



TREE POLICY

1. Introduction

Trees are essential to the creation of an environmentally sustainable and economically successful town. They form the largest and the oldest single living element in our natural environment. The beneficial contribution of trees and the Council's duty to have regard to biodiversity will be considered when forming relevant Council strategies.

The benefits include:

1.1 Places

- Creating an attractive environment where people will want to live
- Providing wildlife habitats
- Replenishing oxygen and absorbing greenhouse gasses
- Reducing particulate air pollution
- Reducing noise
- Contributing to energy conservation by reducing wind speed
- Providing shade

1.2 People

- Reducing everyday stress levels
- Contributing to the well-being of communities
- Bringing beauty to the town

1.3 Prosperity

- Positively affecting property values
- Creating an attractive physical environment that encourages investment
- Creating a pleasant working environment for workers
- Creating an inviting place to visit

1.4 Environment

- Encouraging biodiversity
- Mitigating carbon dioxide emissions
- Anticipating climate change
- Providing a link with the natural environment for local communities
- Landscaping quality and natural heritage

This Council has declared a Climate Emergency and declared Lowestoft an Earth Protector Town. National policies identify trees and urban 'green spaces' as among the community's most valuable features. This Council builds on opportunities to benefit from trees locally. The Council does this through implementation of relevant policies including those directly addressing environmental concerns and its Open Spaces Strategy.

1.5 Background

Upon its creation in April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council inherited a considerable number of trees. While no audit of these trees had been completed prior to transfer, the Council's ambition is to create and maintain records of types, location, age, maintenance and condition of its trees. This policy will set out the Council's legal obligations as well as the challenges, priorities and plans for maintaining and developing its tree stock. This policy focuses on the management of land and trees owned by this Council. However, the Council also plays an important role in influencing the land-use and behaviour of people and organisations, including through making recommendations on planning decisions.



1.6 Key Challenges

- The overall management of a large urban tree stock
- A lack of detailed information about the condition and age of the tree stock
- Insufficient succession planting in past years resulting in a high percentage of declining trees within the overall tree population
- Changes in climate require a greater diversity in tree type in order to mitigate loss and maintain current levels
- The urban environment is now a much harsher place for trees requiring high levels of management intervention in both maintenance of existing stock and the establishment of new trees
- The need for increased understanding and tolerance about living close to trees. People are passionate about trees but perceptions differ greatly from those who see all urban trees as a nuisance and liability to those who would preserve every tree at all cost

2. Aims

All sections of this policy should be read in line with the following aims:

2.1 Manage the Council's tree stock, including pollarding, pruning, coppicing and removing trees where this has overall benefit to the environment and tree stock

2.2 Comply with relevant planning and health and safety laws and trees will be managed accordingly.

2.3 Provide a sustainable and improving tree stock, including through succession planting, to help address the climate emergency and have regard to biodiversity.

2.4 Champion trees and the environment, including through influencing other parties (including through the planning system), entering relevant partnerships and taking advantage of relevant initiatives.

2.5 Maintain and improve landscape quality in a sustainable manner and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, including through tree management measures where appropriate to do so.

The Council reserves its right to exercise discretion in its management of tree stock, with due consideration of arborist or other expert advice where relevant, where this supports the aims above and where a net gain in tree stock is maintained.

3. Management of the tree stock

A risk-based system of tree management has been adopted which relies on a programme of regular inspection prioritised by potential hazard. This is undertaken with the support of an arborist. The basis for repeat inspections will be graded. For example, a high-risk tree may be inspected annually or more frequently and a tree with negligible risk inspected a maximum of five years after the initial survey and repeated as necessary. A prioritised programme of tree work will be maintained, based on the inspections and with an emphasis on planned rather than reactive tree maintenance. The risk and nuisance to persons and property will be balanced against the environmental and other aims of this Policy.

4. The climate emergency and the environment

The Council will take measures to manage dead and dying trees and will actively seek to manage its tree stock to reduce and address disease risks. As part of the Council's commitment, it will replant any tree felled including in the course of arboricultural maintenance, with two trees and an additional two orchard trees. Tree planting will be considered within all new environmental projects.



5. Public requests for works to council trees

All of the Council's trees are on Council land. Many residents live close to trees and this proximity needs to be considered and managed. Within the town's tree population there are a number of common sources for complaint:

- Physical size
- Overhanging branches
- Shade
- Blocking sunlight
- Leaf and fruit fall
- Sticky deposits
- Interference with utilities
- Affecting TV and satellite signal reception
- Fear of tree safety
- Root encroachment related matters
- Preventing car parking on verges
- Obstructing a view

The above 'problems' which lead to a high volume of requests for tree work from the general public are not considered 'nuisance' in legal terms and the Council, as with any private tree owner, is not obliged to take action in these circumstances. It is a widely held perception that the Council has increased responsibilities in law in this respect. This is not the case. The requirements in law are the same as any private tree owner.

Environmental and biodiversity are a high priority for this Council and tree maintenance resources are finite. The Council will manage its resources with a priority to the environment, health and safety and the effective and sustainable management of its tree stock. Adopting a prioritised programme of tree work will mean that risk assessed lowest priority work will not be attended to until such times as the risk rating changes. Lowest priority work will generally refer to requests received from the public. In many cases it is not possible to resolve issues to a resident's satisfaction. However, the Council will communicate its position clearly to the resident. The Tree Policy will be published on the Council's website. The Council reserves its discretion to deviate from the generality of this position, having considered advice from an arborist where relevant and where it is satisfied that the prioritising of resident concerns does not adversely prejudice the important tree stock management and environmental objectives of this policy.

6. Tree policy statements (TPS)

These tree policy statements should be read in line with the aims of this Policy:

TPS1 - We will take all reasonable steps to fulfil duties and obligations to ensure tree safety for public and property.

TPS2 - We will take all reasonable steps to fulfil duties and obligations to ensure trees do not cause damage to property.

TPS3 - We will take all steps to ensure that trees continue to contribute to the development of biodiversity, landscape quality and environmental enhancement.

TPS4 - We will generally only remove trees where there are justifiable arboricultural, structural or legal reasons. (see TPS6)



TPS5 - In delivery of the arboricultural service, we will provide the highest standards of tree care by adherence to relevant British standards and best practice guidelines.

TPS6 - All requests for arboricultural works will be assessed after consideration of advice from an Arborist or other relevant expert. Priorities for inspection shall be on a risk-assessed basis and urgent health and safety issues will be prioritised and action taken by the Clerk. In general, TP9 and TP10 will apply and the Council reserves its right to consider or refuse these and other works. Tree planting or felling will be referred to the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee for their consideration. Each committee will make a recommendation direct to Full Council that will make a decision. Where trees have Tree Preservation Orders they will be referred to the Planning Committee for consideration.

TPS7 - A public safety risk assessment of each tree inspected shall be undertaken. This assessment will shape:

- If works are required
- The specification for works where required
- The priority of works to be completed
- Targeting of finite resources allocated for arboricultural maintenance.
- Communicating where no work is deemed necessary within the terms of this Policy.

We will institute and maintain a risk-based system of tree management relying on a programme of inspection prioritised by potential hazard.

TPS8 - We will not authorise members of the public to undertake works to council owned trees. This does not affect common law rights.

TPS9 - We will not undertake any tree pruning works or remove trees in direct response to any natural or seasonal phenomena, for example:

- falling leaves
- sap exudation, (honeydew)
- falling fruits, nuts or seeds
- bird droppings
- blossom
- reduction or increase moisture to gardens
- sucker growth
- germinating seeds from council owned trees
- blocked or obstructed drains, gutters, flat roofs from tree deposits and leaves
- presence of algae, moss build up

TPS10 - We will not ordinarily carry out tree pruning or removal directly attributable to:

- TV or satellite signal reception;
- Obstruction of direct sunlight or man-made lighting during any part of the day
- blocking or obstruction of a view from a residence
- obstruction of car parking on verges

TPS11 - We will try to develop and promote a better understanding and awareness of the value of trees to the community and communicate our strategy for the management of the urban tree stock on the LTC web site and through service request responses.

TPS12 - We will undertake selective tree pruning for trees identified as obscuring the function of CCTV cameras at the request of the Policing Authority.

TPS13- We shall pay attention to local distinct landscape character and shall afford particular attention to the safe retention of veteran trees and trees with a particular landscape heritage value.



TPS14 - We will explore and develop opportunities to directly utilise or market the arisings (woodchips, logs and timber) generated by arboricultural operations for greater environmental sustainability and to provide service improvement.

TPS15 – We will carry out an audit and establish a database of all trees owned by LTC coupled to an IT based management information system.

TPS16 – We will encourage community involvement in carrying out and maintaining the audit through both our “Friends” groups, local schools and other interested community organisations.

TPS17 – Once the audit is completed we will publish on the LTC website a catalogue of the Council’s Tree as well as labelling trees with information about the species and age etc.

TPS18 - We will maintain the tree population by replacing each tree felled with two replacement trees and two additional orchard trees unless there are compelling reasons why this should not be the case.

TPS19 - We will develop the town’s tree population. The population will be expanded with new tree planting where possible and practical.

