



HAVANT BOROUGH TREE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Promoting a sustainable approach to the Borough's trees for the future

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to endorse this management document for the trees cared for on Havant Borough Council land, recognising the significant contribution these valued natural assets make to our borough's landscape, environment, and communities.

The Council recognises its responsibility as steward of the many trees growing on land it owns, and the need to plan for their long-term future as our borough continues to evolve. Increasing canopy cover and enhancing the health and resilience of our tree stock will help secure the many environmental, social and landscape benefit these trees provide.

Equally important is the ongoing care and management of existing Council-owned trees, ensuring they are maintained and given every opportunity to thrive. Our approach reflects a thoughtful and informed approach to the stewardship of the Council's trees and woodland and we would encourage other owners of trees to adopt our principles.

I hope you enjoy reading this document and recognise the Council's commitment to the many thousands of trees under its care.



Councillor Grainne Rason: Assistant Cabinet Lead for Climate and Nature



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Havant Borough Tree Management Principles sets out a clear framework for the sustainable management, protection, and expansion of the Council's tree stock.

Central to this document is the principle of "*the right tree in the right place*", ensuring that tree planting and management decisions support long-term environmental resilience and contribute to climate change mitigation.

A structured approach to tree management on Council-owned land underpins the policies for routine maintenance, risk management of dangerous trees, and operational practices.

Our aim is to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of the borough's urban forest.

INTRODUCTION

Havant Borough Council has a commitment to trees. They are an integral part of what makes the Borough a vibrant, attractive and appealing place to live, work, visit and study.

The Council owns around 10,000 trees and 185 hectares of woodland. Whilst this is not all of the trees in our Borough, it includes trees in some of our most prominent public spaces. As such, the management of these trees is critical to keeping our Borough attractive and maintaining the clear connection these trees make to our nature and heritage.

In recent years, the threats to our ecology and way of life posed by climate change have become clearer with high temperatures and droughts in the summers followed by exceptionally wet and stormy

winters. These put our trees under increased stress and add complexity to their management. This is all the more important because of the critical role trees play in adapting to the effects of climate change through providing shade and reducing temperatures during extreme heat.

Occasionally trees pose issues for pedestrians and private homeowners and we will seek to strike a balance to maximise the benefits that trees give us and other interests. There are various pieces of legislation and policy that relate to any landowner with trees on their land and in a lot of ways, the Council is no different.

The principles here are designed to support everyone in the Borough in enjoying all of the benefits that the trees in our ownership can bring and to understand how we will manage any issues that they cause when this arises.

The benefits of our trees

Trees provide a wide range of benefits to people living in and visiting the Borough through:

- Preservation of the area's existing historic, verdant and tree-rich character.
- Contribute to making the Borough a prosperous, safe and attractive place to live and work.
- To protect and enhance the Borough's trees, including their intrinsic habitats and biodiversity, landscape character and local distinctiveness.
- Increased awareness of the value of trees in our society.
- To ensure a robust approach to tree inspections on Council owned trees.
- To encourage partnerships with local communities, businesses and voluntary organisations.
- Contribute to delivering net zero emissions and climate change objectives.



THE COUNCIL'S TREES

The Borough of Havant largely retains a verdant character, offering an attractive, pleasant environment in which to live, work and relax.

This rich green landscape is not just aesthetically pleasing; it also plays a vital role in climate resilience, biodiversity, community wellbeing, and local heritage. The Council's Corporate Strategy has a strong environmental focus. This statement of principles feeds into that strategy and its approach and should be read alongside the Borough's Tree and Woodland Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy.

The Council itself is responsible for maintaining over 10,000 trees and 185 hectares of woodland, mostly in our parks and open spaces. They contribute significantly to our overall canopy cover and are the trees that are part of residents everyday lives, connecting our urban areas to nature. The Council has a number of officers and teams who are responsible for managing the Borough's tree stock.

Our trees generally fall into the following categories:



Trees in Parks & Public Open Spaces

The borough has an array of parkland and green spaces, all with significant numbers of trees which contribute to the make-up of the urban forest.



