NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL TREE SERVICES

TREE POLICY
NOVEMBER 2025

Council trees shall be managed.

Nottingham City Council

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1. Introduction

For the purposes of this document, the term 'tree' refers to both individual trees and woodlands. This policy outlines the management of trees owned by Nottingham City Council and aims to ensure their health, safety, and contribution to the urban environment.

2. The Value of Trees in Urban Environments

Trees play a vital role in shaping the character and visual appeal of our cities. They add diversity, create focal points, and enhance the charm of streets, parks, and roadside areas. The benefits of trees are typically grouped into three key categories: Social, Economic, and Environmental.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Research consistently shows that well-treed areas contribute to an improved quality of life. Tree cover can:

- Reduce stress associated with urban living.
- Support childhood development and encourage physical activity.
- Foster stronger community connections and social interaction.
- Lower crime rates in green, tree-rich neighbourhoods.
- Enhance overall wellbeing, particularly for individuals with physical or mental health conditions, who often recover more effectively in green environments.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Trees also bring significant economic advantages:

- Green areas attract more business investment and stimulate local economic growth.
- This leads to increased job opportunities, higher property values, and greater retail activity.
- Trees help reduce household energy costs by moderating temperatures, especially during hot weather.
- By promoting health and reducing stress, trees can ease the burden on healthcare services.
- Homes on tree-lined streets often command higher market values.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

From an environmental perspective, trees are essential to urban sustainability:

- They help combat climate change by regulating temperatures and absorbing carbon dioxide.
- Trees reduce stormwater runoff, lowering the risk of flooding.
- They support biodiversity by providing habitats for wildlife.
- Tree cover helps reduce noise pollution and filters harmful pollutants, including diesel particulates, improving overall air quality.

3. Objectives

- **Preservation and Enhancement:** Maintain and enhance the tree population to improve air quality, reduce pollution, and support biodiversity.
- **Safety:** Ensure public safety by regularly inspecting and maintaining trees.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve the community in tree planting and maintenance activities.
- **Sustainability:** Promote sustainable practices in tree management.

4. Tree Management

4.1 RESPONSIBILITY

Various land-holding departments and service areas retain stocks of trees. Many land-holding services retain ultimate responsibility for tree management. Any delegation of this responsibility within each of these services is established through local agreement or custom.

Tree Services has delegated responsibility to carry out inspections and maintenance to trees in the following areas – Housing Services Estate Land, Highways group, Parks and Open Spaces Services, Heritage, Car Parks, Cemeteries and Corporate Landlord/Property Portfolios.

In all cases, the responsibility for the tree stock reverts to the relevant land-holding service once any maintenance or management work that Nottingham City Council Tree Services is able to commission (given resource constraints) is completed.

All tree maintenance work is funded by the relevant land-holding service.

A reactive service is currently offered to other departments within the Council to support services who currently have their own arrangements.

4.2 INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE

Tree inspections shall be carried out following a risk-based approach; this will determine the frequency of inspections.

- **Regular Inspections:** Trees will be inspected regularly by qualified Tree Inspectors/Officers to assess their health and safety.
- **Maintenance:** Necessary maintenance, including pruning, removal of dead or dangerous trees, and pest control, will be carried out within the recommended timescale from a qualified Arborist.
- **Emergency Response:** A rapid response team will handle emergency situations involving trees, such as storm damage.

4.3 TREE INVENTORY

The Council acknowledges that maintaining up-to-date knowledge of its tree stock is essential for effectively addressing the risks and challenges associated with this asset. This understanding is also fundamental to ensuring that tree management aligns with broader policy objectives. We therefore record our tree inventory on an electronic database. The importance of this approach is underscored by relevant case law.

4.4 INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE REGIME

To support this, trees must undergo regular inspections conducted by qualified and competent personnel. While there is no statutory guidance specifying the exact frequency of inspections, it is essential that inspections occur often enough to enable the timely detection of potential issues. The appropriate frequency shall be determined based on site-specific factors, particularly the level of risk posed to people and property.

Accordingly, the Council has adopted the following inspection cycles as a standard practice, having benchmarked with neighbouring authorities and following assessment of risk.

City Council Tree Area	Inspection Frequency
Highways	3-6 yrs
Heritage Sites	2-5 yrs
Car Parks	3-6 yrs
Housing Services Estate Land	3-6 yrs
Park Trees	2-6 yrs
Cemeteries	3-6 yrs

There will be occasions following planned or reactive inspections for a dynamic risk assessment by the Tree Officer and this could result in specific actions or work as an act of prudence for the Council.

