

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

TREE MAINTENANCE PLAN

As Amended 2016

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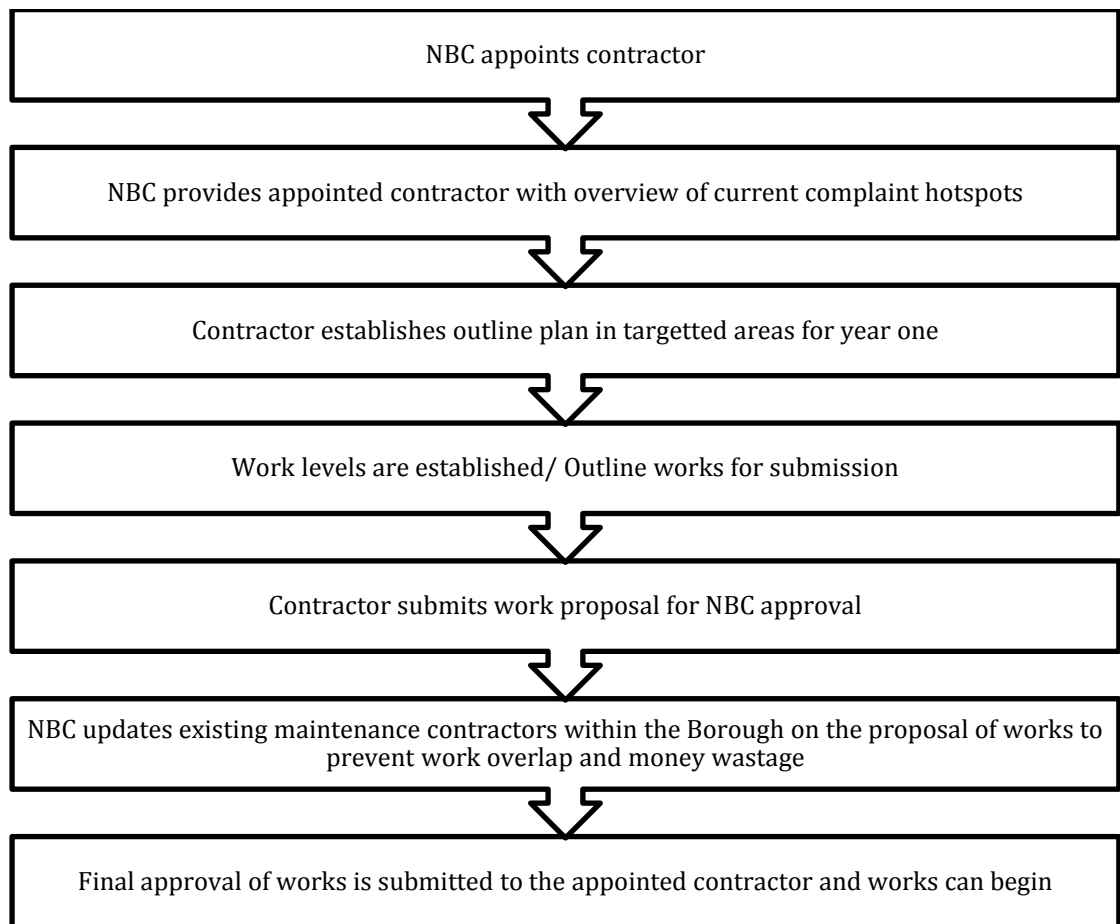
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1. MAINTENANCE PLAN

1.1 How does the maintenance plan work?

This maintenance plan is designed to work alongside the NBC Tree Policy to enhance the existing reactive works rather than replacing them. It has been created to work on a 5-year basis. The land under care of NBC has been divided into 5 zones. Each zone will be thoroughly inspected and works completed during a 12-month period by an approved contractor, on a 5-year rotation; meaning that each zone will be seen every 5 years. Work levels/ pruning plans have been created in accordance with a 5-year maintenance plan to establish a more sustainable tree stock. These pruning plans however, should not focus purely on instant impact, but also on the long-term sustainability and improvement of community spaces.

NBC recognises the benefits to urban trees but also recognises that the wrong tree in the wrong place can be disruptive, for example, significantly obstructing light. This plan has been designed to create a harmonious relationship between trees and people within the borough.



1.2 Detailed description of various Arboricultural works

The following list is for guidance purposes only of best pruning practice and general arboricultural works at the time of writing this policy. Each individual tree genus can react differently to different pruning techniques. Generally trees will be assessed for their suitability to the given pruning technique before any finalised plans of work are carried out.

