





RESIDENT & NEIGHBOURHOODS

TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY 2024-2029

Securing a long-term future for our trees and woodlands and providing management and protection for generations to come

WELWYN HATFIELD





CONTENTS

Page 4 ..... Foreword
Pages 5-7 ..... 1 | Introduction
Pages 8-9 ..... 2 | The Value and Benefits of Trees
Pages 10-11 ..... 3 | Trees and Woods in the Borough
Page 12 ..... 4 | Climate Change
Pages 13-15 ..... 5 | Policy 1: Active Tree Management
Page 16 ..... 6 | Policy 2: Urban Tree Management
Page 17 ..... 7 | Policy 3: Tree Planting
Pages 18-19 ..... 8 | Policy 4: Pest and Diseases
Pages 20-21 ..... 9 | Policy 5: Protecting Trees through the Planning System
Page 22 ..... 10 | Policy 6: Woodland Management
Page 23 ..... 11 | Policy 7: Community Engagement
Page24 ..... 12 | Policy 8: Green Infrastructure
Page 25 ..... 13 | Monitoring and Review
Page 26 ..... 14 | Appendix 1: Street Tree Audit
Page 27 ..... 15 | Appendix 2: Pests and Diseases
Page 28 ..... 16 | Appendix 3: Subsidence Policy
Page 29 ..... 17 | Appendix 4: Types of Pruning
Pages 30-31 ..... 18 | Appendix 5: Glossary
Page 32 ..... Useful Contacts

FOREWORD

As the council's Executive Member for Environment, I am proud to introduce our Tree and Woodland Strategy.

Working closely with fellow Members, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) officers, and a dedicated community of volunteers, we are committed to preserving our natural environment while responsibly managing resources. The significance of our trees and woodlands has never been more widely recognised. These landscapes not only enhance biodiversity and public well-being but also play a vital role in mitigating climate change.

Preserving and enhancing our landscape is a priority for the council, ensuring that future generations can enjoy its beauty and benefits. I am particularly proud of our success in securing grant funding, which supports essential woodland management, and the streamlining of systems that we have developed for the daily care of our trees and woodlands.

WHBC is committed to the continued positive management of our trees and woodlands, and I am pleased that we have a clear and sustainable strategy for their maintenance, growth and renewal into the future.

Councillor Sandreni Bonfante
Executive Member for Environment
November2024





1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this strategy is to set out **the council's approach to managing its trees and woodlands within the Borough** by:

- **Supporting our changing and growing Borough** whilst also maintaining and improving the Borough's tree stock and natural environment.
- **Contributing to biodiversity**
- **Being a leader in tree planting and maintenance in the Borough**. Contributing to the health of residents in the Borough by bringing about improvements to air quality by sequestration of carbon dioxide and reduction in levels of nitrogen dioxide. By carrying out targeted tree planting to reduce air temperatures and the urban heat island effect.

1.2 **The council's trees and woodlands are part of a wider multi-functional network of green infrastructure which runs throughout the Borough**. This includes both public and privately owned trees and in urban or rural locations. Green infrastructure provides a wide range of functions and its presence and quality have a direct impact on quality of life.

1.3 The trees and woodlands which are **managed by the council** include:

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**: Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood
- **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** including Mardley Heath, Danesbury, Singlers Marsh, The Commons, Howe Dell and Oxleys Wood.
- **Small woods:** Examples include Sam's Orchard and Woodhall orchard, closed church yards, St Luke's, St Etheldreda's and St Thomas a Beckett.
- **Tree Belts**
- **Communal gardens trees** surrounding council accommodation
- **Approximately 27,000 individual trees or small groups of trees**

1.4 The council is **not responsible** for the trees and woodland within:

- **Schools**
- **Town or parish council land**
- **Sites managed by Better**, including Moneyhole Park, King George V playing fields, Stanborough Park and Panshanger golf course.





