



WEYMOUTH
TOWN COUNCIL

Tree Management Policy 2021–2025



Introduction

The Tree Management Policy is a document that sets out the maintenance and management of Weymouth's trees.

The Council's 4,000 tree stock includes 118 different species planted across 80ha of open space. These trees provide numerous benefits:

- Providing a valuable habitat for wildlife;
- Filtering atmospheric pollution;
- Providing a barrier to noise and screening poor views;
- Providing shelter from the sun, wind and rain;
- Shading out harmful solar radiation;
- Providing economic, social and strong environmental benefits;
- Cleaning the air that we breathe;
- Providing pleasant green settings in which to live and work;
- Making the town attractive to visitors; and
- Maintaining people's links with the natural environment.

Trees within the town contribute significantly to the quality of the life of its residents and most value and see trees as the important living structures they are. Residents also rally to defend trees that are significant in their locality and will readily contribute to the re-planting of trees, seeing such activity as a long-term investment in the future.

In contrast, trees can also be the focal point for complaints, legal action and requests for removal, which could lead to disagreements between local residents. There is also a legal framework within which the Town Council has obligations in terms of tree care.

Trees planted by previous generations have beautified the town for many decades and it is important that these are protected and further plantings made to ensure a continuation of the benefits they bring for future residents and visitors to enjoy.

This policy will lead to a clear view of the role that trees play and the implications of tree ownership and management, demonstrating that Weymouth Town Council is committed to preserving and managing its tree stock effectively.

1. Background

Trees within Weymouth fall broadly into three categories:

- Owned by Weymouth Town Council
- Private
- DCC ownership

This policy will apply to trees owned directly by Weymouth Town Council (WTC) but there is some significant relevance to the other two categories, which will be referred to further into the document.

Trees owned by any agency or person may be subject to legal controls, such as Tree Preservation Orders or local planning designation controls, such as trees in conservation areas.

The tree policy is intended to act as a framework document that will define the Council's approach to the management of its tree stock. This will in turn lead to several benefits including:

- Ensuring that the management of the Council's trees contributes to making the town's environment attractive and healthy;
- Delivering the safe and efficient management and sustainability of trees;
- Creation of more opportunities for wildlife to thrive in amenity open space;
- Allowing trees to enhance the landscape and add to the biodiversity;
- The promotion of awareness of the importance and value of trees and encourage community involvement in their management and maintenance;
- An increased and varied tree population;
- Delivery of a structured maintenance programme to enhance the quality of the existing tree stock;
- The ability to defend tree related insurance claims; and
- Clear guidance as to the levels and types of works the Council will carry out to its trees, such as felling decisions, pruning and replanting in response to maintenance requirements in terms of tree health and requests from members of the public.
- Helping to mitigate against the climate change emergency.

2. Corporate Priority Links

The policy is based upon the principle that the Council recognises the importance that trees play in improving environmental quality, in the raising of the quality of open space and consequently life standards, their contribution to wildlife conservation, air quality and the educational opportunities they provide.

Trees contribute to the local economy both indirectly, by improving the environment so increasing the desirability of the town as a place to live and work, and directly, by increasing the value of property where trees are present in the immediate vicinity.

3. Legal Framework

- The Highways Act 1980. This requires owners of trees adjacent to the highway to take appropriate care of them to ensure safe passage along the highway.
- The Town & Country Planning Act 1990, in conjunction with Planning Policy Guidance notes, Circulars and Supplementary Guidance issued by Central Government, informs and empowers local government in the care and management of trees. This policy has regard to the legislation and relevant guidance.
- The Occupiers Liability Act 1984. This Act requires landowners to take reasonable care of trees to ensure the safety of people entering that land. (Duty of Care).
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (Section 3). This places a requirement on employers to take reasonable care to ensure the health and safety of third parties, as well as employees. Reasonable care can be defined as having an effective management system for the care of trees in place.
- Town Council owned trees have no specific legal protection, other than being owned by the council, but where the trees grow within a designated Conservation Area, they benefit from the same protection as any other tree under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. There are also a limited number of trees owned by Weymouth Town Council that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders under Section 198 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.
- There is a legal requirement to ensure that trees do not cause direct damage to property by means of physical contact.

