



Tree Management Policies

This document allows our stakeholders to understand our direction while providing answers to common questions. It is collaboration between our team at Woking Borough Council and our Environmental Partner Serco, with the aim to provide a concise and uniform approach to tree management.

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Contact Information

REPORTING A PROBLEM

Reporting a dangerous Public Tree

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree or have a general enquiry then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Reporting an Obstruction to the Highway

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree or have a general enquiry then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Reporting a dangerous Private Tree

If the tree is privately owned then in the first instance please contact the owner of the tree as it is considered a private matter.

Highways, Parks and Open Spaces Cleaning

If you would like to report a road, street or highway that needs to be cleaned please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

General Tree Enquires

Council Tree Maintenance

For information about when Council maintained street trees are next due to be inspected and works issued, contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Trees with Protection

Tree Works Application Advice

If you would like general advice on the application process, please contact 01483 755855 or trees@woking.gov.uk

Tree Protection Status

To check the protections status of a tree, please contact 01483 755855 or trees@woking.gov.uk

For advice about your own trees, please contact a suitably qualified arboricultural professional.

Council Tree Maintenance

Maintenance regimes (Trees)

Policy: The Council manages its trees so that they make a positive contribution to the local environment while maintaining a safe tree stock. Equally we wish to see more people benefit from the presence of trees by ensuring a more equal distribution of tree cover across the town. This will increase the overall biodiversity of the borough and ultimately increase the well being of the local population. Natural Woking is a strategy to seek positive outcomes for habitats and people, by enhancing provision and accessibility to green spaces; conserving appropriate existing biodiversity and habitats; and creating opportunities for species to return to the Borough.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) Clarification of council policy about trees / general enquiries. The enquiry will be answered within 7 working days of receipt. Customers can receive an immediate response by searching for the relevant stated policy on the council's web site. If the enquiry requires further research we will inform the customer within 15 working days and indicate a timescale for any response as appropriate.

Customer Advice: The way that trees are managed very much reflects where they are and ultimately the amount of space they have to grow:

- 1) Street trees in Woking Borough include a high number of large trees such as London plane and Oak growing in restricted spaces such as narrow streets. Given this, many street trees need to be regularly pruned to avoid nuisance to residents and the general public. Typically, street trees are re-pollarded on a regular basis when re-growth is taken back to a pre-formed framework at a fixed height. This work is visually quite harsh, but necessary to keep trees at a maximum size. Epicormic growth is removed from some types of tree annually. For information about when The Council maintained street trees are next due to be inspected and works issued as a result, contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com
- 2) Trees in parks and green spaces including closed burial grounds are managed to reflect the circumstances of the site and the type, age and condition of the trees. Trees in parks generally have more room to grow compared to those in the street and typically grow to their full height and spread. Ongoing maintenance includes the removal of dead wood, formative pruning (to remove problems in tree form when the tree is young so avoiding expensive problems later), removing low branches from pathways and the removal and replacement of trees when they come to the end of their safe and useful life. As a council we aim to increase tree planting year on year, trees are selected and sited to complement and enhance the parks or green space.

- 3) Trees in public housing open space are managed according to their location, which includes both streets (grass verges) and parks. The management of these trees is based on a safety inspection
- 4) Trees in most education facilities are managed by Surrey County Council. For more information please contact Surrey County Council on contactcentre@surreycc.gov.uk
- 5) If you would like more information about the inspection and maintenance of trees in council ownership, please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Tree Planting – guiding principles

Policy: Right Tree – Right Place. The principle of this approach is that by considering the constraints and opportunities of the proposed planting site and the desired features of the proposed trees a list of best-matched tree species will be considered.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry: Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer advice:

- 1) It is generally recognised that large trees in the borough will bring considerably more benefits than smaller trees. But finding room for large trees is a problem in many locations especially streets. The Right Place, Right Tree approach will tend to 'filter out' trees that would otherwise grow too big for a certain location.
- 2) Having too many of the same type of tree in the borough is a concern because of the increased risk of a devastating loss of one or more species of tree to disease or other environmental factors. The devastation of elms being a case in point. We can increase the resilience of our trees by keeping them as healthy and hence as robust as possible. Planting a variety of species increases biodiversity and resilience to pests and diseases.
- 3) Planting native trees is generally preferred especially if the intent is primarily to attract wildlife. But, non-native exotics can make a major contribution to the borough, and in some locations, especially streets, exotics can outperform native trees as they readily adapt to climate change
- 4) Where native trees are selected the Council will endeavour to purchase trees that are of local provenance and that where possible all trees selected will be sourced locally. This has two benefits; the first is that it supports a local economy and second the trees that are purchased will have been grown in the local environment.
- 5) As climate change increasingly becomes a reality, planting and caring for trees in towns and cities will become even more important. But, we will also need to consider which types of trees will themselves be able to cope with a changed climate which is projected to be a trend towards hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter and windier winters. There is still uncertainty about the degree and timing of such climate changes and as such more research is needed to determine which trees should be planted and when. This is echoed by the Right Tree – Right Place policy.
- 6) If you would like more information about tree planting on council owned land, please contact our neighbourhood team on 01483 755 855.

