

GREAT BROMLEY PARISH COUNCIL

TREE POLICY

This policy sets out the method of management for all trees within the Parish of Great Bromley that fall under the responsibility of the Parish Council. The Council is responsible for all trees within:

- Church Meadow
- the Closed Churchyard
- St George's Close open space
- Hare Green Recreational Ground

The benefits of trees

Trees provide a range of social, economic, and environmental benefits across all landscapes, urban and rural. Their importance in tackling climate change and their role in maintaining biodiversity is well known, but they are also extremely important for people's wellbeing.

Aim of the Policy

To ensure that all trees within the care of the Parish Council are preserved and maintained so that they thrive in good health and are kept in a safe condition. Annual tree surveys provide the information needed to manage the trees, helping to keep them disease-free and in as safe a condition as possible.

'The law requires that people should take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that cause a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury to persons or property. The generally agreed standard to be achieved is that of a reasonable and prudent landowner.' (The National Tree Safety Group – *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees*, 2024)

The Parish Council has a duty of care to ensure that all trees within its ownership are maintained and kept in as safe a condition as possible.

Tree Risk Management / General Tree Management

An annual tree condition survey, commissioned by Great Bromley Parish Council, is undertaken by a suitably qualified arboricultural surveyor. The survey assesses the condition of each tree, signs of disease, and overall health. Its purpose is to identify defects that pose a hazard or risk to site users. All significant defects are prioritised, and suitable recommendations are provided to reduce or remove the risk.

Routine arboricultural works may also be recommended to improve tree condition or reduce general nuisance, even where no specific risk is identified. Such works are usually low priority.

The annual survey guides tree management by highlighting where work is required to make trees safe and/or improve their health. Minor works may also be undertaken for practical purposes, e.g., removing low branches (crown lifting) that restrict grass cutting or hinder vehicle parking (Church Meadow).

Legal considerations

There are currently no trees for which the Parish Council is responsible that fall within a Conservation Area or are subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Should this change in future years, the Parish Council will follow the legal procedures required.

Protection of wildlife

Any tree works undertaken must consider the impact on wildlife and the laws that protect them.

The main species affected by tree works are bats and nesting birds.

Bats – All UK bat species are protected by European and UK legislation: the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (and amendments) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These laws afford complete legal protection to all bat species and their roosts (Bat Conservation Trust).

To comply with these regulations, where there are signs of potential bat features within a tree, qualified bat ecologists must be commissioned to conduct a bat survey before any work is undertaken. Recommendations from the survey must be followed, and where necessary, tree surgeons will collaborate with ecologists to ensure all precautions are taken.

Nesting birds – The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 protects wild birds, their eggs, and their nests in England, Scotland, and Wales (note: certain parts of the Act apply differently in Scotland) (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). Significant tree work will be carried out outside the bird-nesting season (Autumn and Winter). If emergency work is required during nesting season, relevant checks must be made beforehand.

Boundary trees

Boundary or roadside trees that impact neighbouring land, public roads, or rights of way will be considered. Trees causing a negative impact on neighbouring properties will be managed accordingly. If loss of light is reported, the Council will investigate and assess whether intervention is justified.

Public rights of way on Council-owned land

The Council will investigate and, where necessary, clear any obstructions caused by trees that impede footpaths or bridleways.

Development / Planning Applications

When considering planning applications, the Council will take into account the likelihood of claims relating to subsidence or damage to properties caused by nearby Parish Council-owned trees.

Claims for subsidence and damage to buildings, infrastructure, or overhead cables

The Council will only consider claims for subsidence or damage caused by existing trees where a report from a suitably qualified structural engineer is submitted. All such claims will be referred to the Parish Council's insurers.

In the unlikely event of tree roots affecting pipes, drains, roads, or paths, the Parish Council will consider each case on its merits and consult its insurers before deciding on any action.

Where tree branches impact overhead cables, appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the Parish Council's tree surveyor's recommendations.

Tree disease / damage

Native tree species in the UK are currently threatened by several serious diseases. Major concerns include Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), which usually destroys ash trees once infected. All ash trees on Parish Council-owned land are infected at differing stages. The annual survey records and monitors the progression of the disease, and appropriate work is undertaken to preserve the trees for as long as possible. Action is taken where deterioration compromises safety.

Other common diseases include:

Acute/Chronic Oak Decline, Dutch Elm Disease, Horse Chestnut Bleeding Canker, and Sweet Chestnut Blight. These diseases often originate from non-native pests and pathogens.

Another serious threat to oak trees is the Oak Processionary Moth, which appears around April, forming white, dome-shaped nests on oak trees. The emerging caterpillars are toxic to touch, as their tiny hairs contain toxins that cause skin and eye irritation.

Storm damage

Where storm damage results in fallen branches, obstructed paths, or hazards to highways or public rights of way, the Parish Council will take appropriate action to clear the obstruction or notify the relevant authority. Any incidents involving damage to property or potential insurance claims will be reported immediately to the Parish Council's insurers, and no remedial work beyond making the area safe will be undertaken until advice has been received.

Planting new trees

The planting of new trees will be carefully considered, with thought given to their future impact on the landscape. New planting will ensure that tree stock is sourced from home-grown native species.

Summary

The annual tree surveys undertaken on behalf of Great Bromley Parish Council ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to maintain the trees within its care in as safe and healthy a state as possible. Through this Tree Policy, the Parish Council demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that all appropriate measures are in place to maintain the health and safety of the trees within its care.

This policy was approved at the meeting held on 11 February 2026 and is due to be reviewed in May 2028, or before as necessary.