Council Owned Trees

Issued : January 2011

"A major problem is the scant attention given to pruning as it affects the health of trees whilst great attention has been given to pruning as it affects the desire of man " (Alex Shigo 1989).

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#### Introduction

These guidelines are intended for determining whether or not requests for pruning of trees owned or managed by Warwickshire County Council should lead to action.



It is not possible to anticipate every situation and it is therefore important that, whilst these statements guide decisions, they should not be considered absolutely prescriptive. This guidance does not override a householder's rights and responsibilities under common law. Furthermore, no one policy should be considered in isolation, but all relevant policies should be taken into account when reaching a decision. These policies should further be considered in the context of wider strategic aims relating to individual areas. Trees are important in our environment, they provide shade, shelter and improve air quality as well as giving a sense of place. Warwickshire County Council would always seek to retain pre existing trees on its land and resist pressure to remove trees from third parties.

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#### Related Highway/Planning regulations:

1. WCC – County Highways 2009 – Guide to Highway Policy Details & Service Levels
  2. TREES – Maintenance of Highway Trees by Third Parties such as Householders
  3. BS3998: "Recommendations for Treework"
  4. Sections 142 and 154 of 1980 Highway Act
  5. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
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#### 1. Safety

Where there is a clear and foreseeable threat to the personal safety of residents or visitors, or to property, that is directly related to the condition of the trees, action will be taken to minimise that risk.

Risk that is an indirect consequence of a tree (e.g. slippery leaves on the pavement in autumn) will not normally be dealt with through pruning except in unusual circumstances.

Unfounded fear of the tree will not normally result in action to prune the tree.

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### 2. Obstruction / Identifiable Risk to the Highway/Adjoining Property

The Council will seek to ensure that adequate clearance of the highway for the type of traffic using the highway is maintained at all times. Complaints about low branches over the highway will be considered and acted upon promptly.

Where branches from trees, for which Warwickshire County Council has a responsibility, are causing obstruction/impediment to our neighbours we will, subject to resources, carry out minimal works to remove or reduce any obstruction. Such works will also take into account their effect on the long-term implications for the health of the tree.

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### 3. Obstruction of Streetlights and Road Signs

The Council will endeavour to ensure that trees under their management do not obscure road signs or prevent street lamps from illuminating the highway.

The purpose of street lamps is to illuminate the public highway and where adequate illumination of the highway is present the Council will not normally take action to improve the levels of illumination of private property.

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### 4. Daylight Loss

Action will normally only be considered where the separation between the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than 6m for trees with a height of over 12m, or less than half the height of the tree for smaller trees, or where the separation between the edge of the canopy and the window is less than 2m.

A 'habitable room' means a dining room, lounge, kitchen, study or bedroom but specifically excludes WCs, bathrooms, utility rooms, landings and hallways.

Where a situation falls within these guidelines, cases will be prioritised according to the severity and effect of the daylight loss in relation to the needs of the building user. If extensive works are required that would significantly change the tree's appearance we may consult with third parties. This would only be mandatory if the tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order or growing in a Conservation area.

Where trees are cited as a legal nuisance, action will be taken to abate that nuisance.

## 5. Television and Other Radio Equipment

There is no right to good reception and in many cases it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by finding an engineering solution. Warwickshire County Council will only consider requests to prune trees to improve reception where all the following conditions are true:

- Efforts have been made to find an engineering solution to the problem and have not been successful.
  - The work required is consistent with good arboricultural practice and will not unduly affect the amenity or health of the tree.
  - The work required can be executed within current financial constraints.
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## 6. Leave, Seeds and Fruit

Leaves and seeds are carried freely on the wind and are largely outside the control of Warwickshire County Council. Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways and weeding of set seeds are considered to be normal routine seasonal maintenance which property owners are expected to carry out.

Pruning will not normally be undertaken to reduce the fall of leaves, seeds or fruit.

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## 7. Honeydew

As with leaves, honeydew (sap exudation) is not readily controllable by pruning and cleaning of affected surfaces can be considered to be routine maintenance. Pruning will not normally be considered solely as a way of alleviating problems with honeydew.

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## 8. Subsidence

Tree related subsidence is a complex issue and each case will need to be considered on an individual basis.

Where damage has occurred the Council will require that adequate assessment and monitoring is undertaken to demonstrate that the tree is involved and that such evidence be submitted in support of any request for action.

Request for action based on an unquantified possibility of damage occurring at an unspecified point in the future will not be considered unless there are other overriding reasons to take action.

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## 9. Direct Root Damage

As with subsidence, cases of direct root damage will be considered on an individual basis. A balance will be struck between the nuisance experienced by individuals and the benefits offered by the tree to the wider community. Where roots are contributing to a trip hazard we would seek to reduce any risk using “no dig” solutions where possible.

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## 10. Drain Blockage

Trees do not normally have the capacity to break into a sound drain, but they will ruthlessly exploit any existing fault. The removal of one tree will not prevent other vegetation from exploiting the same opportunity.

The Council's presumption is that the appropriate way to deal with tree root blockage of drains is to ensure that the drains are watertight. Accordingly, the Council will not normally take action in response to complaints that Council managed trees are blocking drains.

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## 11. Pollarding

Pollarding as a form of tree management will normally be restricted to trees that have been previously maintained by this method.

Where other options are still available pollarding will be avoided. Pollarding often stimulates vigorous dense growth, which will quickly nullify all efforts to reintroduce light and clearance.

Pollarding also induces stress leaving the tree more vulnerable to aphid infestation with a resultant effect of increased honeydew deposit.

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## 12. Root Pruning and Root Barriers.

This will be considered where it is deemed to be cost effective method of dealing with a legal nuisance or trip hazard.

It will only be used where it has been assessed that the effect to the tree is acceptable and it will not lead to the premature decline of the tree or compromise stability.

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