

Tree and Hedge Policy - Parish Council Owned Land

For Hockley Heath Parish Council

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Document Information

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TREE AND HEDGE POLICY - PARISH COUNCIL OWNED LAND

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1. Purpose

To set out the principles for managing trees and hedges on parish council-owned land, promoting safety, biodiversity, and responsible stewardship.

2. Scope

Applies to all trees and hedgerows located on parish council owned land, including:

- Recreation Ground
- Woodland and BMX Area
- Perimeter hedges adjoining public or private land

3. Management Principles

- Trees and hedges will be maintained for safety, habitat value, and landscape quality.
- All works will comply with relevant legislation and conservation standards.
- The Parish Council resolves to **cut and maintain only the side of hedges owned by the Parish Council**, including:
 - Internal faces of perimeter hedging within the Recreation Ground and woodland/BMX areas.
 - No responsibility shall be assumed for the non-council side of hedges unless expressly agreed by resolution.

EXCEPT

- In relation to the shrubs bordering Field Way, outside of the park, to be cut once every 12 months, by the Parish Council's approved grounds maintenance contractor
- The Parish Council resolves **not to carry out tree or hedge works:**
 - to stop leaves falling on the ground. We do not prune or cut down Council owned trees to prevent leaf fall or to clear leaves from private properties - this is a natural process in autumn and trimming trees will not prevent it
 - to cut them back to increase light to a property. We do not prune or cut down Council owned trees to improve natural light, including for solar panels. There is no legal right to light.
 - to reduce the height of tall trees if they seem overgrown. This type of work could potentially damage the tree longer term and cause further issues.
 - due to honeydew. We do not prune for honeydew or sap; this is a natural substance that does not damage cars

- to prune for fallen fruit, berries, nuts, or seeds from Council trees. We also have no policy to remove trees with poisonous fruit or foliage (such as yew trees), however where it is suspected to be a risk we will investigate
- due to birds nesting, roosting or fouling. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (and other related wildlife law)
- due to the TV signal being blocked. Trees only get pruned if overhead cables are taught. If you are affected by a poor signal, you should speak to your provider for help
- due to pollens and allergens
- with overhanging branches. You can trim branches that overhang your property, but before undertaking any work you should check whether the tree has a tree preservation order (TPO).
- where roots are found in drains. This is usually due to another problem, for example, a broken pipe
- that are swaying. Trees naturally sway in the wind. If you do have serious concerns, please email clerk@hockleyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk.

4. Inspection and Maintenance

- Trees inspected at least every 3 years by a qualified arborist.
- The three-year tree survey will list trees requiring works in the Recreation Ground and woodland area / BMX track during Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3.
- Urgent issues will be addressed promptly after consultation with a qualified arborist and council resolution, unless the works are urgent when the Clerk will discuss the nature of the work with the Chair to the Parish Council.
- Perimeter hedge trimming will be scheduled outside nesting season (which is March–August), carried out annually by the Parish Council's approved grounds maintenance contractor.

5. Biodiversity and Planting

- Preference for native species and biodiversity-enhancing planting.
- In areas like the woodland, planting schemes will consider habitat connectivity and educational value.
- Recreation Ground and woodland area planting to focus on resilience and low-maintenance species.

6. Community Engagement

- Volunteers may assist with internal hedge maintenance under council guidance.
- Signage and newsletters to raise awareness of biodiversity.

7. Funding & Review

- The council will pursue funding from biodiversity schemes and tree planting initiatives.
- This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or as needed following significant environmental or operational changes.