



CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This policy defines the Council's approach to tree management on its land. It is intended to be a point of reference for the public, Councillors and Officers to ensure a consistent and structured approach to the management of our trees. This policy sets out a proactive and systematic method of management that will both conserve and enhance our tree population and the amenity value of our land.

For sites of special character, or that have trees of particular significance, this general policy will be supplemented with a site specific policy that addresses the site's particular management needs.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE

The main pieces of relevant legislation and guidance are:

The Occupiers Liability Acts (1957 & 1984) requires occupiers of land to have a common duty of care to all visitors. The occupiers must take reasonable care to maintain their land such that it does not harm any person or damage any property.

The Health & Safety at Work, etc. Act (1974) and *Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999)* require the Council to manage trees and undertake work on trees with regard to the health and safety of employees and the public.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) requires every public authority, in exercising its functions, to have regard, so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

Circular Roads No 52/75 issued by the Department of Environment in 1975 requires local authorities to regularly inspect trees adjacent to highways.

Trees in Towns II (2008) produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government recommends that local authorities should check their tree stock in a systematic way.



The Highways Act (1980) requires the Highway Authority to prevent the obstruction of the highway, which includes ensuring that land owners properly manage the growth of trees and hedges adjacent to the highway.

THE VALUE OF TREES

Trees have many positive impacts on the environment:

- reduce air pollution
- combat climate change
- promote biodiversity
- stabilise soil
- noise reduction
- shade
- wind shelter

Trees are also known to have beneficial impacts on human diseases, including asthma, and stress. The presence of trees has a significant and positive impact on the aesthetic and amenity value of the Council's land.

The Council acknowledges the importance of maintaining a healthy tree population that is appropriate to the character of each of its sites and will allocate sufficient resources to ensure that it is able to manage the trees that it owns.

TREE PLANTING

We are committed to a scheme of tree planting to ensure a healthy age profile of our tree stock. It is accepted that there will be mortalities of newly-planted trees, in some cases owing to vandalism, but this will not prevent the continuation of the planting scheme.

The majority of trees planted will be native, to maximise indigenous flora and fauna, however, this will be site-dependent. For native trees, wherever possible, specimens grown from British seed will be planted, preferably from local stock to preserve the native genetic make-up of the tree population. However, it is acknowledged that exotic species may be planted at sites with a formal, ornamental character, e.g. the Lower Lowndes Park.

Species will be planted that are appropriate to the specific conditions of each site and will take into consideration the problems that trees or certain species may cause in certain locations, e.g. falling leaves blocking drains and aggressive root growth damaging paths. We are committed to choosing species that are likely to be able to cope with our changing climate. We will aim to plant a diversity of species to avoid species-specific diseases and pests having a major impact on our tree stock.



New tree planting, including establishment and maintenance will be undertaken to comply with *British Standard 3998 (1989): Recommendations for Tree Work*. We are committed to undertaking systematic post-planting maintenance until trees have become established.

TREE PROTECTION

Due care will be taken by Parks and Premises Officers to ensure that damage to trees by mowing and strimming is prevented. Longer grass margins around trees may be left.

Protection will be provided for newly planted or young trees where appropriate, e.g. timber-sided planting boxes and strimmer guards.

TREE INSPECTIONS

The Council's trees will be regularly inspected for condition and health, with priority given to those trees which may potentially be hazardous (e.g. over-mature trees or those with signs of disease) and those which are located in the most highly visited areas of the Council's land (e.g. adjacent to major footpaths or in play areas). All trees will have been inspected and the results recorded in a database by 2014. In line with best practice, the trees will be categorised according to the risk they represent. The period of re-inspection will depend on the level of risk associated with a tree: those rated as high-risk may be inspected annually, whereas a low-risk tree will be inspected once every 5 or more years.

We will also consider requests to conduct tree work on the Council's land from members of the public. If the request concerns a potentially dangerous tree, the tree will be inspected on the same or next day. If the request is of a non-urgent nature, an inspection will be undertaken within 30 days. In all cases, the member of the public will be informed of this inspection policy and will be informed of any action to be taken resulting from the inspection.

We recognise the importance of mature and ancient trees and will balance safety with our duty to protect the environment. Higher levels of risk will be acceptable in areas of lower footfall (e.g. the middle of a woodland site) as opposed to highly visited areas (e.g. play areas). This will allow us to keep veteran trees to encourage biodiversity without creating undue risk.