Tree Planting Programme

Policy: The council wishes to maintain and increase the tree cover across the Borough, on occasion the replacement of trees cannot be carried out if the situation for replanting is not possible.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer advice:

- 1) We invite residents and business to suggest areas for planting more trees across the borough and advice can be sought for this by contacting the neighbourhood team on 01483 755 855 or email NeighbourhoodTeam@woking.gov.uk
- 2) Once a tree has been planted we encourage residents to occasionally water the newly planted trees in order to give them the greatest chance of survival throughout the driest months. We ask that clean water is applied and not contaminated water as this may have a detrimental impact on the tree.
- 3) When the decision is taken to remove a council owned tree, a council Arboricultural Officer or SERCO, will determine whether it is appropriate to replant a tree in the same place (for example a street tree) or very close by (for example in a park or green space). The decision to replace the tree will then be recorded by SERCO.
- 4) Many parks and green spaces have been planted with trees over succeeding generations but without the benefit of a clear design. Sometimes this works well, but in some sites the trees actually detract from the overall enjoyment of the site because there are too many trees, they are the wrong species or in the wrong place. We do not believe that it is always appropriate to simply replace a tree in the same place. The Arboricultural officers and Serco will consider new planting on a case by case basis and may consult with one another to form a tree planting plan.
- 5) Where a tree is felled in a park or green space and it is clear that the original tree should be replaced then we will try to do this during the first tree-planting season (November - March) following the removal of the tree.
- 6) If you would like more information about tree planting on council owned land, please contact our neighbourhood team on 01483 755 855 or neighbourhoodteam@woking.gov.uk

Tree Safety Inspections

Policy: Trees in council ownership are inspected for safety on a cycle between 1 and 5 years according to the level of public use in the area immediately surrounding the tree.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) The enquiry will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. If the enquiry requires further research we will inform the customer within 15 working days and indicate a timescale for any response as appropriate.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Trees are inspected by SERCO periodically to check on their condition and to identify whether any works are necessary or not depending on defects noted or otherwise, depending on the problem and the relative value of the tree. The cycle of re-inspection is determined by the location of the tree.
- 2) For information about when council maintained street trees are next due to be inspected and works issued as a result, contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Why is / was a tree felled?

Policy: A response to the reasons why any one tree was felled will be given within 15 working days of receipt. Alternatively, if the tree that was removed was situated in private land and subject to protection, you will be able to find details of an application on public access on our website.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Tree removal is regrettable but under a number of circumstances may be necessary. The decision to remove a tree is not taken lightly and, apart from when a dangerous tree needs urgent attention the council will endeavour not to remove trees unnecessarily. Most trees that need to be felled are done so because the tree has become unsafe and there is no cost effective solution to otherwise retain the tree. Other reasons why trees need to be removed include where planning approval has been granted.

Why is / was a tree pruned?

Policy: A response to the reasons why any one tree was pruned will be given within 15 working days of receipt. Alternatively, if the tree that was pruned was situated in private land and subject to protection, you will be able to find details of an application on public access on our website.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry: Provide clarification of why a tree is to be or was pruned. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Trees are pruned for a variety of reasons including the removal of damaged or poorly formed branches, to reduce the likelihood of failure. Many street trees are maintained on a cyclical programme and in the case of London planes/ Limes by where regular re-pollarding takes place.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree or have a general enquiry then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Will newly planted council trees be maintained?

Policy: All newly planted council owned trees are subject to a 3-year maintenance programme to ensure that they become established. This includes watering and formative pruning.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) We try to keep every newly planted tree watered (for the first 2 years after planting), but some trees may be missed or some trees, because of local conditions, need more water than others. If you see a tree suffering clear signs of drought, then contact us and provide details of the location of the tree.
- 2) We also encourage residents to water the tree using clean water, especially during dry periods.

Why are some trees stumps left in the highway?

Policy: When a tree growing in the pavement is felled it is not always possible to replant at the same time. Under these circumstances a short tree stump is left as a temporary measure to mark the position of the planting site, and to ensure that the tree pit is made visual for residents to avoid tripping in the pit. Tree stumps may then removed at a later date depending on its location

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Stumps are typically left around 1 metre (about 3 feet) or so tall, the tops are chamfered to remove any rough edges.
- 1) We may also leave a monolith/ standing deadwood depending on its location as it is great for habitat and bio-diversity.

Trees and the Law

Common Law Rights

You have a Common Law right to remove (abate) a nuisance associated with trees encroaching onto your property. The following advice is given if you wish to exercise your Common Law right with respect to encroaching trees:

- 1) You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.
- 2) You are strongly advised to consult a professional tree surgeon or the council's tree officers for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees.
- 3) For enquires about trees that may be owned by Woking Borough Council contact: 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com
- 4) Before you consider doing any works to a tree / trees you should find out if they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a Conservation Area. If the trees are protected, you will need to submit a formal application or give notice to the Council. Third parties are able to request tree works even if they do not own the tree. To find out if the trees are protected and for guidance on how to apply for works if they are protected please contact:

Woking Borough Council
Gloucester Square
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6YL

01483 755 855 or trees@woking.gov.uk

- 5) The Council advise that you discuss with your neighbour your intention to prune encroaching branches. Legally you do not own the encroaching branches and you should offer these to your neighbour if you choose to undertake any work. In all likelihood, you should consider disposing the arising's yourself. Green waste can be taken to your local [green waste disposal site](#).

