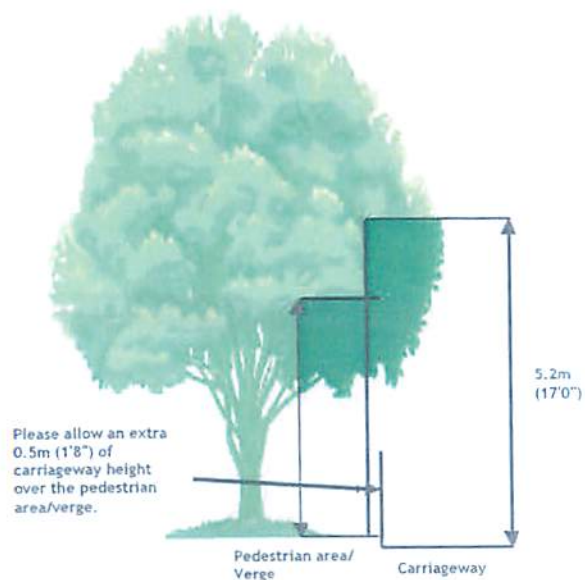


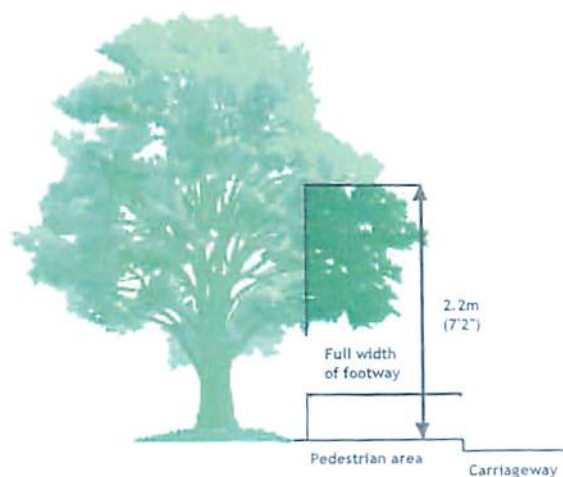
## Trees, hedges, shrubs, etc: Carriageway clearance



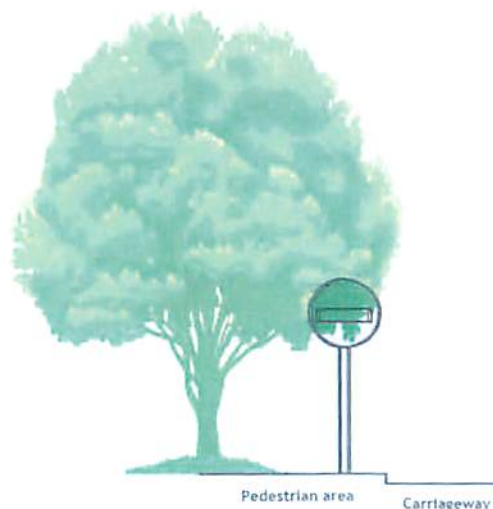
## Street lamps



## Trees, hedges, shrubs, etc: Footway clearance



## Signs



# Hedges, trees and the highway

How you can help us keep our roads  
and footways clear and safe to use

Dorset County Council



Improving the quality of life for people in Dorset,  
now and for the future



## Help us keep the highway clear and safe to use

The cutting back of highway hedges and trees is the responsibility of the landowner or occupier on whose land the hedges and trees are growing.

It is the responsibility of all landowners or occupiers to ensure that their hedges and trees do not interfere with the safe use of public footways and roadways or obscure street lights and road signs.

Dorset County Council as the Highway Authority has a duty to ensure that landowners and occupiers recognise their responsibilities to keep public highways clear of their overgrowing hedges and trees for the benefit of all highway users, whether they are drivers of vehicle, cyclists, equestrians or pedestrians which include pram and wheelchair users, the disabled and the visually impaired.

Rather than wait for complaints about vegetation obstructing highways, the County Council enlists the help of Town and Parish Councils to identify those locations where problems exist so they may seek local co-operation of landowners or occupiers to deal with any offending hedges and trees on an informal basis.

## What will happen if I don't cut the vegetation back?

Should a landowner or occupier's co-operation not be gained, then the Town or Parish Council will inform the County Council's highways department so that formal enforcement action may be considered.

The County Council's highway enforcement officer will further seek the co-operation of the landowner or occupier and advise that if the offending vegetation is

not cut, then enforcement action will be taken. Where it is not possible to gain voluntary co-operation, a formal notice will be served to cut back the vegetation within 14 days. If after 14 days the work has not been done, then the Authority will arrange to carry out the work and recover the cost of doing so from the landowner or occupier.

If in the mean-time an accident happens attributable to the overhanging vegetation, this exposes the owner or occupier responsible for the hedges or trees to a claim from the injured or damaged party which depending on circumstances could be substantial.

## I don't think my hedge needs cutting back

Most disputes about the cutting of highway hedges and trees arise from establishing land ownership. In the majority of cases properties adjacent to public highway include land either to the centre or across the whole width of the highway. This means that any offending hedge or tree (whether it borders or is located within the bounds of highways) will generally be the responsibility of the adjoining property owner or occupier.

Diagrams over the page provide guidance to help determine the extent to which highways should be kept clear of vegetation. It only takes a single overhanging bramble or branch to inflict serious injury to a person's eye or deflect them into the path of passing vehicle. So please work with us to make our highways a safer place.

### Definitions

#### Vegetation

This includes trees, hedges, shrubs and any other organic growth.

### Protected trees

If you need any advice on trees covered by Tree Preservation orders, please contact your local council's tree officer:

- East Dorset District Council:  
01202 886201
- North Dorset District Council:  
01258 484111
- West Dorset District Council:  
01305 251010
- Purbeck District Council:  
01929 556561
- Christchurch Borough Council:  
01202 495000
- Weymouth & Portland Borough Council:  
01305 838000

### Birds' nests

Care should be taken to avoid damaging or destroying the nests of wild birds while they are either being built or used (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). Safety is paramount.

## Contact information

If we can help with this or any other highway maintenance matter, please contact Dorset County Council on:

Tel: 01305 221000  
Email: [dorsetdirect@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:dorsetdirect@dorsetcc.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com)