MAINTENANCE

Tree work will be prioritised and carried out according to identified hazard and risk. After investigation and inspection 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
Timescale for works: Same day or next day wherever possible
- **Category One:** Essential works to mitigate hazard
Target timescale for works: Within 12 weeks of identification
- **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

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 assessment. 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. In this situation, members of the public are advised to follow our *Complaints Policy and Procedure*.

There are circumstances when we will not undertake maintenance:

When we will not undertake maintenance:

- We will not undertake any tree pruning or removal in response to natural



occurrences that do not pose a health and safety risk, such as falling nuts, bird droppings, falling leaves, or sap exudation.

- We will not undertake tree pruning or removal where trees have a negative impact on television reception, where the canopy is blocking lighting (with the exception of street lighting), or where the tree is blocking views from a residence.
- Tree works will not be conducted during the nesting season (March to August), unless the work is for urgent health and safety reasons. It is an offence to intentionally damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; therefore our tree works will avoid this.
- Tree works 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 English Nature will be sought.
- We will not usually prune back trees overhanging an adjacent property unless it poses a health and safety risk.
- We will not remove dead branches (conduct crown cleaning) from trees located in relatively quiet locations due to their ecological value. However, if the dead or diseased branches pose a health and safety risk, or are felt to be impacting upon the tree's health, crown cleaning will be conducted.

TREE FELLING

We will avoid felling trees unless it is necessary. This will usually be for health and safety purposes, or to prevent the spread of serious tree diseases and pests. However, we reserve the right to fell trees to prevent overcrowding, to improve habitats or restore landscapes in line with site management plans (e.g. the Lowndes Park Management Plan), or where a tree is inappropriate to its location and has a significantly detrimental impact on the appearance or amenity of a site. We will keep records of tree removals.

If a tree dies, or is felled, a tree will usually be planted to replace it, although not necessarily in the same location.

COMMUNICATION

The Council will inform the Tree Warden and Ward Councillors of any major tree works in their ward before these works are carried out. We will erect notices on site



to inform the public of major proposed works. Notification in this manner will not take place in the event of emergency works due to time constraints.

ARISINGS – NATURAL AND FROM MAINTENANCE

The Council is committed to disposing of waste from its activities in an environmentally-friendly manner, in accordance with its Environmental Policy.

(i) Woody Debris

Subject to a safety assessment and if appropriate to the specific site, large woody debris will be left in situ for the creation of wildlife habitats. Where possible, the trunks will be left standing, or lying on the ground in habitat piles. Tree stumps will also be left in situ where it is safe to do so as they provide a valuable wildlife habitat whilst they rot down. Hardwood loggery features may be created around tree stumps to encourage organisms such as stag beetles, whilst ensuring the stump is not a trip hazard. Small woody debris will be chipped and applied to gateways and footpaths on Council land.

(ii) Leaves

Leaves will be supplied to Council allotment tenants for use as mulch. However, horse chestnut leaves will not be disposed of in this manner, due to the risk of transferring horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*) around town. As many infested leaves will be collected as is feasible during each autumn and winter period. The leaves will be stored and covered with a thick layer of soil until the end of May, thus preventing adult emergence in the spring.

HEDGES

We acknowledge that hedges are an attractive feature on our sites and provide an important habitat for a wide range of species, offering food, shelter, protection from predators, wintering and nesting sites, and act as transit corridors. It is recognised that trimming hedges too severely can have a detrimental impact on their wildlife value. Where there is no negative impact on health and safety (e.g. visibility for motorists), we aim to have taller, bushier hedges. However, we will ensure that hedge growth does not impair the safety of highway users nor impede their access.

For long hedges, we aim to cut only one section of hedge in any year, leaving the remainder of the hedge uncut. Any given section of hedge will be cut every other year, or on a three year cycle for slow-growing thorn hedges. Unless for urgent health and safety reasons, cutting will not be conducted between April and August. Cutting times will be varied between autumn (September) and later winter (January to February), as cutting at these times has different effects on wildlife.

Gaps will be filled using a mixture of hedgerow species. The new plants will be of



local provenance wherever possible.

Grass buffer strips will be developed next to hedges where feasible and appropriate to the particular site, e.g. Lowndes Park, to promote a diverse hedge-base flora. Cutting of hedge-base vegetation, particularly in autumn, will be avoided where possible. If necessary, a rotational approach will be adopted to ensure undisturbed habitat refuges remain.

