

Appendix 2

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Interim approach for the management and maintenance of Council maintained trees

Contents

Page No.

1. Tree Management Statements	3
2. Management of Council Trees	4
3. Tree Management and Maintenance	5

1. Tree Management Statements

Concerning tree management, Southend Borough Council will:

- Maintain and manage the existing stock of trees in Council ownership.
- Maintain a database of its highways and parks trees.
- Take all reasonable measure to reduce and or eliminate the incidence of growth from, or of, trees obscuring the safe visibility of warning and regulatory street signs or traffic signals.
- Maintain council managed trees in a condition that helps keep our highways and public spaces safe.
- Safeguard council managed trees during construction work in compliance with the British Standard for tree works, BS 5837.
- Work with, and monitor, statutory undertakers and or utility companies to ensure minimal damage to trees.
- Maintain and enhance the towns canopy cover by undertaking tree planting in appropriate areas subject to funding.
- Support and encourage community involvement in tree planting and offer a donated tree scheme
- Promote the benefits of tree in the urban environment.

2. Management of Council Trees

There will be a continuation of the current street tree maintenance programme. This includes cyclical inspections that determine which trees require pruning to keep the highways in a safe condition for users and will require appropriate works to be undertaken. Trees will be assessed individually, in a manner that reflects current best arboricultural practice.

There will be a continuation of street tree planting, in suitable sites, to help maintain and enhance the tree canopy cover across the borough.

There will be a presumption against the removal of healthy trees subject to complaints unless the basis of a complaint has an over-riding justification, and no alternative management practice is practicable. Trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders are subject to planning regulations.

It will be assumed that trees will not be removed for the installation of a permanent vehicle crossing (PVX) unless exceptional circumstances are proven.

The Council will not carry out tree removal or crown reduction work upon a tree that has been the basis of a complaint in relation to allegations that it 'restricts' views, light, T.V. reception, satellite dish reception, and other perceived nuisances such as fruit, leaf fall and light, unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

The Council will take steps to protect its trees from threats such as the activities of statutory undertakers (including gas, water, electric and communications) and other excavation activities or building works.

3. Tree Management and Maintenance

1. Inspect and manage Council-maintained tree in line with best arboricultural practices.
2. The inspection will be undertaken to the following frequency
 - a. Main routes – every 18 months
 - b. Minor a quiet roads- every 3 years
 - c. Parks trees – every 6 years (depending on the level of use of the park)
3. Inspections will be undertaken using the visual tree assessment (VTA) technique, a non-invasive and internationally recognised method of tree inspection, recognised by the UK Arboricultural Association.
4. As required additional methods of decay detection will be used, including probes, sounding mallet, resistograph decay drilling and sonic tomography
5. As a result of inspections, works will be programmed in line with arboricultural specifications. The works are based on the individual tree but may include the following:
 - a. Prune the tree to keep the road clear of vegetation to a height of 5.5m for major roads and 4.5m for minor roads.
 - b. Lift the crown of the tree to remove any growth obstructing pedestrians using the footway to a height no less than 2.5m.
 - c. Prune the crown to remove any deadwood.
 - d. Prune the crown to reduce any excessive encroachment of adjacent private property.
 - e. Re-pollarding
 - f. Crown reductions
 - g. Crown thinning
 - h. Formative pruning
 - i. Remedial pruning (in response to vehicle strikes, storm damage etc.)
6. Occasionally Council trees have to be removed. This is a regrettable but necessary action carried out usually on the grounds of health and safety. Reasons for this type of action include:
 - a. Decay in any part of the tree has reached an advanced stage, and the tree cannot be considered safe for retention.
 - b. The tree has a disease known for its unpredictable or rapid progression that renders the tree unsafe — for example, the root and butt decay fungi Giant Polypore (*Meripilus giganteum*).
 - c. Wind action has severely loosened the tree's anchorage. (storm damage)
 - d. Broken branches in the crown have caused the centre of gravity to be shifted heavily away from the main stem to render the tree unsafe.
 - e. The tree is dead or dying.

