

Congleton Town Council Planning Committee – Guidance on Trees and Shrubs Approved at Congleton Town Council Planning Committee – 19 October 2023

Congleton Town Council believes that the positive impact of trees and shrubs on our environment and communities cannot be overstated and include :

- Countering climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide.
- Trapping through their leaves toxic pollutants and microscopic particles.
- Tempering severe weather with their capacity to attenuate heavy rains and floodwater.
- Moderating temperatures with their ability to evaporate water, reflect sunlight and provide shade.
- Helping prevent soil erosion through their intricate root systems which act as filters.
- Reducing noise as they act as sound barriers.
- Providing increased biodiversity by supporting many species of fungi, lichens, mosses and plants as well as birds, invertebrates and other animals. The nuts, seeds and fruits of our trees and shrubs are essential food sources for British wildlife. Many species of wildlife are threatened and becoming rarer.
- Delivering a range of health benefits including improving the air for asthma sufferers, lowering the risk of skin cancer and creating positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Since May 2019, Congleton Town Council’s Planning Committee has ensured that all planning applications that relate to the pruning, pollarding or felling of trees must be considered by and voted on by the Planning Committee. They cannot be ‘starred’ as planning applications that can be approved on block.

Congleton Town Council actively encourages residents to protect trees by obtaining a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), which protects all types of trees. Anyone can apply for a TPO. The applicant does not have to own the land upon which the tree is situated to apply. There is no charge to apply for a TPO. Applications for a TPO in Cheshire East should be sent to PlanningTrees@cheshireeast.gov.uk with details of the tree(s), their location and why they should be considered for a TPO.

There are special rules regarding the protection of trees in designated Conservation areas of which there are three in Congleton – Lawton Street/Moody Street, Park Lane and West Street.

In view of their significant environmental and economic benefits, this Council urges those submitting planning applications for new developments to include as many additional trees and shrubs as is feasible.

Felling any tree will have implications for people and wildlife and any decision to fell a tree should be a decision of last resort. Where tree(s) are causing a real problem, this Council urges residents to talk to a tree adviser or consultant about how to best manage a problem tree. This Council urges residents to find a quality assured tree surgeon if major work is to be carried out, such as pollarding and pruning which can remove dangerous hanging branches or reduce the weight or impact of a tree without killing it.

Sometimes it is necessary to fell a tree where a tree poses a risk to safety owing to its location or condition, or is shown to be damaging a property. In line with the recommendations of the Woodland Trust, Congleton Town Council recommends planting replacement trees at a ratio of at least three to one. Even at this replacement rate, it will take years for the replacement trees to match the benefits of a felled tree.

Replacement trees should be native trees and the size of the replacement trees should reflect both the trees removed and the local ecosystem. Congleton Town Council urges residents to talk to a tree adviser or consultant about the native trees best suited for their locality. Once established, native trees should require little maintenance or special treatment and they should thrive naturally if planted in favourable conditions.

In the event that circumstances, such as a lack of space, prevent an applicant from replacing a felled tree at the ratio of three to one, Congleton Town Council requests that the applicant gives the replacement trees that cannot be planted to the Trees for Congleton project or to a similar local Community project so that they can be planted in a suitable alternative location.

In summary, the key points for Congleton Town Council's Planning Committee to consider when an application involves trees are:

1. All planning applications concerning trees have to be considered by and voted on by the Planning Committee.
2. Congleton Town Council actively encourages residents to protect our trees by obtaining a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
3. Congleton Town Council urges those submitting planning applications for new developments to include as many additional trees and shrubs as is feasible.
4. Felling any tree will have implications for people and wildlife and any decision to fell a tree should be a decision of last resort.
5. Congleton Town Council urges residents to find a quality assured tree surgeon if major work is to be carried out, such as pollarding and pruning.
6. Sometimes it is necessary to fell a tree where a tree poses a risk to safety owing to its location or condition, or is shown to be damaging a property. This Council's policy is for planting replacement trees at a ratio of at least three to one for every tree felled.
7. Replacement trees should be native trees and the size of the replacement trees should reflect both the trees removed and the local ecosystem.
8. This Council requests that when the applicant is unable to plant all the replacement trees, they give them to the Trees for Congleton project or to a similar local Community project.