

A Tree Policy for Oxfordshire County Council

1. Oxfordshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, is responsible for ensuring the safe passage of highway users is maintained across the road network throughout Oxfordshire excluding motorways and trunk roads.
2. As the Local Highway Authority, the County Council is obliged to consider a whole range of public amenities provided by trees.
3. The following policy statements constitute Oxfordshire's Tree Policy and give clear unambiguous statements for officers to implement to ensure that the Council meets its duty of care, legal and health and safety obligations whilst not exposing itself to any undue liability. All agents, partners and contractors of the council will be required to comply with these policies.
4. The policies below have been collated into six areas:
 - a. Overarching Policy
 - b. Planting Policies
 - c. Maintenance Policies
 - d. Protection Policies
 - e. Subsidence Policies
 - f. Felling and Pruning Policies

a) Overarching Policy

Policy: TP1

The Council will manage trees to ensure that it meets its legal responsibilities, e.g. duty of care, health and safety.

b) Planting Policies

Policy: TP2

Planting on Council managed land should prioritise larger growing shade-providing trees scaling down to smaller ornamental trees where larger trees are not suitable. The Council will establish a diversity of species to mitigate against pests and disease that can threaten entire species. The Council will have final say on species selection.

Policy: TP3

To strive for the provision of space for planting trees on development sites, selecting species in accordance with **TP2**. This will include supporting Community Groups, Parish and Town Councils by enabling planting projects within the County Council's Highway.

c) Maintenance Policies

Policy: TP4

The Council will maintain all its trees ensuring works are to the most recent "British Standards for Tree Work" - BS 3998.

Policy: TP5

The Council will maintain highway trees on a cyclical basis based on risk to ensure its duty of care is maintained and that the Highway remains unobstructed.

Policy: TP6

When undertaking Highway or Utility works near to trees, all operatives must adhere to the guidelines as set out in the Department for Transport's 'Roots and Routes: Guidelines on Highways Works and Trees' and in conjunction with pertinent National Joint Utility Guidance documents.

d) Protection Policies

Policy: TP7

The Council will enforce and prosecute tree related contraventions and apply the maximum penalty within their powers. This will include seeking to recoup costs from other tree owners when undertaking works as an emergency or a Section 154 Notice.

Policy: TP8

The Council will seek compensation from any organisation responsible for significant damage to or removal of any council owned tree(s) to the value as calculated by Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT).

Policy: TP9

On construction sites all work must be in accordance with the most recent version of BS 5837 "Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations" and that foundation details follow the recommendations of the National House Building Councils Standards Chapter 4.2 'Building near trees'.

Policy: TP10

In the processing of planning applications, to aim for retention of trees of high amenity/environmental value taking consideration of both their individual merit and their interaction as part of a group or broader landscape feature.

e) Subsidence Policy

Policy: TP11

In order to protect the Councils' interests and speed up the processing of claims, the Council will manage, and process subsidence claims for trees in accordance with the London Tree Officers Association Risk Limitation Strategy, as well as the Joint Mitigation Protocol.

f) Felling and Pruning Policies

Policy: TP12

We will only fell/remove trees for sound arboricultural reasons.

These may include:

- Dead, dying or dangerous,
- Proven to be causing significant structural damage
- Considered by the Tree Service to be a species that should not be habitant in the location

Or:

- When removal is required as part of an agreed management programme or as a strategic improvement project.

Policy: TP13

The following reasons will not constitute grounds for the pruning or removal of trees by the Council:

- Interference with satellite dish or TV aerial reception
- Leaf fall
- Where the tree is perceived to be too large
- Obstruction of view or causing shade
- Mess caused by insects or birds
- Problems associated with fruit
- Problems associated with pollen
- Healthy mature trees will not be removed to create space to plant new trees
- Someone is willing to pay for the removal and replacement of a tree
- The perceived risk that it may cause subsidence in the future
- Causing disruption to pavements, kerbs, garden paths and walls. In these cases, engineering solutions will be sought.

Judicious minor pruning may be undertaken by the Council on the following grounds:

- Overhanging neighbour's land
- Excessive blockage of light
- To facilitate CCTV cameras

Service Aims

1. Reduce the number of foreseeable tree failures across the highway network.
2. Reduce the overall number of insurance claims alleged to be related to trees.
3. We will respond to and investigate all tree related queries and incidents on the highway network.
4. Maintain the tree stock in a safe condition.
5. Maintain the tree stock to ensure maximum life cycles are achieved to enhance the environment and associated amenity.

Reference & Supporting Documents

- BS 3998:2010 – Tree Work: Recommendations
- BS 5837:2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction
- Roots and Routes: Guidelines on Highways Works and Trees
- Joint Mitigation Protocol
- National House Building Councils Standards Chapter 4.2
- Risk Limitation Strategy
- Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT)
- Oxfordshire Together (OxTog)

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