4. Trees Matter

As alluded to previously, trees have a significant role to play in the urban and rural landscape; they are generally long-lived organisms with life spans ranging from 40 to 1000 years. The environment in which they are growing, or significant changes to it over the life of the tree, can severely affect the lifespan of trees in an adverse way and this is especially true of the street tree environment.

Due to their permanence, trees can be the one enduring feature or focal point in a landscape. This is especially true in the urban and semi-rural environment where the effects of human activity, particularly in terms of buildings and structures, can lead to relatively regular change in the landscape. Trees are therefore important in that they give residents a sense of something more permanent than human activity and provide an important link to the wider natural world and the greater timescales associated with it. However, this does bring with it responsibility in that often a community is relying on the natural presence of trees or the planting programmes of previous generations and due consideration has to be given as to how they are to be protected, many view trees as “always being there” and do not fully appreciate or recognise that they have a finite lifespan.

More importantly it is incumbent on the council to ensure that similar plantings are made for generations to come and this must be done in the sure knowledge that the investment in these plantings is a long term one and therefore must be carefully considered for appropriateness.

Trees are evident across land owned by Weymouth Town Council and their visual impact is self-evident, however, there are many issues associated with trees that have to be considered.

Positives

The benefits of trees are numerous and include:

- Trees reduce pollution levels in urban environments.
- Filtering of the air reduces both gaseous pollution and dust levels; the London Plane is especially significant in reducing airborne dust as well as pollution levels.
- Trees produce colourful displays in the wider urban or rural landscape but, more importantly, in urban situations where they can produce very significant localised colour and form impact to mitigate against the built environment.
- Traffic and industrial process noise can be effectively deflected by tree planting so reducing the level of noise reaching the ears of nearby residents or users of open space.
- Trees are a cost efficient long term investment in improving the urban environment in comparison to say structures.
- Trees are valuable hosts to wildlife providing food, shelter and security to a very wide range of animals, birds, insects and invertebrates. They provide 'stepping stones' for wildlife migrating through the town.
- Carbon dioxide is converted to oxygen ameliorating and refreshing the air, especially in very urban built-up locations.
- Trees can cool the immediate environment, provide shade and also help to generate breeze, all of which are very desirable in built up urban areas.
- Trees can provide visual screening.
- Trees actively increase a sense of wellbeing and reduce stress and, as a result, health in people.
- Trees capture carbon from the atmosphere, helping to mitigate against climate change.

Negatives

- Trees are living organisms and grow to their ultimate dimension which, in a natural setting, is seldom problematic but in the fixed and rigid urban environment this can cause problems as growth intrudes into space required by society and individuals for other purposes. This can manifest itself in several ways both physical, eg. roots causing problems with buildings, structures, paths and mental, eg. trees are getting too big, "threatening" my property.

- Trees bring responsibilities in terms of ownership, which have a financial cost.
- Trees harbour wildlife, which some regard as pests, in particular, the waste products from these organisms can generate complaints such as bird droppings and aphid “Honeydew”.
- Some fruits from trees are pulpy in composition and can cause sticky or slippery residue when they fall onto hard surfaces.
- Trees can block light and television/satellite signals.
- Leaves that fall from all trees can be perceived by some as a nuisance.
- Failure to manage and maintain trees in a structured way can lead to claims for compensation or legal action being taken against the Council.
- Dense shading from some species can lead to problems such as a lack of light for people living adjacent to them, the death of grass or plant species below them leading to a loss of soil structure and the associated risk of soil erosion as well as an increase in contaminated run off.