- We are committed to undertake identified and necessary tree works within reasonable timescales subject to available resources.
- If a tree is in a poor condition and is an immediate risk then appropriate action will be taken as a matter of urgency. We are committed to not removing trees where viable management options are available. We will retain trees in situ whilst reducing the risk attributed to them to a level that is considered acceptable.
- We will not remove any healthy trees unless removal is in line with good management practices, dictated by the Highways Act or as part of a development. If trees are removed for development purposes replacement trees should be conditioned for planting or the monetary value of the asset should be reclaimed for replanting purposes.

4.5 TREE-RELATED RISK AND RECORDED DAMAGE

Nottingham City Council recognises that trees under its management may in certain circumstances, present risks or constitute an actionable nuisance. The Council is committed to addressing these issues in a timely and responsible manner, in accordance with legal obligations and best practice.

- Risk to Public Safety where a Council-managed tree poses a danger to people or property, the Council has a duty to act. All such risks will be addressed as soon as the Council becomes aware of them. Scheduling work in the timescales recommended following inspections.
- A tree may cause an actionable nuisance if it causes a material impact on a third party—for example, physical damage to buildings. Once on notice of the issue the Council will seek to resolve such issues as promptly as is practicable, balancing the needs of affected individuals with the wider public interest.

4.6 COMMON TREE ENQUIRIES - SERVICES OFFERED AND EXCLUSIONS TO TREES WITHIN COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY

Present danger, nuisance and regulated issues. The Council will consider and respond to the following tree-related issues:

1. Where there is obstruction of a legal access right (vehicular or pedestrian)
2. Where there is obstruction of bus stops
3. Public CCTV obstruction where there is no other practical or economic alternative
4. Physical contact of stems or branches with buildings or structures

5. Where trees demonstrably provide an access or obstruct visibility so that crime is a likely result

6. Where trees or limbs are damaged or weakened so that a hazard over private or public land/property results

7. Where roots are known to be involved in damaging structures, including surfaces and underground structures (either directly or indirectly)

8. Where trees are host to an infectious or a notifiable disease or pest

9. Where limbs and trees have fallen in a public place, except where conservation is an overriding priority

10. Public footway obstruction

11. Highway obstruction

12. Road sign or traffic light obstruction

13. Highway sight line obstruction

14. Streetlamp obstruction, where the area of intended benefit is compromised

15. Where a trip hazard is caused (felling will only be considered if area cannot be made safer by alternative action)

16. An Actionable Nuisance is being caused (touching or causing damage to property)

17. The health of the tree requires work to make it safe

Other common causes of complaint (inconvenience and acts of nature)

The Council will address these only if it is practical to do so and it has the resources available, and works would not damage amenity.
In the absence of these provisions, requests for works will be declined:

1. Obstruction of advertising

2. Bark stripping

3. Seed and berry caste

4. Bird droppings and bird roosting

5. Boundary overhang

6. Private CCTV obstruction

7. Climbing by children where there is no obvious hazard

8. Dead or dying trees unless a hazard is caused

9. Fallen trees or limbs in woodland and informal areas

10. Occurrence of sooty mould and honeydew (sticky substance excreted by aphids)

11. Presence of insects unless a known human pest species

12. Where the size of a tree draws complaint

13. Direct sunlight obstructed to a dwelling

14. Direct sunlight obstructed to a garden or drying area

15. Direct sunlight obstructed to solar panels

16. Satellite or terrestrial television reception obstructed

17. Leaf litter and twigs on roofs and in gutters

18. Leaf litter and twigs in private gardens

19. Sap or honeydew secretion

20. Dead or damaged newly planted trees

21. Requests for tree planting

22. Contact with overhead services

24. Failure of light from streetlamps reaching private land

24. Obstruction of views

25. Pest or rodents

5. Tree Planting and Replacement

5.1 PLANTING

- **Species Selection:** We will choose an appropriate species for planting, considering local conditions and biodiversity.
- **Location:** We will ensure trees are planted in suitable locations to avoid future conflicts with infrastructure.

5.2 REPLACEMENT

- **Criteria for Removal:** Trees will only be removed if they pose a safety risk, are diseased beyond recovery, or are causing significant structural damage.
- **Replacement Policy:** For every tree removed, a new tree will be planted, preferably in the same location or nearby where resource and funding permits.

