

STREET TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Overall Policy Aim

To ensure Brent's highway trees contribute positively to the quality of the local environment, are protected from unnecessary harm and that their management acknowledges the high level of interest they receive from all who live, work and pass through Brent.

Policy Objective A

To introduce and continually develop a risk-based approach to tree maintenance.

Policy A1: Tree Maintenance

The council has a proactive tree inspection and maintenance programme in place. The aim is to identify issues and deal with them before they escalate into complex problems that require greater attention and expense.

Tree maintenance involves ensuring the borough's street trees are in good health and continue to thrive. Tree maintenance is also related to the risk trees face or the risk they may pose to houses, residents and / or highways. Examples of tree maintenance techniques the council uses include regular inspections, pruning, tree removal and pollarding (removing a large number of branches).

The council aims to only remove or pollard trees that pose a greater risk. Tree pollarding for example can damage trees and reduce their lifespan.

Under Policy A1 we will:

- carry out regular inspections to identify problems early and take preventative action, example, removal of growth from the base of trees before pathways are blocked;
- keep trees unless there are good arboricultural, environmental, or risk-related reasons not to do so;
- grow a wide range of tree species through our maintenance, management and planting programmes;
- undertake short rotation pollarding only on certain trees that are growing very close to buildings;
- proactively manage our trees based on maintenance cycles ranging from 2, 3, 4, or 5 yearly depending on age, distance from property, species, health and other arboricultural factors;

- not remove or prune trees for the following reasons:
 - To reduce leaf fall and sap production
 - To reduce activities of birds or invertebrates
 - To change natural light levels
- take account of the spread of artificial light from street lights when planning our tree planting and maintenance works.

Policy A2: Subsidence

Subsidence is an identified problem across London, due to the "London Clay" soil in which building foundations rest. This type of soil is prone to move when it dries and when it rains. Buildings across the capital can therefore suffer subsidence even with no trees.

We know that trees take water out of the soil. In some circumstances this can cause the soil to shrink further, causing more soil movement. This can add to subsidence risk.

If we do not recognise these risks in our maintenance works we would leave the council open to increased claims, charges of negligence and subsequent costs.

Under Policy A2 we will:

- determine the type and frequency of maintenance work based on the potential for subsidence; and
- identify street trees for removal and replacement, where this is thought to be in the best interests of the Council and its stakeholders. Appropriate replacement trees will be planted.

Policy Objective B

To ensure our tree planting recognises the needs and capacities of the environment

Policy B1: Environmental Sustainability

Our management of street trees must take into account environmental impacts for our present and future generations.

When planting street trees the borough has to consider amongst other things the space available both above and below ground, the nature of existing or proposed buildings, future management of different tree types and the current presumption of an increasingly warmer climate.

Under Policy B1 we will:

- ensure all tree planting work complies with all arboricultural and Highways Legislation, which controls invasive works in the urban environment;
- continue to plant trees which are in keeping with the landscape character, and good arboricultural practice;
- within available resources, protect street trees and the growing environment from threats such as loss of or damage to verges, the activities of statutory undertakers and others excavating near trees, and damage from overuse of road de-icing salt;
- not consider removing healthy street trees to facilitate off street parking;
- continue to encourage our Arboricultural contractor to re-use, recycle and compost tree clippings waste, old trunks and felled trees;
- seek section 106 monies from large developments, ensuring that schemes contribute to the environmental improvement of their urban context. Where developments require the removal of street trees, we will work with the developer to ensure they are replaced with species appropriate to the changing urban environment;
- have regard to the Borough's Air Quality Action Plan, ensuring that tree species positively affect air quality, when choosing tree species and planting regimes;
- work to provide a sustainable, high quality tree population that:
 - plays a part in adapting to or mitigating climate change, and which is durable under climatic extremes;
 - is kept refreshed as trees age and die off naturally;
- where appropriate, plant suitable native species to meet biodiversity requirements. However, consideration will be given to suitable species based on the latest climate change models that are more adaptable to predicted future climates.

Policy Objective C

To ensure that all relevant customers have a reasonable opportunity to play their part in managing the borough's tree stock.

Policy C1: Customer Engagement

People like to have trees in their street; they soften the landscape, are attractive in the summer and provide habitats for birds. Because of this we understand that removing trees can cause upset, so communicating our decisions regarding tree management is important. The council could choose to make decisions in isolation but we feel this would not be in keeping with our role to engage with and respond to the needs of the community we serve.

Under Policy C1 we will:

- introduce a 'Sponsor a Tree' scheme to encourage and improve residents understanding of tree management. The scheme will also promote greater community ownership of local trees;
- inform local residents before trees are removed, including the reason for the removal, especially where trees may appear to be otherwise healthy;
- publish our arboriculture maintenance programmes on our website each year;
- consult with partners to reduce any potential conflict between our trees and street lighting and CCTV cameras

Policy Objective D

To ensure our Arboricultural maintenance follows good management practice, and meets our certification to the 'ISO14001' environmental management system

Policy D1: General Tree Management

There is a growing need for the Council to provide accurate information on all of its assets, to show transparency in local government processes. One of the ways we meet this is through independently verified management systems. Our Environment & Culture department is certified to the management system ISO14001, and this must be reflected in our overall approach to managing trees in the urban environment.

Under Policy D1 we will:

- The Council will keep its records and management system up to date, and will store and maintain an inventory of its street tree stock, to enable accurate analysis of the tree population for future planning purposes.
- We will review this street tree policy every four years.