5. Sustainability and Biodiversity

It is widely recognised that trees have a significant role to play in biodiversity:

- Trees are an important urban wildlife habitat, they provide nesting, foraging opportunities and cover for birds from predators. Trees provide roosts, commuting routes and foraging opportunities for bats, they also support many insects.
- Lines of trees are important as they act as links between green spaces allowing wildlife to travel between sites.
- Ivy and other climbing plants on trees are a key factor in the diversity of bird, insect and bat species and should be retained where applicable.
- Woodlands provide diverse habitat within green spaces and are very valuable ecologically for the wildlife of urban areas.

The tree policy will enable the council to maintain a sustainable approach to tree and woodland management by:

- Delivering suitable and sustainable tree planting projects that support biodiversity.
- Two for one replacement planting.
- 25% increase in tree stock over the next 5 years.
- Encourage the diversity of tree stock, eg. appropriately diverse species and age ranges to help increase resilience to pests and diseases.
- Deliver a 3 year rolling tree inspection programme.
- Minimal waste timber going to landfill.
- Seedlings grown on at the Council’s tree nursery to reap the benefits of local provenance.

(See also WTC’s Biodiversity Policy)

6. Species Selection

The types of tree growing within a location have a significant impact upon it in many ways, some obvious such as the effect of their size or shape. Other effects may be more subtle to human perception but significant in other ways. The varieties of insects particular to a species may be very wide but, given they are small and hidden within a generally inaccessible canopy, they are not readily observed.

Trees native to a particular country or geographic region are established within the natural ecosystem and, as such, offer the maximum benefit to local wildlife. However, aesthetics and human interactions with trees also need to be considered when selecting species. Non-native trees can also have benefits for wildlife, especially fruiting and flowering varieties. Species selection is critical to successful tree planting schemes in terms of their longevity, resilience to climate change, aesthetic appeal and the benefit to wildlife. So many species exist, that it should not be the case that a suitable tree species cannot be found.

In any site where it is appropriate, natural regeneration should be harnessed to maximise benefit. This would be especially relevant in any urban woodland type development.

Climate change is recognised to be occurring with a general summer drying trend and more frequent heavy rain and high wind events in the winter months. It is accepted that to meet climate change the Council will incorporate native trees, such as Oak and Field Maple. The planting will also include fast-growing trees suited to coastal climatic conditions that provide the best carbon sequestration, such as Sycamore, large leaf Lime, Holm Oak, Horse Chestnut, Tulip tree, Ash and Pine.

7. Wildlife and Conservation

These issues are closely linked to section 5. Trees can often be the only sanctuary for wildlife in the urban or overly maintained formal garden environment and, as such, have a significant role to play.

There is a common misconception that because as humans we use medicine and intervention to ensure or restore health, the same must apply to trees. Similarly there has been an attitude towards trees and woodland of needing to remove dead or decayed material. To clean up, balance and to make uniform, to comply with the human mindset of tidiness or symmetry, have been drivers for many tree management operations in the past. It is now understood more fully that the cycle of growth, decay and death in trees is part of a well developed system involving a wide range of species all dependant on the natural resources trees provide. Deadwood, both standing and fallen, is a valuable habitat for fungi, invertebrates, birds, bats and other small mammals; 40% of woodland species rely on deadwood. In the past, a “tidy mind” syndrome has removed many opportunities for wildlife and has had a very negative effect on both the range of species and their populations.

This policy will address these issues and furthermore develop the potential for wildlife in the future.

8. Trees in Weymouth

The treescape in Weymouth is comparatively limited. There is a diversity of species but the number of trees is relatively low with only a 9.8% total canopy urban tree cover, which ideally should be at a minimum of 15%.

Private Property

Trees of significance on private property have an important role to play and are afforded some protection via the planning process. There is little other control and the potential to preserve the existing stock and to affect an overall increase in the future is very much dependent upon a policy of increasing awareness and interest in trees in the wider community.