1.2.1 Formative pruning

- Formative pruning is carried out on primarily young trees. It is started at nursery age; the goal is to produce a tree, which in maturity will be free from any major physical weaknesses and remain a suitable choice for the site.
- This will help to reduce the future risks associated with trees. In the nursery formative pruning will be carried out to influence the shape, structure and size of the tree.
- At the time of planting or soon after, any pruning work should be kept to a minimum to ensure there is an adequate leaf area for the tree to be able to function.
- Once the tree has become more established formative pruning would normally be continued (normally at about three to five years).
- If the tree has been allowed to develop an unsuitable branch structure it would be appropriate to reduce or remove some of the branches before this stage, however early removal of the lowermost branches should be avoided, if at all possible, as they help to aid stem thickening.

1.2.2 Crown thinning

- Crown thinning is a means of creating more light to a garden or property, without drastically making changes to the shape of the tree.
- When carrying out a crown thinning operation, efforts should be made to make sure an even density of foliage is retained.
- No more than 30% of leaf foliage should be removed throughout the entire crown, as uneven thinning or over thinning, will increase the risk of branch failure.
- Other potentially hazardous or weak branches can be removed whilst carrying out the crown thinning.
- Removing branches back to the stem (other than hazardous or weak branches) should be avoided during a crown thin
- These should be minor works and not effect the overall existing shape of the crown

1.2.3 Crown reduction

- Crown reduction is achieved by reducing the whole dimension of the tree, which reduces height and spread of the tree's crown; lessening the biomechanical stress that the tree comes under by reducing both the leverage and the sail area of the tree.
- It is a method of retaining a tree in confined space, which could potentially make the tree more suitable in its surroundings.
- When carrying out a crown reduction care should be taken to retain the main framework of the crown. A high proportion of the foliage bearing structure should be retained.
- Following a reduction there should be enough healthy leaf bearing structure, capable of producing a dense covering of leaf during the following growing season, whilst maintaining a strong frame work of branches.
- Each tree should be individually assessed as to how much should be removed, and from where the removal should take place, so that the crown is reduced in proportion to its original shape.
- The cuts should expose a smaller proportion of heartwood or ripewood than of sapwood and should not exceed 100 mm in diameter, except on very large trees.

1.2.4 Selective branch removal

- Sometimes specific branches can be a problem. This can include branches which have grown too close to buildings, drastically reducing light and potentially causing long term damage.
- Selective branch removal is an appropriate type of pruning in this case as a way of reducing the above risk/ problem.
- This may involve the removal of an individual branch or the branch being reduced.
- If this type of pruning is necessary, the amount of material to be removed and the diameter of the pruning cut should be the minimum required for the purpose.
- If the selective pruning creates a problem in itself, then other pruning should be carried out in conjunction to alleviate the problem.
- If the end result is to create clearance from a building or structure, the work specification should state the feature and the clearance to be achieved.

1.2.5 Pollarding

- Pollarding is way of establishing a tree at set size to create a woody framework of a manageable size, which will enable future maintenance; it should preferably start soon after the tree has become established (not to be mistaken for 'topping' in more mature trees).
- The main stem of the tree should be between 25 mm to 50 mm in diameter when the pollard is started and usually about 2-3 metres in height. However if the tree has already reached a diameter of somewhere between 50 mm and 200 mm, pollarding is still possible.
- It is recommended that where possible some of the pre-existing foliage should be retained, which will aid better physiological function and reduce the risk of die back or the tree dying.
- If the pollard has been started at a more established stage and has an increased diameter close to the 200 mm even more care should be taken to retain some of the pre-existing foliage.
- Once the pollard has been started it needs to be maintained by cutting the new branches on a cyclical basis, how often this takes place should be decided by its position, how old it is, its species, and what condition it is in.
- Sometimes selective pruning (where some of the branches are maintained within each cycle) can be a good option; it would reduce the amount of pruning wounds the tree has to cope with each cycle and, as more foliage would be maintained, the tree's physiological function will be aided. This should help to reduce the risk of decay in the stem and die back.
- If the pollard cycle has been allowed to lapse over many years, a crown reduction maybe more suitable.

1.2.6 Tree thinning

- Tree thinning is carried out in open spaces where a number of low quality trees have been identified. The aim of removing these low quality trees is to allow the remaining trees to establish properly.
- This can also create more open space and provide increased light to an area.

Bibliography

British Standards BS3998: 2010 'Tree Work- Recommendations'