Cemeteries & Council owned land

Trees through the district which comprise specimen planting, avenues and ancient pollards. These can be encountered in a range of public environments maintained by HBC such as cemeteries and car parks.





Woodlands

HBC is responsible for managing a wide variety of woodland, with each having site-specific management plans.



Important note on Street Trees

These are the trees planted in highway grass verges and pavements along the roads of the Borough and are the responsibility of Hampshire County Council as the Highway Authority and any concerns must be reported direct via the following details [Report a tree problem | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council](#)

Trees are particularly fundamental to the structure of parks and open spaces. These trees are not only important to regular visitors but are also very important contributors to the overall environment and landscape character of the area. They are an extremely important resource that requires active management for the trees to prosper and provide the benefits for our current and future residents.

The nature of tree populations of different parks and open spaces are as variable as the sites themselves. At one end of the spectrum there are older sites, with a declining mature population of trees including a number of interesting specimens. Some sites often contain important veteran trees potentially supporting rare and varied wildlife and holding historic value.



Environmental services in Havant Borough are currently provided by Norse South East Ltd, a Joint Venture Company between Havant Borough Council and Norse Group. The current service agreement ends on 31 March 2026 and, amongst other things, covers grounds maintenance of all of the Council owned parks and open spaces, including the management of Council owned trees.

On 4 June 2025 the Cabinet determined that from April 2028, the services which are currently provided by Norse would be brought in house to the Council. In the meantime, they will continue to be delivered by Norse South East Ltd.

Bringing the management of the Council's trees fully in house introduces the opportunity for a more dynamic and flexible approach to the management of the Council owned trees in particular. Given the climate and nature emergencies, this enables a greater focus moving forwards on the Borough's environment and ensuring that responses to climate change and improving biodiversity are considered holistically.

On this basis, this statement of Principles is considered to be an evolving approach which will respond to opportunities created by the insourcing, the continued need to maintain value for money and an evolving national legislative landscape.



The national legal and policy framework

There is a range of legislation and national policy which is relevant to how we will manage and maintain our trees.

In particular, the Environment Act introduced a strengthened 'Biodiversity Duty' on local authorities and other public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Given the extensive habitats and species which are supported by trees, this places great weight on protecting the trees we have and planting additional trees where possible.

As well as this, there is an extensive regulatory framework which the Council has to act in related specifically to trees.



MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Havant Borough Council manages its Council-owned tree stock in accordance with its Tree and Woodland Strategy. Moving forward, consideration of the impact on trees will be part of the comprehensive consideration of the environment which will feature as part of every decision, project and initiative which the Council takes forward.

The Council will manage our own trees in line with our overall vision for the Borough's trees and woodlands, which is “*the right tree, in the right place, for the right reasons*”.

In implementing the strategy on its own tree stock, the Council will apply a proportionate and pragmatic approach consistent with the National Tree Safety Group's (NTSG) guidance *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees*. This approach recognises that trees provide substantial public benefits and that a degree of risk is inherent and unavoidable. Management is therefore focused on reducing unreasonable risk, rather than attempting to eliminate all risk. The Council considers that trees are a valuable part of the Borough's landscape and townscape. As such, in principle, the Council will look to maintain our tree stock and only to lose trees where it is absolutely necessary according to the objectives below and the principles in this section.



Duty of Care

As the landowner, Havant Borough Council has a legal duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm arising from trees under its control. This duty is discharged through a structured system of inspection, assessment and intervention.



Competent Assessment and Advice

Tree inspections, risk assessments and management recommendations are undertaken by suitably qualified Tree Officers or appointed specialists acting on behalf of Havant Borough Council. These professionals apply recognised arboricultural principles and industry standards to identify defects, assess risk, and specify proportionate remedial works where necessary, ensuring decisions are both technically sound and legally defensible.





Reasonable and Proportionate Management

In line with NTSG guidance, Havant Borough Council accepts that trees cannot be made entirely safe and that zero risk is neither achievable nor desirable. Tree management decisions are therefore based on what would be expected of a reasonable and prudent landowner, taking into account the benefits of retaining trees alongside the likelihood and consequences of harm.