Policy Adopted: 22 February 2010



Glossary

Crown Cleaning – the removal of dead or diseased branches.

Exotic trees – trees which do not naturally grow in Britain and have been brought into the country by humans.

Hedge/Hedgerow - a row of shrubs or bushes which form a boundary and may or may not contain trees.

Loggery – logs 10 to 50 cm in diameter, with bark, are sunk 60 cm into the ground in a group to form a wildlife habitat feature.

Native trees – trees which naturally occur in Britain and have not been introduced by humans.

Pollarding – branches are pruned back to the same point on a regular cycle.

Pruning – the cutting away of unwanted parts of a tree.





CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

LOWNDES PARK TREE MANAGEMENT

A supplement to the Tree Management Policy

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This is a supplement to the town council's Tree Management Policy that outlines tree management issues specific to Lowndes Park. This supplement should be read in conjunction with the main Tree Management Policy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES TO LOWNDES PARK

Historically, trees were a feature of the land that now forms Lowndes Park, as can be seen in the Town Painting dating from c.1760 and early photographs of the Avenue of Elms. A substantial number of memorial trees were planted in the park in the 20th Century and these trees contribute to the heritage of both the park and Chesham's community. The Sovereign Coppice was planted in 1992 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Queen's Accession, and its cultural importance has been recognised by its inclusion in the Special Trees and Woods of the Chilterns scheme.

The current tree population is very significant for the park's appearance and amenity value. We acknowledge the importance of maintaining a healthy tree population that is appropriate to the park's character and of protecting the culturally and historically valuable trees that grow there.

TREE PLANTING

We acknowledge that a significant proportion of the park's existing tree stock is mature, or over-mature. We are committed to a scheme of tree planting to create a more balanced age profile of the tree stock and ensure perpetuity of tree cover for the future.

The majority of trees planted will be native, to maximise indigenous flora and fauna. Wherever possible, specimens grown from British seed will be planted, preferably from local stock to preserve the native genetic make-up of the tree population. However, exotic species may be planted in the Lower Park, as this is in keeping with its more ornamental character and will help to provide year round interest.



The following locations have been identified as areas appropriate for new planting:

- The path running roughly parallel above the Rue de Houilles
- On the east-facing slope of the Upper Park above the existing plantings (whilst ensuring that views are not blocked)
- The path that runs from the south-western end of Skottowes Pond up towards the Rue de Houilles.

COMMEMORATIVE TREES

There is a history of planting commemorative trees in Lowndes Park and the council is pleased to receive requests for planting such trees as long as there is available space. The sponsors will be given a choice of species appropriate to the park and will be consulted regarding suitable locations for planting; however, planting will only take place in areas identified as suitable for new planting, or where a tree requires replacement. The planting will be carried out by the council.

The sponsors would be required to cover the cost of the tree and any desired plaque. Plaques will be in the house style of engraving on a plaque and will be fixed into the ground.

LOWNDES PARK FEATURES

(i) The Upper Park

The Upper Park meadow area has been left uncut for a number of years, allowing a large number of self-seeded oak whips to develop. It has been agreed not to allow the whips to develop into oak woodland as this would fundamentally change the nature of this area. However, the council are happy to allow some trees to develop in this area as oaks provide habitat for many species and are thought to be more likely to cope with climate change compared to some other native species, e.g. beech.

In consultation with the Friends of Lowndes Park, the Parks and Premises Manager selected a number of whips to remain in situ to create small copses and specimen trees without blocking the key views from the Upper Park. The remaining whips have been removed and donated to British Flora. A new mowing regime will be implemented from 2010 to prevent large numbers of self-sown trees establishing in the future.

(ii) The Bowl Barrow (Rolling Pin)

A ring of ornamental trees was planted around the barrow structure in the 1970s, the number of trees representing the number of sails on the mythical windmill that some residents believe once stood on the barrow. The trees were planted to replace



earlier trees that had once formed a ring around the barrow. When in the leaf, the trees obscure the view of the town from the barrow. The root systems of the trees may have damaged the barrow when growing. As the majority of trees are ornamental cherries, when the trees die they will be allowed to decay in situ which will cause minimal soil disturbance. Once the existing trees have died and decayed there will be no replacement planting in the area of the barrow.