Street Trees owned by Dorset Council

Street trees are of high importance within Weymouth. Many streets contain the most established mature examples of some species of trees in the town that are publicly accessible. Other streets contain less mature but, nonetheless, important specimens. There are estimated to be around 1500 street trees across Weymouth and Portland. There are a few Tree Preservation Order protected trees on highways but the vast majority (other than those occurring in conservation areas) have no protection at all. These trees, whilst being of reduced wildlife and conservation value in themselves, do provide important linking corridors for organisms to use to facilitate spread and movement to and from otherwise isolated open spaces.

Trees owned by Weymouth Town Council

Trees growing in the Council's parks and open spaces, including cemeteries, are significant in terms of providing visual amenity value. They offer a green oasis whether they are managed formally or informally.

Parks and open spaces also provide an opportunity to develop collections of different varieties of tree both for their aesthetic contribution and as a valuable educational resource.

Some open spaces are little more than fields of mown grass. These will be enhanced by the planting of trees, especially in copses, which in the longer term will reduce the cost of regular mowing, improve their landscape quality and enhance their biodiversity and interest. These planting schemes are ideal for community engagement and involvement.

9. Safety Inspections and Maintenance

The Council will undertake:

- Three year cyclical inspections of all trees on Council managed land will be undertaken within the Weymouth Town Council boundary. The trees are surveyed to assess their physiological and structural position. The data is logged on the Council's tree management software.
- Every tree that is subject to an enquiry will be inspected on an individual basis. An inspection will be undertaken and the enquirer will be informed as to what work, if any, will be carried out.
- The Council works to create a balance between the needs of the residents, whilst still preserving the amenity of the area.
- The Council will always use best arboricultural practice to develop environmental sustainability within parks and open spaces.
- Where a tree is removed either due to health and safety or inappropriate planting, the Council will aim to replant a replacement.
- To help maintain a continuity of tree cover, the Council will undertake the planting of new trees where suitable opportunities arise.
- Tree inspections will be carried out following storm events along public highways adjacent to Council land, footpaths in Lodmoor Country Park, Nothe Gardens, Radipole Park and Gardens plus Weymouth and Melcombe Cemeteries.

Tree work **will** be carried out when one of the problems below is identified:

- Where a tree poses a safety risk the Council will remove dead, dying or dangerous trees or parts of trees.
- Trees will be cut back from properties where they touch windows, walls, roofs or gutters and to avoid structures, such as aerials, tiles or gutters being damaged.
- The Council will make safe an unacceptable trip hazard caused by the growth of Council owned trees.
- Clearance of low branches over footways and roads will be undertaken for pedestrians and vehicles respectively. Trees on open spaces, which are not blocking the highway or sightline, will be left with a more natural shape where the branches may extend down to the ground.
- Steps to clear a sightline will be taken where it is being blocked by low branches.

- Low branches overhanging a private garden will be lifted, when requested, to a height of 9m maximum.

Tree work **will not** be carried out solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and or seasonal phenomena, such as:

- Falling leaves.
- Sap exudation (eg. Honeydew).
- Falling fruits and/or nuts.
- Bird droppings.
- Blossom.
- Sucker growth.
- Epicormic growth.
- Germinating seeds from trees.
- Presence of wildlife resident in or using the tree.
- Blocked or obstructed drains, gutters, flat roofs from tree deposits and/or leaves.
- Allergies.

The Council **will not** carry out tree-pruning or tree removal directly attributable to:

- TV or satellite signal reception.
- Emission of sunlight.
- Blocking or obstruction of a view from a residence.
- The height or spread of a tree.
- Feeling threatened by the tree.
- There is an offer to pay for works and or a replacement.
- Unsubstantiated non-professional opinion.

In exceptional cases individual circumstances will be taken into account when considering a course of action.

10. Strategic Aim

To preserve, improve and increase the tree stock within the town.