Risk-Based Inspection Regimes

Consistent with *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees*, inspection regimes are proportionate to the level of use and potential impact of tree failure. Higher-use areas are prioritised for more frequent or detailed inspections, while trees in low-use or remote locations are subject to appropriately reduced levels of assessment. This ensures resources are directed where they will most effectively reduce unreasonable risk.





Balanced Decision-Making

Tree management decisions are evidence-based and not driven by a fear of litigation. The Council avoids unnecessary felling or excessive pruning where risks can be acceptably managed through monitoring or limited intervention. This balanced approach reflects NTSG guidance, which cautions against disproportionate responses that undermine the long-term sustainability and public value of the tree stock.



Resourcing

The Council recognises the importance of trees to our Borough and the environmental, social and economic benefits that maintaining, enhancing and increasing the Council's tree stock can have. As such, the Council commits to ensuring that sufficient resources are in place to achieve the specification set out below. This will be reviewed annually through the revenue and capital budget setting process. This includes:

- Ensuring that there are sufficient qualified personnel in place to undertake inspections and maintenance of the Council's tree stock.
- Reviewing the budget available to undertake necessary tree works as part of the annual budget setting process.
- Ensuring that any new tree planting has the necessary capital and revenue budgetary provision in place.



Regularly inspecting our trees

Accurate, up to date information on the health of our trees is essential if they are to be correctly managed. Tree inspections following the principles of risk assessment form the basis of proactive maintenance regimes for Council owned trees. The Council undertakes inspections of its tree stock in line with established risk assessment principles, forming the basis of a proactive and proportionate tree maintenance regime. While it is not possible to eliminate all risk associated with trees (they are living and changing natural organisms), the Council takes reasonable and practicable steps to identify and manage potential hazards on land within its ownership, in accordance with industry best practice and relevant legal obligations.

Havant Borough Tree Management Principles



This includes duties set out under the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, which require landowners and occupiers to take reasonable care to ensure that visitors are not exposed to unnecessary risk.

As such, the Council will undertake a rolling programme of inspections of our trees based on the following criteria:

- Trees will be risk assessed in terms of the frequency of inspection based on sound arboriculture best practice.
- The programme of proactive tree inspections is designed to ensure the risks to people and property from Council owned trees are as low as reasonably practicable.
- Where appropriate, for example if a plausible concern is raised, inspections may take place outside of the regular cycle.
- Competent and correctly qualified specialists will be used to inspect the Council's trees.
- Utilise knowledge and risk assessment procedures that take account of the health of the tree and its effects on the local environment to provide the basis for the management of Council Trees.



Statutory Tree Protection

The Council works as a responsible landowner, bound by the Biodiversity Duty and the principles set out in this document and our Tree and Woodland Strategy. As such:

- The Council recognises the value which our trees provide to our open spaces, parks, cemeteries and other areas across the Borough.
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) will not typically be placed on land owned by Havant Borough Council or other responsible landowners (such as Portsmouth City Council and Hampshire County Council).
- Where a TPO is in place, works will only take place after planning permission has been granted by the Local Planning Authority.



Planting of new trees

The Council will seek no net loss of our tree stock and ideally adding to those numbers. New tree planting is critical if the tree cover of the Borough is to be maintained and enhanced for future generations. Trees take decades to mature, so the loss of older trees will have a significant impact on the area.

