A good hedge has many benefits as a garden boundary and can make an attractive feature of benefit to everyone. But a hedge that is neglected or inconsiderately maintained can cause misery, for example blocking out light to a neighbouring property.

Since 2005, local councils have had the power to intervene in disputes about high hedges in certain limited circumstances. Most of the attention is focused on Leylandii and other cypress type hedges, but any evergreen hedge may be considered. High Hedge complaints are handled through this Council’s Regulatory Services team.

**Talking to your neighbours**

The best way to deal with a problem with your neighbour's high hedge is always to negotiate with them. Remember that no matter what happens to the hedge, you still have to live next door to your neighbours. Going in with all guns blazing is not going to improve your relationship with them at all, and what's more your council is unable to take action unless you can prove that you have made significant efforts to negotiate and these have failed.

**How can the Council help?**

Local councils in England and Wales have powers to intervene in certain disputes over high hedges. Complaining to the Council about your neighbour's hedge is a last resort and before you go down this route you must try to resolve the issue with your neighbour amicably. You will need to show evidence of the efforts that you have made to reach an amicable solution, so make sure you keep records of correspondence.

This Council has a charge of £380 for investigating a high hedge complaint.

**What sort of hedges are covered?**

The legislation is restricted to certain types of hedges. In order for a complaint to be dealt with by the Council the hedge must:

- Be wholly or predominantly evergreen or semi-evergreen. This means it must retain some live foliage throughout the year. Beech hedges, for example, are excluded as although they often retain leaves throughout the winter, these leaves are dead and brown.
- Consist of a line of two or more trees or shrubs. The legislation does not apply to single trees.
- Be at least 2m in height. This is measured from natural ground level at the point at which the hedge is growing, usually on the hedge owner's land.
- Form a barrier to light or access.
- Adversely affect your reasonable enjoyment of your property by virtue of its height. Problems related to hedge roots are specifically excluded.

**What will the Council do?**

The high hedges legislation was introduced on 1 June 2005 under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 and applies to evergreen and semi-evergreen hedges of over two metres in height.

The legislation provides for those who feel that a neighbour's hedge is hindering the reasonable enjoyment of their property to submit a formal complaint to the Council, who will charge a fee for this service.

The Council will then investigate the matter and may, if considered appropriate, serve a notice on the hedge owner requiring them to reduce the hedge’s height. In most cases, it is possible for neighbours to agree on a course of action without a formal complaint being necessary. This is certainly the preferable approach for all concerned. If you are unable to reach agreement with your neighbour, you could try contacting a local mediation service (for which there may be a charge). You should be aware that the law requires people to have taken reasonable steps to try to settle their hedge dispute for themselves before making a formal complaint to the Council.

**Is there a set maximum height for hedges?**

No. Although a hedge that is less than 2m tall does not come within the scope of the legislation, this does not mean that all hedges must be reduced to 2m.

The council have to consider what is reasonable, taking into account both your views and those of your neighbours. The precise height will depend on the individual case and factors such as distance to buildings and aspect.

**Can I appeal against the Council's Decision?**

Whether or not you can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate depends on the nature of the decision made by the Council, who you are and your reasons (or grounds) for disagreeing with the decision in question.