

# Kidderminster Town Council

## Tree Management Policy 2024

(In respect of trees on Town Council owned land)

Created: June 2024

Review: June 2025

### 1. Aim

1.1. Kidderminster Town Council Tree Management Policy is relevant in order to maintain a consistent approach to tree management within the Town Council.

- Apply to land that the Council owns or manages, and to any land that in the future the Council acquires or chooses to manage and maintain.
- Provide the public with a general guide as to what to expect from the Council regarding tree management and maintenance.
- Provide staff and maintenance teams with direction in undertaking routine work on and around trees.
- Be used as part of a suite of documents that contribute to Kidderminster Town Council's general aims in asset, land, and public realm management.

### 2. Introduction

2.1. All aspects of this Policy, except where the Council concludes there is a danger of harm to persons or property, will be subject to the limitations of finite resources, seasonal considerations, and other competing demands.

2.2. It is acknowledged that some areas might have management plans already in place which include tree management. Furthermore, these plans might be modified or updated, and plans may be created for other areas.

2.3. Trees are individual living biological structures, and each tree's needs will evolve and develop over its lifetime that will be affected by and will affect neighbouring flora and fauna.

2.4 Trees situated within the Public Highway, adjacent to the roadside verges, are generally the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council.

### **3. Policy Scope**

This policy applies to all trees under Kidderminster Town Council ownership/management, which are located within the allocated Open Spaces.

Although, we believe this policy to be as comprehensive as possible, we acknowledge it does not cover every situation. We reserve the right to exercise discretion in application of this policy when to do so would be in the best interests of the Council and its resident.

### **4. Health & Safety**

4.1. The priorities are public, staff/contractors and property safety. In response to this the Town Council:

- Will engage suitable professionals to provide regular condition surveys as part of its risk management strategy.
- Will ensure that Council staff and contractors working on tree maintenance will be competent to carry out the tasks they undertake.
- Should look to budget sufficiently each year to at least tend to High and Medium risk trees.
- Will deal promptly with all trees or branches on trees that pose a significant risk, regardless of designation or location.

### **5. Tree Maintenance**

5.1. Routine maintenance will be carried out at appropriate times throughout the year, e.g., not when birds are nesting.

5.2. Routine maintenance is considered to include:

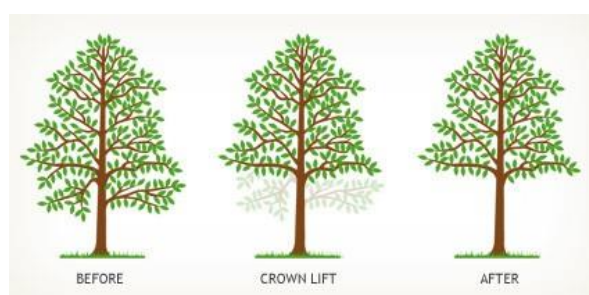
- Light pruning to remove damaged or diseased limbs.
- Removal of self-set saplings.
- Shaping of canopies to improve appearance or longevity of a tree.
- Thinning out of trees where they are in direct and detrimental competition with each other.
- Light pruning to remove obstructions to the public realm. This will include tending to epicormic growth.

## 6. Tree Pruning Techniques

We will seek to ensure that tree works are carried out to the highest standards. In carrying out tree works, we and any third party working on trees over which we have a responsibility, will ensure that pruning conserves the overall amenity value, form and shape of the tree and all tree works must be carried out in accordance with British Standard 3998 – Recommendations for Tree Work. Particular pruning specifications may or may not be appropriate for trees of different ages, species, health and condition, or even between trees of the same species depending on their condition, age and environment. Clear and acceptable pruning objectives are necessary in advance of approval of a pruning specification. The pruning objectives may require implementation of one or more of the following operations:

### ➤ Crown lifting

The removal of the lowest branches of a tree so that the remaining lowest branches are at a specified height, usually 2.4m over a footpath and 5m over a road. This operation is undertaken for a number of reasons, such as to allow access under a tree; to clear branches from low structures; or to allow light under the canopy.



### ➤ Crown thinning

The removal of a specified proportion of branch material from the interior of the crown without affecting the shape of the tree. This operation is usually undertaken to reduce crown density; form a healthy branch structure by removing dead; diseased, damaged, crossing and rubbing branches, and allow more light through the canopy. Many tree species evolve a canopy density for adaptive reasons and crown-thinning can increase turbulence and cause drought stress and branch failures. For this reason, crown thinning is usually only acceptable when carried out as part of crown cleaning or balancing works.



### ➤ Crown Reduction

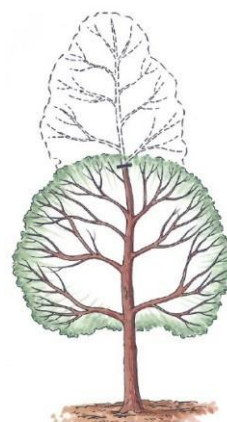
Reducing the overall size of the crown area by a specified percentage by pruning back the leaders and branch terminals to lateral branches that are large enough to assume the terminal roles (at least one third the diameter of the cut stem). Crown reduction



up to a maximum of 15-20% may be acceptable to semi-mature trees providing cuts do not exceed 5-7cm and where shaping and restricting size and spread is essential. Crown reduction of mature or older trees is not normally acceptable as it can severely affect tree health and may lead to the death or decline of the tree and is generally only acceptable as management of last resort.

### ➤ **Topping**

This entails cutting at a certain height to reduce the height of the tree. Topping is not acceptable as it severely affects the public amenity and health of the tree, sometimes leading to death. Topping can also lead to future problems due to a flush of weak re-growth that can represent a danger and also exacerbate existing problems. If height reduction is considered essential and unavoidable, crown reduction (see above) is preferred.



### ➤ **Pollarding**

This severe operation entails the removal of the entire tree's branch structure back to the trunk. Pollarding is an ancient way of maintaining trees that is sometimes necessary, particularly on trees that have been pollarded previously. Only certain species will tolerate this degree of pruning, and new growth may be weak and prone to tearing off. This method of management is not therefore normally acceptable.



### ➤ **Dead Wooding or Crown Clean**

This operation is similar to a crown thin except that only dead, diseased, crossing and rubbing branches are removed to tidy up the appearance of the tree. No healthy, sound wood is removed. This operation is recommended to help maintain a healthy, safe tree.

### ➤ **Formative Pruning**

The removal of problematic or potentially problematic branches, ensuring good tree development.

### ➤ **Stump Grinding**

Stump grinding is the practice of removing a tree stump to below ground level by mechanical means. We will carry out stump grinding where necessary to enable new trees to be planted or to remove a significant hazard. Where stump removal is not necessary tree stumps will be removed close to ground level so as not to leave a trip hazard.

### ➤ **New Tree Planting**

Where it is necessary to remove a tree, Kidderminster Town Council will endeavor to plant wherever possible a new "standard" tree to enable succession of Tree Stock

## **7. Conservation Areas & Tree Preservation Orders**

7.1. If part of Kidderminster Town Council lies within a designated Conservation Area, and Planning Permission must be obtained prior to undertaking any work on trees that lie within a Conservation Area.

7.2. Some trees have been afforded additional protection in the form of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Trees with a TPO may be within a Conservation Area, but many are not. Planning approval must be obtained, prior to undertaking any work on such trees.

7.3. Kidderminster Town Council is not the Planning Authority for Kidderminster. Like everyone else, the Town Council must apply to the local Planning Authority, Wyre Forest District Council, for permission to undertake work on trees within a Conservation Area and/or trees with a TPO.

## **8. Council Trees Affecting Private Property**

### 8.1. Overhanging branches

- If branches from a Council tree are overhanging private property, then the resident or property owner can cut them back to the boundary of their property. This work should be done from their own property, and they have the responsibility to dispose of any cuttings.
- Where it is not possible, sensible, or appropriate to undertake this work from the resident's or property owner's land, permission could be sought from the Council to undertake this work from Council managed land. If permission is granted, it must be in writing before work begins. The resident or property owner is still responsible for the removal of any cuttings.
- The Council may consider assistance with the removal of cuttings but may want to charge for this service.

### 8.2. Trees Damaging Property or Potential Safety Hazard

- Any tree that is an imminent or significant safety hazard will be dealt with promptly.
- If it is proved that a Council tree has damaged property, or could cause damage in the future, we may or will carry out work on the tree, depending on the circumstances.
- Trees Blocking Light, Affecting Television Reception, or Causing Other Issues of Concern, such as where trees block light or obstruct a reasonable view that was otherwise there before existing tree growth.
- Where Council owned or managed trees are blocking light, affecting television reception, or causing some other perceived nuisance, the Council will, without prejudice, consider pruning or some other action as a matter of goodwill.

### 8.3. Trees Damaging Underground Pipes

- It is considered exceedingly rare for underground water pipes to be broken by tree roots. Tree roots do not break into undamaged pipes but will take advantage of a pipe that is already damaged.

- The Town Council will not carry out work on trees to prevent roots entering damaged pipes, as repairing the pipe is the only effective and certain solution.
- Water pipes are the responsibility of the utility company.

#### 8.4. Trees Damaging paths.

- It is often possible to repair paths to take account of adjacent trees and tree roots. Where roots protrude, they can be root pruned, or the path re-laid around the tree with flexible materials such as asphalt to provide a smooth service. Where trees are considered to be causing damage to paths or footpaths, we will not normally consider tree removal except where there is a risk to public health which cannot otherwise be mitigated.