1.5 **The council has a management agreement with Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Highways to manage their urban, street highway trees**. This management agreement explicitly specifies the type of work and the reason why it is to be undertaken. Requests for variations to the works that would be outside the management agreement will be referred to HCC. Hertfordshire Highways have a Tree Strategy and Guidance Document dated January 2013.[1]

1.6 **National polices are used to protect private trees and woodlands**. This is primarily through the Town and Country Planning Acts 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999. These documents form a legal framework for the designation of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

1.7 **The Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme** is a specific management scheme relating to the original area of the town, the aim of which is to protect the amenities and values of the area. This is another system of protection for most trees and hedges in the older part of Welwyn Garden City, enabling the council to protect those trees that it considers significant.

1. https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/highways/plans-and-strategies/highway-tree-strategy-and-guidance-document.pdf

1.8 This strategy recognises and incorporates relevant local and national policy and guidance, and these include:

Legislation (National)

- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act
- 1976 Burial Act 1853
- Climate Change Act 2008
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
- Forestry Act 1967 (as amended)
- Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Security) Regulations 2013
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957
- 1984 Planning Act 2008
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Planning Compensation Act 1991
- Town and Country Planning (Trees) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008
- Town and Country Planning (Trees) (England) Regulations 1999
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Environment Act 2021

Legislation (County & Borough)

- Leasehold Reform Act 1967

Policy (National)

- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
- Keepers of time: A statement of policy for England's Ancient and Native Woodland National Planning Policy Framework The UK Forestry Standard
- England Tree Strategy consultation June 2020
- The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024
- Tree health Resilience Strategy 2018 DEFRA

Policy (County & Borough)

- Hertfordshire County Council, Highway Tree Strategy and Guidance Document (Jan 2013)
- Policy EM3 (Estate Management Scheme)
- Welwyn Hatfield Business Plan 2015-2018
- Welwyn Hatfield Community Strategy 2015-2020
- Welwyn Hatfield Submission Local Plan
- Hertfordshire County Council Tree and Woodland Strategy 2022-2030
- Hertfordshire County Council Pollinator Strategy
- Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Climate Change Strategy

Guidance (National)

- BS3998 2010 Tree work – Recommendations BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations
- BS8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations Common sense risk management of trees Faculty Jurisdiction Rules
- 2015 NHBC Standards 2011: 4.2 Building near trees NJUG guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees Volume 4 Planning for a healthy environment – good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity Planning for A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment
- State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021 – Woodland Trust
- Common sense risk management for Trees – National Tree Safety Group

Guidance (County & Borough)

- Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's 5 year plan
- Roads in Hertfordshire: Highway Design Guide
- Welwyn Hatfield Green Infrastructure Plan
- Hertfordshire's State of Nature report Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- London Tree Officers Association Joint Mitigation Protocol for subsidence claims

1.9 This document draws upon the council's knowledge and experience as well as accepted industry standards to set aims for the planting, promotion and protection of the tree-covered landscape and provides continuity in the long term management of trees and woodlands. It will be used by the council, local groups, individuals, agencies and any other interested parties as a reference document.





2 | THE VALUE AND BENEFITS OF TREES

2.1 The future will bring many challenges to **balance the needs of the Borough with the need to maintain and enhance the landscape**. These include:

- **Population growth**
- **Local Plan development sites**
- **Building heights and densities**
- **Climate change mitigation**
- **Maturing landscapes**
- **Pressure on nature and habitats**
- **Pests and diseases**



Trees bring benefits to communities, wildlife and the environment. In towns and cities they can...

ADD CHARACTER AND CHARM

Trees add beauty to their surroundings. They bring colour, soften harsh lines of buildings, screen unsightly views and enhance the character of an area.

IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

Trees improve air quality and counteract the greenhouse effect by absorbing pollutants and intercepting harmful particulates.

SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Tree-planting projects, school gardens and Edible Playgrounds can help children develop their environmental awareness, conservation skills and knowledge of sustainable food.

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

Creating and caring for green spaces helps people reconnect with their neighbours and their surroundings.

REDUCE FLOOD RISK

Trees absorb water, lowering stress on storm water drains and mitigating flood risk. They also improve soil quality and prevent erosion, so more water is held in the ground.

