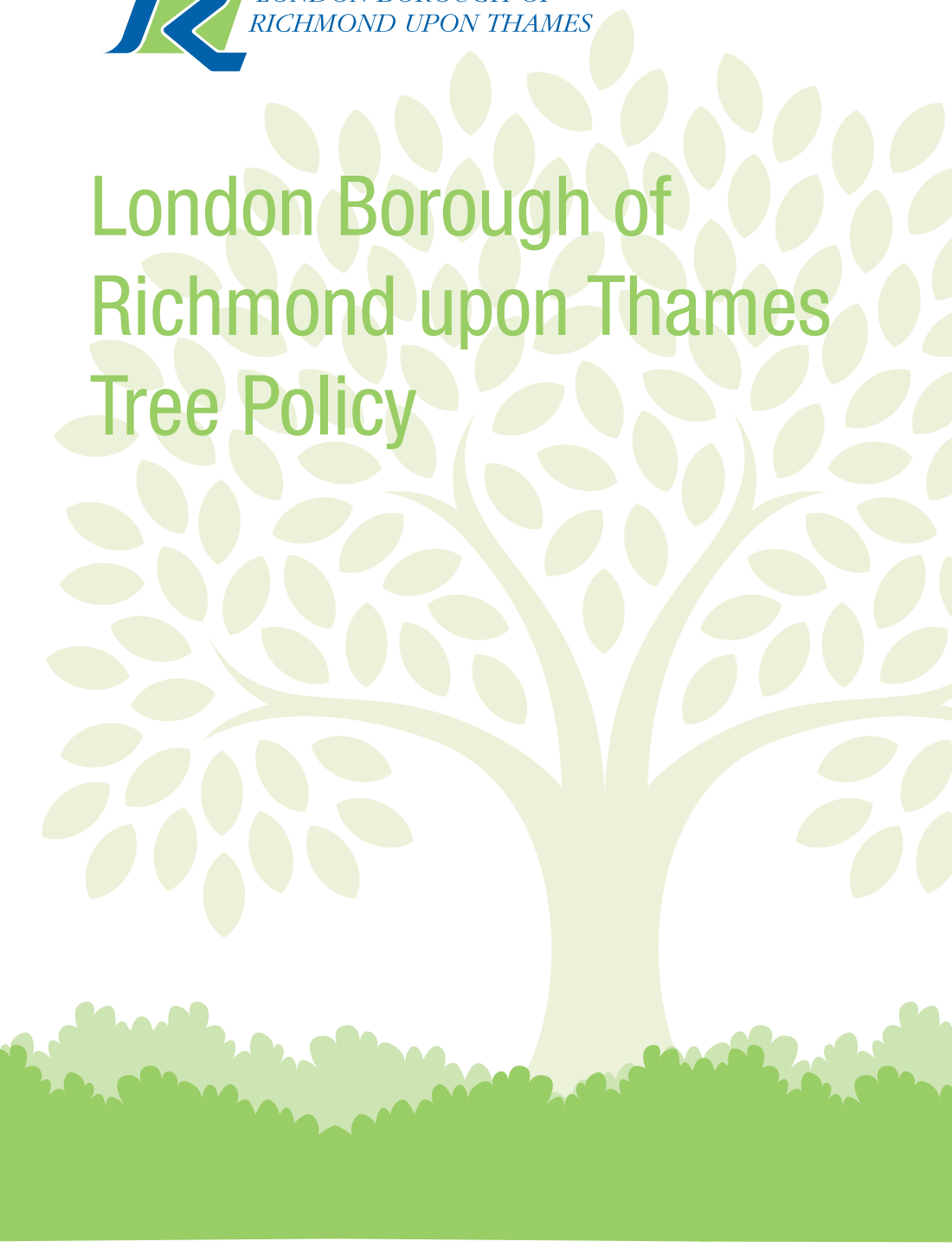




London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Tree Policy



Policy context and objectives

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is renowned for being a leafy Borough; we are responsible for thousands of trees within our streets, parks, open spaces and woodlands. In addition, the Borough is rich in vegetation within privately owned and managed properties.

This policy acknowledges the value of the Borough's trees; key responsibilities are identified which determine our approach towards tree management. The approach is presented as a number of components designed to give clear guidance to all stakeholders.