Green Waste can also be collected by the council, please fill in [this form](#) for green waste collection.

If the encroachment relates to a Council or Surrey County Council owned tree, any cuttings should be disposed of appropriately and not returned to the relevant Council.

Tree protection – TPOs and Conservation Areas

Policy:

- 1) See Tree Preservation Orders and the protection of trees in a Conservation Area <http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/trees>
- 2) Works to protected trees must be applied for in the formal manner by submitting an application form. Please visit, <http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/makeplanningapplication/treeworks>, for the appropriate forms and guidance on how to fill them out.
- 3) Tree works applications for trees protected by a TPO can take up to 8 weeks for completion. Tree works applications for trees protected by a conservation area will be processed within 6 weeks for completion.

Wildlife and Countryside Act – Nesting Birds

Policy:

- 1) All wild birds are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) whilst they are actively nesting or roosting.
- 2) It is also an offence to take or destroy any wild bird eggs from nests.
- 3) This means that trees should be checked thoroughly prior to works being carried out. Unless the works are considered an emergency works to trees should be avoided until the tree is nest free.

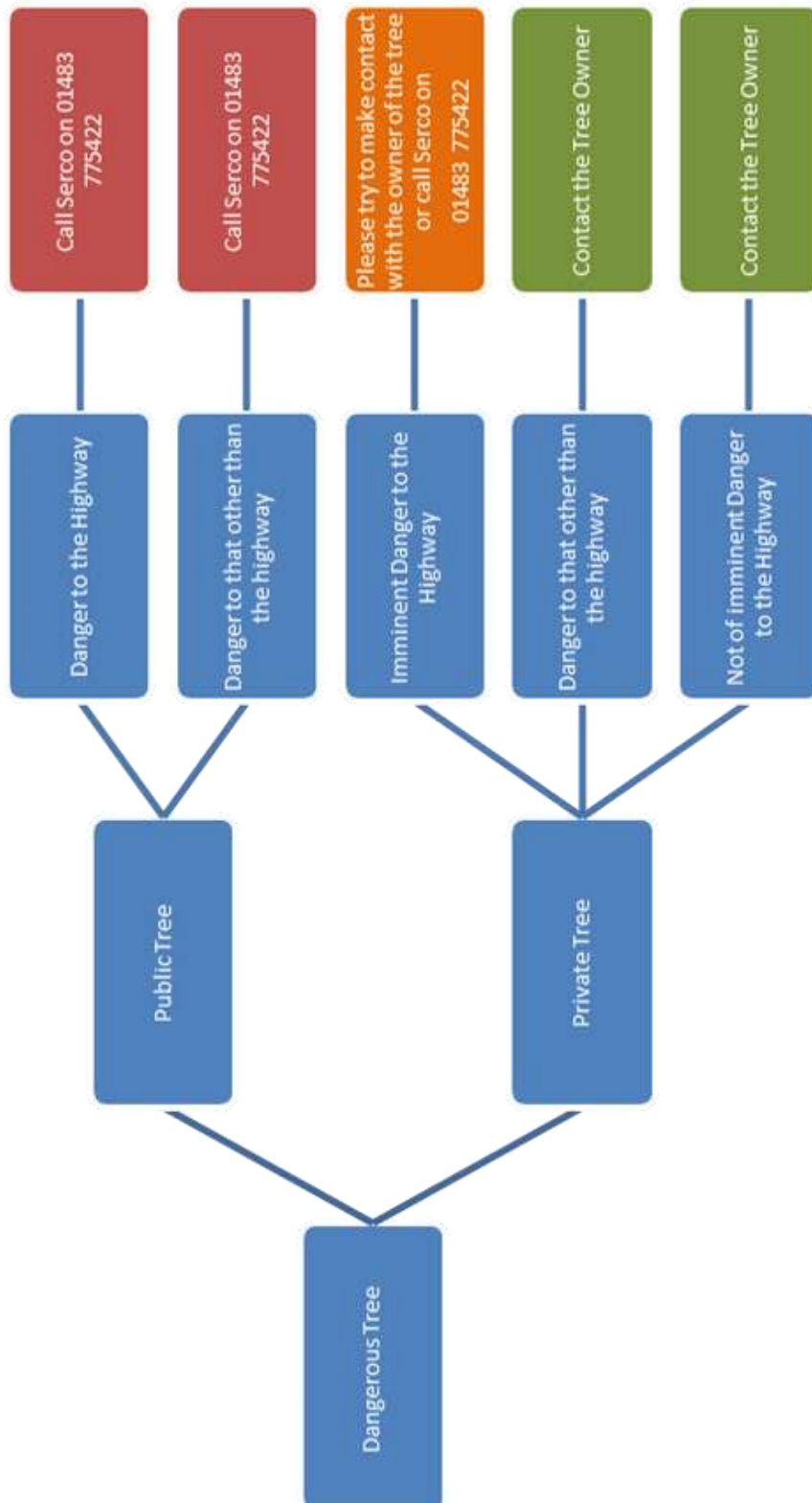
Council tree works Applications

Policy:

- 1) As part of ongoing best practice, The Councils Partners and those that work on its behalf, will be required to submit formal applications for trees covered by a TPO or by those within a Conservation Area.
- 2) This will give the Councils Tree Officers the opportunity to ensure that trees of high public amenity value are managed in accordance with their status in the landscape

Dangerous Trees

The diagram below shows the process of response for tree related enquiries. For further policy information, please continue to pages 14 -19.