To achieve this the Council will seek to:

- Swiftly replace any tree which is unavoidably lost.
- Replacement and new trees will be of a variety that ensures biodiversity and sustainability. Where appropriate and possible deadwood habitat will be retained to benefit local wildlife.
- Consider opportunities to undertake additional planting of new trees in line with the strategy aims.
- Ensure that any programme for planting new trees carefully considers the resource and financial implications (both capital and revenue), to ensure that appropriate inspection and management are accounted for.
- Undertake high quality new planting to replace trees identified for removal as part of programmed works; considering non-native species alongside native trees helps build climate resilience and future-proofs Havant Borough's overall tree canopy.
- Any new tree stock within the Borough will use plant material sourced from locally known stock via approved nurseries - meaning whether it is a native or non-native species, the trees themselves will be supplied by nurseries grown from seed collected in a known and trusted area. This ensures that the new trees are well adapted to local soil, climate, and ecological conditions, which improves their resilience and long-term survival. Using known provenance sourced stock also helps reduce the risk of introducing pests and diseases that can be associated with non-local or imported plant material.
- Tree planting methods will be integrated through all Council processes and services to ensure all new planting follows the same best practice principles.

To ensure HBC retains its existing levels of tree coverage, re-planting needs to take place continuously throughout the borough. It is recognised that newly planted trees require specific maintenance during their initial establishment period in particular.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to establish new trees, particularly in urban areas, due to considerations such as underground services, competition for space, limited soil volumes, poor soils, pollution, insurance claims, safety audits, vandalism, and the impacts of climate change.

These constraints may vary and are less prevalent in many of the parks and open spaces. However, the commitment required to establish a newly planted tree, so as to achieve independence in the landscape, should not be underestimated and remains a challenge for local authorities both in terms of space and also—critically—the resources and budget which is needed.

Where trees have been removed from HBC land, it is important they are replaced the following planting season in order to sustain our tree heritage. New planting will take account of the future impact upon the local and wider environment.

Young tree maintenance is not only crucial to the survival of a newly planted tree. It ensures future problems are remedied before they become high-cost maintenance issues or health and safety concerns.



Pruning of our trees

Pruning of trees will be based on:

- The outcomes of the inspection regime.
- Utilising knowledge and risk assessment procedures that take account of the health of the tree and its effects on the local environment.
- Following best arboricultural practice for pruning works and, where possible, be scheduled so as not to be detrimental to the tree species involved.
- Resisting unnecessary pruning of the Borough tree stock, whilst ensuring resources are allocated to remedy health & safety concerns.

Generally, works will be undertaken on Council owned trees if they are to:

- Remove an actual (not perceived) risk.
- Abate an actual nuisance - i.e. damage being caused or foreseeably being caused.
- For normal access over roads and driveways.
- To meet highway clearances.

Any longstanding pruning regimes may be re-considered where necessary to accord with these principles.

The implementation of pruning regimes will also be kept flexible, responding to abnormal events such as storms. On a day to day basis though, pruning regimes will respond to the seasons, for example avoiding pruning of trees in flower to ensure that availability of nectar and seeds is not interrupted.

Felling of our trees

The Council will resist the removal of any tree unless it is:

- Dead or dangerous.
- Identified for removal following a risk assessment procedure showing an unacceptable risk to public safety.
- Identified for removal as part of a planning consent.
- A tree causing an obstruction to a public highway, public right of way, where the obstruction cannot be removed by pruning the tree or other reasonable measures.
- A tree causing a legal nuisance to an adjoining property, where pruning would not address the problem. Felling would only be acceptable when justified by the facts of the case and where pruning would not remedy the problem.
- Circumstances where pruning has been undertaken to remedy a severe problem and proved to be unsuccessful.
- Thinning out young and developing trees following principles of best arboricultural practice.
- Where it is demonstrated and verified by relevant specialists that significant property damage is being caused (see below regarding insurance claims).



The Council will consider thinning of groups of trees or woodlands where this would benefit the woodland as a collective, but this would only be where removal would comply with Arboricultural best practice.

Emergency works—such as in storm conditions—would take place as quickly as possible and is part of the Council's overall response to emergencies.