The value of our trees

The Borough recognises the value of its tree resource and understands that there are Social, Environmental Health and Economic benefits:

Social

Trees provide:

- A sense of place and community
- An educational resource
- Seasonal interest, flowers, fruit, autumn colour, dormancy
- A cultural and historic link to many areas of the Borough
- Trees help to put Richmond 'on the map'; the green environment encourages people to visit and live in the Borough
- They are a tool in reducing crime levels

Environmental

- Trees reduce the 'Urban Heat Island Effect' by absorbing radiation which would otherwise be stored and emitted by urban infrastructure increasing local temperatures
- Trees absorb and store greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, helping to combat Climate Change
- Our trees offer shade as protection from the sun, within our parks and open spaces they provide cool places for people to enjoy during periods of high temperature
- Trees intercept rainwater helping to prevent localised flooding
- Trees are an essential element of biodiversity; supporting wildlife throughout all areas of the Borough
- Trees help to reduce noise pollution within our busy environment

Health

- Trees help to improve air quality as they remove pollutants helping to minimise associated health risks to our population
- Trees have a positive effect upon our mental health and sense of wellbeing
- Trees provide inviting areas for us to exercise
- Trees provide shade therefore reducing the risk of skin cancer
- Trees reduce the urban heat island effect, helping to cool local areas and therefore preventing heat associated injury/ailment

Economic

- The presence of trees can increase the value of properties
- Trees make areas more attractive to prospective property purchasers
- A green environment makes for a better working environment; workers who have views of trees feel happier and therefore makes for better performance
- Trees help to create welcoming areas within our town centres, encouraging people to visit and stay for prolonged periods, using shops and restaurants
- Trees help to regulate local temperature extremes therefore reducing the costs of heating and cooling buildings
- The presence of trees makes for a healthier population, therefore reducing the burden upon the health services

In understanding the benefits of its tree resource the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames will work to safeguard and maximise the benefits that trees provide.



The Council's responsibility

Legal

Statutory obligations dictate how the Council must manage trees that are within areas of its control; these are principally the Highways Act 1980 and the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & 1984.

Statutes such as The New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991; Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 govern how contractors working within the Borough must operate.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 places a duty upon the Council to assess the impact of tree loss within the Borough; where the loss is likely to have a significant impact upon the local and wider landscape the Local Authority must consider protecting trees through the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) process.

Overarching Policies

This policy links to overarching National, Regional and Local policies including:

- The National Planning Policy Framework and The London Plan
- The Boroughs Local Plan, Village Plans, Parks Strategic Principles, Air Quality Action Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy

Meeting the responsibility

In order to fulfil these responsibilities, the Council employs expert Arboriculturalists, who are suitably qualified and experienced in the delivery of statute and policy relating to Arboricultural Management.

Policy components

1. Legal Responsibility

The Council will ensure that its trees are managed in order to meet its statutory responsibilities.

2. Tree Policy Context

The Council's trees will be managed to ensure compliance with overarching national, regional and local policies.

3. Quality assurance

The Council and contractors working on its behalf will work in accordance with current industry best practice.

Where work is not carried out to the required standard the Council will seek remedial action and compensation where irreversible tree damage or destruction has been caused.

4. Tree Surveying

At appropriate intervals the Borough's trees will be assessed as part of a detailed survey.

The survey will determine management schedules.

The Borough's tree management regime will adopt a sustainable approach and be driven by the need to maximise the benefits provided by trees and maintain our tree population.

The survey will accord to the principles of the National Tree Safety Group guidance "Common sense risk management of trees".

5. Sustainable tree planting

The Borough's tree stock will be sustained or increased through an annual programme of tree planting.

The Council will plant the right tree in the right place and where appropriate this will give priority to planting native trees.

The Council will aim to plant within the location of the tree that has been removed. Where existing site constraints mean that this is not possible a tree will be planted in the nearest possible suitable location.

The Council will encourage species and genetic diversity amongst its tree population, this is to avoid risk of disease having widespread and damaging effects and to provide variety to those living in or visiting the Borough.



6. Tree Pruning

Tree management schedules will be produced in accordance with the principles as outlined within Section 4.

