

# Tree Pruning Policies

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## Introduction

These policies are intended as guidelines for determining whether requests for the pruning of trees within churchyards and the curtilage of churches managed by parishes within the Diocese of Lichfield should lead to action.

It is not possible to anticipate every situation and it is therefore important that whilst these policies guide decisions they will not be considered prescriptive. Furthermore, no one policy will be considered in isolation, but all relevant policies will be considered when reaching a decision. These policies will further be considered in the context of wider strategic aims relating to individual areas.

## Safety

Where there is a clear and foreseeable threat to the personal safety of residents or visitors, or to property, that is directly related to the condition of a tree, action will be taken to minimise that risk.

Risk that is an indirect consequence of a tree (e.g. slippery leaves on the pavement in autumn) will be dealt with through pruning only in unusual circumstances where other options are not available.

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

## Obstruction of the Highway

The parochial church council (PCC) will seek to ensure that adequate clearance of the highway for the type of traffic using that highway is maintained at all times. Complaints about low branches over the highway will be considered and acted upon promptly.

## Obstruction of Street Lights and Road Signs

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

The purpose of street lamps is to illuminate the public highway and where adequate illumination of the highway is present the PCC will not normally take action to improve the levels of illumination of private property.

## Daylight Loss

Action will normally only be considered where the separation between the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than 6m for trees with a height of over 12m, or less than half the height of the tree for smaller trees, or where the separation between the edge of the canopy and a vertical line through that window is less than 2m.

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

Where a situation falls within these guidelines' cases will be prioritised according to proximity and account will also be taken of the orientation of the affected window.

### **Television and other Radio Equipment**

There is no right to good reception and in many cases, it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by finding an engineering solution. The PCC will only consider requests to prune trees to improve reception where all the following conditions are true:

- Efforts have been made to find an engineering solution to the problem and have not been successful.
- The work required is consistent with good arboricultural practice and will not unduly affect the amenity or health of the tree.
- The work required can be executed within current financial constraints.

### **Leaves, Seeds and Fruit**

Leaves and seeds are carried freely on the wind and are largely outside the control of the PCC. Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways and weeding of set seeds are 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.

### **Honeydew**

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

### **Subsidence**

Tree related subsidence damage is a complex issue, and each case will need to be considered on an individual basis.

Where damage has occurred, the PCC 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.

Requests for action based on an unquantified possibility of damage occurring at an unspecified point in the future will not be considered unless there are other overriding reasons to take action.

### **Direct Root Damage**

As with subsidence, cases of direct root damage will be considered on an individual basis. A balance will be struck between the nuisance experienced by individuals and the benefits offered by the tree to the wider community.

## **Drain Blockage**

Trees do not have the capacity to break into a sound drain, but they will ruthlessly exploit any existing fault. The removal of one tree will not prevent other vegetation from exploiting the same opportunity.

The PCC's presumption is that the appropriate way to deal with tree root blockage of drains is to ensure that the drains are watertight. Accordingly, the PCC will not normally act in response to complaints that PCC managed trees are blocking drains.

*Andy Smith  
Lichfield DAC Tree Adviser  
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