11. Tree Policy Statements

To ensure the Council meets all legal requirements placed upon it:

- 1 The Council will employ or enable the training of staff within the Parks Service to the standard required to enable efficient and safe management and assessment of the town's trees.
- 2 The Council will carry out a tree survey on all its trees and will continue to re-survey on a 3 year rolling programme.

- 3 The Council will ensure it meets its obligations under the Health & Safety at Work Act.
- 4 The Parks Service will develop a cyclical/pruning management strategy based upon findings of the tree survey within 3 years.
- 5 The Council will fund works arising from the tree survey on a risk-based basis and will continue to fund cyclical maintenance works.
- 6 All tree works will be carried out to BS 3998, wherever possible, by either the Council's own staff or any contractor engaged to carry out works on the Council's trees.
- 7 All new plantings will be considered to ensure maximum potential for biodiversity and to create a varied and sustainable tree stock in public open spaces.
- 8 The development of an urban woodland will be a priority for any significant suitable open space.
- 9 Any woodland developed under policy 8 will have the management principle of sustainability with prunings and cropped timber reused for fuel and/or other purposes. No intervention works will be carried out unless on health and safety grounds or for the purposes of conservation.
- 10 Mature trees will be actively protected and an impact assessment will be carried out before any further plantings or landscape works are carried out in the vicinity of such trees.
- 11 Wherever safe to do so, all standing dead/dying trees will be left in place and not felled.
- 12 Where safety prevents trees to be treated (as in 11 above), dead timber will, where safe to do so, be left on the ground to naturally decay.
- 13 Where 11 and 12 do not apply, material from trees, both dead and alive, will be stacked on site in Eco piles where it does not impact the visual amenity or public enjoyment of a site.
- 14 Overarching principle: trees will not be removed unless they are dead, diseased, dying, dangerous or satisfy the criteria laid out in 15.
- 15 Trees implicated in building subsidence claims will not be removed until the criteria below have been met:
 - A fully geotechnical survey, including trial pits, has been carried out.
 - The soil profile shows clear evidence of desiccation in excess of recognised soil/water reduction due to climate change.
 - Root samples of the same species must be found below the level of any foundation upon which a claim is being made.

- A full soil moisture profile to below foundation level must be carried out.
- Where other vegetation present but not visible from a publicly accessible site, a full survey must be provided for consideration.
- Seasonal monitoring of the alleged subsiding structure has been carried out.
- There is no potential to carry out significant pruning/reduction to the tree to alleviate any clearly established problem.

16. Any tree removed by the Council will be replaced by 2 trees but not necessarily in the same location. Species selection may not be the same but will be based on the items within this policy.

17. Prior to removal, unless in emergency or unplanned situations, felling notices will be issued to residents in the immediate area of the tree or posted in the relevant open space for at least one week.

Note: This will not be a consultation exercise for works that are required under policy 14 or where the pruning is of a routine nature.

18. Prior to removal or significant pruning works, Ward Councillors will be emailed by the Parks & Open Spaces Manager at least one week in advance.

19. Trees will only be routinely pruned for the removal of dead, diseased, dying, dangerous or crossing material. Dead material will be left in situ where it does not cause a danger to the public. However, remedial work will be carried out should it be identified as necessary from the tri-yearly tree survey. Pollarding will not be carried out as a management operation unless no other professional technique is available.

20. Requests for significant pruning of trees for the reasons detailed in policy 19 will be refused. Light pruning could, however, be considered where appropriate which would alleviate some of the problems experienced on the basis that the Council would wish to be a "good neighbour". This decision is delegated to the Parks & Open Spaces Manager or their authorised representative.

19. Pruning works will be carried out where a legal nuisance is evident, such as contact with private property or trespass both above and below ground. Works will not be carried out where they would render the crown unbalanced or in any other way vulnerable or where the tree is unstable due to excessive root pruning.

20. Decisions to fell and/or prune are technical decisions based around professional training and experience and are delegated to the Parks Senior Arborist. In emergency situations, or in the absence of the above, the decision is delegated to the arboricultural crew.

