HARPER
Tree Consulting

A plain-English guide for homeowners, architects and developers

Do I need a tree survey for planning permission?

If there are trees on or near the land you want to build on, the answer is very often yes. Missing tree information is one of the most common reasons planning applications are held up. This guide explains when you need a tree survey, what it involves, and how to avoid delays.

When is a tree survey needed?

Councils take trees into account in planning decisions whether or not they are protected. You will usually need a tree survey to British Standard BS 5837 if:

- there are trees on the site that could be affected by the work
- trees on neighbouring land, or street trees, are close enough for their roots or branches to be affected (roots don't stop at the boundary)
- you are planning an extension, a new house, an outbuilding, a new driveway or changes to ground levels near trees
- the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or are in a Conservation Area

Most councils set this out in their **local validation list**, the checklist of documents they need with an application. If the tree information is missing, the council may not accept the application as valid, may ask for it later (adding weeks), or may refuse permission.

When you probably don't need one

- There are no trees on or near the site, or they are well away from any building work.
- The work is permitted development and doesn't need a planning application. TPO and Conservation Area rules still apply to the trees themselves.

Not sure? Send us your plans and a few photos. We can usually tell you quickly.

When should I get it done?

As early as possible, ideally before your plans are finalised. A survey at the start lets your designer work around the trees from day one. A survey at the end can mean redesigning the scheme, and delays you could have avoided.

What does a tree survey involve?

We visit the site and record each relevant tree: species, size, age, condition and quality. Each tree is given a category (A, B, C or U) reflecting how important it is to retain, and we calculate its Root Protection Area, the area that needs protecting during building work. This goes onto a **Tree Constraints Plan**, showing your designer where the trees limit what can be built. Depending on your project and council, you may also need an **Arboricultural Impact Assessment**, and an **Arboricultural Method Statement** with a **Tree Protection Plan**.

Building in the New Forest?

Inside the National Park, planning and tree work applications go to the New Forest National Park Authority, not the district council, and trees can carry extra weight in planning decisions.

Reports are usually delivered within **10 working days**, with faster turnaround for urgent work. Prepared by Jon Harper, Royal Forestry Society Certificate in Arboriculture (with credit). Independent advice, with no ties to tree work contractors.

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Free quotes: send the address, a few photos and any plans