ENABLE URBAN FORAGING

Trees provide fruits and nuts for wildlife and humans. Community orchards offer health, social and environmental benefits.

CONSERVE ENERGY

Carefully positioned trees can cut heating and cooling requirements in buildings, providing shade in the summer and blocking wind in the winter.

ENHANCED HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Trees and green spaces can improve recovery times from illness, reduce stress and boost mental health.

ENRICH HABITATS AND BIODIVERSITY

An increase in tree diversity benefits a host of insects, birds and mammals that rely on trees for food and protection. For example, they are an important source of nectar for bees.

3 | TREES AND WOODLANDS IN THE BOROUGH



3.1 Welwyn Hatfield is a Borough to the north of London in the County of Hertfordshire. The two principal towns are Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City and there are a number of villages and hamlets. The Borough also contains large areas of open countryside. Each urban, suburban and rural area has its own identity and character.

3.2 In Welwyn Hatfield the population size has increased by 8.5% from around 110,500 in 2011 to 119,900 in 2021. As of 2021, Welwyn Hatfield is the 15th most densely populated of the East of England's local authority areas, with around seven people living on each football pitch-sized area of land.[2]

3.3 Welwyn Garden City is an early example of the Garden City movement and Hatfield is a post second world war New Town. Both towns were designed around existing features such as woodland, field boundaries, orchards and individual mature trees as they were considered to be visually important for residents. As construction of each neighbourhood was completed it was landscaped and new sets of trees were planted. These trees have grown old together and are frequently at the end of their natural lifespans. This treescape now gives both towns a unique character and challenges.

3.4 The Borough's rural areas perform many strategic functions such as separating towns and villages from each other, providing access to the countryside for recreation and leisure and are also home to some of the Borough's key natural assets.

3.5 The Borough has a range of natural resources and environmental assets of local, regional and national importance, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, trees and woodlands, extensive areas of agricultural land, minerals reserves, rivers, river valleys and floodplains and a comprehensive network of open spaces. The council is a custodian of some of these environmental assets, for example Northaw Great Wood, which is a medieval woodland pasture and has such high biodiversity importance that it is designated as a site of special scientific interest (SSSI).

3.6 It is important to ensure the continuity of tree cover across the Borough, with a variety of age ranges and a diversity of species. However, aged populations with little diversity are more likely to be damaged extensively by pests and/or diseases which will shorten their natural life expectancy.

[2] https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000241/

3.7 Remnant orchards which were kept through the towns' construction can still be found today. These old trees could be interesting and unusual varieties which are not commonly available and planted now. Hertfordshire has lost two thirds of its orchards in the past fifty years. To counter this decline, the council has been planting orchards and fruit trees on suitable open spaces, freely accessible to the public. Some are planted and maintained by volunteer tree wardens.

3.8 It is important to plant species which provide forage for pollinating insects. Insect pollination is important to the reproduction and persistence of many wild plants that, in turn, underpin a wider and more complex network of animal and plant life. Pollination is therefore an important process in maintaining healthy and biodiverse ecosystems.

3.9 Woodlands need a range of tree ages, densities and species for the benefit of biodiversity and continuity of crown cover. Areas of young, dynamic growth lock away more carbon than an increasingly aged and dying one. To increase habitat types and create a healthy woodland, woods need to be actively managed. Management can include glade creation, ride widening, thinning and coppicing as well as new planting.



3.10 In addition to woodlands, there are smaller groups of trees planted or retained across the Borough. These provide a visual and acoustic barrier to separate housing from commercial developments, busy roads and railways and other residential areas. These are managed in a similar way to individual trees but with consideration to improving and maintaining their function as a barrier. Individual trees may need to be removed to allow regeneration of lower-level vegetation.

3.11 Whilst these issues can seem disconnected and not immediately relevant when discussing a tree strategy for present residents, it is vital that decisions taken today are made with a view to improving life for future residents. Trees planted now might take more than a generation to mature, especially within woodlands.

