WHITEHILL
TOWN COUNCIL
Serving Whitehill & Bordon

TREE POLICY

Date of Adoption: 23.03.21 Date of Review: 07.11.24 Next Review: Nov 2027

PREFACE

Whitehill Town Council believe that our Trees, Hedgerows and wider Greenspace form an integral part of our Towns character. Our ethos is focused on upholding the Healthy Green Town status we were awarded in 2016 and promoting the natural environment for all to access and enjoy. To this effect, we have sent notice to all stakeholders that we are in favour of it being a de facto prerequisite of all future land sales for the purpose of development to include a native tree / natural environment protection caveat at point of sale. Our commitment can be seen in the routine rejection of all planning that does not meet the criteria and in our objections when invited to give an opinion. We highlight that in part, housing is sold off the back of our wonderful greenspaces and so feel it is correct that they in turn do everything possible to conserve our natural resources. We consult regularly with experts from across the "green spectrum "to ensure we are doing everything possible to uphold our commitment to the Trees, Woods, Meadows, Commons and Rivers within our beautiful Town so that under our custodianship they are protected for future generations. We stand for sustainability, conservation and a reduction in our carbon footprint in line with environmental advice. Whitehill Town Council has a designated Greenspace representative, council officer, tree wardens and a council that already controls areas of our natural environment on your behalf. Our policy is to aim for democratic oversight which may include management of any town Greenspace currently not within our control and to work closely with wider stakeholders who do have green interests within Whitehill and Bordon.

The importance of the natural environment on health and wellbeing can never be underplayed and along with sensitive conservation practice, under our council, it never will be.

THE LAW

- A principle of English Common and statute Law is that land / tree owners have a duty of care to visitors, residents, passers-by and indeed trespassers when on their land.
- This means that the Town Council has a responsibility to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of death or injury to those on Town Council land.

INSPECTIONS

The Council has a duty of care for its trees and will inspect trees in high-risk areas annually. High risk areas will include such areas as those adjacent to the public highway, major footpaths, and other areas of high use such as the Council's play areas. After storms or any incidents of gale force winds or falls of snow, trees in high-risk areas will be given a visual inspection.

The Council recognises the importance of mature and ancient trees and will balance safety. with a duty to protect the environment. Higher levels of risk will be acceptable in areas of lower footfall (e.g., the middle of a woodland site) as opposed to highly visited areas (e.g. play areas). This will allow the Council to keep veteran trees and to encourage biodiversity. without creating undue risk.

Work that Whitehill Town Council will undertake

Work that Whitehill Town Council will carry out on Council owned trees.

In maintaining our trees, we will:

- Remove dead, dying and dangerous trees.
- Remove dangerous and damaged limbs.
- Carry out works that protect the health of the tree and extend its life for the benefit of the environment.
- Within Bordon Inclosure and the Local Nature Reserve a management plan for the woodland will be followed that benefits the overall health of the woodland for biodiversity.

It is our policy to survey our trees on a regular basis, but if trees require works for any of the above reasons, members of the public may contact: info@whitehilltowncouncil.gov.uk.

The trees will be inspected and if works are required this will be planned and prioritised according to the level of risk.

Work that Whitehill Town Council will not undertake.

We have no obligation to carry out the following tree works:

- Cut back branches overhanging private property.
- 'Top' trees or remove branches to increase daylight or decrease height in relation to property.
- Remove branches or trees affecting views or interfering with TV reception.
- Remove branches or trees to prevent falling leaves, honeydew from aphids or other. minor debris.
- Remove roots from drains or repair root damage to structures, where the tree has not been clearly demonstrated to be the principal cause.

PRINCIPALS WHERE TREES ARE MANAGED

When trees are felled or made safe because they are dead, dangerous, or dying, if appropriate to the specific site, large woody debris will be left in situ for the creation of wildlife habitats. If the tree is still alive it will be pollarded to extend its life. Where possible, the trunks will be left as standing dead wood, or lying on the ground in habitat piles. This will all be assessed with health and safety in mind.

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER'S

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is a form of planning control that protects trees that make an important contribution to their local surroundings. TPOs are made when trees are under threat of being cut down or damaged.
It is illegal to cut down, prune, or damage a tree protected by a TPO without East Hants District Council's consent. The unauthorised lopping or felling of a tree is a serious criminal offence and can result in a large fine and a criminal record.
Use http://maps.easthants.gov.uk to look up an address and see if there are any protected trees nearby. Consent is needed to work on a protected tree. If you wish to undertake felling or crown reduction, please discuss your proposals with East Hants District Council in order to gain consent.

