HARPER
Tree Consulting

A plain-English guide for homeowners, landlords and property managers

How do I find out if a tree has a TPO?

Before you prune, reduce or fell a tree, it's worth checking whether it is protected. Work on a protected tree without consent is a criminal offence, and serious cases can lead to an unlimited fine. The good news is that checking is usually quick and free.

Two kinds of protection

- **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)** protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands that the council considers important to the local area. You need the council's consent before carrying out most work on them.
- **Conservation Areas** protect most trees within the area, even without a TPO. You must give the council six weeks' written notice before working on any tree with a trunk diameter over 75mm, measured 1.5m above the ground.

A tree can be covered by both, and it may be protected even if it stands on a neighbour's land.

How to check

1. **Look at your council's online map.** Many councils publish a map of protected trees and Conservation Areas. Search your council's website for "tree preservation order map".
2. **Ask the council's tree officer.** If there is no map, or you're not sure which tree is which, email or phone the council's tree team with your address.
3. **Check your property documents.** TPOs show up on the local land charges search carried out when you bought the property.
4. **In the New Forest National Park,** the National Park Authority deals with protected trees, not the district council.

If the tree is protected

- **TPO trees:** apply for consent, usually through the Planning Portal or directly to the council. There is no fee, and councils normally decide within eight weeks.
- **Conservation Area trees:** give six weeks' notice. During that time the council can decide to make a TPO if it wants to protect the tree.
- **Dead or dangerous trees:** there are limited exceptions, but you will usually need to tell the council first (five working days' notice for a dead tree unless the work is urgent), and you may have to plant a replacement. If in doubt, ask before you act.

Getting the application right

Applications are often delayed by vague descriptions like "trim" or "cut back". Councils want to know exactly what work is proposed and why, and where work is justified by a tree's condition or by subsidence, they expect supporting evidence. We can check protection, specify the work and prepare the application with any supporting report. 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 and a few photos of the tree