

# PLANNING FOR TREES ADVICE NOTE



*A guide for  
developers*

*September 2005*

# Introduction

Woodland, trees and hedgerows have an important role in our environment, they:

- Are good for our health, and the health of the planet;
- Provide shelter and food for other wildlife, particularly if they form connections to other hedgerows, trees and woodlands;
- Absorb pollution and muffle noise;
- Slow down the wind and reduce heating bills;
- Create enjoyment to the public; and
- Provide maturity to developments and enhance property values.

Woodland, trees and hedgerows should be seen as an asset rather than a constraint in any new development. Removing trees and other site features may have a detrimental effect on your planning application if this means that developments no longer tie into their surroundings, or have any screening. Therefore before ANY work is carried out on site, the following information should be considered. Please also refer to our General Landscape Advice Note for further information.



*'Existing Trees and Hedgerows can be valuable features on a development site'*

## Factors to Consider Before Designing a New Development

In order to design any new development it is important to have a site survey plan, drawn to

scale, and you may employ a surveying company to do this accurately. This should include the location of tree trunks, canopy spreads, hedgerows, boundaries, buildings and other site features, as well as existing ground levels. Once this is done the plan can be used to mark on the following information:

- Tree Survey information:** A qualified arboriculturalist will be able to identify, through the plan and a report, tree species, which trees are worthy or unworthy of retention, as well as any other work that is required from a health and safety point of view. This is important information to have early on, as designing around unsafe trees may compromise the amount of space given to healthy trees.
- The value of trees and hedgerows:** Tree's and hedgerow's value in terms of their visibility, screening, shading and sheltering potential; contribution to the character of the locality; and/or creation of focal points should be shown on plan.
- Other designations that may include:**

- Trees that are protected by Tree Preservation Orders and/or Conservation Area designations. (Refer to our Tree Advice Note and our General Landscape Advice Note).
- Important hedgerows: are protected under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. (Refer to our General Landscape Advice Note).
- Ancient semi-natural woodland. (Refer to our Tree Advice Note and our General Landscape Advice Note).
- Wildlife habitat containing protected species. (Refer to our Tree Advice Note and our General Landscape Advice Note).
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest. (Refer to our Tree Advice Note and our General Landscape Advice Note).
- Historic Parks and Gardens. (Refer to our General Landscape Advice Note and Historic Parks and Gardens Supplementary Planning Document available on our website).
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments. (Refer to our Tree Advice Note and our General Landscape Advice Note)



*'Trees and Hedgerows contribute to the character of the area'*

Once you have gathered all this information you will be in a position to identify the trees and hedgerows that you intend to retain, remove or carry out work on. If we disagree with your judgements, alterations to the design of your new development may be required.

Therefore it may be in your interests to agree tree and hedgerow works with a Tree and Landscape Officer before going any further with your design work, or submitting a planning application.

## Designing a new Development

### General design issues

When submitting a planning application, drawings should be included to support your application (refer to "Advice Notes on Design Statements and Drawings to support planning applications in Wychavon" booklet). Among other plans, a Site Layout Plan should be submitted to show the proposed layout of the new development. The Site Layout Plan should use your site survey plan as a base and clearly identify existing trees and hedgerows to be retained and or removed. It should also include proposals for new planting, clearly labelled to show their species, size at planting, and planting densities, or numbers (refer to our Landscape Proposals Advice Note).

The plan should demonstrate that both existing and new trees will be able to continue to grow and flourish through careful design of the new development under the following criteria:

## Space

If trees are to survive to maturity, space needs to be given to accommodate them. Therefore development proposals, even if not affecting trees directly, may not be acceptable if they would result in undue pressures, in the short or long term, for felling or excessive pruning of important trees.

If buildings are constructed too close to existing trees or new tree species are not carefully chosen, the trees may become a constant source of complaint that could lead to their removal or destruction of their shape. If large species are chosen to screen a development, buildings should be set back from them. If trees are required within a garden setting for amenity, smaller species may be more suitable.

As a general rule trees should be planted at a distance of no less than two thirds of the mature height of the tree from a building. Paths, services, boundaries and other smaller structures with foundations should not be built within the mature canopy spread, or half the height of the tree, whichever is greater. Details will be required of any works within the root spread of an existing tree to be retained.