- f. The tree has been hit by a vehicle leaving large wounds in the crown and or stem and possibly affected the tree's stability and anchorage.
- g. A heavily leaning stem is obstructing vehicles and or pedestrians using the highway and or footpath.
- h. The growth of the tree's roots are severely disrupting the surface of the adjacent highway and/or footpath, and no other engineering solutions are practicable.
- i. Stem and or root growth is severely restricting rights of way along the highways.

Tree removals for the above reasons are a last resort and only undertaken when no other form of management is appropriate.

- 7. Trees may sometimes be removed as a result of agreed private and highways developments. However, before trees are removed, engineering options to enable their retention will be investigated. When the tree/s can not be retained, funding for replacement planting will be sought.
- 8. Trees may sometimes be removed where it has been verified, through on-going investigations, site surveys and other relevant technical data supplied by the property owner, that a tree within Council ownership is a significant contributor to property damage.
- 9. Situations do occur when the roots of a tree are causing direct damage to an adjoining property or hard surface. In these situations, root pruning will be investigated. However, if this is not an option or root pruning would result in the tree being unstable, removal may be the only option.

The environment in which a tree is growing impacts on its health, growth and management — trees on the highway face greater challenges than those in parks or woodland. Heat, buildings, traffic and soil compaction are just some of the challenges faced by highways trees. As a consequence of the environment highways trees grow in they can not be considered in the same way as trees in a park or woodland.

- 10. Update and maintain a database of council trees.
- 11. Manage council trees in line with current health and safety requirement and other legislation.
- 12. Work with, and monitor, statutory undertakers and or utility companies (including gas, water, electric and communications) to ensure that damage to trees during their work is prevented or kept to a minimum.
- 13. Residents will be advised when a tree in their street is going to be removed by the following:
 - a. Hand-delivered letters to houses in the street within a 30-metre radius from the tree (not flats with over three residences) and affix a notice to the tree.
 - b. If the tree is close to a block of flats or has no residential properties, a notice will be put on the tree a minimum of 10 working days before the tree is to be removed

- c. Where a tree is to be removed in an emergency, no letter notice will be provided.
- d. Trees to be removed will be publicised on the council website (excluding emergencies).
- e. Ward councillors will be emailed advising on tree removals. (excluding emergencies).

14. Trees will be planted annually during the autumn-winter planting season, usually between November and the end of March.

15. When assessing suitable sites in the highway for tree planting, any necessary consultation with appropriate borough Council officers will take place, and the arboricultural officer will make a decision based on the following guidelines:

- a. The presence of underground and overhead services and utilities.
- b. Is the site too close to a junction, which could lead to visibility problems now or in the future for road users?
- c. Is the site too close to a designated pedestrian crossing?
- d. Is the site too close to street furniture such as traffic lights, road signs and lamp columns?
- e. Will the planting of the tree leave a passable width of the footpath/pavement and comply with the equalities act.
- f. Will the planting of the tree affect the visibility now or in the near future of CCTV camera locations?
- g. Available space and the potential impact of the growing tree on adjoining surfaces and structures.
- h. Select a tree species appropriate to the location (ultimate size, invasive rootstock, habit/form, fruit production).

16. Where practicable and resources allow an average of 300 standard trees will be planted a year. In addition to this, the planting of whips will be undertaken in suitable locations.

17. Newly planted standard trees will undergo the following maintenance:

- a. Checking the stake is secure and reducing its height if required.
- b. Checking the tree ties are not causing constriction, and repositioning if necessary.
- c. Formative pruning of the tree to create a balanced, natural crown.
- d. Corrective pruning to remove any branches obstructing the footpath or road.
- e. Remove any weed growth from the tree pit.
- f. Watering during the summer annually.