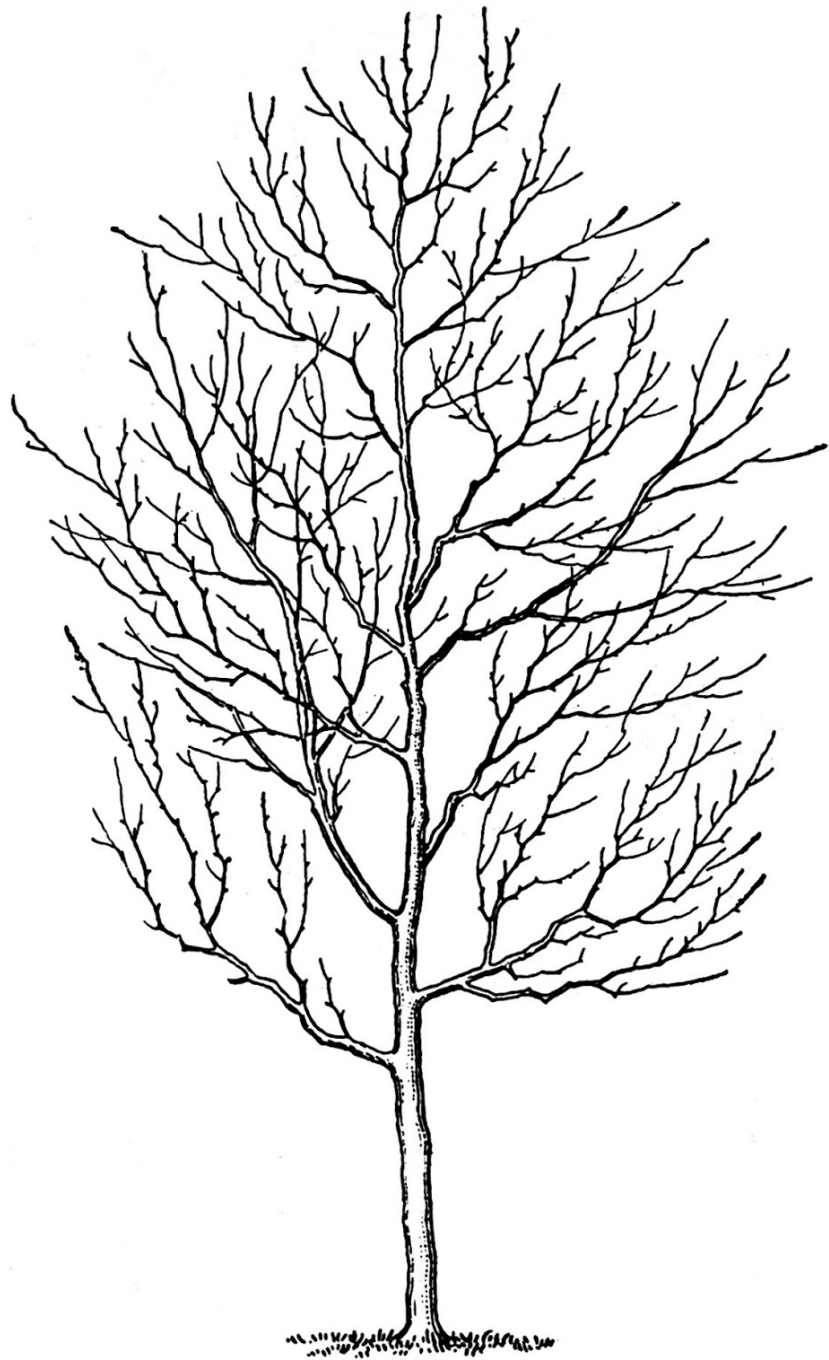


# Highway Trees Strategy



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1.0	17/09/18	-	Matthew Joyce	George Bell	To be approved

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## 1.0 Introduction and History

This Strategy sets out how the authority intends to maintain trees within the adopted highway. The aim of the strategy is to protect and promote the benefits of our highway trees and to recognise the beneficial contribution that these trees make towards the character and appearance of Blackburn and Darwen. As the local highway authority the Council has the responsibility for trees within the adopted highway.

This strategy will be reviewed and, if necessary revised, every two years or sooner, if required by any significant events.

## 2.0 The Benefits of Street Trees in the urban environment

### 2.1 Benefits

The benefits of trees have long been acknowledged. But in the last twenty years there has been significant reinforcement of the need for action on a worldwide scale to protect and conserve trees. In 1994 “Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy” was published as Britain’s response to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro. An important recommendation of this meeting was that individual countries should prepare strategies and action plans to implement the agreements. The value of trees in towns has been known throughout the world since earliest times. Towns and cities everywhere bear testament to the value of the municipal tree.

Research in the late 20th century increasingly has shown a clear and positive correlation between a person's view of trees and recovery from illness and maintenance of general health.

### 2.2 Urban Trees and Pollution

Since concern about the effects of acid rain became widespread, a great deal of research has been undertaken worldwide into trees and pollution. Trees absorb carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon dioxide, and, of course produce oxygen. Trees have a positive effect on the environment and human health by reducing levels of pollutants in the air. Trees also intercept and capture large amounts of particulates that are a bi-product

of combustion and increasingly implicated in the current increase in asthma cases. Small particles which may be most damaging to people, are most effectively contained by trees. Studies in the U.S. show that an urban forest of 49 hectares will intercept between 22kg and 77kg of particulates per day.

### 2.3 Trees in the Urban Landscape

Trees are amongst the most important landscape features in our towns and cities. Carefully located, a single tree can have a major impact on a street scene or view. Trees can define and give character to spaces, frame views, lead the eye to important landmarks and screen unsightly features. They can soften the appearance of large structures or barren areas and provide interesting colour, texture and movement that change with the seasons.

Recommendation 35 of the UK roads Liaison Group's Well Managed Highway Infrastructure calls for "...Highway verges, trees and landscaped areas should be managed with regard to their nature conservation value and biodiversity principles as well as whole-life costing, highway safety and serviceability."

### 2.4 Noise reduction

Trees and other vegetation can play an important role in attenuating noise through reflecting and absorbing sound energy. One estimate suggests that 7db noise reduction is achieved for every 33m of forest whilst other reported field tests show apparent loudness reduced by 50% by wide belts of trees and soft ground.

## 3.0 Value of Council owned Trees

### 3.1 Actual value of trees

Many different ways of valuing trees have been developed to meet different needs. The Council has used the Helliwell method to estimate the amenity value of its highway trees.

### 3.2 Property values

Several studies have analysed the effect of tree cover on the price of residential house sales and have concluded that values of properties in tree lined areas may, on average, be up to 6% greater than in similar areas without trees.

## 4.0 Highway Tree Management

### 4.1 Location of Highway Trees

The location of highway trees will be mapped on the Council's corporate GIS system, this will record:

- a. The location.
- b. The common name of the tree.
- c. The date it was last inspected.
- d. Its condition at that time.
- e. Its height.
- f. Any other relevant comments.

Currently there are over 2,700 individual trees; lime, rowan and cherry are the most popular of the 69 different varieties.

### 4.2 Consultation

Prior to any planned pruning or felling operations the authority will consult with residents in the immediate area of the affected tree or trees. Residents, in this immediate area will be informed, in writing, of the reasons for the planned pruning or felling operation, together with the intended date of the work, there will be sufficient opportunity for residents to give their views and opinions. The intention to carry out any proposed works will also be displayed on the authority's website, offering an opportunity for those indirectly affected to comment. All comments and opinions received will be carefully considered and an appropriate response provided. This process may be waived in the case of urgent or emergency work, see section 5.4, below.

### 4.3 Types of Pruning for Trees

There are many different types of pruning undertaken to manage trees. They are listed and described below as acceptable methods and good practice within the industry and the authority. Generally the Council will use the techniques for pruning set out in BS 3998 and the European Tree Pruning Guide. Tree officers will use Risk Assessment procedures to identify the extent of work needed and these assessments will take into account the Authority's statutory obligations including consideration of protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Where evidence of birds nesting is found no work will be carried out until the nesting season is over.

- 4.3.1 Crown Thinning - This reduces the density of the tree's crown without changing the shape and form of the tree. Thinning reduces the amount of foliage and allows more light through the canopy or crown. It is ideal for admitting more light to gardens and windows and allows crossing and rubbing branches to be cleared.
- 4.3.2 Crown Lifting - This essentially means pruning off lower limbs close to the trunk to give more clear space below the crown which is essential for street trees and useful for allowing more light into gardens. It also prevents low branches obstructing footways, drives etc.
- 4.3.3 Crown Cleaning - Cleaning consists of the removal of all dead, dying and diseased wood and rubbish accumulating in forks. It also includes the removal of objects such as wires, ropes and boards. Cleaning out may consist of the removal of unwanted climbing plants, such as Ivy or Clematis, from the crown of a tree.
- 4.3.4 Crown Reduction - The tree crown is reduced by shortening branches, usually carried out all round the crown or canopy to maintain a balanced shape. It is useful for preventing branches touching buildings, roofs and guttering. It also prevents branches obstructing street signs, lighting and high vehicles.
- 4.3.5 Root Pruning - Cutting tree roots is highly undesirable and can affect the health and safety of a tree. Root pruning is a specialised operation that should only be undertaken with the support and supervision of the Arboriculturalist. Pruning of buttress or other major roots can make the

tree unstable. There are strict guidelines relating to severance of tree roots. Severance of more than 30% of a tree's root system is quite likely to cause slow dieback and eventual death of a mature tree.