Public and Private Tree – Causing an Obstruction to the Highway

Policy: If a tree is causing an obstruction to the highway then the Council will aim to attend site within 1 hour, where reasonably practical, with the aim to remove the obstruction. An obstruction is where a tree or section of tree is blocking all or some of the access to a highway.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an emergency situation arises our tree contractor will aim to attend site within 1 hour to make the situation safe. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of failure or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention, or
- 2) If not an emergency situation, a site inspection will be undertaken within 6-8 weeks of receipt and the customer will be notified of what action is considered appropriate.

(An emergency is considered to be a severe risk to health and safety of the highways and its users) **Please see page 19 for further information.**

Customer Advice:

- 1) If a privately owned tree is causing an obstruction to a road, powers exist to remove the obstruction and make the highway safe.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a public or private tree causing an obstruction to the highway then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Public Tree – Danger to Highway

Policy: If a council owned tree is in such a condition that it poses a high risk to people or property and is considered to be an emergency situation then instruction will be given to our tree contractor who will aim to attend site within 1 hour, where reasonably practical, to make the tree safe.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an emergency situation arises our tree contractor will aim to attend site within 1 hour to assess the situation. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of failure or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention, or
- 2) If not an emergency situation, a site inspection will be undertaken within 6-8 weeks of receipt and the customer will be notified of what action is considered appropriate.

(An emergency is considered to be a severe risk to health and safety of the highways and its users) **Please see page 19 for further information.**

Customer Advice:

- 1) Trees can be made safe via pruning or felling. Typically we would employ the most cost effective approach. But, for certain High Value trees (those of high amenity value) we would consider other options to reduce risk to an acceptable level including options to reduce the likelihood of the tree failing or the likelihood of persons being close to the tree if it did fail.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Private Tree – Danger to Highway

Policy: If a tree in private ownership is shown to be a danger to the highway, the landowner will be contacted and instructed to make the tree safe. Please note the landowner will be responsible for any costs associated with works to private trees.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an emergency situation arises our tree contractor will aim to attend site within 1 hour to assess the situation. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of failure or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention, or
- 2) If not an emergency situation, a site inspection will be undertaken within 6-8 weeks of receipt and the customer will be notified of what action is considered appropriate.

(An emergency is considered to be a severe risk to health and safety of the highways and its users) **Please see page 19 for further information.**

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a private tree causing an imminent danger to the highway then please contact the owner or call Serco on 01483 775 422.

Private Tree – Danger to that other than the Highway

If the tree is privately owned then in the first instance please contact the owner of the tree as it is considered a private matter

If a neighbouring tree is dangerous please inform your neighbour, contact your insurers and seek legal advice.

Public Tree - Danger to that other than the Highway

Policy: If a council owned tree is in such a condition that it poses a high risk to people or property and is considered to be an emergency situation then instruction will be given to our tree contractor who will aim to make the tree safe within an hour.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an emergency situation arises our tree contractor will aim to attend site within 1 hour to assess the situation. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of failure or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention, or
- 2) If not an emergency situation, a site inspection will be undertaken within 6-8 weeks of receipt and the customer will be notified of what action is considered appropriate.

(An emergency is considered to be a severe risk to health and safety of the highways and its users) **Please see page 19 for further information.**

Customer Advice:

- 1) Trees can be made safe via pruning or felling. Typically we would employ the most cost effective approach. But, for certain High Value trees (those of high amenity value) we would consider other options to reduce risk to an acceptable level including options to reduce the likelihood of the tree failing or the likelihood of persons being close to the tree if it did fail.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Public Tree – Requiring action but not of imminent danger

Policy: If a tree is identified as hazardous, but the risk to the public is low then the tree will be made safe depending on the degree of risk identified at the time of inspection.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If not an emergency situation, a site inspection will be undertaken within 6-8 weeks of receipt and the customer will be notified of what action is considered appropriate.

