

## 1 Introduction

1.1 The overall aims of the Tree Policy are to ensure the health of the trees managed by Stockport Homes Group, and to encourage biodiversity; maintain and improve landscape quality; and through these elements, improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to neighbourhoods managed by Stockport Homes now and in the future.

## 2 Key Features of the Policy

2.1 The policy seeks to maintain and improve the tree cover and encourage conservation, positive management and appropriate planting of trees and woodlands.

2.2 The policy provides guidance to Stockport Homes' customers, staff and stakeholders to enable a consistent approach to tree management. This will be based on an overall assessment of the risks from trees, by particularly identifying groups of trees by their position and degree of public access. This enables the risk associated with tree stock to be prioritised and help identify any checks and inspections needs.

2.3 The trees managed by Stockport Homes have been generally divided into three zones:

- The first zone which is those areas which are publicly accessed and frequented daily by people (including for example footpaths, highways communal areas, greenspaces, play areas)
- The second zone is where trees are not subject to as frequent access (including individual gardens and the third zone visited infrequently (including for example woodlands with limited access)).

2.4 Stockport Homes will provide guidance to all customers who live in a property managed or owned by Stockport Homes to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in managing trees, as set out in their Tenancy Agreement, and for example customers who are leaseholders.

2.5 Stockport Homes will provide guidance to private landowners on their role and responsibilities in managing and maintaining trees where adjacent to or impacting on Stockport Homes managed land. For example, where a tree is having an impact on Stockport Homes managed land or where there is joint responsibility for a tree on a boundary.

## 3 Tree Inspection and Work

3.1 Stockport Homes will carry out tree inspections of its tree stock within land that it is responsible for. In each instance a record of the survey will be produced.

3.2 Where works are identified these will be managed and monitored by Stockport Homes, where required advice provided by an Arboricultural Officer,

thereby ensuring that works are carried out to appropriate standards and trees are protected and remain as healthy as possible.

3.3 All works to trees will be carried out in line with current legislation, including Health and Safety, and recommended standards by a competent Arboricultural contractor.

3.4 Any work to a tree which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order or within a designated Conservation Area will only be carried out where consent from the appropriate Authorities has been received.

3.5 All tree works will be carried out in accordance with relevant wildlife legislation, including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in respect of legislation protecting birds and bats (which are also protected under EU Directive Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010).

3.6 Where a tree is on private land, Stockport Homes will work as a good neighbour with a private owner to identify if any works or action are required, along with seeking any other professional advice as required to resolve any issues.

3.7 Where there is a claim that a tree managed by Stockport Homes is causing subsidence and/or damage to private property, Stockport Homes will require the owner to provide evidence and the owner to provide a structural report. Stockport Homes will review any evidence and determine the appropriate course of action.

3.8 Where a customer or private landowner causes damage to a tree managed by Stockport Homes, a review of the tree will be carried to determine what action is required. This may lead to the recovery of costs to make good or replace and further legal action as appropriate.

## 4 Tree Management

4.1 Stockport Homes will carry out a regular inspection regime of its tree stock within land it manages. This includes survey of trees within communal greenspaces and individual gardens, in addition to tree inspections required through a referral process as set out in the Tree Procedure.

4.2 A tree management programme will be prepared and reviewed regularly, based on the outcomes of any survey and implemented where it is reasonably practicable to achieve, subject to resources and on the basis of the criteria as defined below.

### (i) Dead, Dying and Dangerous Trees

4.3 Where a tree has been identified as dead, dying or dangerous, it will be removed following advice from an Arboricultural Officer as soon as practical possible or in line with any health and safety advice which requires action to be undertaken.

## **(ii) Other works**

4.4 Where a tree has been identified as needing other works except for (i) above, any works required will be included in Stockport Homes tree management programme. Any works required will be carried out where it is reasonable and practical to achieve, subject to resources.

### **Damage to Property**

4.5 Where a tree managed by Stockport Homes has been identified as potentially damaging property and it can be demonstrated that a tree is the primary cause of direct or indirect damage to property, Stockport Homes will act to rectify the problem based on the advice by the Arboricultural Officer, a structural surveyor or other technical advisor as appropriate.

4.6 Direct damage may include tree roots lifting paving stones, or trunks or branches damaging boundaries (for example including garden walls or fences). Indirect damage may include subsidence due to soil shrinkage resulting from water extraction by tree roots or damage due to location of tree and impact on dampness. In cases of any damage to property it must be clearly demonstrated that the tree is the principal cause of the damage.

### **Obstruction of the Highway**

4.7 Any work recommended by an Arboricultural Officer to clear the obstruction will be carried out as appropriate.

### **Obstruction of Street Furniture**

4.8 Any work recommended by an Arboricultural Officer to clear the obstruction will be carried out as appropriate.

### **Trees affecting Reception**

4.9 There is currently no legal right to good television reception, and no legal requirements to rectify a loss of television or radio service in respect of trees. It is the responsibility of the relevant Utility company to ensure that there is an adequate service to all properties. Interference is not at present a legal nuisance, and in many cases, it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by the relevant Utility company finding an engineering solution. Request for such work will only be considered if it can be demonstrated that:

(i) the householder has taken every effort to find an engineering solution to the problem and has not been successful.