3.12 In 2017 research was undertaken to examine tree cover in English towns and cities, the subsequent paper was entitled *The Canopy Cover of England's Towns and Cities: baselining and setting targets to improve human health and wellbeing*. The base line survey recorded Hatfield as having 20% tree cover and Welwyn Garden City 27%. The paper concluded that a recommended countrywide target of 25% tree canopy cover is needed to offset the negative impacts of living in an urban environment and climate change within the next 10 years. Wherever possible the council will promote urban tree cover.





4 | CLIMATE CHANGE

4.1 Along with other local councils, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and set itself five ambitious objectives, including achieving net zero by 2030 as an organisation.[3]

4.2 It is important to note the contribution trees and woodlands make towards mitigating the impacts of climate change and their role in helping the council achieve its Climate Change objectives.

4.3 Trees mitigate climate change through carbon capture but also prevent flooding, reduce city/town temperatures, reduce pollution and keep soils nutrient rich.

4.4 A Treeconomics Report[4] 2019 reveals that the council manages a total tree stock of about 100,000 woodland trees and 16,900 street trees (This excludes trees on Highway land managed by WHBC). In total they store 78,000 tonnes of carbon, annually sequester 2,400 tonnes of carbon and annually remove 31 tonnes of pollution from the ground and air.

4.5 The UK hosted the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26 in Glasgow on 31 October 2021). At this meeting it was acknowledged that we are facing the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss and that one cannot be solved without the other. World leaders are being encouraged to include nature-based solutions in their climate plans.

4.6 It is acknowledged that the management of existing trees woodlands along with planting of new trees is an important part of the council's journey towards achieving net zero by 2030.

3. https://www.welhat.gov.uk/plans-strategies/climate-change-strategy

4. https://archive.welhat.gov.uk/media/17495/Treeconomics-WH-Tree-Inventory-Report/pdf/Treeconomics_report.pdf?m=637405359048270000



5 | POLICY 1: ACTIVE TREE MANAGEMENT

The council will inspect trees within its management once within a three year rolling programme; one third of the trees in year one, the second third in year two and the last third in year three. The process then starts again the following year.

In certain circumstances the council will increase the frequency of inspections to every two years, 18 months or annually, in order to monitor the condition of certain trees more closely, especially those with fungal growths that are more obvious in particular times of the year.

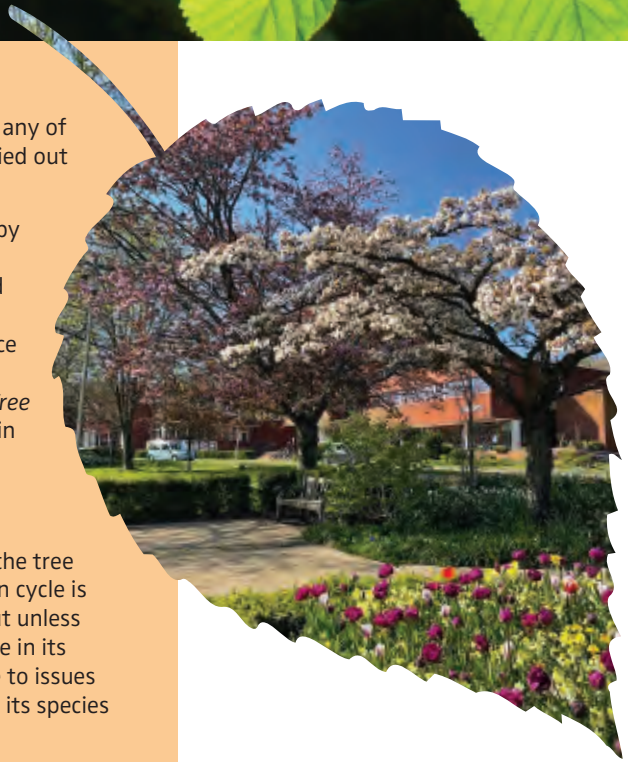
The inspections will assess the condition of the tree and whether work is required to tackle any of the following issues:

- Decay, structural damage or any indication of imminent failure.
- Physical encroachment, where branches are touching buildings.
- There is a risk of vehicular or pedestrian safety.
- Sightlines are required to be maintained for road signs, street lights, council CCTV cameras.
- Previous pruning regimes dictate that a continuation of such measures remain appropriate for that specimen e.g. periodic reductions or pollarding.
- Thinning tree stands to allow remaining trees more room to grow.
- A proven claim of subsidence damage.
- Considered by the Tree Service to be an inappropriate species for the location.
- Other work which it is considered will improve the long-term viability of the tree.

Work required to tackle any of these issues will be carried out as soon as possible.

Works will be specified by professionally qualified Tree Officers and carried out by professional contractors in accordance with BS3998 *Recommendations for Tree Work (2010)* to maintain the highest possible standards of care and management.

A further inspection of the tree outside of the inspection cycle is unlikely to be carried out unless there is a sudden change in its condition or in response to issues associated with trees of its species and/or age.





5.1 If members of the public have specific concerns regarding trees or woodland managed by the council they can make contact via the council's Contact Centre on 01707 357000 or online via the Contact page on the council's website.[5]

5.2 This policy will be used when the council is considering works to trees in its management. When we refer to urban trees, we encompass trees growing in all the following situations:

- on grass verges in front of houses
- in the gardens of communal housing schemes
- in closed church yards and cemeteries
- beside or behind houses whether in garage areas or in tree belts
- on urban open spaces

In the case of the last two categories, large groups of trees will be inspected as one whole group and recorded as such.

5.3 The council's Contact Centre is the main point of contact for all enquiries relating to trees on council land. The council has no powers or statutory duties to maintain land or trees which it does not own. The Land Registry has details of who owns private land.

[5] https://www.welhat.gov.uk/contact

5.4 The council is committed to managing trees through the policies set out in this strategy. However, occasionally works may take place over and above that which is outlined to improve the long-term future or viability of a tree.

5.5 Within the urban environment, where the relationship between residents and their landscape is so close, there are inevitable conflicts. The council is positively managing individual trees that might directly impact small numbers of people but widely benefit the community as a whole. There is a difficult balance to achieve.

5.6 As an owner of a large number of street and woodland trees, claims are occasionally made against the council for damage caused to private property as a result of tree related subsidence. This happens when tree roots extract moisture from the soil beneath a property, causing downward movement and associated damage. Rarely, the opposite of subsidence occurs, heave, where the ground re-wets following removal of trees.



5.7 It is therefore important for the council to consider fully any duties it has to address the risk of subsidence occurring, alongside the environmental impact and financial cost that any proactive or responsive approach to this problem may have.

5.8 When and where subsidence will occur cannot be predicted as there are so many variable contributory causes, not least of which is the weather. There is also no industry agreed method of tree maintenance that can definitely prevent subsidence from happening and research has suggested that general pruning of trees may increase water demand. The proactive management of trees to minimise subsidence risk is a specialist area and will be considered by the council as and when appropriate, in response to its duties of care.

5.9 Once notified of an incidence of subsidence, the council will respond and in 2010 adopted an approach to managing claims which involves the assessment of the importance of the implicated tree alongside the level of evidence required to prove its involvement and the likely cost of the claim. While the council will co-operate and communicate with claimants in the hope of reaching a mutually acceptable solution, claims will be vigorously defended when insufficient evidence is provided.

5.10 Individual trees recorded on the council's database will be assessed once within a three year rolling period. Tree groups and woodland boundaries with private property, car parks, roads and railways will also be inspected once within a three year rolling period in the context of their setting. All other woodland trees will be either subject to an approved management plan or left to grow unhindered. We rely on natural regeneration in all woodlands when felling is undertaken. If the expected regeneration is not adequate within ten years, we are obliged within the terms of the Woodland Improvement Grant to supplement with planting. In addition to natural regeneration, we plant native broadleaf trees to increase wildlife cover, all again within the parameters of the Woodland Improvement Grant.