- 4.3.6 Pollarding - This involves pruning all the branches from a tree at a certain height, usually between 2 metres and 5 metres above ground level. Since ancient times pollarding has been a traditional method for cutting timber and then allowing re-growth. It should normally be commenced when the tree is still young and then repeated at regular intervals through the life of the tree. It is now essentially a method of controlling the growth of the tree and to restrict the size of its crown. Pollarding is traditional in some localities and for certain species but it can be detrimental to the appearance of individual trees. There is a case for pollarding veteran trees to allow them to be retained without compromising public safety.
- 4.3.7 Coppicing - This is a similar practice to pollarding, but in this method the tree is cut back close to ground level to promote multiple stem regrowth. Whilst this is generally used to promote stem growth for commercial harvesting it can be a useful practice for amenity and for conservation; for example coppicing willows along riverbanks to help bank stabilisation and for wildlife habitat.
- 4.3.8 Barrel Growth removal - This work is the removal of small shoots from the trunk or barrel of the tree to improve visibility along the highway, particularly at junctions. The growth is removed to a range of different heights from 3 metres to 6 metres, depending on the tree's proximity to nearby buildings.
- 4.3.9 Felling - This operation is the complete removal of a tree down to a stump. It may involve careful dismantling of the branch structure to avoid damage to surrounding features such as houses and gardens. Due to the complexity of this operation and differing equipment requirements is sometimes necessary to leave a tree stump and return at another time to remove it. When this happens, stumps will be left 1½ metres high to remove the possibility of trip hazards. The Council will resist the removal of any established tree unless it is dead, dying or diseased or is identified as needing removal as a result of a Risk Assessment or planning consent. It may also be necessary to allow the



falling of a mature tree if it is obstructing a public highway or Right of Way or if it is causing an illegal nuisance to an adjacent property.

## 5.0 Duties and Responsibilities

### 5.1 Duty of care

Owners of trees have a duty of care and are legally obliged to carry out inspections to identify and resolve potential hazards.

### 5.2 Nuisance

Owners of any trees that are a potential nuisance or danger to members of the public or to property will be asked to carry out work to resolve the situation. In the event of failure to carry out work, within a reasonable time the Council will use statutory powers to implement essential works and recharge the costs to the owner.

### 5.3 Powers

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has powers under the Highways Act 1980 Section 154, The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Section 23 & 24 and in common law to ensure that members of the public are not put at risk when using the highway and these powers extend to cover highway trees.

### 5.4 Emergency work

The Council will fell and remove any tree or limb of a tree that obstructs or partially obstructs the highway or appears to present a danger to highway users as soon as practicably possible, in such cases consultation may not be possible or practical.

### 5.5 Condition

The condition of landscaped areas and trees can contribute to the core objectives as follows:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Network Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• obstruction to user visibility and legibility of traffic signs</li><li>• fallen trees or overgrown vegetation that physically obstructs part of the highway</li></ul> |
|----------------|---|

- falling branches from trees
  - leaf fall from trees causing slippery surface
  - root growth affecting surface regularity
- Network Serviceability
- potential for service interruption
  - quality of user experience
- Network Sustainability
- landscape conservation
  - mitigation of climate change effects
  - support for habitat and biodiversity
  - problems of root growth for surface, structure and highway drainage
  - maintaining

## 6.0 Assessment of Requests for Pruning.

### 6.1 Approach

This strategy outlines Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's approach to highway tree management work and describes in broad terms, situations where we are likely to consider pruning, felling or other forms of tree management work for our street trees. Trees do require work from time to time to reduce risk and liability, or to ensure that people are not deprived of a reasonable right of enjoyment of their property. All work to highway trees will normally be carried out by specialist Arboricultural teams and will be in accordance with current UK and EU legislation, guidance, British Standards and Codes of Practice. Trees in conservation areas or those subject to Tree Preservation orders will not normally be pruned.

Guidelines for pruning are given below:

### 6.2 Safety

Where a highway tree presents a clear and foreseeable threat to the safety of highway users or to adjacent property action will be taken to minimise that risk.