(ii) The work required is consistent with good arboriculture practice and will not unduly affect the amenity value or health of the tree.

### **Trees affecting Telecommunication Line.**

4.10 Where a line runs through a tree, works will only be considered where proven by the customer that the line is affected. Works will only be carried out

where consistent with good arboriculture practice and not affect the amenity or health of the tree. Works will only be delivered as part of management programme unless considered a health and safety issue.

## **Obstruction of Utility Cables**

4.11 Utility cables are the responsibility of the statutory undertaker. If the tree is growing very close to, through or is affecting a power cable or electricity line it should be reported to the relevant Utility company.

## **Stockport Homes Investment Programme (capital, repairs and revenue)**

4.12 Where any investment works are planned to be carried out on Stockport Homes property or land where trees will be affected, advice will be sought from Stockport Homes' Environmental Services Team. Any works will be subject to details as recommended by an Arboricultural Officer. Trees may be maintained or removed to enable works to be undertaken, if trees are to be felled, trees will be replaced in appropriate alternative locations.

## **Overhanging Branches**

4.13 In respect of overhanging branches, all residents have a legal right to cut back to the boundary of the property and offer waste back to the owner of the tree. In circumstances where damage or nuisance is being caused or the tree is dangerous, Stockport Homes will seek the advice from the Arboricultural Officer. Where owners notify Stockport Homes of branches overhanging their property, appropriate guidance will be given.

## **Inappropriate Species**

4.14 In certain circumstances a tree may have outgrown the space allocated, and pruning will not suffice, following advice of Arboricultural Officer the tree may be removed and an alternative species planted.

## **Shade or Blocking of Light**

4.15 There is no legal right to light. Advice should be taken from Environmental Services where trees are affected. Stockport Homes will not remove or prune a tree in order to mitigate shade.

## **Miscellaneous**

4.16 Stockport Homes will not fell or prune trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena, which are largely outside of its control. There are a variety of potential nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor or seasonal and considered to be normal and acceptable consequences of living near trees. Examples of such problems are falling leaves, twigs, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings; insects associated with trees (spiders, wasps, flies etc); reduction or increase of moisture to gardens; suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens; leaves

falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs, the build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structures.

4.17 Stockport Homes will work with customers to seek alternative solutions where appropriate to address issues, for example relocation of washing lines.

4.18 Where a tree is reported to be an issue relating to a personal medical complaint, Stockport Homes not normally prune or fell a tree under its ownership / management where a request has been made to do so because of a personal medical complaint. However, where it can be established that the presence of a tree is causing a detriment to the health of a customer, further consideration will be given to the management approach of trees and advice should be sought from Stockport Homes' Environmental Services Team.

### **Biosecurity / Pest and Epidemic Management**

4.19 Biosecurity is a set of precautions that aim to prevent the spread of pests, pathogens or invasive species. The threat to trees from these has never been greater and as a large landowner, Stockport Homes undertake to follow best practice and specific advice as published.

## **5 High Hedges**

5.1 A "high hedge" is defined as a line of two or more evergreen or semi evergreen trees or shrubs that are over two metres in height. Individual trees or shrubs, groups of trees or woodlands do not come under this definition.

5.2 Where Stockport Homes receives a tree referral, it will investigate, and recommended action as required.

5.3 Where Stockport Homes is unable to resolve an issue, it will be referred to Stockport Councils Planning Service, who have delegated powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, (Part 8) and the High Hedges (appeals England) Regulations 2005 to deal with complaints from properties adversely affected by evergreen hedges over two metres high - <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/high-hedges-policy>.

## **6 Tree Planting**

6.1 Stockport Homes will seek feedback from customers and Stockport Council on locations where it would be appropriate to plant trees as part of delivering neighbourhood improvements, subject to the availability of funding. Any planting will aim to support the continued improvement of the tree cover, to encourage conservation, positive management of all tree stock.

6.2 Planting of trees within communal spaces is not permitted without prior permission from Stockport Homes, any such requests should be directed to the Housing Management Services to determine suitability as set out in 7.12.

## 7 Trees in Individual Gardens

7.1 Where a tree is an individual garden, Stockport Homes will undertake a tree inspection where required on the request of a tenant, member of staff, Councillor or Stockport Council. Any tree works will be included in the tree management programme as defined in 4 above.

7.2 The Tenancy Agreement states that:

- You must keep your garden reasonably neat and tidy and free from rubbish. Lawns must be cut, and hedges trimmed
- Without our written permission, remove, alter, replace or plant any hedge, fence or tree at the property
- Without our written permission, allow any hedge to grow more than 2 metres high and you must not cut down or remove any hedge or tree completely.