5.11 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Tree Officers are qualified, experienced tree experts who will apply their knowledge of tree anatomy, tree physiology, tree biomechanics, geology and environmental conditions.





6 | POLICY 2: URBAN TREE MANAGEMENT



6.1 The council **will not** carry out tree works to council trees or Hertfordshire Highway trees for the following reasons:

- To increase the amount of sunlight reaching a property or where views are obstructed.
- To improve reception for mobile phone, satellite and television reception.
- To allow light to reach solar panels.
- To alleviate problems caused by natural or seasonal phenomena e.g. sap, pollen, leaves, seeds, bird droppings, flowers, nuts and berries.
- To alleviate build-up of algae and moss or prevent dampness on paths, structures or gardens.
- To alleviate potential insurance and subsidence issues unless supported by evidence such as relevant engineering report.
- To resolve footpath, heave or trip hazards caused by root ingress unless no viable alternative can be found to alleviate the problems.
- To facilitate vehicle crossovers unless the tree has a very limited life expectancy or is at an age where it can be relocated elsewhere. In this case, any associated costs will be borne by the crossover applicant.
- To remove lower branches from specimen trees. These will be trees chosen to grow in their natural form, where access beneath the crown is not required.
- Where the tree is a rare example of a native tree or makes a significant contribution to the landscape.
- To prune trees or branches that overhang boundaries unless the Tree Officers are concerned about the safety of the tree or the tree is touching the property.

6.2 The overriding view is that there will be a presumption to prune the tree(s) and not to remove healthy trees.

6.3 The council has an obligation to ensure the safety of people and property. Works may be carried out to satisfy the council's duty of care or for good arboricultural and woodland management practice.

6.4 Work to Hertfordshire Highway trees will also be carried out in line with this policy, which mirrors the standard the County Council has adopted.

6.5 Pruning trees to accommodate unhindered panoramas for new CCTV cameras is very difficult. Cutting sight lines through crowns can unbalance the tree and often stimulates more growth, quickly blocking the view again. Advice will be given on request about the scope for pruning when consulted about new CCTV locations.

6.6 In some instances there is difficult balance to be struck between good tree/woodland management and obligations to ensure safety to people and property. The priority is to ensure that trees and woodland are as safe as reasonably practicable.

7 | POLICY 3: TREE PLANTING

7.1 The council will undertake tree planting across the Borough on publicly owned land.

7.2 Planting will take place in the best possible situations to maximise gains for environmental improvement.

7.3 New planting positions will respect the view of existing road signs, street lights and CCTV cameras.

7.4 Urban planting will seek to respect the original layout of concepts of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield New Town. Avenues of formal planting will be retained until their decline dictates that complete renewal is a more appropriate solution. Interim planting to fill gaps will not take place. Where practical, the original species will be selected again to renew the original layout. Where this is not practical we will notify local residents setting out why a different species is selected.

7.5 In addition, historically significant species will also be acknowledged and replanted where possible. If exact species are no longer suitable because of pests and diseases, the surrounding environment, or short life expectancy, species with a similar form and impact will be selected.

7.6 The council's Business Plan has a target to plant at least 300 urban trees across the Borough on publicly owned land each year. The young trees will be watered twice a month for three years, between March and October each year.

7.7 Felled verge trees will be replaced on a one-for-one basis. The replacement may not occur in the following tree planting season if the schedule is already full. In these instances, the location is noted for the following year. Sometimes it is not possible to replant in the exact location due to developments on the highway such as crossovers, cycle tracks, underground services, street lights, signs or parking bays.

7.8 Sometimes trees which are felled are not replaced. Common reasons for this are the proximity of surrounding trees, the tree was removed to alleviate a proven subsidence case or it was a self-set or weed tree in an inappropriate location.

7.9 In areas monitored by CCTV, care will be taken to not obstruct the view of the cameras, especially where conflict could arise due to the future stature of the tree.

7.10 Trees removed from tree belts or groups of trees will only be replaced when the barrier effect has been compromised.