RESPONSIBILITY OF RESIDENTS

DANGEROUS TREES

If you have a tree on property you own or rent, you are responsible for it and should take reasonable steps to manage and reduce risk. This includes identifying and inspecting trees that might cause injury or place property at risk of damage.

OBSTRUCTION TO PATHS AND THE HIGHWAY

It is important to ensure trees and vegetation which overhang public highways, pavements and paths are regularly maintained (out of bird nesting season) to ensure there are no obstructions to members of the public. Council authorities, including Town Councils, have certain powers to deal with trees not on their land which overhang the highways, streets, or pavements. They can give notice to the owner requiring them to cut or prune the tree or other vegetation. If the owner fails to comply the Authority may carry out the work and charge the owner.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Land within Whitehill and Bordon is owned/leased and managed by three public bodies that include Whitehill Town Council, East Hants District Council and Hampshire County Council. These councils are responsible for trees on their land. There is also a considerable amount of privately owned land with the responsibility for trees being with individuals or organisations. Individual land ownership can be confusing as your property line is not necessarily where your fence line ends, and you may be responsible for land beyond it. You should be able to check this on your deeds which may be held by your mortgage company, you can also contact land registry online. Some land is unregistered and there is no obvious landowner even though the land may be owned, possibly by the builder of the adjacent properties.

TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

TREE INSPECTIONS

Trees will be inspected at three levels:

1. **Informal Observations** – members of WTC staff will be aware of trees health and condition and make observations as part of their other duties and respond to issues raised by members of the public.
2. **Walk through inspection –** this takes place when a member of WTC walks and visually inspect trees to see if there are any visual tree defects. This will always occur following strong winds, named storm or a snow fall. Following a weather incident only trees of concern need recording including location, species, size, defect, recommendation for work and Timescale.

    - Urgent (24) hrs
    - High Priority (within three weeks)
    - Medium Priority (Within 6 months)
    - Low priority – to be kept under observation.

3. **Formal Inspections –** this involves a detailed inspection of all trees or tree groups on a site/zone and including tree species, size, signs of disease including fungal attack, tree canopy, damage, checks for any hollowness. Sail effects of ivy etc.
   If on inspection the inspector has any concerns beyond his/her level of expertise an arborist should be consulted.

Tree sites are graded into zones following the following categories.

	Descriptor
High Risk	Areas of ground that are within falling distance of people, property, highways and overhead cables.
Moderate Risk	Open spaces with moderate footfall/occupancy including parks, sports pitches, and allotments.
Low Risk	Public open spaces and conservation sites with low footfall/occupancy including buffer strips and woodland.

Surveys will be carried out using the following Frequencies.

Risk Zone	Survey Frequency
High Risk	Formal Inspection every year. Walk over inspection following extreme weather.
Moderate Risk	Formal inspection every two years. Walk over inspection following extreme weather.
Low Risk	Informal observations of trees within falling distance of paths and benches to be carried out by WTC during everyday duties. Reporting any concerns.

Proposed program of inspection for the next 5 years.

Risk Zone	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
High Risk	X	X	X	X	X
Moderate Risk	X		X		X
Low Risk	During usual daily tasks				

RESPONSIBILITIES

The amenity land owned or leased by WTC including allotments, recreation grounds, open spaces, playgrounds will be inspected by Grounds Officer and Assistant and concerns may be referred to an Arborist.

Natural areas including the Local Nature Reserve and Bordon Inclosure are inspected by the Deadwater Valley Trust as part of their contract with Whitehill Town Council and they follow both the management plan to maintain the woodland environment and the tree management plan in order to ensure health and safety.

TREES THAT ARE ANCIENT/VETERAN OR OF IMPORTANCE TO THE COMMUNITY

Veteran trees are defined as 'a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition'. Some trees are instantly recognisable as veterans, but many are less obvious. There is no set age for a tree to be considered ancient, as different species age at different rates. Birch trees, for example, are fast-growing, and could be classed as ancient at 150 years old, an oak tree not until it is 400 years old, while a yew tree might receive the same accolade at 800 years of age.

Whitehill Town Council is committed to recording and managing veteran/ancient trees to ensure their health and longevity. This may result in a variety of measures including de-compacting soil beneath the tree to allow nutrients to reach the roots, diverting footpaths to reduce soil compaction, hallowing to remove the effect of competing younger trees, encouraging the growth of scrub beneath the trees canopy to protect the ground and the laying of mulched wood chip. Any tree of interest will be discussed in consultation with the Chairman of the Greenspaces committee. Where necessary experts in this field of expertise will be consulted.