

This document contains hyperlinks.

Dear [insert name of local authority],

I am a resident of [insert area]. I would like to formally raise my concerns regarding overgrown hedges, foliage, and vegetation in our area, especially in [add road names here if applicable – your letter will be more powerful if you include specific examples] in accordance with the Highways Act 1980. As a blind/partially sighted resident, I have additional mobility needs, therefore being put in a position where I am forced onto the road puts me at extreme risk of being injured or run over.

Under the [Highways Act 1980, section 154](#), local authorities can require landowners to cut back overhanging branches and vegetation if it endangers or obstructs the passage of pedestrians. As a [blind/ partially sighted] individual who relies on mobility aids to navigate the pavement on a daily basis, I strongly urge you to act upon this obligation. I have been forced to walk onto the road, facing oncoming traffic, as there has been no room on the pavement left for me to continue my journey safely, putting me at significant risk.

I have also been injured by overhanging branches and overgrown hedges obstructing the pavement at my head height, and mostly blocking my access. Due to my sight condition, I don't always see these.

This has left me with bruises, cuts, and scratches, and has reduced my confidence to travel independently. When vehicles simultaneously park

on the pavement, I - along with anyone else with a guide dog or wheelchair – cannot navigate the path safely.

I am not the only person experiencing this. According to the RNIB, over two million people are living with sight loss in the UK, with 250 people diagnosed every day. According to [Thomas Pocklington Trust's "Listening Month" survey](#), 75% of blind and partially sighted people said that the accessibility of the street environment was their biggest daily complaint. 57% of local authorities were identified to take longer than the 14 days outlined in the Highways Act 1980 from a recent Freedom of Information Act inquiry carried out by Thomas Pocklington Trust.

To those with accessibility needs, overhanging vegetation is not a minor inconvenience, but an active danger. I've provided a list of areas in which I feel the council can do better.

[Please remove these brackets. This list contains examples of issues we have noticed with local authorities. Edit and remove any that do not apply in your area and feel free to add others if you wish]

- Reporting overgrown vegetation. I was unable to report the issue using your website, as it is not designed accessibly. There are confusing or difficult to navigate steps, and the reporting needs to be done through an interactive map that I cannot use.
- Reporting overgrown vegetation. FixMyStreet is inaccessible and difficult to use with a screen reader, and your website lacks an alternative.

- It is very difficult to be able to pinpoint exactly where overgrown vegetation is located on a map without assistance. There should be an alternative option.
- The council takes too long to cut back overgrown vegetation. The Highways Act 1980 states that it should take 14 days to cut it back, but the council has taken inappropriately long which is affecting my ability to make journeys independently.
- The council should make use of guidance published by sight loss organisations on how overgrown vegetation should be addressed, in order to ensure a fair and accessible society for everyone.

Thomas Pocklington Trust has provided guidance [\(add hyperlink\)](#) on how overgrown vegetation should be dealt with, and how reporting it can be done accessibly. Please do read this, as it can support you in implementing the necessary changes in your local authority.

I also encourage you to view Thomas Pocklington Trust's Freedom of Information report [\(add hyperlink\)](#), examining how local authorities have been dealing with overgrown foliage, and including examples of good practise you can use to improve your own response. If you wish to learn more about why cutting it back is so important, please contact Sight Loss Councils at info@sightlosscouncils.org.uk

I hope that this has been helpful and offered some insight into the challenges we face, however, I look forward to your response and organising a meeting to discuss this further on how to make our local area more accessible and inclusive.

Yours sincerely,
[insert name]