

Guidance Notes

Completing a Tree Survey for a planning application:

1. Abbreviations

TPO Tree Preservation Order

CA Conservation Area

RPA Root Protection Area

TCP Tree Constraints Plan – plan to help decide what development layout to create around the trees with adequate clearance.

TPP Tree Protection Plan – plan of final layout showing what trees are to be retained or removed and any tree protection measures.

DBH Diameter at Breast Height

2. When to carry out a Tree Survey

This depends on which planning application form you are using. Please read carefully any instructions in the “Trees and Hedges” section as some forms ask you to show positions on a scaled plan for any trees or hedges on the property, or on adjacent property which are within falling distance of the boundary, and to indicate which ones will need to be pruned or removed. Other application forms might ask for additional information if you have ticked **yes** to trees or hedges are present or will be affected, and indicates you need to provide a full Tree Survey and accompanying plan before your application can be determined. This is to ensure that the planning process takes account of all trees and hedgerows which may be affected by the development proposals. Failure to supply the required information may result in your application being rejected or delayed.

Professional developers will most likely have come across Tree Surveys previously and will be able to refer to BS5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition & construction*, or may prefer to employ an arboriculturist to carry out a tree survey and produce a TCP and/or TPP with survey report.

For anyone wishing to carry out their own tree survey to submit to the council with a planning application, here are some guidance notes to clarify the tree survey requirements.

3. What to include on a tree survey

A tree survey should record information about all the trees, groups of trees and woodlands on the site and any trees adjacent to the site within falling distance of the boundary. Even if some trees are not near to the proposed works they should still be included on the survey. You may find it easier to write about each tree individually or to put the information in a table format. An example is shown below.

A tree survey should contain the following information;

- Date of survey
- Reference numbers, for easier tree identification if there are more than one of each species and for cross-reference to the plan
- Tree species
- Approximate height in metres
- Trunk diameter measured at 1.5m above ground level (DBH)
- Branch spread in metres, measured from trunk to outer edges of the crown in north, east, south, and west directions
- Height to lowest branch above ground level
- Approximate age class (e.g. Y=Young, SM=Semi-Mature, M=Mature, LM=Late-Mature, OM=Over-Mature, or actual age if known when planted)
- Condition (e.g. good, fair/average, poor, dead)
- Structural condition (e.g. forks in stem, dead wood, loose bark, fungus, leaning, cavities, struck by lightning, part failed, collapsing, previous pruning work)
- Other features (e.g. ivy, nests in use, fungal bodies present at certain times of the year)
- Category grading according to BS5837, section 4.5 tree categorization method, should be provided by professional developers, agents and arborists.

4. Presentation of the Survey Information

The locations of the trees and their canopy spreads should be accurately drawn (to the nearest 0.5m) on a scaled plan of the site. Each tree should be identified on the plan using the corresponding identification reference given to them in the survey data/table.

The survey data listed above can be presented in a table format.

Here is an example of tree survey information;

Tree Ref No	Species	Ht (m)	DBH (mm)	Crown spread	Ht of lowest branch	Age class	Condition/ comments	Category
T1	Silver birch	11	290	N 4 E 4.3 S 4.2 W 3.8	2.5	M	Fair condition. Trunk forked at 3m.	B
T2	Norway maple	15	576	N 7 E 6.5 S 6.8 W 7.1	3	SM	Good condition & shape. Single straight stem, no decay or defects visible. In prominent position.	A
T3	Cherry	6	308	N 2 E 2.8 S 3 W 2.6	2.3	LM	Poor condition. Large basal wound with decay. Leaning. Driveway under canopy. Limited remaining life expectancy	C

Any other information, comments or observations can be provided as additional columns on the table or in a written report to accompany the plan and table.

The tree report should also state which trees are intended to be retained, which will require some pruning work and which are to be felled, giving reasons for any trees to be felled. It is also advisable to contact the council to check if any trees are protected by a TPO, by virtue of being within a conservation area or by conditions attached to a previous planning consent.

5. Hedgerows

If it is a hedge or section of a hedge which will be affected or is proposed to be removed then a hedgerow survey will be required in addition to being shown on a scaled plan.

A hedgerow survey should contain the following information;

- Location of existing hedge. Also to be shown on a plan and annotated as which sections are to be removed, retained, reduced or cut back etc...
- Length of hedge to be affected by the planning proposals
- Height of hedge
- Width of hedge
- Approximate age of hedge, if known
- Species within the hedge, including any trees
- Species of any plants growing below the hedge and up to 1m either side of the hedge, if it is a countryside hedgerow
- Presence of, or signs of, any wildlife (nests, droppings, claw/foot marks, feeding areas)

6. Tree Protection

For trees to be retained, whether covered by a TPO or not, it is advisable to place protective fencing around at the outer edge of the canopy (assuming the canopy has not been cut back) as a minimum distance from the trunk. For trees with narrow canopies or trees which have been cut back, very old trees and trees covered by a TPO the RPA should be calculated according to BS5837:2012 with consideration for growing environment and any existing root obstructions, then the protective fencing is to be placed at the outer extents of the calculated RPA – the council officer can help you calculate the RPA if required. Tree protection is required to prevent accidental damage to branches and trunk, to obstruct heavy machinery driving under the canopy crushing the roots and causing soil compaction, and to prevent materials being stored under the trees which may compact or contaminate the soil. Soil level should not be altered within the RPA as this is also damaging to the roots and detrimental to the survival of the tree.

Most builders use Heras/Block 'n' Mesh fencing which is adequate providing it is bolted together securely and is kept in place at the appropriate distance around the tree.

Tree protection will also consider;

- a) Construction of hard surfaces within the RPA
- b) Installation of underground services within the RPA
- c) Site movements in proximity to the RPA
- d) Cement/mortar mixing and fuel storage to prevent soil contamination in/near the RPA
- e) Location of site compound, materials and visitor parking in proximity to trees.

Contact the council if you require any advice.

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