

POLICY:	HEDGEROW MANAGEMENT POLICY
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1. Description

Hedgerows play a vital role in the rural landscape and offer many benefits. As well as providing an important habitat to support an abundance of wildlife, hedgerows can capture carbon, provide wood fuel, provide shelter and shade, prevent soil loss, reduce flooding, filter pollutants and improve air quality.

The Council believes that hedgerows play a vital role in; improving the aesthetics of the town, combatting climate change, absorption of noise and particulate pollution, act as corridors for wildlife to utilise, and create a diverse habitat for a variety of wildflowers, insects, birds and mammals.

2. Purpose of this policy

Nearly half of Britain's hedgerows were lost between 1940 and 1990, predominately due to agricultural intensification and expansion. Despite the rate of loss now slowing neglect, damage and removal of hedgerows is still impacting this rich and valuable resource.

The Town Council is responsible for managing hedgerows situated on its land. The Council will manage its hedgerows to; minimise any risk to people and to any surrounding buildings and properties, and to enhance and improve the natural environment. This policy document will ensure that a consistent and structured approach is taken in the management of the Council's hedgerows.

Maintaining and managing hedgerows is a crucial part of halting biodiversity decline.

3. Scope

- 3.1 All wild bird species, their eggs and nests are protected by law.** The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended protects nesting birds. All works to habitats including trees, shrubs and woodland must be inspected prior to works to avoid harming birds or to use measures which do not kill or injure them before considering taking harmful action.

Work should be planned outside of the bird nesting season (generally considered to be between March-August inclusive), however this period is not defined by law, and a number of species are known to nest outside of this time. If works are undertaken during the nesting bird season, for health and safety reasons, the trees, shrubs and/or woodland should be inspected by a suitable person. If an active nest is identified, a no works buffer should be installed around the nest until it is no longer active.

3.2 The effect of climate change on hedgerows

Hedgerows are relatively resilient to the effect of climate change; however, they can be affected in the following ways:

- Increased temperatures mean increased growth and greater management requirements and a changing composition of wildlife.
- Warmer winters and fewer frosts mean winter chill requirements of berry species may not be met. This will affect food resources for wildlife.
- Drier summers mean increased die back of certain hedgerow tree species.
- Wetter winters mean wet soil structure and wood species will be at risk of dying.
- Increase in storm frequency means loss of mature and veteran hedgerow trees that may be more susceptible to damage.

3.3 Biodiversity and habitat enhancement



Hedgerow margins are an important part to a healthy hedgerow. They can be specifically planted or growth of native, present plants encouraged.

Dense grass margins at the base of hedges hold value for wildlife because when left undisturbed for longer. It can provide vital sanctuary for wildlife during hot summers and cold winters, as well as food cover and places to hibernate for hedgehogs. Tussocks of grass and tall herbs will develop, and this structure is a great way to provide another niche for wildlife that complements the more flower-rich areas.

These margins are often known as 'sanctuary strips' only need to be a few feet wide at the base of the hedgerow and they require a minimum of management, so are cost effective.

Flowers like primroses and knapweed in the margins can provide nectar and pollen for bees and invertebrates.

Hedgerow margins in sensitive locations

Narrower hedgerow margins will be left in sensitive locations such as cemeteries to ensure the site carries its usual well managed appearance. For example on amenity areas a margin could be 1m in width, however in sensitive areas a margin of 50 cm is more manageable and would still provide some biodiversity benefits.

4. Procedure

4.1 Management of existing hedgerows

Town Council priorities to manage our hedgerows are:

- Cut hedgerows back once a year over winter (outside of bird nesting season).
- Cut back marginal grass biennially (bottom of hedges)
- To safely maintain hedgerows adjacent to public footpath so they do not cause an obstruction or a hazard. To achieve this we will need to undertake a summer trim back using manual cutting equipment following a bird nesting inspection. E.g. Wheeler Road/Sandpits Road hedges

Hedges running alongside commonly used footpaths and rights of way need to be maintained so that public access is not affected or impeded. This methodology will reduce any subsequent reports from members of the public that hedges are causing safety or access issues.

Nesting birds must also be taken into account. Only urgent work (for health and safety reasons) should be undertaken during nesting season. If work is required, then the growth cut back should always be kept to a minimum; work should be undertaken using manual, non-power, equipment.

A reference for hedgerow management:

<https://hedgeline.org.uk/guidance/hedgerow-components/>

4.2 Planting new hedgerows

Where suitable and practical, the planting of new hedgerows should be encouraged.

If a hedgerow is being planted as a boundary, it will be positioned about 75cm-1m from the boundary edge, to allow the hedgerow to fill out as it grows and matures.

Hedgerows should be planted during the winter season, between November and March.

The Town Council makes a commitment to create new living hedgerows or dead hedges where viable and cost effective.

Living hedgerows

- These are the traditional, planted rows of shrubs/trees (hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, etc.) that grow as a boundary or wildlife corridor.
- They provide habitat, biodiversity, carbon storage, and landscape character.

Dead hedgerows

- These are constructed from cut branches, prunings, or coppiced wood, woven or stacked along a boundary.
- They act as temporary barriers, shelter for wildlife, and protection for newly planted hedges until the living plants establish.
- They slowly decompose and recycle nutrients.

4.3 Communication

Ludlow Town Council will publicise the positive work it is doing to maintain hedges, increase biodiversity on sites and combat climate change.

We can also encourage residents to have hedge boundaries rather than fencing.

Further Policy Aims and Actions

- Assess the health of existing hedges as part of each site's biodiversity audit.
- Identify gaps that require replanting or laying to encourage regrowth. When the hedge has become overgrown and gappy at the bottom, laying rejuvenates it, encouraging dense new growth from the base.
- Increase hedgerow network where possible.
- Planting large growing mature trees such as oak, ash and beech with hedgerows that will increase the amount of wildlife that uses the hedge. Insects will congregate around the crown and beneath the canopy providing feeding for birds and bats. Small trees like holly, rowan and crab apples are valuable for flowers and rich berry/fruit crops.
- Hedges should be linked with other wildlife habitats and gaps filled in. Some creatures avoid crossing open spaces because it leaves them vulnerable. Links provide safe passage.

5. Hedgerows on or adjacent to LTC land.

- 5.1 LTC has 15 sites where various grounds maintenance work is required. There are hedgerows (various sizes and types) at 11 of these sites.

Sites with hedgerows are listed below along with a brief description:

- Castle Gardens – an established hedgerow adjacent to the castle walls
- Linney – established hedgerows along two sides of the site bordering Ludlow Rugby Club and its access drive.
- Wigley Field allotments – various hedgerows along boundaries with neighbouring land and also within the allotments adjacent to a stream
- Henley Orchards (4 plots of land). Various hedgerows on three of these plots which act as boundaries with neighbouring properties and a public bridleway
- Henley Road cemetery – well established hedgerows along the majority of the cemetery boundary.
- Wheeler Road amenity area – well established hedgerow along the full perimeter boundary of the site with the public highway
- St Johns garden – some small hedgerow type shrubs within planted areas
- Weyman Road – site of new hedgerow to be planted in winter 2025/26.

6. Legal

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Environment Act 2021

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, s40

6. Other relevant policies

Environmental Policy
Biodiversity Policy
Tree Management Policy