Inappropriate pruning of trees

The Council occasionally receives requests to prune trees which go beyond the criteria listed above. The Council generally will **not** prune or fell a tree to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Branches overhanging properties** – Residents may exercise their common law rights to prune back branches to their property line (disposing of branches at their own expense). However before doing so they should reassure themselves that the trees is not subject to a TPO and that pruning back the tree would not lead to adverse effects which would threaten the tree's overall health or stability.
- **Where a trees is thought to be overly large.**
- **Interference with satellite, TV or other media reception** – There is no legal right to media reception and the Council has no obligation to remove or prune trees to improve reception.
- **Leaf fall** – This is limited to a short period of the year. Leaves which fall on highways and footways are managed or removed by the Council. Residents are responsible for any leaves which fall on their own properties and gardens.
- **Fruit fall** – This is again limited to a short period of the year. Fruit, seeds and berries which fall on highways and footways are

managed or removed by the Council. Residents are responsible for any which fall on their own properties and gardens.

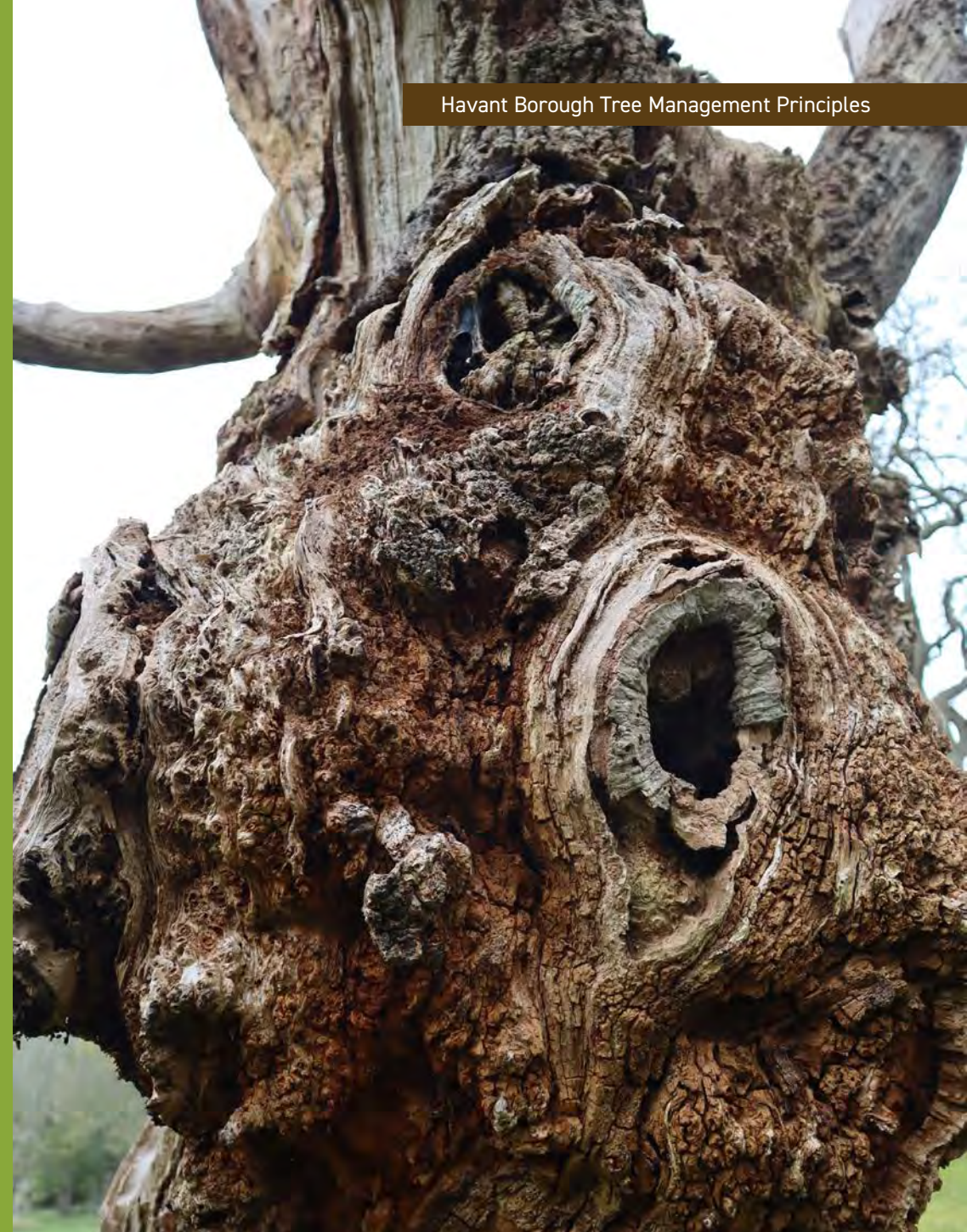
- **Problems associated with pollen** – Trees remove harmful dust and pollutants from our atmosphere and it is not possible to control the pollen produced by our trees without significant consequences for the natural environment.
- **Bird and insect droppings** – These are not recognised as a legal nuisance, however hazards on footways are managed as much as is reasonable by the Council.
- **Obstruction of views** – There is no right in British law to a view, either to ensure privacy or to remove obstructions.
- **Shading of properties, including solar panels** – Whilst the Council encourages residents to install PV panels if their roof is suitable, if trees would shade the panel, they cannot be removed.
- **Concerns about subsidence** – If residents are concerned about subsidence or heave caused by a Council tree to their property, this should be investigated through their insurance company. However each case is unique and the Council cannot as a matter of course take pre-emptive works to prevent structural issues taking place.