*'Tree sizes and species should be appropriate to each location'*

## Choice of species

The design and function of new planting should be decided at an early stage. Tree planting may be used as screening between buildings and to enhance the character of the site, critical to this is the choice of species. In general new planting should follow what is found in the locality to fit in with the character of the surroundings. It is likely

that whatever is growing strongly locally will be suitable for the soil type, and climatic conditions.

## Ownership

Trees within gardens are likely to come under more pressure than those in larger areas of public open space, as people often complain about loss of light, leaf drop in the autumn, possible damage to houses and or cars. Therefore if there were any important existing trees on site, it would be best to incorporate them within the public open space provision.

Under Common Law, unless the tree is protected by any other designations (refer to our Tree Advice Note), people are entitled to trim back to their boundary any overhanging branches or roots which are on their land. For this reason when you design new tree planting or design new plots around existing trees you should consider positioning the tree so that it's eventual canopy spread can be accommodated in one person's ownership. If trees cross boundaries with other properties there is a risk that the tree's shape will be affected, or the tree's stability if roots are pruned back to the ownership boundary.



*'It is best to accommodate a tree's canopy spread within one person's ownership'*

## Soil conditions

There is almost as much of a tree below ground as there is above it. A tree does not have a 'tap root', but a mass of rapidly subdivided fibrous roots extending at least to the edge of the outermost branches, and often beyond, for up to 1.5 times the tree's height. Most of the tree's roots are within 600mm of the surface and the fine feeding roots may be just below the surface some

way from the trunk. Any activity that damages or kills these fine roots will affect the health of the whole tree. Damage done to the main structural roots will not only kill the feeder roots, but will also affect the tree's stability and may render it dangerous.

### **Damage to tree roots can be caused by:**

- Increasing ground levels and or compacting the ground around the tree stopping oxygen getting to the roots.
- Reducing ground levels meaning that roots are cut stopping nutrients getting to the trunk and branches and destabilising the tree.
- Putting non-permeable surfacing over the rooting area, stopping the tree getting the water and nutrients that it is used to.
- Cultivating the ground for new planting that may disturb and or cut the roots.
- Storing substances around a tree that may poison the soil.

When designing new developments, details of existing and proposed levels will be required. These should demonstrate that ground levels within the spread of the tree's roots will not be altered.

Details should also be provided of the treatment of the ground within the root spread of the tree. For example hard surfacing, type of planting and ground preparations to be carried out (refer to our Landscape Proposals Advice Note), as well as details of protective fencing.



*'Existing trees should be protected on all development sites'*

## Actual damage

Poor tree surgery, storm or lightning strikes or damage caused by construction traffic may lead to structural harm to a tree and or fungal infections. Damage above ground is easily seen, and may even be repaired by a Tree Surgeon. However, damage below ground is much more serious and may cause the tree to die slowly over a few years. In order to carry out construction works, scaffolding and various types of machinery are likely to be required on site, that have the potential to harm existing trees. It will be important to agree the positioning of vehicular access for construction traffic, areas for material storage, site huts etc. as well as details of protective fencing prior to work commencing.

Protective fencing should be installed around all trees and hedgerows to be retained prior to any work commencing on site. It should be at least 1.2m height and positioned around the canopy spread of the tree or a distance of half the height of the tree from the trunk, whichever is greater.



*'1/2 height'*

*'Canopy Spread'*

For hedgerows the fence should be located along the full length of the hedge and 2m from the base. Within this fenced off area no works of any description shall be carried out. Nothing shall be stored, no machinery shall pass through and no excavations carried out. Fires should be at least 10m from the edge of retained tree's canopies and hedgerows. The storage of oil, bitumen and cement, as well as concrete mixing should be at least 10m from the edge of the tree's canopies and hedgerows.

Where work is required to any existing trees this will be expected to comply with current

arboricultural best practice.

A list of local tree surgeons can be obtained from us or a list of approved contractors from The Arboricultural Association, Ampfield House, Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 9PA



*'Mature Trees add value to a new development'*

## Help and Advice

*For more detailed guidance and advice contact:*

**The Heritage Section  
Planning Services**  
Wychavon District Council,  
Civic Centre,  
Queen Elizabeth Drive,  
Pershore,  
Worcs. WR10 1PT

Planning Customer Service Officers  
Tel: 01386 565565  
e-mail: [planning@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:planning@wychavon.gov.uk)  
website: [www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)

