

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPLETING THE COMPLAINT FORM

General notes

These guidance notes are to help you fill in the form to make a complaint about a neighbouring high hedge. You should also read the leaflet *High hedges: complaining to the Council*.

Consideration of your complaint will be delayed if you do not complete the form properly or do not provide the information requested.

If you are still unsure how to answer any of the questions, please contact The Planning Division, Planning Strategy Telephone no: 01424 787631 or email planning@rother.gov.uk You can obtain large print versions of this guidance and the form through the council.

Section 1: Attempts to resolve the complaint

Please keep the descriptions brief but say how you made the approach (eg face to face, phone, letter) and what the result was.

Example 1

- 12 March 2005 – phoned neighbour [Mr Bloggs of 12 High Street] to ask if we could discuss hedge. Met on 19 March but we couldn't agree a solution;
- 15 April – mediators visited;
- 9 April – met neighbours [Mr Bloggs] and mediators. But still couldn't find an answer we were both happy with; on 14 May – wrote to inform neighbours [Mr Bloggs] would be complaining to council.

Example 2

- 12 March 2005 – wrote to neighbours [Mr Bloggs of 12 High Street] to ask if we could discuss hedge. 2 weeks later still no reply;
- 9 April – wrote to ask if he would speak to mediator. 2 weeks later still no reply;
- 7 May – wrote to inform neighbours [Mr Bloggs] would be complaining to council.

Example 3

- 12 March 2005 – saw neighbours [Mr Bloggs of 12 High Street] in their garden and asked if we could discuss hedge. Neighbours [Mr Bloggs] came round on 19 March. Saw the effect of the hedge for themselves. Sympathetic but unwilling to reduce the hedge as much as we wanted;
- Neighbours [Mr Bloggs] willing to try mediation but discovered that neighbour mediation not available in our area. We live too far from the nearest service;
- 23 April – saw neighbours [Mr Bloggs] again and told them that, if we couldn't agree a solution, we would make a formal complaint to Council. Left it for a couple of weeks then confirmed in writing that we would be going ahead with the complaint.

It is not necessary to send copies of all correspondence with your neighbour about the hedge – especially if the dispute is a long-running one. You need only provide evidence of your latest attempts to settle it.

Section 2: Criteria for making a complaint

Who can complain:

Q2.6 You must be the owner or occupier of the property affected by a high hedge in order to make a formal complaint to the Council.

If you do not own the property (eg because you are a tenant or a leaseholder), you can still make a complaint. But you should let the owner (eg landlord or management company) know what you are doing.

Q2.7 The property does not have to be wholly residential but must include separate living accommodation otherwise we cannot consider the complaint.

Section 3: Grounds of complaint

It will help if you provide as much information as you can but keep it factual. Remember that a copy of this form will be sent to the person who owns the property where the hedge is growing, and to the person who lives there if they are different people.

Concentrate on the hedge and the disadvantages you experience because of its height. We cannot consider problems that are not connected with the height of the hedge. For example, if the roots of the hedge are pushing up a path.

Nor can we consider things that are not directly about the hedge in question. For example, that other people keep their hedges trimmed to a lower height; or that the worry is making you ill.

Please also provide a photo of the hedge and a plan (1:2500) showing the location of the hedge and surrounding properties.

Please also provide a plan scale 1:500 showing:

- The position of the hedge and how far it extends.
- If you are complaining about the hedge blocking light, please also show on your plan the position of windows that are affected by the hedge (eg whether they are located on the front, side or rear of the house).
- Relevant measurements (eg size of garden, distance between the hedge and any windows affected). All measurements must be in metres (m).

Please include copies of any professional reports that you may have had prepared and of any other documents that you want the Council to take into account.

Section 4: Previous complaints to the council

We only need to know about formal complaints, made under the high hedges Part of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. You don't need to tell us about telephone calls or other informal contact with the Council about your hedge problems.

Section 5: Who's who/The parties

We need all these names and addresses because there are some documents that we are required, by law, to send to the owner and occupier of the land on which the hedge grows. These include our decision on the complaint.

Q5.1 Even if someone else is submitting the complaint on your behalf, it is important that we have your contact details.

Q5.2 You need to complete this section only if the complainant does not live in the property affected by the hedge. We need this information because we will have to get in touch with the occupier to arrange to visit the property so that we can see for ourselves the effect of the hedge.

Q5.3 Complete this section if you are a professional adviser, relative, friend or other representative.

You will be our main contact on all matters relating to this complaint. We will direct all queries and correspondence to you. Please bear this in mind.

Q5.4 This will normally be the person you have talked to when you tried to agree a solution to your hedge problems.

If the site where the hedge is growing does not have a postal address, use the box to describe as clearly as possible where it is, eg 'Land to rear of 12 to 18 High Street' or 'Park adjoining Tower Road'.

We need this information because we will have to contact these people for their comments, and to arrange to visit the site where the hedge is growing.