(iii) The Park Road Hedge

Sections of the hawthorn-dominated hedge will be cut in a three-year rotation to ensure continuous habitat provision. A longer grass margin is maintained on the park side of the hedge to provide a further wildlife habitat. The Park Road side of the hedge will be maintained to ensure that the footpath is not obstructed. If gaps arise that require re-planting, we will look to introducing other species, such as blackthorn and field maple, to provide a more diverse mix of planting.

(iv) The Rue de Houilles

The Rue de Houilles is the site of the original avenue, planted with a double row of elm trees in the mid-18th Century. This was replanted in the mid-19th Century with a single row of elms. These elms were cut down in the 1950s in response to fears of Dutch Elm disease. The avenue is currently lined with a mixture of species of significantly differing heights and shapes.

Considerable consultation was undertaken from 2003-07 to decide whether a uniform avenue of trees should be re-planted along the Rue de Houilles. Whilst there was some support for this idea, the consensus was that it would not be appropriate to fell a large number of healthy trees, as would be required to recreate an avenue. It was decided by the Recreation and the Arts Committee on the 3rd September 2007 that the proposal to recreate the avenue would be rejected.

As trees along the avenue die, replacement specimens will be chosen that will help to create a more uniform appearance. This is likely to include limes and walnuts.

We will investigate the feasibility and desirability of crown lifting the trees surrounding the Scented Garden as this area is heavily shaded. There are a number of birch trees and a diseased rowan tree along the northern half of the avenue which are not aesthetically pleasing. Subject to the tree inspection and available budgets, these trees may be felled and replaced with more suitable species.

(v) The Sovereign Coppice

Forty trees of native species were planted in 1992 at the western end of the Upper Park. The planting was intended to create the shape of a crown visible from the air once the trees had matured. Whilst only a few of the trees have failed to establish, the crown shape is not apparent from aerial photos. The planting is not a true coppice, as it is not cut regularly for wood.

Whilst tree management will be guided by the results of the first tree survey, it is



expected that we will thin out the weaker trees and conduct formative pruning to improve the shape of the remaining trees. In line with the main Tree Management Policy, replacement trees will be planted and, if possible, it will be attempted to restore the coppice to 40 trees, as the planting was undertaken to celebrate 40 years of the Queen's reign.

We will plant a mixed hedge to hide the unattractive fencing along the far western boundary at the end of the coppice.

(vi) Chesham Park Community College Boundary

The existing boundary is a mixture of trees and hedging with substantial gaps exposing unsightly fencing. These gaps will be filled in with mixed hedging.

(vii) St. Mary's Way Northern Entrance

The entrance has a confused series of footpaths with no clear view into the park. To improve the structure of the entrance, the conifers will be felled to enable the large beech to be viewed from the entrance, creating a focal point.

(viii) Archena Gardens

Archena Gardens also provides an unclear entrance way into the park and can appear dark and gloomy. Along with improvements to the planting and footpaths, the conifers will be removed and replaced with more appropriate species.

(ix) Western Edge of Skottowes Pond

When the rowan tree flanking the pond has died, it will be replaced by alternative species, which will result in larger, more impressive specimens more suited to this location.

(x) The Wildlife Area

The Wildlife Area is under the management of the Friends of Lowndes Park. In December 2009, a cherry and a rowan were planted in this area. It is intended to fell the conifer, as it is not in keeping with the Wildlife Area. A more suitable, replacement species will be provided by the Friends of Lowndes Park.

(xi) Family Tree Planting Scheme

Over 120 trees were planted between 1983 and 1993 to commemorate or celebrate family events. Many of these were planted on the east-facing slope in the Upper Park. The majority of trees belong to native species. There is no central point of focus to these plantings, but this has provided sufficient space to enable the trees to fill out, and successfully forms a break between the open section at the top of the park and the rest of the park. The new mowing regime, implemented in 2009, has left a longer grass border around these groups of trees, to prevent mowing/strimming damage and to provide wildlife-friendly undergrowth. There is room for additional planting in this area, although care will be taken to consider the impact on the views from the top of the park.



(xii) Hudson's Dell

Hudson's Dell is now outside the park border, in Park Road, but was historically part of the park and will be considered as such for the purposes of this supplement. Although small, it is heavily wooded, hence its name. It is intended that this high level of tree cover will be maintained.

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