21. Where a third party is unhappy about decisions to or not to fell/prune, the Council's Customer Complaints procedure is to be followed.

22. The Council will continue to secure, improve the quality of and increase the town's tree stock.
23. The Council's Senior Arborist and the arboricultural team will stay updated in the latest arboricultural techniques and will be resourced sufficiently to enable the Council to continue to meet its policy and legal obligations.
24. Where works are carried out by utilities organisations, eg. electricity suppliers adjacent to Council owned trees, then the works will comply with NJUG10 guidelines. The Council may take action against those in breach of the guidelines to secure compensation.
25. No works by third parties are to be carried out to any tree in the Council's ownership without the express approval of the Parks & Open Spaces Manager.
26. Any unauthorised works to trees as in policy 27, such as vandalism, removal of material, damage or attempt to modify growth or kill by third parties, will be regarded as criminal damage and will be reported to the Police for action to be taken.
27. Information on trees will be placed on specific web pages on the Council's website by the Parks & Open Spaces Service to raise awareness of the value of trees and encourage residents to become involved in tree matters.

This policy will be available on those pages.

12. Tree Management Statement

Weymouth Town Council understands and values the contribution trees make to the overall environment of the town and the benefits they bring in terms of economic prosperity, health, wellbeing, biodiversity, sustainability, wildlife and that, globally, they significantly reduce atmospheric pollution and CO² levels.

The Council will actively manage its tree stock to enable it to increase in quality and quantity and endeavour to raise awareness and appreciation of trees and the benefits they bring in the wider community.

It is expected that over time the delivery of this policy will effect a significant increase in the quality of life for the residents and visitors to the town.

Nb. This document will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Tree planting across Weymouth 2021-2025

Weymouth Town Council has pledged to reduce its carbon footprint by 2030 and to offset its emissions the Parks & Open Spaces team are committed to increasing the Council's tree stock by 1000 over the next five years. This will be achieved by planting across a number of Town Council owned sites in Weymouth.

Bincleaves open space	No additional planting at this time	
Bowleaze open space	Additional planting at either end of the grassed open space. Introduction of shelter built.	2024 2021
Carlton Road North	Scope to plant more trees but there is an on-going vandalism issue currently.	Review
Corfe Road open space	No additional planting at this time	Decision to be made following the Asset Review
Douglas Road open space	Scope for additional planting	2022
Elm Close	Scope for additional planting	2022
Elveroakes Way	No additional planting at this time	Decision to be made following the Asset Review
Greenhill Gardens	No additional planting	
Honeysuckle Close	Scope for additional planting	2024
Forehill Close	Scope for additional planting	2024
Larkspur Close	No additional planting at this time	
Links Road Open Space	Planting of hundreds of tree saplings to create a woodland copse	2021
Louviars Road open space	Scope for additional planting	2025
The Marsh	Scope for additional planting	2022/23
Miles Gardens	No additional planting due to Bee Orchids	
Milton Close	No additional planting at this time	
Nothe Gardens	No additional planting at this time	
Pottery Lane	No additional planting due to Bee Orchids	

Radipole Park playing field	Scope for additional planting	
Ryemead Lane	Explore potential for additional planting with Wessex Water	
St Johns's Gardens	No additional planting	
Sandsfoot Gardens	No additional planting at this time	
Seven Acres	No additional planting	
Southill Estate	Scope for additional planting	
Sprague Close	No additional planting	
Telford Close	Scope for additional planting	2023
Westmacott Road	Potential for 1 or 2 trees	2024
Windsor Road	No additional planting at this time	
Wooland Gardens	Scope for additional planting	2022
Weymouth Play Areas	Potential to introduce some tree planting in play areas	2022-2025
Weymouth Cemeteries	No additional planting at this time	
Wyke Gardens	No additional planting	
Wyke Playing Field	Scope for additional planting	2025