



DEVELOPMENT SITE HEDGE WORK SPECIFICATION

Guidance on the management of hedges on or
bordering development sites

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Please note:

All views and opinions expressed in this proposal are purely those of the author. The content cannot necessarily be taken to represent the specific policy of any of JP Associates' developer clients.



Introduction

The importance of hedges within the landscape is now universally accepted and they are regulated and protected by the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations.

The work described in this specification cannot necessarily be applied to all hedges. Hedges differ in terms of species, condition of individual trees and variety of woody and woodland plants. These are simply broad principles that should be applied according to the individual circumstances of each length of hedge.

Ownership

The question of ownership of a hedge that forms a property or site boundary often complicates its management. This work specification details the operations that should be undertaken in an ideal situation where the hedge is owned or controlled by one party.

With most property boundaries, ownership and therefore management of the hedge is divided between the neighbouring properties. In the interests of good relations, even when one party owns the whole hedge, operations such as laying should be carried out only after consultation with the neighbouring property owners and/or tenants. In some circumstances more severe work can be carried out in phases over several years. Apart from small scale, delicate operations, effective hedge management can be achieved only when work can be carried out to both sides of the hedge at the same time.

Hedges as habitats

Hedges are rich, natural ecosystems, providing habitats for a multitude of species of flora and fauna including lower plants and many different trees, woody and woodland species. Communities of mammals, birds and invertebrates will also interact and depend on each other and the floral communities. As with all ecosystems, hedges will naturally develop as their environment changes through the natural processes of succession and as human influence effects change.

Hedges are able to respond to environmental change as long as the pace of change does not exceed the rate at which the habitats can adapt. Hedge laying, for example, will remove most of the leaf area and destroy certain habitats so the operation should be timed to reduce the immediate environmental impact. Hedgerow management should be undertaken sensitively to allow the hedge to respond to changes.

Bank integrity

Maintenance of the integrity of hedge banks should be carried out periodically. Adding earth or other material will prevent the erosion of the hedge bank and therefore protect the ecosystem.

Material should be added slowly so as not to exceed the rate of change that the hedge can cope with. Traditionally material was placed on top of the bank when the hedge was laid, every five years or so. If this has not been carried out for some time the bank will have naturally reduced in height but the ecosystem will have responded to this environmental change. Redressing a big change in bank height in one operation would cause an environmental change that the hedge could not cope with. There would be a drastic change to the ecosystem and an unacceptably high level of habitat loss.



Traditional hedge management

Hedge laying tends to be personalised and no two people will lay a hedge in exactly the same way. However, there are certain principles that remain the same.

First any accumulated rubbish, debris and old fencing materials should be removed. Suitable growth under 100mm diameter should be laid over. Traditional hedge laying will usually involve removing most of the existing growth and gaps will often be exposed. Any significant gaps should be replanted with a double staggered row of suitable species (Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hazel, Field Maple, Oak and Ash) using bare-rooted whips (either 45-60cm or 60-90cm) planted in a double staggered row at six plants per linear metre.

The stems should be left to grow on, as hedgerow standards should be selected from tree species rather than more shrub-like plants.

In development-site hedge management, stakes or pegs should be used to hold the laid stems in place. Baler twine used in agricultural hedge management is not a suitable alternative. The use of stakes or pegs will also help to create a more substantial barrier without having to use supplementary fencing.

Council requirements

Where a Local Planning Authority (LPA) is due to adopt Public Open Spaces (POS) or other areas, the department responsible for the future management should be consulted on its particular requirements and policies.

On development sites the management of existing hedges is often subject to a planning condition and the LPA will need to be consulted so that the finished hedges can be inspected and any conditions discharged.

Specification

This specification details the management operations for different types of hedge, classed according to different land use:

- hedges between private residences
- hedges bordering Public Open Space
- hedges that form site boundaries.

In all cases the exact work details will be subject to negotiation.

Hedges between private residences

The main function of hedges between private residences is as a screen and boundary so that properties enjoy both privacy and security without creating heavy overshadowing. Keeping the boundaries (and gardens) tidy is important. To ensure the long-term efficiency of the hedges it may be necessary to lay the hedge and allow the regrowth to form a thicker, more effective screen. Hedge laying can cause a short-term loss of screening but as the regrowth is usually more vigorous than the normal growth pattern, this should quickly be redressed.

Work details:

- 1 remove dead, dying and dangerous stems
- 2 remove all debris and old fencing materials



- 3 retain only the best-formed, single-stemmed specimen tree species to grow on as hedgerow standards. These stems should be crown lifted to clear the gardens and surrounding area
- 4 re-coppice stems over 100mm diameter
- 5 lay over suitable stems in the traditional manner and remove remainder
- 6 cut back side growth to expose bank.

Hedges bordering POS

The primary function of POS hedges is similar to that of private dwelling hedges except with less emphasis on screening. However, there remains a clear need to maintain the integrity of the hedges to prevent erosion of the banks and habitat loss.

Within a POS the shading provided by mature trees is probably an advantage so more stems are retained to grow on as hedgerow standards. Varying the appearance of the hedges will provide contrast to the development and add interest to the POS areas.

Work details:

- 1 remove dead, dying and dangerous stems
- 2 remove all debris and old fencing materials
- 3 retain good quality, single-stemmed specimen tree species to grow on as hedgerow standards. These stems should be crown lifted to 3m
- 4 re-coppice stems over 100mm diameter not to be retained
- 5 lay over suitable stems in the traditional manner and remove remainder
- 6 cut back excessive side growth.

Hedges forming site boundaries

The main function of site boundary hedges is to form a screen, providing security and privacy. As with the other hedges it may well be necessary to carry out some fairly drastic operations to ensure its long-term effectiveness. As even a short-term reduction of the screen may be unacceptable to all concerned, a temporary screen fence may be needed. Site boundary management will usually only be able to proceed following agreement with the neighbouring properties or landowners and it may be necessary to phase-in certain more drastic operations over several years.

Work details:

- 1 remove dead, dying and dangerous stems
- 2 remove all debris and old fencing materials
- 3 retain only the best-formed, single-stemmed specimen tree species to grow on as hedgerow standards. These stems should be crown lifted to clear gardens and surrounding area
- 4 re-coppice stems over 100mm diameter
- 5 lay over suitable stems in the traditional manner and remove remainder
- 6 cut back side growth to expose bank.

