

TREES AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

Trees positively contribute to your environment. Attractive green spaces and gardens increase the value of properties as well as promoting community cohesion.

Trees can also provide opportunities and some constraints for developers. It is important to take into account existing trees on the site when designing the layout and provide appropriate distances between structures and trees to reduce foreseeable risks and reduce conflicts about shade, falling debris, or dominance by trees. Some trees host sap-sucking insects that excrete honeydew (a sticky sugar solution) which can be unattractive to house purchasers, especially near parked cars or gardens. Drains blocked by leaves and debris as well as apprehension during gales all create pressures to heavily prune or remove “retained” trees.

Some ways in which we can help you:

- We welcome early discussion with agents and discuss proposals with planning officers as part of pre-application submissions (charges apply).
- Site monitoring visits can be made when issues arise during the development which affect trees of ‘high’ or ‘moderate’ quality.
- We can assist in compiling tree surveys and work schedules for open spaces which are to be adopted by AVDC. We can also commission the works for you (charges apply).

Obtaining planning consent

Quality trees in, or adjacent to, planning application sites are likely to influence the determination of planning applications. Sympathetic designs in accordance with **BRITISH STANDARD 5837** are more likely to gain planning consent.

Implementing national best practice guidance allows agents and their clients to avoid pit falls during the planning process by considering trees and your environment at the earliest stages of the design concept.

Developers want to build profitable, sustainable, attractive and secure structures as part of any new development and the consideration of trees within or adjacent to their site can promote good design, a healthy and attractive environment, speed sales and increase the values of the finished development.

Successful tree retention depends on safeguarding every part of the tree throughout development and most especially the tree’s root system.

Tree Surveys and categorisation

These should be carried out by a suitably qualified arboricultural consultant or contractor prior to layout design. The survey data will enable you to select appropriate trees for retention and identify trees that ought to be removed. A proper survey will highlight foreseeable opportunities or constraints and help to produce a design which we can support in arboricultural terms. Table 1 within BRITISH STANDARD 5837 explains how trees should be categorised.

Designing a sympathetic layout

Root Protection Areas should be sufficient for the size and location of all retained trees. They typically extend from the stem centre to a radius equivalent to twelve times the stem diameter. Refer to clause 4.6 of BRITISH STANDARD 5837 for detailed guidance on the calculation of these areas.

Woodlands, veteran trees and native Black Poplars may justify greater separation from structures. This is to safeguard the ecologically richer woodland edges and to reduce foreseeable risks and pressures which often erode such features.

Site storage and working areas should be outside root protection areas.

Homes and gardens built within the shade of trees are unattractive to some purchasers and also result in pressures to heavily prune or even fell trees after occupation.

Foundations

Foundation designs must take into account proposed new tree planting as well as trees retained and trees removed. Guidance for building on clay soils in proximity to trees is available from the National House Building Council (NHBC).

New tree planting and landscaping should be incorporated as an integral part of a development proposal. Details of the tree planting/ landscape scheme should ideally be provided as part of an application. Where this is not the case conditions are likely to be imposed on any planning permission to require such details be submitted. You need to know the species and location of new tree planting before you can design adequate footings.

Roads and other hard surfaces should normally be positioned outside the root protection areas, but if this is not achievable, guidance should be sought on special construction methods. **“No-dig” methods should be taken very literally - not even the surface soil should be disturbed.**

Underground and overhead services should be positioned outside the root protection areas, but where this is not achievable, a guidance note: **NJUG VOLUME 4. Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees** gives advice on how to install services sympathetically.

Protecting your retained trees

Tree Protection Plans are often required by planning conditions to ensure protection against damage during demolition, construction and landscaping phases of development. Early submission as part of an application can overcome objections and add merit to your applications.

cross section of a tree, note the shallow and wide spreading root system

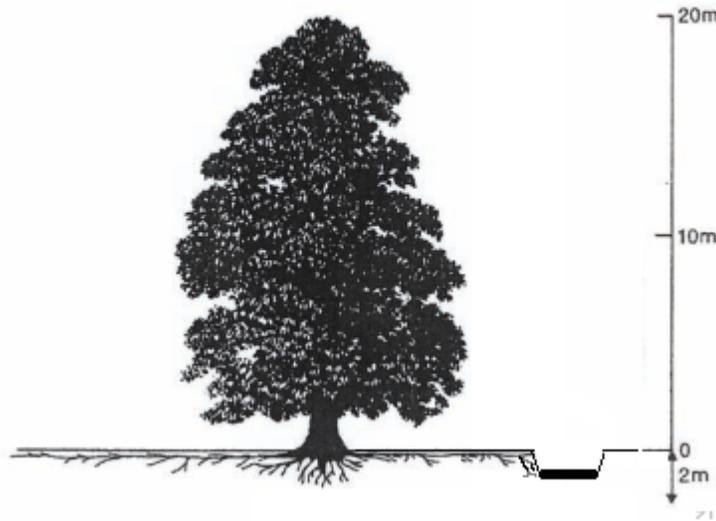


Figure 1

Retained trees will need robust, physical protective barriers during demolition and construction. Site staff involved in these operations should understand and respect the protective measures. Monitoring by site supervisors will ensure protection remains effective until soft landscape works commence.

