



Buntingford Town Council Tree Policy

First adopted July 2023

Reviewed

Next adoption due May
2027

Trees owned by the Town Council

The Council values all trees across the town, including those on its own land.

Trees offer many benefits; they reduce carbon dioxide levels, filter and absorb pollution, absorb noise, produce oxygen, reduce the stress of modern lifestyle, encourage wildlife, have an aesthetic value and offer shade and shelter. Trees are naturally growing, shedding organisms. Leaves, twigs, fruit litter, pollen and dead branches are a normal consequence of living with trees.

We will not fell or prune any trees without sound evidence that the tree is likely to cause damage or injury. We acknowledge that for conservation reasons sometimes its removal will benefit the wider environment.

Tree replacement

When a tree has to be removed for any reason the Town Council will seek to replace it with a similar tree variety. It may not be possible to replace the tree in the same location but will endeavour to site the new tree nearby or elsewhere on their land.

Tree safety

We recognise that actions taken need to be proportionate to the actual risks involved and the importance of trees in our environment.

The Council operates an independent tree risk management inspection programme to inspect trees we own. Inspection methods are reviewed regularly and updated wherever necessary to keep up with nationally recognised good practice. The current advice is that our trees should be inspected every three years. Trees or tree groups that are identified as being of higher risk are inspected more frequently as advised by the inspector and identified in the tree survey report.

The inspection surveys are carried out by specialist arboriculture consultancy practices. We insist they hold an accreditation issued by the national Arboreal Association and inspections are carried out by fully qualified surveyors. Where our inspectors reveal there is any cause for concern regarding safety of trees, we endeavour to take appropriate action.

We investigate each request we receive from members of the public and refer to the findings of the latest inspection survey report as well as considering the position of trees in relation to resident's properties.

The Council will only commission work based on the current survey results. **We will not carry out works on trees that have not been recommended as part of our rigorous inspection process** other than in the unusual circumstances where the condition or status of a tree has suddenly changed. For example if high winds have fractured a branch that now requires pruning.

Whilst we do all we can to protect members of the public, trees are a naturally growing in the environment and are not always predictable.

The council cannot offer a service to inspect trees that are not on Council land. That is the duty of the land owner.

Council Tree overhanging resident's property

Residents are only permitted to cut back growth to the boundary line of their property and no further.

Our general advice regarding vegetation is that householders are legally within their rights to remove any branches that are overhanging the boundary up to and no further than the boundary and preferably no higher than 3 meters.

This does not allow residents to reduce the height of a Council owned tree in any way. It's important to note that any such pruning may damage the visual aspect of the tree and could seriously destabilise it. For that reason the Council would only agree to any major pruning to one side of a tree near boundaries if it can be achieved sympathetically to the tree and the landscape.

A Council Tree blocking light from residents

The Council will not prune trees to afford light to residents.

We advise all residents there is no legal entitlement to light. There are common law rights that relate to development which might apply to a neighbour building a new extension. This does not relate to trees present in the landscape.

We will investigate each request and refer to the findings of the latest inspection and survey report as well as considering the position of the trees to the resident's property.

Tree roots lifting patio, path or drive

We do not routinely inspect or repair root damage made to private property, even if residents feel the tree is located on Council land. Cutting the roots of trees is generally ill-advised as it may affect the trees health and stability.

Trees covered by a TPO or in a Conservation Area will require an official application and permission before root pruning can take place.

Tree damage to drains

It is rare for trees to block up or cause damage to drains. In order for the roots to gain access the drain must already be damaged. Instances of underground pipes being broken by growth of tree roots are rare. The Council will not undertake the felling of trees to prevent roots entering already damaged pipes.

Council trees with fungal growth

The Council inspects all of its trees and its inspectors are expert in identification of fungi growth and its effect on various types of trees. Their recommendation for work, if they decide it necessary, will be prioritised according to the level of risk.

Council trees that are covered in ivy

Ivy supports many species of wildlife for nesting and hibernation including insects, birds, bats and other small mammals. It also provides a food source for wildlife in autumn and winter.

Ivy causes no direct damage to trees. However in some situations it can add to the weight of a trees crown and in wet and windy conditions cause damage to the tree.

The Council only undertakes the removal of ivy from trees where considered necessary to aid the health of an old or ailing tree or to support the inspection of trees. Ivy can be removed from listed trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Tree dropping fruit/seed/leaves onto resident's property

The Council values its trees across the town including trees on its own land. Trees are naturally growing and shedding organisms. Leaves, twigs, fruit litter, pollen and dead branches are a normal consequence of living with trees and are not sufficient justification for felling or pruning.

Bird droppings from trees

The Council values the trees under its care and does not accept that any nuisance experienced from bird droppings, from birds roosting or nesting in a tree, is sufficient cause to fell or carry out pruning. It is an offence to disturb birds while they are nesting, building a nest, or near a nest that contains their young.

Reporting damage to trees

Residents should report any concerns or issues they may have with trees to the Town Council's Clerk's Office on 01763 272222. Our staff can make an initial assessment and call in our specialist arboreal consultant if necessary.