

Lichfield District Council

Resident and Business Services - Parks and Open Spaces

Tree Management Procedure

Background

Park trees significantly contribute to the natural green space, in environmental, social, and economic areas in the district. Removing airborne pollutants, reducing surface water and temperature, being crucial to health and wellbeing. This Tree Management Procedure has been developed to give clear parameters for the management and maintenance of the council's tree stock, estimated in the region of 30,000 trees. As trees are a living dynamic structure, it is not possible to anticipate every situation, however, with this process the council will meet its duty of care, legal, health and safety obligations, ensuring the trees are as safe as reasonably practicable. This procedure will be reviewed annually in line with the departmental annual risk assessment updates.

Core procedural points:

The Council will:

- continue to manage its tree stock based on the methodology set out below so that it can ensure its trees are as safe as is reasonably practical.
- continue to train park staff to a basic level of tree inspection so that they're on hand to carry out inspections whenever this is needed.
- Co-ordinate independent qualified arboricultural inspections in line with the below approach.
- act upon its tree inspections, carry out works needed within a reasonable timescale.
- treat all complaints and enquiries in the same manner, by discussing, visiting, and inspecting the trees, providing advice and feedback set out in this policy.
- consider completing works to trees where there is a threat to public health/safety, could cause damage to property, or is a conduit for anti-social behaviour.
- consider completing works to trees that are diseased but will take into account national guidance as well as considering the overall impact on works across the district. If diseased trees are found to be a widespread issue, then further advice and guidance will be sought from Cabinet and or a Scrutiny Committee.
- after basic inspections are completed and where there is doubt about the health and safety of a tree, expert inspections will be requested from qualified arboriculturalists.
- after we have inspected a tree, if further action is required, we will identify which category this action fits into.
- carry out visual inspections following Met Office weather warning alerts for high wind, graded amber and above at high risk sites.
- also carry out quick visual inspections to trees when they are in the vicinity of large-scale events in parks.
- trees identified as dangerous, but not within LDC's remit to be reported to the relevant landowner and backed up with an email/in writing as appropriate.

The Council will not:

- consider completing works if the complaint or enquiry is about leaf fall and litter, overhanging branches, blocking light to gardens, fruit or seeds falling, blocking views, or is causing nuisance because of wildlife, like birds or squirrels, or sap.

Our approach

In order for us to manage our trees safely, the following methodology has been implemented, considering several factors including: a tree's size, location, age and susceptibility to recognised diseases.

a) Tree Location/Site Risk

The risk of individual areas across the district are in line with the Parks site inspection matrix, as follows:

High	School runs, exercising/dog walking sites, routes to shops/facilities, sites with play equipment, adjacent to public highways, bus stops, overhead power lines & utilities
Medium	sites which have, or are adjacent to infrastructure/property, evidence of desire lines, adjacent to public footpaths and benches. No play equipment.
Low	Sites with no formal play, little or no infrastructure, not a destination place.

The specific tree location within the polygon (Arbortrack listed site), may result in individual tree location risks being re-assessed.

b) Tree Condition (as per Arbortrack category, assigned by inspector)

Condition	Summary	Probability of Failure
Felled/fallen	The tree has fallen or been felled	None
Stump	Tree felled but stump still present, potential re-growth. Minimal at time of inspection, potential for change in future years	Low
Good	Tree showing good crown health, leaves/needles, and trunk. No signs of pests or diseases.	Low
Reasonable	May be showing signs of dieback, deadwood, swelling or cracks in the trunk, leaning, evidence of fungus, pests and/or cavities.	Medium
Poor	Crown dieback, fallen limbs, diseased. Evidence of being unstable, new leaning apparent, storm damage.	High Very high
Dead	Tree shows signs of failure, dropping limbs, of immediate danger	Very high
-	Young trees less than 75mm diameter (measured 1.5m from the base) and those removed, or which have fallen completely and are to be left for wildlife habitat, to be inspected as part of the Parks Team Site Inspections.	Minimal /None