(An emergency is considered to be a severe risk to health and safety of the highways and its users) **Please see page 19 for further information.**

Customer Advice:

- 1) Trees can be made safe via pruning or felling. Typically we would employ the most cost effective approach. But, for certain High Value trees we would consider other options to reduce risk to an acceptable level including options to reduce the likelihood of the tree failing or the likelihood of persons being close to the tree if it did fail.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

What Constitutes a Dangerous Tree

Customer Advice:

- 1) Inspection - If a tree poses an immediate and present danger we will inspect a very high risk tree within 6 hours, high risk within 18 hours, medium risk within 24 hours and low risk within 48 hours.
- 2) Works Required - Any works required as a result of inspection for very high risk trees to make safe or secure (this may just be coning/ taping off) will be carried out within 3 hours of inspection, high risk within 12 hours, medium risk within 48 hours and low risk within 96 hours.
- 3) Signs to look for which may mean that a tree is in such condition to warrant immediate attention include a tree which is:
 - a) Snapped or blown over
 - b) Rocking at its base – roots are damaged
 - c) Uprooted but held up by another tree or building
 - d) Large branch has broken off or is hanging off the tree
 - e) Blocking road, footpath, access to property
 - f) Fallen on to house or car
- 4) Signs to look out for which may mean that a tree is a risk to people or property but the risk does not require an emergency response include a tree which is:
 - g) Dead
 - h) Bark is loose and falling off
 - i) Mushrooms or fungi growing on or near the tree
 - j) Old splits and cracks in the trunk or large branches
 - k) Smaller branches falling from the tree
 - l) Small areas of deadwood
- 5) Trees can be made safe via pruning or felling. Typically we would employ the most cost effective approach. But, for certain High Value trees (those of high amenity value) we would consider other options to reduce risk to an acceptable level including options to reduce the likelihood of the tree failing or the likelihood of persons being close to the tree if it did fail.

Concerns Relating to Trees

Bird droppings

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce bird droppings, or remove/clean bird droppings from private land.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Bird droppings may be a nuisance, but the problem is not considered a sufficient reason to prune or remove a tree. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (and other related wildlife law) and the Council will not interfere with the habitat of nesting birds to prevent bird droppings.
- 2) Suggestions for abating the problem are outlined here:
 - Place a false bird of prey near to the tree to reduce the amount of birds sitting in the tree.
 - Wind chimes can help deter birds from nesting in a the tree.

If the tree is privately owned then please contact the owner of the tree as it is considered a private matter.

Blossom

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a Council managed/ owned tree to remove or reduce blossom from trees or remove fallen blossom from private land.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Tree blossom is a natural occurrence, which cannot be avoided by pruning and signals the start of spring.
- 2) Roads, streets or the highway are swept of excessive blossom as necessary. Similarly paths through parks and green spaces will be swept of blossom as part of normal cleaning cycles.

If the tree is privately owned then please contact the owner of the tree as it is considered a private matter.

Crime and anti-social behaviour

Policy: Where a Council managed/ owned tree is associated with criminal activity and / or anti -social behaviour, measures to reduce the problem will be considered on a site-by-site basis.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 2) Customers will be informed within 7 working days of receipt that a site inspection is required and that such a site inspection will be undertaken within 8 weeks of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Where a tree is associated with criminal activity and / or anti-social behaviour, steps to reduce the problem may require the coordination of a number of organisations including the Police. Just pruning or felling a tree is not always the answer to the problem. Some research shows that areas with lots of trees actually help to make places safer. But, neglected spaces with overgrown trees and untidy areas can encourage criminal activity and / or anti-social behaviour. The Council's tree and grounds maintenance contractor aims to improve these areas by making the local environment cleaner, greener and safer.
- 2) You are not allowed to remove wood (or other parts of a tree) from parks or green spaces without consent. Sometimes wood will be left in some of our wooded areas for wildlife habitat and this must be left to encourage bio-diversity. Un-authorized persons are not allowed to use a chainsaw of any type in parks or green spaces. If you see someone who may be removing wood without consent (a person not associated with SERCO, the council contractor) or they are using a chainsaw then call the Police on their non-emergency number, 101, and please call SERCO on 01483 775 422.

Drains

Policy: The Council would not usually prune, fell or cut the roots of a Council owned tree to prevent roots entering a drain. If the tree is privately owned and protected with a Tree Preservation Order or is within a Conservation Area, an application should be submitted for any work and will be considered in the normal manner. All applications are considered on their own merits.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Tree roots typically invade drains that are already broken or damaged. Trees themselves very rarely break or damage the drain in the first place. Tree roots found in a drain are usually symptomatic of an underlying problem requiring repair of the broken pipe. If you are concerned about the condition of your drains then you are advised to contact your water and sewerage company.

Fruit

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree to remove or reduce the nuisance of fruit / berries or nuts, or remove such fallen fruit from private land.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Fruit trees such as apple, cherry and pear have the double benefit of spring blossom and autumn fruit. This makes fruit trees good for wildlife and a source of free food. But, there are some locations where fruit trees are less desirable, for example where soft fruit would make the pavement slippery.
- 2) When considering what tree to plant we take account of the likelihood of such problems. Equally, where fruit trees are established but there is a significant anti-social behaviour problem we may consider phased removal and replacement on a case by case basis.

- 3) Roads, streets or the highway are swept of excessive fruit as necessary. Similarly paths through parks and green spaces will be swept of fruit as part of normal cleaning cycles.

High hedge

Policy: You can find out full details about making a high hedge complaint on the [Government website](#).

Before you make a complaint, you must have taken the following steps to sort out the problem yourself:

- Spoken and written to your neighbour about the hedge and how it is affecting the enjoyment of your property. You must have made at least three attempts in the last four months with at least two in writing; and
- Spoken to a [third party mediation group](#). These are groups run by trained mediators who will mediate between two parties in dispute.