TPS20 - New trees will be planted of both indigenous and non-native origin to establish a wide diversity of species to best anticipate the continued effects of climate change. Indigenous trees species used will complement existing species to maintain the local distinct landscape character and be sourced to have local provenance where possible

TPS21 - Newly planted trees will be provided with protective guards where appropriate, and if required grills, and will receive systematic post-planting maintenance until they are established. Newly planted trees shall be watered, as required, for up to two years following establishment.

TPS22 - Private sponsorship of commemorative tree planting shall be encouraged in areas deemed suitable under the terms of landscape design best practice.

TPS23 - We will actively monitor the tree stock for infection and spread of tree diseases and take action as specified to control the spread of diseases that may affect the well-being of the tree stock. We will maintain professional links to monitor and identify a programme of preventative and remedial works, advice and notification.

TPS24 – We will actively consider trees for their local, environment and aesthetic importance both on council property and in the wider community and, where needed, seek to place Tree Preservation Orders on them following the normal procedures.

TPS25 - We will ensure that the management of trees and their vital importance to the environment are considered and embedded within all future strategies, policies, planning and council plans where applicable.

TPS26 – We will consider the importance of the environmental impact when considering both planning applications and Neighbourhood Planning and encourage the planting of trees whenever feasible.

Revisions	
Date	Amendment
February 2021	Last sentence of introduction amended from <i>‘The contribution of trees has to be considered when forming strategies to achieve many council objectives as follows:’</i> to <i>‘The beneficial contribution of trees and the Council’s duty to have regard to biodiversity will be considered when forming relevant Council strategies. The benefits include:’</i>



February 2021	Additional bullet point under heading 1.3 (Prosperity) <i>‘Creating an inviting place to visit’</i>
February 2021	Under heading 1.4 amended <i>‘National Policy identifies trees and urban ‘green spaces’ among the community’s most valuable features and Central Government expects that Local Council’s will maximise the opportunities that urban trees can bring to the above key areas through its strategic direction. This direction is now being delivered locally by Lowestoft Town Council by the formulation of an Open Spaces Strategy which underpins many facets of the wider council vision and policies. This Tree Policy will feed into the Open Spaces Strategy as well as any Planning and Neighbourhood Planning strategies and decisions.’</i> to <i>‘This Council has declared a Climate Emergency. National policies identify trees and urban ‘green spaces’ as among the community’s most valuable features. This Council builds on opportunities to benefit from trees locally. The Council does this through implementation of relevant polices including those directly addressing environmental concerns and its Open Spaces Strategy.’</i>
February 2021	Point 1.5 amended from <i>‘The historical context of trees owned by Lowestoft Town Council</i> <i>Upon its conception in April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council inherited a considerable number of trees. However, no audit of these trees had been completed prior to transferring them to the Council and there is no record of tree type, location, age, maintenance or condition. This policy will set out the Council’s legal obligations as well as the challenges, priorities and plans for maintaining and developing its tree stock.’</i> to <i>‘Background</i> <i>Upon its creation in April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council inherited a considerable number of trees. While no audit of these trees had been completed prior to transfer, the Council’s ambition is to create and maintain records of types, location, age, maintenance and condition of its trees. This policy will set out the Council’s legal obligations as well as the challenges, priorities and plans for maintaining and developing its tree stock. This policy focuses on the management of land and trees owned by this Council. However, the Council also plays an important role in influencing the land-</i>



	<i>use and behaviour of people and organisations, including through making recommendations on planning decisions.'</i>
February 2021	Wording at section 2 (Aims) amended to provide more clarity as to the aims of the policy, whilst now allowing some discretion for the Council to consider individual requests for tree works on their own merit.
February 2021	Wording at section 3 made more concise and more relevant to Lowestoft Town Council specifically. More clarity provided as to how the Town Council will manage its tree stock and associated risks.
February 2021	Section 4 added (the climate emergency and the environment).
February 2021	Section 5 (requests from the public) amended to clarify that the Town Council's priorities are biodiversity and the environment, and health and safety, and requests for tree maintenance from the public will be considered with this in mind. Amendment made to give the Town Council flexibility to deviate from the policy where necessary in considering requests from the public.
February 2021	Removal of the previous section 5 (the current administration of trees).
February 2021	Wording of the TPS statements amended to make them more relevant to the Town Council, and to better align with the purposes of the policy.
May 2022	TPS10 word 'ordinarily added.
April 2023	Added reference to Earth Protector Town declaration at 1.4. Added 'pollarding' to 2.1 Added the word 'structural' to 6 TPS4 TPS6 – amended paragraph to update Committee names TPS15 – removed "Within five years..." TPS20 – replaced "exotic" with "non-native"