Inspection calculation matrix

		Tree Condition					
		Dead	Poor	Reasonable	Good	Stump	Felled / Fallen
Location / Site Risk	High	Immediate Action to remove/ reduce risk Arbortrack re-inspect 6 months, if not removed at time of inspection.	Immediate Action to remove/ reduce risk Arbortrack re-inspect 12 months.	2 ½ yearly (30 months)	3 yearly	5 yearly	No further expert tree inspections
	Medium	Immediate Action to remove/ reduce risk Arbortrack re-inspect 12 months, if not removed at time of inspection.	Immediate Action to remove/ reduce risk Arbortrack re-inspect 2 ½ yearly (30 months)	3 yearly	4 yearly	5 yearly	No further expert tree inspections
	Low	Immediate Action to remove/ reduce risk Arbortrack re-inspect 2 ½ yearly (30 months), if not removed at time of inspection.	3 yearly	4 yearly	5 yearly	5 yearly	No further expert tree inspections

Responding to enquiries and complaints

The Council will always respond to enquiries and complaints regarding trees, whereas there are potentially several responses that we may issue: all being dependant on the tree, its condition, its location, and the nature of the request.

But we recognise that one person's opinion of a tree might be very different to another person's. In consequence, and given a limited budget, we will not undertake works to trees unless it is necessary to do so.

When we receive enquires or complaints, then we follow the process detailed below:

1. Customers will be encouraged to record enquiries and complaints via the councils 'report it' (Jadu) process online or cases be registered by the councils contact centre/park staff.
2. Check that the tree is LDC's on Arbortrack and the councils GIS database – if not owned

by LDC advise the complainant accordingly. No further action.

3. If the tree is LDC's then confirm its status on Arbortrack and check the following: Is the tree subject to a TPO or is it in a Conservation Area, are any works planned, is it being monitored, has this person made previous enquiries.

If the enquiry or complaint is relating to dropping leaves, overhanging branches, blocking light to gardens, causes fruit to fall, blocking views or is causing nuisance because of wildlife or sap then advise the customer that we don't carry out works to trees for these reasons. Record the customer enquiry on the software system for the next routine inspection to be taken into account.

3a) If the complaint is about overhanging branches and the tree is not protected by a TPO or within the conservation area, we will advise the customer that they are able to complete this work themselves. We will also advise them if the trees are protected and what procedures they need to follow if they are.

3b) If a complaint continues, we might allow the customer to carry out works to a tree at their own expense as long as the works are specified in advance and agreed with the council. There is no guarantee for this, and the council's Arboricultural Officers can provide the appropriate technical advice on any specifications put forward.

4. If the complaint relates to the poor condition of a tree and which might threaten public health/safety, cause property damage, or is a conduit for anti-social behaviour then the tree will be inspected on a case-by-case basis and referred to the manager. If the manager agrees, then action as necessary. If reported as dangerous and parks staff/managers are uncertain then refer to Arboricultural Officers for a re-inspection
5. Whether the complaint requires inspecting or works, all cases are dealt with within a reasonably practicable timeframe.

Recording and reporting

Works including; basic, expert and detailed inspections, removals, failures, enquires, complaints and outcomes to be recorded on Arbortrack and Jadu in line with the councils customer promise.

Trees planted to be recorded on Arbortrack detailing initial maintenance programme.

To review and report outstanding Jadu cases to management on a monthly basis.

Budgeting

Any works for trees in parks will either be completed by the qualified in-house team or procured in line with the councils' financial procedures. The parks team has a limited budget set aside to maintain all its trees and maximising these resources is essential.

There will be times when emergency works are needed and in these circumstances the councils Grounds Maintenance department or a contractors selected via the procurement process will be used.

Tree Software licence

The Software license is paid from the Parks revenue budget.