Q5.5 If you are in any doubt about who owns the property where the hedge is situated, you can check with the Land Registry. The relevant form (313) is on their website (www.landregistry.gov.uk).

Alternatively, Land Register Online (at www.landregisteronline.gov.uk) provides easy access to details of registered properties in England. Copies of title plans and registers held in electronic format can be downloaded in PDF format for £2 each. The register includes ownership details.

Section 6: Supporting documents

Please make sure you have ticked all the relevant boxes.

If you have ticked the last box, please list these documents by date and title (eg January 2005 – surveyor's report). This will help us to check that we have got everything.

Section 7: Sending the complaint

Please send two copies of the form together with a fee of £600 to:

Head of Planning
Planning Division
Rother District Council
Town Hall
Bexhill on Sea
TN39 3JX

Cheques should be made payable to Rother District Council



Head of Planning
Planning Division
Town Hall, Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex TN39 3JX
Telephone 01424 787600
Email: planning@rother.gov.uk
Website: www.planning.rother.gov.uk

COMPLAINT FORM: High Hedges

For office use only

Date reg'd	
Receipt	
Amount	
Checked	

2 copies of this form should be submitted

Please read the guidance notes attached

Use this form to submit a complaint to the Council about a high hedge, under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. It should be completed by the person making the complaint or their representative.

Before completing this form, please read the guidance notes sent with it and the leaflet *High hedges: complaining to the Council*. Please use BLOCK CAPITALS and black ink.

YOU MUST PAY A FEE WHEN YOU SEND IN THIS FORM. The current fee is £600. The Council will rely on the information you provide so please make sure it is clear and accurate.

1. Attempts to resolve the complaint

Please describe what you have done to try to settle this matter. Give dates and say what the result was. **Please provide copies of any letters that you mention.**

1.1 Approached neighbour/hedge owner and asked to discuss problem

1.2 Asked neighbour/hedge owner to try mediation

1.3 Informed neighbour/hedge owner of intention to complain to Council

If you have not tried all the above steps, the Council might not proceed with your complaint.

1.4 Anything else

2. Criteria for making a complaint

About the hedge

2.1 Is the hedge – or the portion that is causing problems – made up of a line of 2 or more trees or shrubs?

Yes No

2.2 Is it mostly evergreen or semi-evergreen?

Yes No

2.3 Is it more than 2 metres above ground level?

Yes No

2.4 Even though there are gaps in the foliage or between the trees, is the hedge still capable of obstructing light or views?

Yes No

2.5 Is it growing on land owned by someone else?

Yes No

Who can complain

2.6 Is the complainant the owner or occupier (eg tenant) of the property affected by the hedge?

Yes No

Please delete whichever does not apply.

Owner / Occupier

2.7 Is the property residential?

Yes No

If you have answered 'No' to any of the questions in this section, the criteria have not been met and so the Council cannot consider your complaint.

3. Grounds of complaint

Please describe the problems actually experienced as a result of the hedge being too tall, and say how serious they are. It will save time and help your case if you stick to the facts and provide all relevant information to back up the points you are making.

To help the Council understand your situation, please provide a site plan (1:2500) showing the location of your property, a photo of the hedge and a plan or sketch of both the site where the hedge is growing and the property it is affecting, with the hedge clearly marked on it.

4. Previous complaints to the Council

4.1 Has a formal complaint been made to the Council before about this hedge?

Yes No

4.2 If you have ticked 'Yes', do you know the date and/or reference number of the Council's decision letter?

Date Reference No

4.3 What has changed since the Council last looked at this?

If nothing has altered, the Council might not proceed with your complaint.

5. Who's who/The parties

5.1 Complainant's contact details

Name:

Address:

 Postcode

Telephone No:
(optional)

5.2 Address of the property affected by the hedge and name of the person living there if different to 5.1

Name:

Address:

 Postcode

Telephone No:
(optional)

5.3 Contact details of Agent or other person acting on behalf of the complainant (if any)

Name:

Address:

 Postcode

Telephone No:
(optional)

5.4 Address of the site where the hedge is growing and name of person living there, if known.

Name:

Address:

Postcode

Telephone No:
(optional)

5.5 Name and address of the person who owns the property where the hedge is situated, if different to 5.4 and if known

Name:

Address:

Postcode

Telephone No:
(optional)

6. Supporting documents

6.1 Have you enclosed the following:

A photo of the hedge	<input type="checkbox"/>
A location plan of the hedge and surrounding properties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of correspondence with your neighbour about the hedge	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of any other documents that you mention <i>(please list these separately)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Sending the complaint

- 7.1 I confirm that I have completed as much of this form as I can and that, to the best of my knowledge, the information provided is accurate.
- 7.2 I enclose the fee of £600

Name: Date:

Signature:

7.3 THIS FORM AND ALL ENCLOSURES SHOULD BE SENT TO:

Head of Planning
Planning Division
Rother District Council
Town Hall
Bexhill on Sea
TN39 3JX

7.4 Please also send a copy of this form to the people identified in section 5 above

Tick the box to show you have done this