7.3 Stockport Homes will maintain trees in individual tenant's gardens in the same circumstances as they would on communal land. However, if the tree has been planted by the current tenant or on his/her behalf then it would be the responsibility of that current tenant to carry out any tree maintenance work required and subject to permissions as set out in Tenancy Agreement. Stockport Homes is able to provide advice where customers request.

### Trees in Private Ownership

7.4 Stockport Homes is not responsible for trees on privately owned land. Where issues are identified where a tree is privately owned, Stockport Homes will seek advice from Arboricultural Officer and other relevant officers to determine the issue and recommend action. Stockport Homes will liaise with the owner to determine appropriate action and where issues cannot be resolved appropriate legal advice will be sought.

7.5 All tree requests are stored on a central database, this provides information on progress with tree inspections, outcomes of surveys, emergency tree request (call out) and planned schedule of works, which is available through Stockport Homes Environmental Services Team.

## 8 Internal Controls

<b>1</b>	<b>Version control</b> Version number will change every three years or at major review	
	<b>Version No.</b>	<b>Date</b>
	1	September 2025
	<b>Change/s and reasons for change</b>	
	3 yearly review of policy	

<b>2</b>	<b>Policy Owner</b> i.e. Director	Director of Customer Services
	<b>Policy Author/s</b> i.e. Head of Service	Head of Environmental Services
	<b>Approved by/date</b>	Customer Services Management Meeting 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2025– Decision Director of Customer Services – Decision – 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
	<b>Communication</b>	Team Meeting
	<b>Effective Date</b> - the date of sign-off	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
	<b>Next Full Review Date</b> i.e. 3 years after effective date, with an annual light touch review	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2029

<b>3</b>	<u>Regulatory Standards</u>	Please list the Consumer, Governance, Viability standards and outcomes this policy meets
	<b>Standard/s</b>	<b>Required outcome</b>
	Neighbourhood and Community Standard	<u>1.1 Safety of shared spaces</u> 1.1.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces. <u>1.2 Local cooperation</u> 1.2.1 Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.
	Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard	Registered providers must communicate with tenants and supply information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account. <u>1.1 Fairness and respect</u> 1.1.1 Registered providers must treat tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect. <u>1.2 Diverse needs</u>

	<p>1.2.1 In relation to the housing and landlord services they provide, registered providers must take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and, where relevant, prospective tenants.</p> <p><u>1.3 Engagement with tenants</u></p> <p>1.3.1 Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered and communicate how tenants' views have been considered.</p> <p><u>1.4 Information about landlord services</u></p> <p>1.4.1 Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.</p> <p><u>1.5 Performance information</u></p> <p>1.5.1 Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services.</p>
<b>Legalisation</b>	The policy links with a range of legislative requirements, including but not limited to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)</li> <li>• The Health and Safety at Works Regulations (1999)</li> <li>• Occupiers Liability Act (1957 &amp; 1984)</li> <li>• Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) - High Hedge Legalisation</li> <li>• The Countryside and Wildlife Act (1981)</li> <li>• Highways Act (1980)</li> <li>• Town and Country Planning Act 1990</li> <li>• EU Directive Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010</li> </ul>

<b>4</b>	<b>Linked policies/strategies</b>	
	Stockport Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Management Strategy</li> <li>• Safer Neighbourhoods Strategy</li> <li>• Health and Safety Strategy</li> <li>• Home Repairs Policy</li> <li>• Estates and Neighbourhoods Management Policy</li> </ul>
	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stockport MBC Tree Management Procedure</li> <li>• Stockport MBC Tenancy Agreement</li> <li>• Stockport Action Plan for Nature</li> <li>• Stockport Local Development Framework</li> <li>• Stockport MBC Climate &amp; Nature strategy (CAN)</li> </ul>

<b>5</b>	<b>Equality, diversity and inclusion</b>	Describe how different experiences, characteristics, and approaches were considered during the
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		formulation of the policy, e.g. neurodiversity, age, religion, sex/gender, financial/digital inclusion.
		Customer feedback from tree referrals has been considered in formulating the policy, to ensure equal impact where customers may have a personal medical issue or disability and consideration of this is taken determining the action appropriate to managing any tree(s) and the impact on the customer.
<b>6</b>	<b>Customer Voice</b>	Describe how the customer and/or colleague voice shapes and influences the policy and services
		Customer feedback has been considered in preparation of the policy, including Tenant Satisfaction Measures including TP10 Communal Areas are clean and well maintained.
<b>7</b>	<b>Risk management</b>	This policy helps to mitigate the following risks identified on the Corporate Risk Register
	Corporate Risk 1	The relationship with the Council is not strong, supportive and effective
	Corporate Risk 6	Stockport Homes does not deliver excellent customer services in the way that customers require them
	Corporate Risk 7	Stockport Homes does not respond to and learn from complaints effectively and does not listen to the customer voice
	Corporate Risk 15	Health and safety obligations to colleagues across Stockport Homes aren't fulfilled
<b>8</b>	<b>Performance monitoring</b>	Please list the relevant government TSMs (Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
		TP10 - Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained