HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL

Tree Management Policy

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago

Warren Buffett

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INTRODUCTION
Hellesdon Parish Council has adopted parts of Norfolk County Council's Tree Management Policy which are relevant in order to maintain a consistent approach to tree management in the Parish of Hellesdon.

Trees are a highly-valued feature of the landscape of Hellesdon; they make an enormous contribution to the character and beauty of our Parish and create /maintain environments rich in biodiversity. Hellesdon Parish Council values its trees and recognises both the human and environmental benefits of having a healthy and sustainable tree population.

We also recognise that although trees are a positive feature, they can be the cause of a range of problems, from being a nuisance or inconvenience to potentially causing serious injury or even death. As a tree owner, we have a direct responsibility for ensuring our trees do not pose a danger to the public or property and are managed appropriately. This policy sets out our approach to tree management.

We aim to inspect our tree stock at an appropriate frequency, depending upon number of pedestrians, vehicles and other targets either passing beneath or within falling distance of the tree, to ensure continued public safety. Following inspection, the trees will be assigned a risk classification which will inform their prioritisation for maintenance works.

POLICY SCOPE
This policy applies to all trees under Hellesdon Parish Council ownership / management, regardless of their location, this policy links in to Hellesdon Parish Councils Neighbourhood plan: Policy 1- Green Grid, it is Hellesdon Parish Councils policy to look to expand the trees in Hellesdon where possible. The Parish Council know and understand the benefit of trees and hedgerows offering additional wildlife benefits of continuous cover instead of isolated pockets.

Although, we believe this policy to be as comprehensive as possible, we acknowledge it does not cover every situation. We reserve the right to exercise discretion in application of this policy when to do so would be in the best interests of the Council and its residents.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES IN THE URBAN AND RURAL LANDSCAPE
Trees are important features in the landscape. They help to create an attractive environment, making the town a better place to live, work, study and visit. They bring colour and contrast, screen unsightly structures, give privacy and soften the hard lines of streets and landscapes. Not only do trees have a visual quality, but they also enhance the environment in less obvious ways:

- they improve air quality by filtering airborne dust, smoke and fumes;
- they absorb traffic noise in built-up areas and can help limit noise pollution;
- they reduce temperature extremes by providing shelter in hot weather and insulation in cold weather; trees adjacent to buildings can reduce air conditioning and heating costs;

- they act as a screen, increasing privacy in residential roads and gardens;
- they convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, increasing the quality of the air locally and helping to reduce the 'greenhouse effect';
- they provide food and habitat for birds and other wildlife, thus supporting nature conservation value and biodiversity;
- research has shown that trees provide many psychological and health benefits and have been shown to reduce stress significantly.

LEGISLATION

There is a range of legislation which has been considered during the development of this policy, for example:

The Parish Council recognizes that Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), in respect of trees or woodland, which is considered to have a significant impact on the amenity of a local area.

In addition to those trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order, the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) also makes special provision for trees in conservation areas.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981, as amended CROW Act 2000) states that it is illegal to intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird while that nest is in use or being built.

Bats are a European Protected Species and are protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Causing damage to a roosting / nesting site is a criminal offence which can lead to imprisonment.

The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) introduced powers allowing important rural native hedgerows to be protected.

TREES ON HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL OWNED / MANAGED LAND

We have a responsibility to maintain trees within our ownership/management to ensure they are in a safe condition and not causing an unreasonable danger or actionable nuisance. All enquiries regarding trees on Hellesdon Parish Council land should be directed to the Council on 01603 301751 or clerk@hellesdon-pc.gov.uk.

INSPECTION OF TREES

We work to a risk-based approach to tree management: a programme of inspection identifying and prioritising potential hazards. The cycle of inspection for trees will be set according to their location and area of risk.

TREE MAINTENANCE

Tree maintenance is currently mostly 'reactive' in nature and conducted in response to reports received by the council concerning specific trees. In future, a greater level of tree maintenance work will be conducted as a result of information gathered during pro-active tree inspections. However, reactionary tree maintenance will always form a key element of overall tree maintenance operations and normally originates from the following:

- programmed and routine inspections by a qualified tree inspector/consultant.
- ad-hoc inspections by a member of Parish Council staff following enquiries, reports and service requests;
- reports from Residents;
- enquires from Parish Councillors;
- reports from utility companies;
- cyclic maintenance;
- emergency works (e.g. resulting from high winds)

The following categories will be used when prioritising tree works

Priority	**Response**
Priority 1: Urgent Public Safety	From within 24 hours to one week depending upon the risk
Priority 2: Non-urgent but essential work	Between 1 to 6 months depending upon risk and time of year
Priority 3: Desirable	12 months where possible
Non-priority	No action proposed

A tree could warrant immediate attention if, for example:

- it has snapped or blown over;
- it is rocking (roots are damaged)
- it is uprooted but held up by another tree or building;
- a large branch has broken off or is hanging off the tree;
- it or its branch is blocking the road or footpath;
- it or its branch is blocking access to property;
- it has fallen on to a structure, such as a building or car.

A tree may be a risk to people or property but does not require immediate attention if: for example

- it is dying (few leaves in summer or dieback in the crown);
- its bark is loose and falling off;
- mushrooms or fungi are growing on or near the tree;

- old splits and cracks are in the trunk or large branches;
- smaller branches or twigs are falling from the tree.

Trees will be made safe via pruning or felling and we would use the most cost effective approach. However, for certain High Value trees we would consider other options to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. This would include options to reduce the likelihood of the tree failing or the likelihood of persons being close to the tree if it did fail.

PUBLICISING TREE FELLING/PRUNING

Where works are minor such as pruning (including repeat cyclical pruning of trees) or involve removing trees that are less than 15 cm diameter (6 inches) at a height of 1.3 meters (just over 4 foot), we will not publicise the works.

Where works are more impacting, for example, felling larger trees, carrying out works to a veteran tree or a tree with a Tree Protection Order (TPO), we will erect an informative site notice on or very close to the affected tree. If more than one tree at the same location are affected it may be more appropriate to erect a site notice including a map / schedule. We will also tell houses opposite and either side by letter (if applicable). We will also publicise the proposed work through social media

If a tree scheme (felling, pruning or planting) is judged to be more impacting on the local area we will consider more publicity as appropriate.

Where a competent officer has determined that the tree should be felled on public safety grounds there will be no public consultation and no right of objection.

DEALING WITH TREE CARE

Works are sometimes necessary to ensure that trees are in a safe and healthy condition. We receive many requests and complaints regarding trees. It is important that individual issues are dealt with consistently and that decisions are balanced against the positive contribution that trees make to the environment and enjoyment of the parish by local residents and visitors. Many of the complaints received involve minor or seasonal issues that are generally considered to be foreseeable or social problems associated with living near trees, which can often be minimised through careful pruning and careful species selection when planting.

In all cases, consideration will be given as to whether the tree in question meets the necessary criteria forprotection.

To ensure that requests for works to trees are dealt with efficiently, consistently and fairly, our policy in relation to the more common types of request is outlined below.

Obstructing/Overhanging Tree Branches

Tree branches can cause obstructions to public footpaths, roadways/signs, streetlights and open spaces. Appropriate pruning to eliminate hazards caused by obstructive branches will normally be acceptable, providing efforts are made to retain the shape of the tree.

We will undertake work to trees in Council ownership/management to maintain a minimum 5 meters clearance over roads and 2.4 meters over formal footpaths.

We will not prune trees that overhang neighbouring properties unless the trees are dangerous or causing an actionable nuisance (i.e. touching the walls, roofs, windows, gutters, garage etc.). This will ensure that damage to property such as aerials, tiles or gutters is avoided.

Adjacent Landowners do have a common law right to prune back tree branches **to their boundary**, providing that this would not lead to tree death and providing that the tree in question is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or situated within a Conservation Area.

Shading and Loss of Light

Trees are often perceived to block light to nearby properties. However, pruning or removal of trees will often have a negligible impact on the amount of light reaching a house or garden. Therefore, tree works to improve light levels will not normally be considered. However, we will consider taking action (pruning or felling) in the following circumstances:

- if the height of the tree is more than 12metres and the distance between the base of the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than 5 metres;

- if the height of the tree is less than 12 metres and the distance between the base of the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than half the height of the tree (where the separation between the edge of the tree canopy and a vertical line through that window is less than 2 metres).

A 'habitable room' is a dining room, lounge, kitchen, study or bedroom but not a WC, bathrooms, utility room, landing or hallway.

Where elderly, infirm or disabled persons who spend a significant amount of time within their home are affected by loss of light, or it can be established that the presence of trees is detrimental to the health of such residents, further consideration will be given to the management approach to trees. This consideration will also take into account the quality and importance of the tree in question, as well as the benefits to the wider community.