Insurance claims on Council owned trees

Havant Borough Council recognises the Joint Mitigation Protocol (JMP) as industry best practice and will determine subsidence cases on this basis. The JMP is a standardised approach to managing subsidence claims where trees are identified as a potential cause of structural movement. It aims to define best practices for investigating and processing building damage caused by tree roots, including setting benchmarks for response times and evidential standards.

The protocol's primary objectives are to streamline claims handling, support prompt decision-making, and facilitate timely mitigation efforts—ultimately leading to faster resolutions. At the same time, it acknowledges the important role of trees in urban settings and ensures that local authorities receive comprehensive investigative evidence at the outset. This enables informed and timely decisions regarding the most appropriate action concerning the tree. Notably, the protocol marks a significant milestone, as it reflects a unified agreement among building insurers and their representatives that remedial pruning can be a viable alternative to tree removal.

(Details can be found at [Joint Mitigation Protocol](#))



Where necessary, the Council will obtain expert specialist advice to verify submitted evidence and where it demonstrates that the tree is an influencing cause, permission to remove the tree will not unreasonably be withheld.

The Council will seek to avoid potential subsidence incidents by taking a proactive approach when determining planning applications. In those areas where the risk of subsidence is greatest, because of the presence of a highly shrinkable clay soil and important landscape trees, the Council will require evidence that measures will be taken to try to prevent future subsidence damage. In some instances, engineering solutions, such as differential building joints and special foundations, may be required.



The Council's insurers, Tree Officers, Legal Officers and Building Control Surveyors will work closely to resolve any issues in an expedient manner. Upon receipt of insurance enquiries from third parties or their representatives, the Council will:

- Undertake reasonable endeavours to clarify the technical issues relating to building subsidence using the Joint Mitigation Protocol.
- Continue to react swiftly to insurance enquiries and request the relevant reports and monitoring information necessary to accurately determine the involvement of Council owned trees.
- Work to the Joint Mitigation Protocol for the timely resolution to insurance enquires involving Council owned trees:
 - Where an application to work on a protected tree in relation to a subsidence case is received, it must be supported by strong evidence that the tree in question is or is likely to contribute to (on the balance of probabilities) damage to a building and the criteria set out in this strategy are met. Although the level of evidence required will differ on a case-by-case basis, the Council will normally require:

- An engineer's report (including an accurate survey).
- A history of damage and precise level monitoring information to demonstrate that the tree is responsible for the damage.
- If this evidence is not sufficient, the Council may require further information including crack monitoring, soil analysis, foundation details, root analysis and drain surveys to be submitted.

There will be situations where a tree makes a negligible contribution to the character or quality of the local environment. In these situations, the Council will agree to its removal based only on a visual assessment of the damage.



HAVANT BOROUGH TREE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

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