Roots are mainly shallow yet extend randomly far from the base of the tree. Roots are frequently found just under the surface, so all excavations inside Root Protection Areas should be avoided.

Without these measures, retained tree roots can be easily damaged beyond recovery, leading to decline or death of a significant tree. The rationale for the initial layout of the development would then become irrelevant. This would result in an expensive financial burden on the owner as well as a significant loss to the local community and environment.

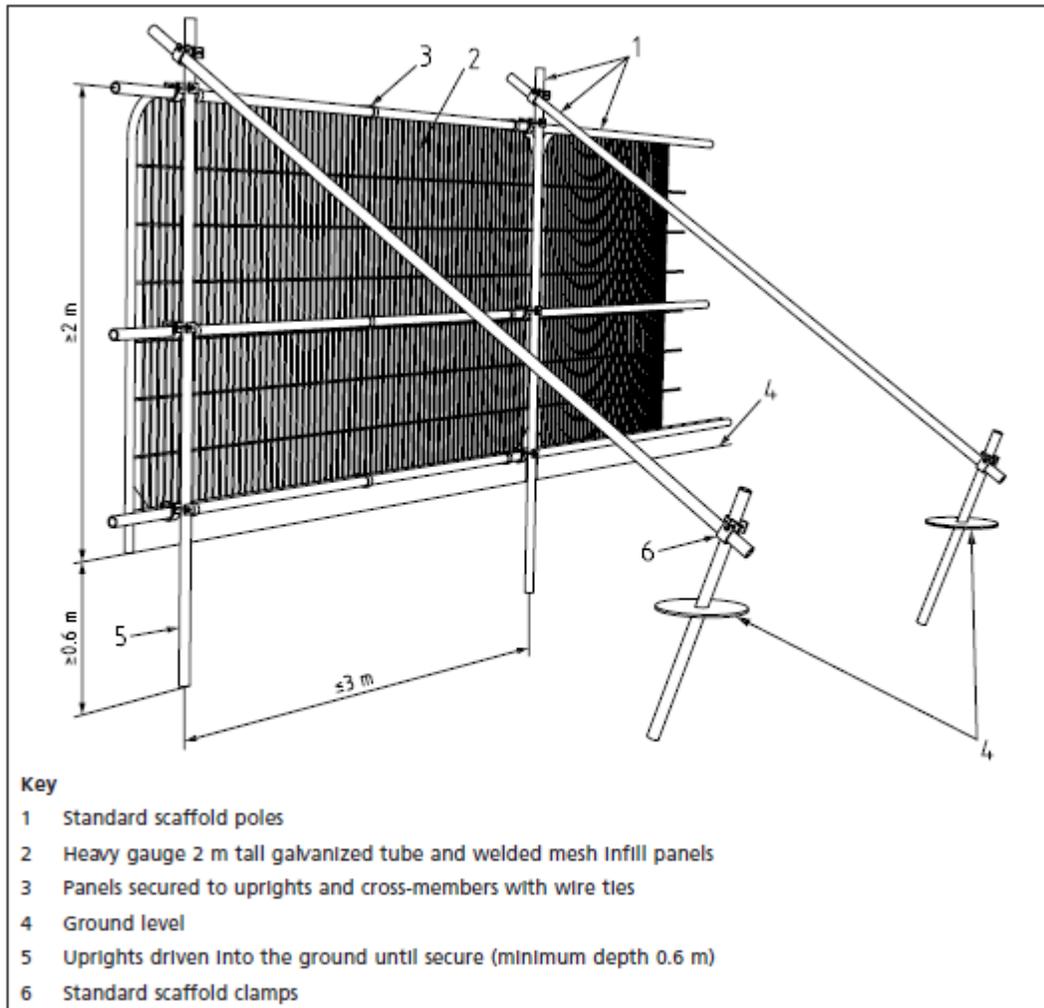


Figure 2: section of a protective barrier for retained trees

Many trees are subject to legal constraints, for example by **Conservation Areas**, **Tree Preservation Orders**, or **Felling Licences**. Offences can lead to heavy fines and costly replacement planting. Planning conditions can place duties on landowners to undertake tree protection and tree planting work.

After care and future management of trees and green spaces

Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 places a duty on the Local Planning Authority to secure the planting of new trees. We will strive to achieve the *'right tree in the right place'*.

Agreements between developers and local authorities frequently provide for future management of open spaces. Developers will be expected to maintain green spaces to an acceptable standard.

Tree and woodland works should be carried out by reputable and suitably qualified tree contractors. Lists of those approved by the Arboricultural Association can be found at www.trees.org.uk.

BRITISH STANDARD 3998 sets out the current recommendations for tree surgery and felling.

BRITISH STANDARD 8545 advises on how to establish new trees.

Contact details:

Arboricultural Association – www.trees.org.uk

Arboricultural Practice Notes - are available from AAIS, Alice Holt Lodge, Forest Research Station,, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH.

AVDC planning and tree officers – www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk

British Standards – BSI, 389 Chiswick High Road, London, W4 4AL.

BRE – Building Research Establishment, Garston, Watford, WD2 7JR

National Joint Utilities Group – 30 Millbank, London, SW1P 4RD

NHBC – Buildmark House, Chiltern Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP6 5AP

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