

West Suffolk Council Tree Management Policy

Appendix 8: Tree planting and aftercare

Tree planting

To maintain a continuity of tree cover the council will undertake the planting of new trees and woodlands on land that they manage where suitable opportunities arise.

Increasing the size and distribution of the resource is an essential part of West Suffolk's sustainable growth. The planting of trees may enhance not only existing open space, and streets but also new developments. Equally, new planting should endeavour to create green links in-between the network of green spaces in the area.

New tree planting can open up opportunities to increase biodiversity, restore or improve the local landscape character or to introduce trees of a different age class to that which already exists.

When undertaking tree planting, the principles of right tree right place should be followed.

Where appropriate, removed council trees will be replaced by new planting. Often it will not be possible to plant the additional replacement trees within the same area. In these cases the tree will be planted as close as reasonably practical.

Natural regeneration of native species is also to be encouraged so the natural genetic variation will provide a buffer against climatic variation, pests and diseases.

Clump planting

Where tree planting is to take place, consideration should be given to planting in groups of trees, rather than individual specimens. In many circumstances there are a range of benefits when using this technique.

Groups of trees within an urban setting, such as parks and other open spaces, can have a greater benefit visually, providing a more natural looking environment.

Groups of trees can increase the visual carrying capacity of an open space. This means that more people can use the space, while the impression of a quiet and natural environment can be maintained.

Risks associated with trees can be reduced in terms of how closely people are exposed to hazards. With individual trees in public spaces, people have access to the whole tree, so people walking past and under them are exposed to the risks of branch or tree failure. With trees planted in groups, only the trees around the outer edge pose the same level of risks. In essence the exposure to risk per tree

is much less when planted in a group. This is particularly useful in parks and other places where there is open access.

There are benefits to tree establishment in terms of nursery shelter from surrounding species. There may also be cost benefits in terms of tree protection.

Clump planting can also have greater biodiversity value, as clumps of trees can provide more a more diverse habitat structure and ecological niches.

Aftercare

Whilst the maintenance of mature trees can sometimes be delayed for a year or two without risk to the health of the tree, newly planted trees require much closer attention in the course of systematic post planting maintenance.

Tree replacement and tree planting using natural regeneration will be encouraged where possible to increase the efficiency of tree establishment, reduce aftercare costs, encourage/protect local tree stock providence and increase the longevity/health of trees.

Where natural regeneration may provide replacement or new planting, it may be necessary to use tree protection measures such as rabbit guards, rabbit fencing, mulch mats or area mulching to aid establishment. In many cases this will also be necessary to identify trees for retention and prevent conflict with grass cutting or other maintenance operations.

When undertaking new planting, consideration to aftercare needs, availability of resources and likelihood of successful establishment will be a key factor in choosing locations and species. In some instances it may not be economically viable to plant trees in certain locations as the aftercare and watering costs would far exceed the cost of planting or the likely cost/benefit of such planting. In such circumstances resources may be better allocated to other options.

The council will undertake appropriate scheduled watering for newly planted trees. Due to the variability of the seasons and conditions in specific locations, it is not possible to define these rates other than to ensure that conditions are monitored closely and requirements produced accordingly. Similarly the council will undertake young tree maintenance in terms of formative pruning on a case by case basis.

Tree protection in terms of tree or shrub guards can often cause problems if left in place too long. Often such guards can restrict growth and cause formative problems if not regularly checked or removed at the appropriate time. Tree guards also produce significant littering issues once they have broken down and can also cause an eye sore which reduces the benefits of newly planted areas. Tree protection will be removed when no longer needed.