Loss of View

Trees will only be pruned or removed to restore views when necessary to retain important public viewpoints or there is potential to bring about significant public benefit and/or enhance the local landscape or townscape. Historical records may be used to determine the level of management required. Pruning of trees for highway sight-line requirements will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Tress affecting reception (Television/Satellite/Solar Panels)

Pruning in the short term may help improve television reception. However, in the long term the flush of quick, extra growth associated with pruning can exacerbate the problem. In most cases the problem can be resolved by relocating the aerial or satellite dish, or alternatively using a booster. Residents are advised to contact their satellite or TV provider for specialist advice. Removal or pruning of trees to enable a clear television reception would only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Similarly, we will not prune or fell a tree in our ownership/management to improve natural light to a solar panel. Whilst we recognise the need for renewable energy sources, trees are also important in tackling climate change.

Overhead Cables / Telephone Wires

Utility companies have certain legal rights to carry out works to public or privately owned trees to address health and safety problems and to maintain a clearance between trees and their apparatus to ensure continuity of supply. This may sometimes involve the loss of trees. Where works to trees are necessary as a result of proximity or conflict, we will encourage utility operators to adopt the most appropriate long term solution, giving consideration to tree health, local tree cover and visual amenity.

Problems caused by branches interfering with privately owned telephone wires can usually be eliminated through appropriate pruning and tree removal would not usually be considered.

We will not prune or fell a tree in our ownership/management to prevent or reduce interference with telephone wires. We would recommend contacting the telephone service provider in such circumstances.

General/Minor Nuisances

We will not fell or prune trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena, which are largely outside of our control. There are a variety of potential nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor or seasonal and

considered to be normal and acceptable consequences of living near trees. Examples of such problems are:

- falling leaves, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings;
- insects associated with trees (spiders, wasps, flies etc.);
- reduction or increase of moisture to gardens;
- suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens;
- leaves falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs;
- the build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structures.

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.
Falling leaves, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings are 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 these issues alone.

We would not normally prune or fell a tree under our ownership/management that bears poisonous fruit/foliage (such as laburnum or yew).
However, where it is known that unsupervised young children are likely to be exposed to berries or foliage that will make them ill if eaten, we will investigate and take action, where appropriate.

Trees considered too big/too tall

We will not prune or fell a tree under council ownership/management because it is considered to be 'too big' or 'too tall' for its surroundings.

Personal Medical Complaint

We will normally not prune or fell a tree under our ownership/management where a request has been made to do so because of a personal medical complaint. However, where it can be established that the presence of a tree is causing a detriment to the health of residents further consideration will be given to the management approach of trees.

DAMAGE AND TREE ROOTS

Many tree conflicts arise because of the presence of tree roots and the perception that they are causing damage. Where damage is alleged, each complaint will be investigated on an individual basis. The following guidance will be used in assessing levels of nuisance and identifying appropriate action.

Root invasion in gardens

Tree roots in gardens are a natural occurrence and root presence is unlikely to be affected by tree pruning or removal. Landowners do have a common law right to prune back tree roots to their boundary, providing that this would not lead to tree death and providing that the tree in question is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or situated within a Conservation Area.

Most species of deciduous tree will re-sprout from the stump when cut down. Many species will produce a new growth shoot from a root if it becomes exposed to sunlight through ground erosion. Some species readily produce shoots from their buried roots as a way to regenerate and this is often stimulated by stresses, such as heavy pruning or felling. Numerous tree species (including Cherry and Poplar) are therefore likely to produce vigorous root suckers as a response to being felled. Poisoning a stump to prevent such suckering is not always successful since application of herbicide onto a stump face often only affects the stump and the upper roots.

Tree felling or branch pruning in response to root invasion in gardens would not normally be appropriate, as such works are likely to worsen existing problems. The pure encroachment of roots into adjoining land is not considered to amount to actionable nuisance.

Damage to walls and fences

It is often possible to rebuild or repair garden walls and fences to take account of adjacent trees. This can be achieved in a number of ways (for example installing a section of railing or bridging foundations around the base of a tree). Therefore, where trees are considered to be causing damage to walls or fences, we will only consider tree removal if the walls or fence is irreplaceable and of exceptional importance e.g. a retaining wall or of historical interest, or if there is a risk to public health in leaving the tree which cannot otherwise be mitigated. If a damaged wall or fence was constructed after planting of the tree, it may mean that the design or construction has failed to take the presence of nearby trees into account.

Damage to paths

It is often possible to repair paths to take account of adjacent trees and tree roots. Where roots protrude, they can be root pruned, or the path relayed around the tree with flexible materials such as asphalt to provide a smooth surface. Where trees are considered to be causing damage to paths or footpaths, we will not normally consider tree removal except where there is a risk to public health which cannot otherwise be mitigated.

Damage to drains or water pipes

There is no evidence to suggest that the tree roots can actively penetrate an intact pipe or drain, but they can find their way into drains by any existing fault and increase damage. In these situations, the owner of the drain should seek to get the drain repaired at their own expense. Tree removal will not normally be considered.

Trip Hazards

We will make safe an unacceptable trip hazard in a street, road or highway which is caused by a tree in our ownership/management.

Subsidence

While we recognise our responsibilities for the trees in our ownership/ management, we will expect any claim against our own trees to be supported by sufficient evidence to show that the tree in question is a contributory factor in the subsidence. Where this evidence is

provided, we will obtain expert specialist advice to verify submitted evidence as necessary. We will therefore require the following information in order to consider a claim associated with tree related subsidence:

- description of type of damage;
- indication of seasonal movement;
- levels and distortion survey;
- visual evidence of damage;
- depth of foundations demonstrated from excavated trial holes;
- analysis of soil type underfoundation;
- presence and identification of trees roots.

We will not normally subject our trees to regular heavy pruning to deal with suspected damage. Instead we will where feasible opt for removal and replacement planting with an alternative species that is less likely to cause future problems.

Heave

When a tree is removed in a clay sub-soil, the soil will rehydrate and swell in volume. The expansion may lift the foundations and cause cracking to the property. This is known as 'heave'. This is more likely to occur if the removed tree was mature and had a high-water demand such as an oak tree. No liability, at present, falls upon a local authority for damage due to heave resulting from tree removal where this is requested by the third party.

PROTECTED TREES

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's)
A TPO is a legal document made, administered and enforced by the local planning authority, to protect specified trees and woodlands with public amenity value.

A TPO prevents cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or destruction of trees (including cutting roots) without permission.

The Parish Council recognises its responsibilities in regard to its trees that are protected by TPOs.

Trees in Conservation Areas
It is an offence to cut down, prune, lop, top, uproot or wilfully damage or destroy a tree in a conservation area without getting prior written permission from Broadland District Council.

The Town Council recognizes its obligations when undertaking works to trees in conservation areas.

OTHER FACTORS CONSTRAINING WORK TO TREES

Birds
Under the Wildlife & Conservation Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to kill, injure or take wild birds, their young, their eggs or nests. Non-urgent major tree work involving tree removal/reduction and hedge cutting operations should not normally be undertaken during bird nesting/breeding season, which is considered to be from February until August (Natural England).

Bats
Bats are a European Protected Species and are protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Causing damage to a roosting/ nesting site is a criminal offence which can lead to imprisonment. Trees displaying signs of roosting bats will be referred to an Ecologist before any work commences. Any trees supporting roosting bats will not be worked on until Natural England is consulted.

Restrictive Covenants
Occasionally, restrictive covenants attached to the deeds for a property may restrict what work can be undertaken to trees.

VANDALISM AND DAMAGE TO COUNCIL OWNED/MANAGED TREES
Vandalism is an increasing pressure on trees. Usually it is young newly planted trees that are damaged; however, mature trees are often damaged too. There are various ways in which vandalism can be counteracted, but none of these is 100% effective against determined attack.

The main methods of deterring vandals are to plant large numbers of very young trees, known as whips, or to plant larger robust trees depending on the site. Another method is to put guards or fencing around trees, but these have to be large enough and strong enough to offer real protection.

This latter approach tends to be the most expensive method and only appropriate in very high profile positions. In the long run, increasing environmental awareness within schools and communities should help reduce vandalism. There are cases where trees we own/ manage have been irrevocably damaged or removed without permission. We will investigate any reports of vandalism/damage to trees in our ownership/management, and try to repair any damage where we can.
Where possible, we will take legal action against the person(s) causing the damage.

BIOSECURITY / PEST & EPIDEMIC MANAGEMENT
Biosecurity is a set of precautions that aim to prevent the spread of pests, pathogens or invasive species. The threat to trees from these has never been greater and as a large landowner we undertake to follow best practice and specific advice which is regularly published by the Forestry Commission.