6. Community Involvement

6.1 ENGAGEMENT

- **Education:** We will provide educational programmes about the benefits of trees and proper tree care.
- **Volunteering:** We will encourage community members to participate in tree planting and maintenance activities.

6.2 REPORTING

- **Public Reporting:** Tree enquiries can be made online by completing a form that will be processed by our Team. Contact can be made 24/7 for out of hours and emergencies.

7. Resources and Funding

7.1 BUDGET

- **Funding Allocation:** Essential funding to be prioritised to address tree safety critical works for tree management, including planting, maintenance, and emergency response.
- **External Funding:** We will continue to seek external funding and grants to support tree-related projects.

7.2 EQUIPMENT AND STAFFING

- **Materials and Equipment:** We will ensure the availability of necessary materials and equipment for tree maintenance is accessible to maintain trees.
- **Training:** We will ensure our staff receive regular training to keep them updated on best practices in arboriculture.

8. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

8.1 COMPLIANCE

- **Legislation:** We will adhere to all relevant legislation and regulations concerning tree management.
- **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs):** We will protect trees with TPOs and ensure compliance with their requirements. This role is currently administered by the Planning Department.

9. Root Damage and Subsidence

9.1 CLAIMS FOR DAMAGE SUSPECTED BY TREES

The Council recognises its duty of care to take reasonable and proportionate steps to mitigate direct damage to third-party properties, including root ingress from Council-managed trees. The Insurance Team works in close collaboration with the Tree Services Department to assess and manage claims related to such incidents.

The Council is committed to proactive tree management practices aimed at reducing the risk of subsidence and direct property damage. These practices may include root pruning, structured pruning regimes such as pollarding, and, where necessary, the removal of the tree identified as the influencing factor. Allegations of root-related damage will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with careful consideration given to both the impact on individuals and the broader environmental and community benefits provided by the tree.

Each year, the Council receives a limited number of claims alleging subsidence caused by tree root encroachment. In cases where building movement is attributed to the shrinkage of clay soils, claimants will be required to provide professional evidence, including cyclical monitoring, to demonstrate that a Council-managed tree is a contributing factor.

Tree-related subsidence is a complex issue, and all cases will be evaluated individually in accordance with established protocols and best practices.

9.2 DRAINAGE AND ROOT INGRESS

Reports are occasionally received regarding tree or shrub roots entering drainage systems and causing blockages. It is important to note that roots will only grow in environments conducive to their development. Healthy, watertight underground utilities are typically resistant to root ingress. However, if a fault exists and conditions are favourable, roots may exploit the weakness.

The removal of a specific tree does not guarantee prevention of future root ingress, as other vegetation may exploit the same opportunity. The most effective solution is to ensure that drainage systems are properly maintained and watertight. Residents experiencing drainage issues are advised to consult a qualified drainage specialist to assess the situation and determine the influence of any roots.

The Council will not act in response to complaints solely alleging that Council-managed trees are responsible for blocked drains.

10. Strong Wind/Storm Impact

10.1 Tree Services will proactively work with services such as Heritage Sites and Parks on their effective processes on their safe management of open spaces in the event of strong winds and storms.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- **Regular Reviews:** We will conduct regular reviews of the tree management programme to assess its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
- **Public Feedback:** We will incorporate public feedback into the review process to ensure community needs are met.

12. Tree Asset Value and Wilful Damage to Trees

12.1 ECO BENEFIT TREE VALUE

The Council utilises the Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) system to assign a monetary value to trees under its ownership or management. This approach recognises trees as valuable public assets rather than liabilities and supports their strategic management.

CAVAT serves as a decision-making tool for both broad tree stock management and individual tree assessments. It enables the Council to quantify the value of trees for various purposes, including:

- Budget planning and justification
- Assessing and recovering the value of lost amenity due to intentional or negligent damage
- Urban forest management and strategic planning
- Supporting insurance claims (e.g., in cases of subsidence)
- Informing tax assessments and real estate valuations

As stewards of public assets, the Council is committed to protecting its tree stock. Any damage to Council-owned trees will be investigated, and appropriate compensation will be sought using CAVAT valuations to reflect the loss incurred.

In cases where tree removal is proposed for development purposes, CAVAT provides a framework for evaluating the financial value of the tree, aiding in decisions about retention or removal. Similarly, it is used to assess damage caused during construction activities.

By adopting CAVAT, the Council reinforces its commitment to responsible tree management and the protection of the city's green infrastructure.