Unfounded fear of a tree will not normally result in action to prune the tree.

### 6.3 Obstruction of the Highway

The Council will seek to ensure that adequate clearance of the highway for the type of traffic using that highway is maintained at all times. Inquiries and comments about low branches over the highway will be considered and acted upon promptly.

### 6.4 Obstruction of street lights and road signs

The Council will endeavour to ensure that trees under their management do not obscure road signs or prevent street lamps from illuminating the highway.

### 6.5 Daylight Loss

There is no right to light with regard to trees, so action will normally only be considered where the separation between the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than 2 metres and the extent of light excluded is unreasonable.

A 'habitable room' means a dining room, lounge, kitchen, study or bedroom but specifically excludes WCs, bathrooms, utility rooms, landings and hallways.

### 6.6 Television and other radio equipment

There is no right to good reception of any signal type. The TV licence does not guarantee or grant an adequate signal and in many cases it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by finding an engineering solution.

### 6.7 Leaves, Seeds and Fruit

Leaves and seeds are carried freely on the wind and are largely outside the control of the Council. Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways and weeding of self-set seeds are considered to be normal routine seasonal maintenance which property owners are expected to carry out. Pruning will not normally be undertaken to attempt to reduce the fall of leaves, seeds or fruit.

#### 6.8 Honeydew

As with leaves, honeydew is not readily controllable by pruning and cleaning of affected surfaces is considered to be routine maintenance. Pruning will not normally be considered solely as a way of alleviating problems with honeydew.

#### 6.9 Subsidence

Tree related subsidence damage is a complex issue and each case will need to be considered on an individual basis. An increasing number of insurance claims and mortgage enquiries relate to possible or actual subsidence of structures and buildings of various kinds. Insurance companies will frequently refer to an adjacent Council owned tree and demand its removal or commence a claim against the Authority. Where damage has occurred the Council will require that adequate assessment and monitoring is undertaken to demonstrate that the tree is involved and that such evidence be submitted in support of any request for action. Monitoring of the subsidence or other damage over an extended period of time is essential to establish the true reason for the problem. It must be remembered that the removal of a large tree can cause 'heave' which is the opposite effect to that which is planned. Requests for action based on an un-quantified possibility of damage occurring at an unspecified point in the future will not be considered unless there are other overriding reasons to take action.

#### 6.10 Direct Root Damage

As with subsidence, cases of alleged direct root damage will be considered on an individual basis after detailed investigation and

confirmation that the roots in question are in fact part of the adjacent Council owned tree and not some other plant or tree.

#### 6.11 Drain Blockage

As with subsidence, the Council will require that adequate assessment is undertaken to establish that a tree's roots are invading a drain. The most appropriate remedial action will be decided upon which has a balance between the nuisance experienced by individuals and the benefits offered by the tree to the wider community.

#### 6.12 Footway crossing applications involving trees.

When Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council receives an application for a footway crossing and there is a tree in the footway or verge, considerations will be made as follows.

- If the property already has alternate access the application will be refused unless there is a compelling reason.
- If the excavation needed to construct the proposed crossing impinges on the Root Protection Area, as defined in British Standard 5837: 2005 Trees in Relation to Construction Recommendations, then the individual situation is to be considered by the authority's Arboricultural Officer to establish the extent of potential damage to roots.

### 7.0 Tree Planting

#### 7.1 Sustainable Stock

A sustainable stock of trees is at the heart of this strategy. Trees take decades to mature and to contribute fully to the treescape and local environment. The Authority benefits from the foresight of previous generations and their tree planting policies. Many of Authority's highway trees date from Victorian times and from the inter-war years. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council will plant a new tree to replace every tree felled in the highway, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The replacement will be in the same location as the tree removed, or as close as possible unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Overall there will be no net loss of tree numbers in the highway realm.

## 7.2 Environment

Roads and streets offer a difficult environment for trees; they need special care and protection to thrive, which can be costly. Roads and streets are where most of our services, cables, pipes and overhead wires are found, together with junction boxes, post and telephone boxes, street lights, signs and access chambers. The presence of this equipment above and below ground makes it difficult to find sufficient space to plant trees. In residential areas verges have often been surfaced with tarmac and many houses now have driveways. Careful consideration should be given to choose new trees that are tolerant of vandalism, traffic pollution, road salt and other pollutants.

## 7.3 Practice

Tree planting and establishment will be carried out in accordance with good arboricultural practice and guidance promoted by government agencies and professional institutions. The Council is committed to maintaining high standards of workmanship and setting a good example to others.

This strategy supports the Highway Asset Management Strategy.