

Spelthorne Borough Council

Tree Policy

Summary

Spelthorne Borough Council is setting out a new Tree Policy with the view to having a more efficient approach to tree management and supply clarity to those areas encompassing the policy.

The frequency of inspections regarding council owned land will directly correspond with the priority of the land in question; with public safety and the prevention of damage, the utmost concern. In light of this the Council will strive to respond to all related issues according to the degree of urgency.

The significance of trees

Trees play a major role in the modern environment especially within the urban fringe; a factor which will only continue to be more relevant as our need for development and growth continues amid pollution growth and climate change. The Borough recognises the broad spectrum of benefits that trees can provide; Environmental, Social, Health and Economic.

Environmental

- Trees offer vital micro-environments and foraging opportunities for a broad-spectrum of biodiversity, often proving green corridors to disjointed habitats.
- Be it on an international or local scale, trees absorb and store greenhouse gasses aiding the combat against climate change.
- Trees capture rainwater via both the canopy and root systems helping prevent localised flooding.
- Within busy urban surroundings trees can offer visual and noise filters.

Social

- Provides an area with a sense community.
- Offers site specific character through varying species and seasonal changes.
- Engagement and education tool.

Health

- By absorbing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses air quality is improved
- Through absorption and shading the Urban Heat Island Effect is reduced
- Aesthetically pleasing thus making areas more appealing for exercise

Economic

- A green environment is seen as a more beneficial place to live, visit and work.
- The presence of trees, especially well established trees can increase the value of properties.
- Trees can help regulate localised temperatures thus facilitating manmade heating and cooling condition.

Obligation of the Council

Legal structure

Statutory obligations determine how trees in the ownership of the council are managed. Frameworks concerning responsibility and management techniques are taken from the Highways Act 1980, Occupiers Liability Act 1957 & 1984, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 along with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Under the Tree Preservation Order section 198 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990; the Council has the authority to place Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) on valued trees, ensuring their protection.

Internal policies

In-house schemes such as Biodiversity Action Plans, Sustainability Strategies and Street Scene projects may correspond but not exclusively with the legal structure above.

Quality declaration

Contractors who work on behalf of the Council will be working inside the guidelines of best arboricultural practise. Work which is not up to the required standard of the Council will be disputed appropriately. All works will be carried out in accordance with the appropriate British Standard BS3998:2010

Felling and Pruning

The council will only fell trees on arboricultural evidence such as:

- Dead, dying, diseased or dangerous
- As part of an active management programme
- Evidence of substantial structural damage
- Considered an unsuitable species for that location and likely to lead to future problems

The following reasons below do not constitute the felling or pruning of trees:

- Where a tree is judged to be too large
- Leaf fall
- Adjudged to be hindering satellite TV reception
- Associated mess such as insect, fruit, seed, pollen or bird
- External body is willing to financially pay for works
- Mature trees will not be felled to create space for the planting of new saplings
- Perceived risk of future subsidence
- Pavement, garden and wall disturbance- engineering solutions will be sought under these predicaments

Minimal pruning may be carried out on the basis of:

- Assist the use of CCTV
- Overhanging neighbours property
- Blockage of light in extreme cases

Tree surveying

- Although the main aim is to provide a balanced environment by encouraging tree growth where possible, the risk factor must be taken into account.
- Surveys will be undertaken at appropriate intervals in accordance with site location. Survey frequency will depend on public activity rates.
- Annual visual checks will be undertaken by the relevant officer- secondary inspections may be called upon via an arboricultural consultant if required.
- Where necessary site plans will be kept in conjunction with future works.

Planting and future preservation

- In conjunction with planting by Council contractors, volunteer groups and the Tree Warden team undertake planting within Council owned land.
- Species specifics must be taken into consideration when planting new trees to allow the greatest possible chance of success based on size, soil type, structure and future management.

- A high priority and preference will always be given to native species, where possible trees of ecological value will be planted.
- Under the consideration of planning applications and developments 'ecological offsetting' will take place. Trees make up a percentage of this and are regularly included with such proposals.
- A conscious effort will be made to plant more native hedge mixes within the borough to assist or replace fences, providing living barriers with ecological value.
- To protect the Boroughs trees from specific diseases a rich diversity of species will be encouraged; this will also provide a more varied display.

Private land

- The Council are not able to assist in civil disagreements.
- Disputes conserving High Hedges can be found within the Councils web-portal.

Natural cycle

- The Council holds no responsibility for anything that may be released as per the natural cycle of the tree such as seeds, fruits and leaves etc. This also includes droppings of dwelling birds, mammals and insects.

Disease and pets

- The Council will take appropriate management towards established infestations and remains active in preventing such threats.