Once the above steps have been taken and the issue remains unresolved please complete the form and send it to the marked address. As well as the form, you will need to send us:

- A site plan with the hedge clearly marked on it. This should be to scale and show the relevant site and hedge measurements, including the direction of North; and
- A cheque made payable to 'Woking Borough Council' for the [correct fee](#).

In addition, the hedge you wish to make a complaint to us about must:

- be made up of a line of at least two evergreen or semi-evergreen trees or shrubs;
- not have any significant gaps in it;
- be at least two metres in height when measured from the level of roots at ground level; and
- Block out light to your home or garden.

A Successful Complaint

If the Council decides that the hedge is affecting the enjoyment of your property, we may decide to issue a remedial notice. We will send this notice to you, the owners and occupiers of the land, on which the hedge is growing, and any neighbouring owners or occupiers that are affected. This remedial notice will explain:

- That you have made a complaint;
- That we have decided to support your complaint and the reasons for this;
- The action that the hedge owner must take and the date that this action must be taken by;
- Any future action which the hedge owner must take to stop the problem happening again;

- What will happen if the hedge owner does not take this action within the timescale we set; and
- That the remedial notice is registered as a local land charge for the time it is valid.

An Unsuccessful Complaint

Both the complainant and the owner of the hedge can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against a decision we make: Any appeal must be made to the Planning Inspectorate within 28 days of the remedial notice, or the date on which we notify all interested parties of our decision.

Installation of a drop kerb

Policy: Woking Borough Council is not required to agree the felling or pruning of the roots of a council owned tree to allow the installation of a drop kerb.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) If you want to provide off road parking at your property that requires the installation of a drop kerb off the highway, it is advised that you contact Surrey County Council
- 2) Further advice can be sought on our website;
<http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/service/preapp/kerbs>

Leaves

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree to remove or reduce leaf fall or remove fallen leaves from private property.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) The loss of leaves from trees in the autumn is part of the natural cycle and cannot be avoided by pruning.
- 2) The maintenance of gutters is the responsibility of the landowner and the Council is not obliged to remove leaves that may have fallen from Council managed/ owned trees. Where gutters are regularly blocked by fallen leaves, the occupant may wish to consider gutter guards to provide a low maintenance solution.
- 3) For roads, streets or the highway extra teams are working in the autumn to clear fallen leaves.
- 4) In parks and green spaces paths or areas of hard standing are regularly cleared of fallen leaves, but leaves on grass / shrub beds are generally left until the majority of leaves have fallen before they are removed (unless leaving them would damage the grass in which case the accumulated leaves would be removed sooner).
- 5) Leaves are generally sent for composting to our local green waste sites and used to manage the boroughs local plant stock.
- 6) Roads, streets or the highway are swept of excessive leaves as necessary. Similarly paths through parks and green spaces will be swept of leaves as part of normal cleaning cycles.

Light

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree to improve natural light in a property.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice

- 1) In law there is no general right to light. Any right to light would need to be established via a specific grant (rare) or by prescription
- 2) Following this, a legal right to light can only be enjoyed in relation to a specific opening (such as a window) in a building; there is no right to light in connection with open land, such as a garden. Further, if these conditions are met then an owner of the building is entitled to such access of light as will leave his premises adequately lit for all purposes for which they may reasonably expect to be used.
- 3) If natural light is being blocked by the growth of a hedge then action may be taken to reduce the problem under the High Hedges Act, Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act, 2003. For further information refer to the Council's web page on High Hedges. See High Hedges on Page 23.

Nuisance to third parties – private tree

Policy: The Council has no authority to intervene in a dispute between neighbours. However, if the problem is due to a 'high hedge' information can be found on the Planning web page.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Please make contact with your neighbour first to see if the issue can be resolved.
- 2) You may benefit from approaching a mediation service if you cannot amicably resolve a dispute between yourself and your neighbour. Here is the link for the [Woking Mediation Service](#).

Personal circumstances

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree where a request has been made to do so on the grounds of a medical condition or other personal circumstances.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Pollen

Policy: The Council would not usually or fell a council owned tree to remove or reduce the release of pollen.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Poisonous berries

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree as a result of poisonous fruit / foliage (such as yew trees), however where it is claimed or known that unsupervised young children are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated and appropriate action considered. When considering planting these types of trees in public areas, the Council will employ the Right Tree – Right Place approach.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Road – Sight Lines

Policy: We will undertake work to a tree in council ownership to maintain clear sight lines at junctions and access points (associated with a street, road or highway).

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an urgent situation arises a council officer will aim to attend site within 2 working days to assess the situation.
- 2) If not an urgent situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate. The owner of the tree may be informed of what works they are responsible for to prevent the tree from harming persons or property.

Customer Advice:

Standards for visibility vary according to the class and speed limit in force.

