

Tree Management Policy



Introduction

We at Great Places are committed to providing and maintaining a high-quality environment for our customers. We want to ensure that this includes the provision of a healthy and abundant tree stock and ensure protected trees are maintained to a recognised industry standard. Trees provide many benefits, including contributing to our health and wellbeing, providing shade, reducing noise, absorbing storm water and reducing airborne pollutants. Trees also provide aesthetic value and soften the built environment, whilst also providing a valuable habitat for wildlife such as birds, bats and insects.

Great Places recognises trees are a valuable asset. However, in the wrong place trees can be a nuisance, can cause structural damage and can pose a risk to safety if they become diseased or decayed. A careful balance must be struck between maintaining enough trees in the right places to provide the benefits that trees offer, whilst minimising the risk of harm and avoiding the damage or nuisance that they can pose.

Context

This policy and management plan cover all Great Places tree stock and will be used to benefit both customers and our assets. Customer feedback showed that our customers want a greater understanding of their role and responsibilities in relation to trees in their gardens and in communal spaces. This policy sets out what customers can expect from us in a clear way.

We have a legal responsibility to manage and maintain trees growing on land that we own ensuring a safe environment for customers, colleagues and third parties and compliance with all relevant legislation relating to trees. We want ensure that our tree portfolio remains healthy, sustainable and beneficial for all.

Great Places looks after over 18,000 trees. We believe our trees add value to local communities as the presence of trees and greenery minimise the effects of being a 'Urban Heat Island', whereby urban areas experience warmer temperatures than surrounding rural areas. Green spaces also reduce the risk of flooding and provide people with a space to meet, socialise and relax. Our natural capital absorbs CO2 and is an important aspect of reducing climate change. Through working with customers and developing action plans to improve the use of natural capital, we will seek to unlock previously unloved pockets of greenspace into areas that the community can value.

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Aims and objectives

The policy sets out how Great Places will achieve balance to:

- maintain a healthy tree stock with diverse maturity to make full use of the environmental, social and economic benefits that this brings;
- fulfil Great Place's statutory duty of care and corporate objectives on safety using proactive and proportionate tree risk management;
- use transparent systems, strategies and approaches to address customer's enquiries about trees, and focus on finding solutions to deal with tree problems.

What is involved?

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The following aims and actions are used to guide decisions on tree management:

Risk and safety

- We will manage tree risk using a planned and proactive approach that is proportionate to the risk posed by trees, the safety of customers and the public.
- We will try to retain trees where possible unless the risk is too great, or the cost is high.
- We will seek input from professional arboriculturists to manage tree risk. Our two-year tree management plan will be achieved using independent tree surveyors to highlight potential risk such as tree health, location and future impact to nearby buildings.
- We will carry out any tree works in accordance with recommendations set out by the British Standards Institute. These recommendations provide guidance on management options for established trees (including soil care and tree felling) and overgrown hedges.

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Trees and nuisance

Trees works will not normally take place due to problems with the following:

- Shade, either in the communal garden area or window into a property
- Falling leaves, fruit or flowers
- Pollen
- Interference with TV, mobile phone or Wi-Fi signal (customers should contact their service provider for a solution)
- Bird droppings
- Obstruction of views
- Because they are “too big” or “too tall”
- Obstruction of utility cables (these are the responsibility of the utility company or owner)

Tree work will be considered to deal with the following nuisance:

- Branches touching a building or structure
- Trees in a clearly unsuitable location
- Roots or aerial parts causing significant direct structural damage
- Clear evidence of subsidence damage caused by a tree
- Tree branches obscuring streetlights, road signs or CCTV cameras
- Trees or part of a tree aiding anti-social behaviour.

Tree work needed due to encroachment into neighbouring properties from overhanging branches will be considered on a case-by-case basis with priority given where branches are hazardous, or the tree is proved to be causing direct or indirect (subsidence) damage. Shading, detritus or bird nuisance will not be considered a reason to prune, reduce or fell a tree.

Claims of direct or indirect (subsidence) damage by trees will be dealt with cooperatively with action taken where sufficient evidence is supplied.

Long-term maintenance work will be identified during planned inspections, taking into account available budget and risk. Works where early intervention would prevent a future costly management issue will be prioritised over lesser works.

Woodland and shelterbelts will be subject to minimum management unless the trees pose a significant risk.

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Stumps will only be removed where they present a trip hazard or could potentially damage machinery in grassed areas.

Tree planting

Trees removed from a communal area because they are dead or in poor condition will be replaced on a 1:2 basis provided that there is sufficient space for new trees to grow to maturity without causing nuisance or damage to property. This could be in a different location in order to maintain a healthy tree stock and will be managed by the Facilities Management Team. New trees will be selected according to the principle of “right tree, right place”.

Tree planting plans for new developments will be assessed for “right tree, right place” and may have to be re-planned if necessary.

Trees in customers’ gardens

Trees in a customer’s garden are the customer’s responsibility and will not be included in Great Place’s planned inspection and maintenance regime.

In exceptional circumstances, we may help a customer manage trees that are dead, diseased or dangerous or causing damage to property and any inherited problems from a previous occupation. The customer may be recharged for this service, and this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If customers want to remove a tree from their garden then we ask that they seek permission from Great Places before doing so. There may be restrictions held upon the tree and Great Places need to consider the wider impact of felling a tree in a customer’s garden.

Plumlife customers do not need to request permission for individual gardens but they do need to be aware of any restrictions on their trees.

Who will be involved?

The Facilities and Estates team will be responsible for managing the budget for trees, arranging surveys and planning in tree works with procured contractors. They will also work closely with our Neighbourhood teams, Independence and Wellbeing and Plumlife to ensure the policy is understood and followed by all, including customers.

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Links to related policies, strategies, and procedures

Internal

- Neighbourhood and Communal Spaces Policy
- Customer Feedback Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Customer Experience Strategy

External

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas#tree-preservation-orders--general>

<https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/media/Trees-org.uk/Documents/GuideToTreesAndTheLaw-Web.pdf>

<https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/tree-work-recommendations/standard>

Policy approval date:	27/02/2025
Equality impact assessment date:	04/02/2025
Reducing carbon impact	Effective tree management directly contributes to our 10 year ambition toward net zero
Safeguarding/Modern Slavery impact:	N/A
Policy review date:	27/02/2028
Lead team:	Facilities and Estates Management
Level of authorisation required:	Directors
Please record all authorisation meetings, with dates and details	Directors meeting for approval of policy and EIA – 27/02/2025