TREE PRUNING TECHNIQUES

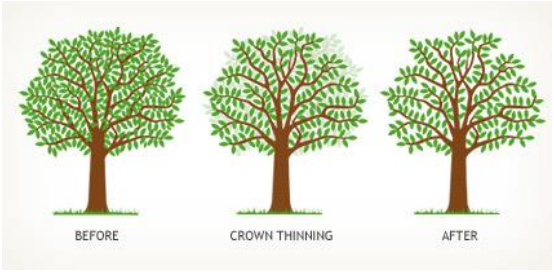
We will seek to ensure that tree works are carried out to the highest standards. In carrying out tree works, we and any third party working on trees over which we have a responsibility, will ensure that pruning conserves the overall amenity value, form and shape of the tree and all tree works must be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 — Recommendations for Tree Work. Particular pruning specifications may or may not be appropriate for trees of different ages, species, health and condition, or even between trees of the same species depending on their condition, age and environment. Clear and acceptable pruning objectives are necessary in advance of approval of a pruning specification. The pruning objectives may require implementation of one or more of the following operations:

Crown lifting

The removal of the lowest branches of a tree so that the remaining lowest branches are at a specified height, usually 2.4m over a footpath and 5m over a road. This operation is undertaken for a number of reasons, such as to allow access under a tree; to clear branches from low structures; or to allow light under the canopy.

Crown thinning

The removal of a specified proportion of branch material from the interior of the crown without affecting the shape of the tree. This operation is usually undertaken to reduce crown density; form a healthy branch structure by removing dead; diseased, damaged, crossing and rubbing branches, and allow more light through the canopy. Many tree species evolve a canopy density for adaptive reasons and crown-thinning can increase turbulence and cause drought stress and branch failures. For this reason, crown thinning is usually only acceptable when carried out as part of crown cleaning or balancing works.



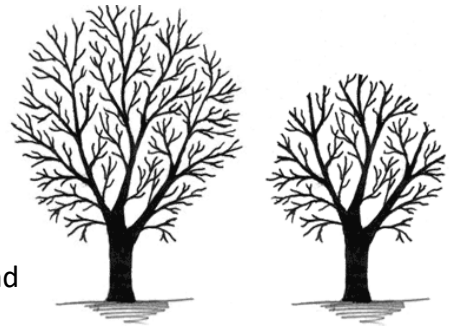
Crown Reduction

Reducing the overall size of the crown area by a specified percentage by pruning back the leaders and branch terminals to lateral branches that are large enough to assume the terminal roles (at least one third the diameter of the cut stem). Crown reduction up to a maximum of 15-20% may be acceptable to semi-mature trees providing cuts do not exceed 5-7cm and where shaping and restricting

size and spread is essential. Crown reduction of mature or older trees is not normally acceptable as it can severely affect tree health and may lead to the death or decline of the tree and is generally only acceptable as management of last resort.

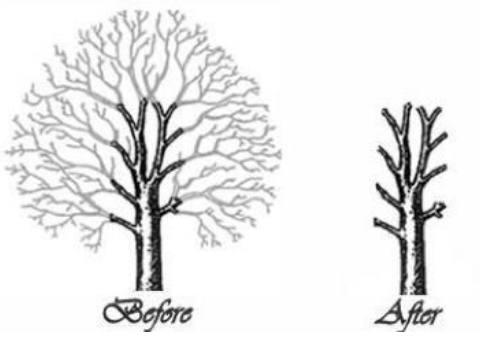
Topping

This entails cutting at a certain height to reduce the height of the tree. Topping is not acceptable as it severely affects the public amenity and health of the tree, sometimes leading to death. Topping can also lead to future problems due to a flush of weak re-growth that can represent a danger and also exacerbate existing problems. If height reduction is considered essential and unavoidable, crown reduction (see above) is preferred.



Pollarding

This severe operation entails the removal of the entire tree's branch structure back to the trunk. Pollarding is an ancient way of maintaining trees that is sometimes necessary, particularly on trees that have been pollarded previously. Only certain species will tolerate this degree of pruning, and new growth may be weak and prone to tearing off. This method of management is not therefore normally acceptable.



Dead Wooding or Crown Clean

This operation is similar to a crown thin except that only dead, diseased, crossing and rubbing branches are removed to tidy up the appearance of the tree. No healthy, sound wood is removed. This operation is recommended to help maintain a healthy, safe tree.

Formative Pruning

The removal of problematic or potentially problematic branches, ensuring good tree development.

Stump Grinding

Stump Grinding is the practice of removing a tree stump to below ground level by mechanical means. We will carry out stump grinding where necessary to enable new trees to be planted or to remove a significant hazard. Where stump removal is not necessary tree stumps will be removed close to ground level so as not to leave a trip hazard