

# **Guidance Note – Trees**

## **Planning application validation guidance note on trees.**

Walsall Council is committed to improving the local environment by securing high quality design resulting in development which respects existing natural features of value as well as restoring and extending the resource. It is vital to ensure that trees and woodlands be sustained throughout the borough. It is also important to conserve the visual quality of the natural environment for all people currently living or working in Walsall as well as for visitors and prospective investors.

Walsall Council expects all new development in Walsall to be designed to a high standard. In many cases this requirement will present designers with obligations and opportunities to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment. New development brings new opportunities and it is important that development makes a positive contribution to Walsall's natural environment and does not detract from or erode it. The information required to be submitted in this checklist will therefore be a material consideration in determining planning applications. Planning applications which disregard this guidance may not be granted planning permission.

Trees can offer many benefits, including:

- providing visual amenity, softening, or complementing the effect of the built environment, and adding maturity to new developments.
- displaying seasonal change and providing opportunities for wildlife inbuilt-up areas.
- making places more comfortable in tangible ways by contributing screening and shade, reducing wind speed and turbulence, intercepting snow, and rainfall, and reducing glare.

Trees are also important elements of green infrastructure, contributing to urban cooling through evapo-transpiration and providing micro-climatic effects that can reduce energy demands in buildings. They therefore represent a key resource that can significantly contribute to climate change adaptation.

Existing trees are an important factor on construction sites, whether on or near the working areas, and trees are a material consideration in the UK planning system. This checklist is intended to assist decision-making regarding existing and proposed trees in the context of design, demolition

and construction. Root systems, stems, and canopies, with allowance for future movement and growth, need to be considered in all projects, including those that do not require planning permission. The space required for any proposed new trees to become established is an important consideration.

During their lifetime, trees will be vulnerable to disturbance, injury, environmental changes, pests and diseases. Construction work often exerts pressures on existing trees, as do changes in their immediate environment following the construction. A tree that has taken many decades to reach maturity can be damaged irreparably in a few minutes by actions that might be unwitting, negligent or wilful. The early provision of physical protection from damage is therefore critical.

Where tree retention or planting is proposed in conjunction with nearby construction, the objective should be to achieve a harmonious relationship between trees and structures that can be sustained in the long term. The good practice recommended in British Standard 5837:2012 Tree in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. Recommendations is intended to assist in achieving this objective. BS5837 gives recommendations and guidance on the relationship between trees and the design, demolition and construction processes. It sets out the principles and procedures to be applied to achieve a harmonious and sustainable relationship between trees and structures. It must be involved at the outset of a potential development and used to identify constraints and inform feasibility studies / design options before a full planning application is even submitted.

Where there are semi-mature trees/mature trees/veteran trees/trees protected by Tree Preservation Order or situated within a Conservation Area, or hedgerows within the site and/or off-site trees within 15metres of the application site (including street trees) irrespective of whether the trees are proposed for removal or retention, a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA) in accordance with BS 5837:2012, or any superseding standard, will be required.

Where trees or hedges will be retained and could be damaged by carrying out the proposed development, there will be a requirement to produce a Tree Protection Plan (TPP) in accordance with BS5837:2012 or any superseding standard. The TPP may take the form of a single A3 plan at an appropriate scale (no smaller than 1:200) showing the location and specification of the tree protection measures.

Clearly it will not be possible for the Local Planning Authority to assess the accuracy of all the submitted information until the case officer has made a site visit e.g. with regard to matters such as accurate plotting of trees. However, if after making a site visit such information is found to be lacking or inaccurately presented, this will need to be requested and may delay

the determination of your application. It is therefore essential that the application is accurately submitted at the outset to avoid any potential delays in processing the application.