- 1) If a privately owned tree is causing an obstruction to the visibility at a road junction (sight line), powers exist under the Highways Act to make the owner of the tree remove the obstruction. If they do not, Surrey County Council or Woking Borough Council may do the work and recharge the owner.
- 2) The shoots that grow from the base of some trees in council ownership such are removed as part of our tree maintenance programme. Basal shoots on trees in parks and open spaces are not held as priority work and may be done when time allows unless they are significantly obstructing pathways etc. Otherwise, the removal of epicormic shoots for aesthetic reasons is done as and when funds allow or when it is necessary to inspect the base of a tree.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree or have a general enquiry then please contact our Neighbourhood team on 01483 755 855.

If the tree is privately owned then please contact the owner of the tree as it is considered a private matter.

Roots

Policy: The Council will not prune, fell or cut the roots of a Council owned tree to prevent roots damaging property that is already broken or damaged. If the tree is privately owned and protected with a Tree Preservation Order or is within a Conservation Area, an application should be submitted for any work and will be considered in the normal manner. All applications are considered on their own merits.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 2) Tree roots typically enter areas of property that are already broken or damaged. Trees themselves very rarely break or damage property in the first place. Tree roots found near the property are usually symptomatic of an underlying problem requiring repair of previously damaged property. If you are concerned about the condition of your property please contact your insurers.

Sap

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees. The Council also do not see this as sufficient justification for works applied for within a TPO application.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Honeydew is caused by greenfly (aphids) feeding on the tree, which excrete a sugary sap. Often the honeydew is colonised by a mould, which causes it to go black.
- 2) Unfortunately, there is little that can be done to remove the aphid which causes this issue and pruning the tree may only offer temporary relief and any re-growth is often more likely to be colonised by greenfly.

Service Providers

Policy: Services providers, such as Network Rail, UK Power Networks and British Gas, are exempt from the need to make formal applications for tree works even if the tree is under statutory protection.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry
- 2) The service providers should follow best practice guidelines. If you are concerned about the practices involved please contact the relevant company.

Street Light Obstruction

Policy: We will undertake work to a tree in council ownership to ensure that trees do not unduly obstruct the streetlight.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If not an urgent situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate. The owner of the tree may be informed of what works they are responsible for to prevent the tree from harming persons or property.

Customer Advice:

- 1) If a privately owned tree is causing an obstruction to street light, powers exist under the Highways Act to make them remove the obstruction. If they do not, the council may do the work and recharge the owner.
- 2) When new trees are being planted, their position is considered so that to avoid the obstruction of street lighting.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree or have a general enquiry then please contact our Neighbourhood team on 01483 755 855.

If the tree is privately owned then please contact the owner of the tree as it is considered a private matter.

Subsidence damage to property (tree-related)

Policy: The Council has in place active tree management systems to avoid damage being caused to buildings and other structures as a result of the action of council owned trees. We rigorously defend claims to identify bogus or false claims. It is noted that Woking is primarily situated on Bagshot sands soil structure and would advise that you seek the advice from an arboricultural consultant and your insurance company before proceeding with any formal claim.

Our response rate to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) Concerns about tree-related subsidence damage: All concerns about tree-related subsidence damage involving a council owned tree will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. In our response, we will advise that you should contact your insurance provider for advice. In addition, we will advise you that you should contact us again if you wish to make a formal claim for damages or to formally notify us of your concerns about future damage.

Customer Advice:

- 1) If you believe that your property is suffering subsidence damage due to the action of trees in council ownership (or that you are concerned about potential damage) then we will respond by advising that you should contact your property insurer.

Telephone wires

Policy: We may undertake work to a tree in council ownership if the tree is causing significant damage and the works alleviate the problem.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If not an urgent situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate. The owner of the tree may be informed of what works they are responsible for to prevent the tree from harming persons or property.

Customer Advice:

- 1) It maybe that your telephone service provider may be able to suggest an alternative solution to the problem. Sometimes it is possible to redirect your telephone line to alleviate the issue.

Traffic signal / street sign obstruction

Policy: We will undertake work to a tree in council ownership to maintain clear sight lines for traffic signals and street signs (associated with a street, road or highway).

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an urgent situation arises a council officer will aim to attend site within 2 working days to assess the situation.
- 2) If not an urgent situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate. The owner of the tree may be informed of what works they are responsible for to prevent the tree from harming persons or property.

Customer Advice:

- 1) If a privately owned tree is causing an obstruction to a traffic signal or street sign, powers exist under the Highways Act to make the owner remove the obstruction. If they do not, Woking Borough Council or Surrey County Council may do the work and recharge the owner.

Tree and TV / satellite reception

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree to prevent interference with TV / satellite installation / reception.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) It maybe that your satellite or TV provider will be able to suggest an alternative solution to the problem, for example relocating the aerial/dish or means to boost the signal.

Tree too big / too tall

Policy: We will not prune or fell a council owned tree because it is considered to be 'too big' or 'too tall'.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) A tree is not dangerous just because it may be considered too big for its surroundings. Other problems and evidence would need to be identified for the council to consider it to be dangerous.

Tree touching building

Policy: If a tree in council ownership is touching your property (dwelling house, boundary wall, garage etc.) we will take action to remove the nuisance.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If not an urgent situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate.

