



Boston Borough Council

Tree Pruning Policy for Pruning Council Managed Trees

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Borough Council receives many requests each year from members of the public requesting the Council to prune or fell trees that are growing on land managed by the Council and which are near residential properties. The Tree Pruning Policy is intended to be a guideline for determining whether or not requests for pruning Boston Borough Council's managed trees should lead to action.

1.2 It is not possible to anticipate every situation and it is therefore important that whilst these policies guide decisions they should not be considered absolutely prescriptive. Furthermore, no one aspect of the policy should be considered in isolation, but all relevant aspects of the policy should be taken into account when reaching a decision. The Tree Pruning Policy should also be considered in the context of wider strategic aims relating to individual areas, open spaces and the treescape.

2.0 Safety

2.1 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 a tree, action will be taken to minimise that risk.

2.2 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.

2.3 Where concerns are raised regarding the safety of trees, the Council will arrange a suitable inspection. Unfounded fear of a tree or an unqualified opinion that a tree may be dangerous, or at some point cause a potential future risk, will not normally result in action to prune the tree.

3.0 Obstruction of the Highway

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

4.0 Obstruction of street lights and road signs

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

4.2 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 a private property.

5.0 **Loss of Daylight / Sunlight**

5.1 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 where the separation between the edge of the canopy and a vertical line through that window is less than 2m.

5.2 A 'habitable room' is a room which is part of the original building construction if the trees were planted at the time of construction. A habitable room means a dining room, lounge, kitchen, study or bedroom but specifically excludes WCs, bathrooms, utility rooms, conservatories, landings, hallways or garages or other habitable rooms which have been added to the original building after the trees have been planted.

5.3 Where a situation falls within these guidelines, cases will be prioritised according to proximity and account will also be taken of the orientation of the affected window. The results of any consultation exercise may modify decisions if it appears that any work would be by and large unpopular with the rest of the community.

5.4 The Council will not usually prune a tree due to the loss of daylight into a private garden and we will only carry out pruning of trees that overhang private gardens in accordance with the principals of common law and subject to financial constraints. Property owners can be reminded that overhanging branches to a private garden can be pruned back by the property owner, however, caution is required in case any pruning works cause or lead to the tree becoming dangerous and presenting risk.

6.0 **Television and other radio equipment**

6.1 There is no legal right to good reception and in many cases it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by finding an engineering solution, for example movement of the aerial or purchase of digital satellite equipment.

6.2 Boston Borough Council will only consider requests to prune trees to improve reception where all of the following are true:

6.3 Efforts have been made to find an engineering solution and have not been successful.

6.4 The work required is consistent with good arboricultural practice and will in no way affect the amenity, health or life expectancy of the tree, or increase maintenance liabilities for the tree (for example, if pollarding is the only solution) and that the work can be carried out within current financial resources.

7.0 **Leaves, Seeds and Fruit**

7.1 Leaves and seeds are carried freely on the wind and are largely outside the control of Boston Borough 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.

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

8.0 **Honeydew**

8.1 As with leaves, honeydew 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.

9.0 **Subsidence**

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

9.2 Where damage has already 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.

9.3 Requests for action based on an unquantified and unqualified possibility of damage occurring at an unspecified point in the future will not be considered unless there are other overriding reasons to take action or that if risk of damage is determinable without doubt or if risk is imminent.

9.4 Any claims for subsidence that has occurred and that is supported by qualified evidence that the Council's managed trees are the cause of that subsidence, will be dealt with by the Council's Insurers in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Policy.

10.0 **Direct Root Damage**

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 Confirmation that direct root damage has been caused to a property, will only be considered if evidence is supported by a qualified person, for example, a Building Surveyor.

11.0 **Drain Blockage**

- 11.1 Trees do not generally 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.
- 11.2 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. It is the responsibility of the owner of the drain, to prove that the blocked drain has been caused by the tree and it is not simply the tree exploiting an existing fault with the drain. Confirmation of this will only be considered if proven by a qualified specialist.