



## **DRAFT TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **General Policy**

This policy defines Datchworth Parish Council's approach to tree management on its land. It is intended to be a point of reference to ensure a consistent and structured approach to the management of the Parish Council's trees.

This policy sets out a proactive and systematic method of management that will both conserve and enhance our tree population and the amenity value of our land.

The Council has used the National Tree Safety Group's document "Common Sense Risk Management of Trees - Landowner summary of guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for estates and smallholdings" as a reference guide to good practice together with advisory guidance documents from the Health and Safety Executive.

In respect of inspection and surveys, the Council has referenced information contained in the document from the Forestry Commission "Practice Guide – Hazards from Trees."

### **Tree Protection**

The Parish Council will endeavour to ensure that damage to trees by mowing and strimming by Parish Council appointed Contractors is minimised and contractors will be requested to abide by sensible precautions when undertaking works. Longer grass areas around trees may be left so as reduce cutting activity near tree bases and trunks.

Protection will be provided for newly planted or young trees where appropriate, e.g. timber-sided planting boxes and strimmer guards.

### **Tree Inspections and Surveys**

The Parish Council will carry out inspections and surveys as follows:

## High Risk Public Access Areas

These areas are Council owned land with high public access eg:

- The Turkey Farm
- Datchworth Green
- Bulls Green
- Nutcroft Play area
- Burnham Green

A competent person will carry out a visual inspection of all trees in these areas every **TWELVE MONTHS**. As stated in the National Tree safety Group's guidance document the inspection will consist of a specific visit to all trees sited in the areas, undertaken by a competent person, when a formal inspection will take place. This will involve a ground level initial assessment which takes in to account the external structure of the tree and signs of structural failure, fungal growth, branch decay, low hanging branches etc.

A qualified arboriculturist will carry out a detailed survey of all trees in these areas **EVERY TEN YEARS**.

Where an inspection or survey identifies that the condition of any tree in these high-risk areas has deteriorated to such an extent as to raise safety concerns a **FULL DETAILED TREE SURVEY by a competent, qualified person** will be commissioned as soon as is practicable.

## Medium Risk Public Access Areas

These areas are Council owned land with some public access or where trees are located near to roadways where branches could fall on to footpaths and roadways eg:

- Paynters Green
- Footpaths around the village

A competent person will carry out a visual inspection of all trees in these areas every **TWO YEARS**. As stated in the National Tree safety Group's guidance document the inspection will consist of a specific visit to all trees sited in the areas, undertaken by a competent person, when a formal inspection will take place. This will involve a ground level initial assessment which takes in to account the external structure of the tree and signs of structural failure, fungal growth, branch decay, low hanging branches etc.

**No formal surveys will be carried out.**

## Low Risk Public Access Areas

These areas are Council owned land with low or limited public access or access undertaken by persons with reasonable awareness of residual risks eg:

- Woodland areas
- Bridal paths around the village

These areas will have **NO** formal inspection or survey programme.

### Competent Persons

The Parish Council will be guided on the matter of competency by the information contained in the document “Common Sense Risk Management of Trees” issued by the National Tree Safety Council and published by the Forestry Commission.

### All Public Access Areas

Where a member of the public reports any defects or visual damage to trees the Parish Council will arrange for an appropriate inspection to be carried out by a competent person as soon as is practically possible and will arrange for any necessary works to make the tree safe according to the assessed risk of personal injury or serious damage to property.

Public reports should be made directly to the Parish Clerk and in the absence of the Clerk, directly to any elected Councillor.

### Tree Felling

The Parish Council will avoid felling trees unless it is necessary. This will usually be for health and safety purposes or to prevent the spread of serious tree diseases and pests. However, the Parish Council reserve the right to fell trees to prevent overcrowding, to improve habitats or restore landscapes in line with site management or where a tree is inappropriate to its location and has a significantly detrimental impact on the appearance or amenity of a site.

Tree felling will not be undertaken in the nesting season unless for immediate safety reasons.

### Woody Debris

Subject to a safety assessment and if appropriate to the specific site, large woody debris will be left in situ for the creation of wildlife habitats. Where possible, the trunks will be left standing, or lying on the ground in habitat piles. Tree stumps will also be left in situ where it is safe to do so as they provide a valuable wildlife habitat whilst they rot down.

### Maintenance

Tree work will be prioritised and carried out according to the identified hazard and risk. After investigation and inspection, the Parish Council will produce a programme of works within the available budgets. The emphasis will be on planned, rather than reactive, tree maintenance.

The following categories will be used to categorise our tree works:

- **Emergency:** Dangerous trees requiring immediate attention: Within a maximum of 72 hours wherever possible.
- **Category One:** Essential works: Within 18 months of identification
- **Category Two:** Desirable works, eg. to improve tree health, loosening/removing tree ties as the trees grow: Within 24 months of identification
- **Category Three:** Non-essential works, eg. thinning out, formative pruning: Within 36 months of identification

Tree maintenance will be conducted by a Competent Person or by approved Contractors. All tree works will be conducted to comply with BS 3998: 2010 Tree Works - Recommendations.

### **Tree Pruning**

Tree pruning will be carried out when deemed necessary following any inspection or assessment. Pruning will be carried out:

- for health and safety reasons eg. to remove some of the lower branches of a tree located near a road to enable traffic to pass safely
- where it benefits the health of the tree e.g. pollarding will be conducted regularly on certain species where it extends the lifespan of the tree and prevents splitting
- where it is in line with site-specific management plans

### **The Parish Council will not undertake tree pruning or removal maintenance:**

- in response to natural occurrences that do not pose a health and safety risk, such as falling nuts, bird droppings, falling leaves, or sap exudation.
- where trees have a negative impact on television reception, where the canopy is blocking lighting, with the exception of street lighting.
- where the tree is blocking views from a residence.
- during the nesting season unless the work is for urgent health and safety reasons. It is an offence to intentionally damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; therefore tree works will avoid this if a tree contains roosting bats (it is a criminal offence to recklessly or intentionally disturb bats, or to damage or destroy a roost). If work is required for health and safety reasons and the health and safety issue does not pose an immediate threat, the advice of English Nature will be sought.
- trees overhanging an adjacent property unless it poses a health and safety risk.
- removal of dead branches (conduct crown cleaning) from trees located in relatively quiet locations due to their ecological value. However, if the dead or diseased branches pose a health and safety risk or are felt to be impacting upon the tree's health, crown cleaning will be conducted.

This Tree Policy was adopted by Datchworth Parish Council on

It will be reviewed every **THREE YEARS** by the Trees Committee or Amenities and Outdoor Spaces Committee, as appropriate, unless legal requirements relating to the responsibility of landowners for tree safety management change in the interim. If so, the Policy will be reviewed accordingly.

Proper Officer:  
Datchworth Parish Council  
Date: