

APPENDIX 4: Common Issues & Enquiries FAQs

I live near mature trees which drop blossom in the Summer and leaves in the Autumn, how can I avoid these filling up my gutters or causing trip hazards?

The safety of the Highway is the Council's responsibility and is cared for via the Street Pride Service. Although the Council cannot remove obstructions on private land, it can clear public paths and pavements where fallen leaves and fruit presents a potential trip hazard. If you wish to report a potential trip hazard due to falling leaves or fruit please email: <https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/report>

The property owner is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of their property including access to gutters and drains and in leafy areas it is recommended that gutter guards are installed as a simple and cost-effective measure against blockages.

Both tree blossom and falling leaves are a natural occurrence marking the seasons and both are easily carried on the wind. Pruning deciduous and flowering trees would not reduce the volume or impact of these two natural cycles.

Trees on my street are secreting sap on to my car and property, what can I do stop this?

Unfortunately sap or honeydew is a naturally occurring issue caused by aphids and greenfly who feed on the tree and create a sugary substance as a by-product. There is no way to stop this natural activity and research has shown that regrowth from pruning can often exacerbate the problem as the new growth attracts more insects. Although an inconvenience, the sap can be washed from cars, windows and signage with warm soapy water.

Birds are nesting in the trees outside my home and the noise and mess is causing a nuisance, what can be done?

The nesting season in the UK runs from March through to September and trees provide important habitats for birds who support biodiversity and ecosystems that support our food production. Birds choose to nest in areas where they feel safe and trees provide cover for their nests and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As this is part of the natural order of the environment it is

impossible to divert birds to nest elsewhere and would be illegal for the Council to intervene in this natural habitat.

The trees that neighbour my property are blocking the light to my garden/house, can they be removed please?

The Council policy does not permit removal of healthy trees other than for the circumstances outlined in section 2.2.4 *Pruning & Felling* which does not cover the removal of trees due to light obstruction. However, the Council's aim is to ensure that it protects the natural environment whilst balancing the quality of life for residents and appreciate that overshadowing from neighbouring trees can cause distress. These situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and in some cases pruning may be advised, however safety work will take priority and it is unlikely that felling would be recommended. In addition, the guidance at 2.2.4 *Pruning & Felling* also sets out your Common Law right to prune overhanging branches at your property which could also help alleviate the problem.

My property has solar panels to provide renewable green energy but the trees on my street are blocking the light to these panels, can they be removed or pruned?

If the tree was planted after the installation of solar panels the Council's Tree Service will investigate the issues and seek to resolve the problem through pruning or transplanting the tree, if it is young enough.

Prior to installing solar panels and other sources of renewable energy all aspects of the property should be assessed, including trees on neighbouring land. Trees provide a huge contribution to the climate change agenda and although the switch to renewable energy sources in domestic areas is welcome, it does not outweigh the community and climate benefits of the trees, as such trees will not be removed to allow access to sunlight for solar panels.

The trees near my property are blocking my view of the local landscape, please can they be pruned, thinned or removed?

Trees are an important part of our natural habitat, providing food and shelter to wildlife and cleaning our air of toxins and pollutants, therefore the Council policy does not permit the removal of trees to open up views. However, the guidance at 2.2.4 *Pruning & Felling* does set out your Common Law right to prune overhanging

branches at your property which could also help alleviate the problem.

The trees near my property are overgrown and I believe that they are becoming dangerous, please can they be cut back?

In general trees do not become overgrown, they grow to the full height of that particular species, however when trees are large and sway in the wind it can be unsettling for people and although they are appropriate for their species they may not be appropriate for the setting. The Council's Tree Service undertakes proactive tree surveys across the borough to ensure that the condition of Council-owned trees is safe and that they are appropriately maintained. If you believe that the trees near your property are dangerous it is worth checking the guidance provided in section '2.2.3 Responding to Dangerous Trees & Emergency Incidents' before making a service request as this outlines some of the characteristics of dangerous trees.

My property is located next to a woodland and the trees attract wild animals, insects and 'pests'. Could these trees be removed or cut back please?

Given that trees provide a natural habitat or vital source of food for animals and wildlife of all types (some of which are protected in law), removal or pruning which could cause damage to the natural habitat of wildlife would not be supported.

Whilst the Council would not be permitted to undertake tree works to resolve these issues there are measures that home owners can take to reduce the impacts such as ensuring that all holes in gutters and facias are blocked to avoid opportunities for wasps and other pests to nest, and ensuring that walls and fences are well maintained to prevent access to gardens from neighbouring woodlands.

I believe that tree roots are causing damage to water pipes and drainage in my local area and would like this to be investigated by the Council.

Whilst tree roots can travel many metres underground, away from the tree itself, they are not strong enough to break or crack pipes and drains. However, where there is a pre-existing crack the tree roots can often exploit these cracks exacerbating the damage.

The responsibility for the care and maintenance of pipes and drains lies with the sewerage and water provider for the area when they are located in the street and

with the property owner where they cross into private land. In the first instance it is advised that you contact your provider to explore the issue further. If you still feel there is a case for indirect damage to your property, please follow the guidance set in section '2.2.8 Damage to Property' when gathering your evidence.

My neighbour's trees are affecting my property what can I do?

The Council cannot intervene where a tree is privately owned and recommend that in the first instance you approach your neighbour and ask that they rectify the problem. If the problem continues, it is recommend that you contact Citizen's Advice Bureau to support you in mediating the issues. However, there are a number of occasions where the Council will offer support:

- Where the resident is vulnerable (e.g., age or disability) the Council's Community Protection Unit will support residents to initiate the conversation with their neighbour
- Where the tree is growing in a Council owned property the Council's Tree Service will investigate.

Trees are blocking my television signal, can they be removed or cut back?

Satellite-television requires the 'dish' to have a clear line of view to the orbiting satellite which can be obstructed by a number of existing elements from highway signs and buildings to small tree branches, preventing adequate signal getting to the satellite-dish. Given the specific requirements of the technology it is advised to contact the company who installed your equipment to resolve the issue as the Council do not prune or remove healthy trees to allow for improved television signals.

Trees outside are touching my telephone wires and I'm worried about damage to the line, can they be pruned back?

Telephone wires are extremely robust coated with thick layers of plastic to protect the wires from interference from trees, bird life and other obstructions. If you have faults on your line please contact your Service provider in the first instance.