Previous pruning regimes will be considered and where appropriate repeated on a cyclical basis.

The Council will prune trees where it is in the best interest of public safety.

The Council will prune trees to eliminate any unreasonable obstruction of the public highway, footways and other areas of public access.

Pruning will be undertaken in order to prevent branches contacting neighbouring property.

Trees will be pruned to ensure that established essential fixtures and services situated within the public highway are fit for purpose.

Trees will be pruned where they cause an unreasonable obstruction of access to private property.

Historic vistas will be maintained through appropriate tree management.

The Council will undertake pruning operations where legitimate instructions have been received by a utility provider.

The Council will make pruning cycles available for view on its web pages.

7. Tree Removal

Where the problem cannot be remedied by pruning or a suitable engineering solution, the Council will remove trees which pose an unacceptable risk of injury or damage.

Where the problem cannot be remedied by pruning or a suitable engineering solution, the Council will remove trees which cause an unacceptable obstruction of the public highway and footpaths.

Trees will be removed where the Council's Arboriculturalists deem that a species is inappropriate for its setting.

Where trees are proven (beyond reasonable doubt) to be the cause of significant structural damage, removal will be considered.

The Council will consider the removal (or thinning) of trees where it will benefit adjacent specimens, for example in overpopulated formal avenues.

Where the removal of trees is likely to have a significant impact upon the landscape and therefore generate public interest the Council's Arboriculturalists will give advance notice to the Ward Councillors and the Relevant Cabinet Member.

8. Inappropriate tree work operations

The Council will not undertake tree work operations which may result in unnecessary damage or injury to trees and will not therefore prune or remove for any of the following reasons:

- Shade prevention
- Interference with television/satellite signals and private CCTV operations
- Contact with overhead telephone lines
- Branches are overhanging neighbouring property
- Prevention of animal and insect droppings or squirrel access
- Because trees are perceived as being large or too big
- Seasonal occurrences such as leaf, flower, seed and fruit fall

Third parties are not permitted to access Council land in order to carry out works to trees that are within its control.

10. Utility Services and Cross overs

The Council will not remove or reposition trees to facilitate the implementation of non-essential underground or over-ground services and signs or the construction of drop kerbs or crossovers.

Where new essential services are proposed the Council's Arboriculturalists will provide advice during the design stage in order to minimise the impact upon trees.

11. Root ingress

The Council is unable to prevent root ingress to within adjacent gardens and will not therefore undertake root removal where this has occurred.

The Council will not accept responsibility for tree roots that have gained access to drains or services as a consequence of those services being unfit for purpose.

12. Affixing to trees

Items such as decorative lights may only be attached to the Borough's trees where a suitable methodology has been submitted to and approved by the Council's Arboriculturalists.

The Council's tree section will not take responsibility for any unauthorised attachments.

Where the owner is known they will be given a period of 20 working days to arrange for removal to take place.

Any unauthorised attachments such as decorative lights and signs will be removed; the Council will seek remedial action and compensation where irreversible tree damage or destruction has been caused.



13. Private trees and development

The Council will serve Tree Preservation Orders in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government Planning Practice Guidance (Tree Preservation Orders and trees in Conservation Areas).

Where tree loss occurs through development replacement trees will be sought either to be planted within the site or within the public realm through the Section 106 agreement and CIL process.

14. Tree work notifications and applications

The Council will only validate Section 211 Notifications and Tree Work Applications that conform to the requirements outlined within the guidance as provided by the Planning Portal.

15. Trees and private property

The Council is unable to assist in civil disputes regarding privately owned trees.

The Council are only able to become involved with a High Hedges dispute upon receipt of a complaint that conforms to the requirements outlined within the guidance as provided by the Planning Portal.

16. Pests and Diseases

The Council will take a responsible management approach towards established pests and diseases and will be proactive in planning for any new threats that are posed to the Borough's tree population.

17. Natural occurrences

The Council does not accept responsibility for the clearing up of or damage caused by anything that may be deposited as part of a trees natural cycle (e.g. leaves, seeds, fruit etc) onto neighbouring property.

The Council does not accept responsibility for cleaning or damage by animal or insect droppings (for example bird droppings and aphid honeydew) onto neighbouring or private property.

Parks and Open Spaces

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