Customer Advice:

- 1) In many cases the solution will be for the council to prune the tree, but in exceptional circumstances it may be more appropriate to fell the tree. If pruning is appropriate we will endeavour to undertake works to stop the problem re-occurring within 3 years.

Reporting a Problem

If you would like to report a problem with a Woking Borough Council tree or have a general enquiry then please contact SERCO on 01483 775 422 or helpdesk.woking@serco.com

Trip hazard

Policy: We will undertake measures to make safe an unacceptable trip hazard in street, road or highway caused by the growth of a council owned tree.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an emergency situation our tree contractor will be instructed to attend site within 1 hour to make the situation safe. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of failing or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention, or
- 2) If not an emergency situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate.

Customer Advice:

- 1) Pavements (associated with a street, road or highway) are inspected regularly and trip hazards repaired as appropriate.
- 2) There are a number of ways the council can repair a pavement damaged by tree roots. Simply, the pavement surface can be 'built-up', or isolated roots can be pruned (if these do not affect the stability of the tree) and the pavement surface repaired. Removal of the tree is usually the last resort (accepting that in some circumstances where the tree is low value or easily replaced removal may be the most appropriate solution).

Vandalism

Policy: We will look into any reports of vandalism to a council owned tree and try to correct any damage where we can.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) If an urgent situation arises a council officer will aim to attend site within 2 working days to assess the situation.
- 2) If not an urgent situation a site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate. The owner of the tree may be informed of what works they are responsible for to prevent the tree from harming persons or property.

Views

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree to improve the view from a private property.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) There is no legal right to a 'view'.

Wild animal / insect pest

Policy: The Council would not usually prune or fell a council owned tree to remove or reduce incidence of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals.

Our response to this tree-related enquiry:

- 1) A site inspection is not usually required. Customers will be informed of council policy within 7 working days of receipt of an enquiry.

Customer Advice:

- 1) You may be able to dispose of individual pests but this may not control or eliminate the pest itself. Ideally the whole nest should be destroyed. This can be achieved with great caution but it is far safer to use pest control experts.
- 2) It is important to note that some pests are vital Bees for example are important to biodiversity and the ability to produce food, therefore advice should be taken before considering their removal.

Response rates to public enquiries

Policy: emergency tree-related issue

SERCO will aim to attend site within 1 hour to assess the situation. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of collapse or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention.

Policy: non-emergency tree-related safety issue

A site inspection will be undertaken within 15 working days of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate.

Policy: tree enquiry not requiring a site inspection

Customers will be informed of council policy within 15 working days of receipt of an enquiry. Customers can receive an immediate response by searching for the relevant stated policy on the council's web site.

Policy: tree enquiry requiring a site inspection

Customers will be informed within 15 working days of receipt that a site inspection is required and that such a site inspection will be undertaken within 6-8 weeks of receipt and the customer notified of what action is considered appropriate.

Policy: concerns about tree-related subsidence damage

All concerns about tree-related subsidence damage involving a council owned tree will be acknowledged within 15 working days of receipt. In our response, we will advise that you should contact our insurance department for advice.

Policy: claims / notice of alleged tree-related subsidence damage

All claims or notice of claims against the council relating to a council owned tree will be acknowledged within 15 working days of receipt. In our response (Insurance department response process)

Policy: clarification of council policy about trees / general enquiries

The enquiry will be answered within 15 working days of receipt. Customers can receive an immediate response by searching for the relevant stated policy on the council's web site. If the enquiry requires further research we will inform the customer within 15 working days and indicate a timescale for any response as appropriate.

Glossary

Crown

The foliage bearing section of the tree formed by its branches and not including any clear stem/trunk.

Deadwood

Non-living branches or stems due to natural ageing or external influences. Deadwood provides essential habitats and its management should aim to leave as much as possible, shortening or removing only those that pose a risk. Durability and retention of deadwood will vary by tree species.

Decline

When a tree exhibits signs of a lack of vitality such as reduced leaf size, colour or density.

Epicormic growth

New growth arising from dormant or new buds directly from main branches/stems or trunks.

Fertilising

The application of a substance, usually to the tree's rooting area (and occasionally to the tree), to promote tree growth or reverse or reduce decline. This will only be effective if nutrient deficiency is confirmed. If decline is the result of other factors such as compaction, physical damage, toxins etc., the application of fertiliser will not make any difference.

Formative pruning

Minor pruning during the early years of a tree's growth to establish the desired form and/or to correct defects or weaknesses that may affect structure in later life.

Fungi/Fruiting bodies

A member of the plant kingdom that may colonise living or dead tissues of a tree or form beneficial relationships with the roots. The fruiting body is the spore bearing, reproductive structure of that fungus. Removal of the fruiting body will not prevent further colonisation and will make diagnosis and

prognosis harder to determine. Each colonisation must be considered in detail by a competent person to determine the long term implications of tree health and structure when considered alongside the tree species, site usage etc.

Root pruning

The pruning back of roots (similar to the pruning back of branches). This has the ability to affect tree stability so it is advisable to seek professional advice prior to attempting root pruning.

Vitality

The degree of physiological and biochemical processes (life functions) within an individual, group or population of trees.