7.11 Within woodlands, new tree cover is encouraged by a combination of natural regeneration and replanting as appropriate.





8 | POLICY 4: PESTS AND DISEASES

8.1 The council will keep abreast of all regional and national updates and advice on pest and diseases effecting trees and woodlands. Trees will be monitored for signs of pest and disease to assess what works that maybe required to retain the tree safely.

8.2 The council will disseminate information about locally important pests and disease to the public via the council's website and other methods such as articles in *ONE Magazine*, press releases, etc.

8.3 The control of muntjac deer and grey squirrels will be undertaken if the impact of the damage is considered to have a moderate impact on site biodiversity.

8.4 Trees are more susceptible to having infection and disease if they are damaged, in poor health, growing in poor site conditions or are of a particular species. For much of the trees life it can defend itself or react to arising problems. If a tree has low vitality or is stressed it might not be able to defend itself. Infection can hasten tree decay, decline and death and can pose serious concerns for public health and safety.

8.5 Climate change affects both the spread of pests and diseases and the trees ability to react to it. It is important that the council has an understanding of the potential problems so that it can react in a swift and informed way.

8.6 Current pests and diseases in the Borough are: brown-tailed moth, ash die-back, acute and chronic oak decline, horse chestnut bleeding canker and horse chestnut leaf miner. Pests and diseases which are likely to become a problem in the Borough in future years are: oak processionary moth, sweet chestnut blight, oriental chestnut gall wasp and massaria disease on plane trees. Examples of pests and diseases which are not currently present in the UK are: Asian longhorn beetle, emerald ash borer, citrus longhorn beetle and oak wilt. Consideration will be given as to how manage trees affect by pest and diseases as part of the inspection process.

8.7 In most cases there is very little that can be done to prevent these outbreaks from happening on a commercial scale and it becomes a matter of responding to the effects rather than prevention. The best defense is to ensure that the trees we have now and those that are planted in the future, are the best for their situation and are at their peak health and condition. Planting a diverse range of species also builds resilience into the tree population as pests and diseases sometimes target just one species. There are several key pests and diseases that are thought to be the potential high-risk factors of the future. The risk is becoming greater with the speed and spread of international pests and diseases.

8.8 High populations of grey squirrels and muntjac deer can cause extensive physical damage to trees and prevent the natural regeneration of woodland flowers. Without vegetation it is difficult to create a diverse structure. Squirrels and deer do not have natural predators, so control needs to be by human intervention. This presents challenges in woodlands close to human habitation and is often not undertaken for this reason, to the detriment of the ecology of the woodland.

8.9 The control of deer numbers is essential across all of the UK so woodlands can be successfully managed for timber or wood fuel and healthy and diverse wildlife habitats.

8.10 Within Welwyn Hatfield, control of muntjac deer has been undertaken at Northaw Great Wood for some years. Trained and experienced stalkers are reducing the numbers of deer until the effects of browsing are considered to be at a sustainable level. Site assessments are made biennially. Deer control is undertaken in conjunction with adjacent land owners.

8.11 The council is being strongly advised by the Forestry Commision to reduce the numbers of muntjac within Sherrardspark Wood. Greater control of the deer population will help young trees establish and ensure a diverse age structure of trees within our woodlands.





9 | POLICY 5: PROTECTING TREES THROUGH THE PLANNING SYSTEM

9.1 The council will seek to protect and retain existing trees, hedgerows and woodland on development sites through the use of planning conditions. Section 106 agreements and Tree Preservation Orders as appropriate.

9.2 If Planning permission is granted, the felling of trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) will require a replacement tree to be planted (with the exception for woodland TPOs).

9.3 New developments, such as housing and commercial schemes will be required to incorporate tree planting within the site as part of its design.

The council as the Local Planning Authority is responsible for enforcing the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

9.4 Whilst the council is responsible for its own trees and woodlands, a great deal of what combines to create a shared landscape is privately owned. Although the council does not have direct responsibility for these trees, it is actively engaged in protection of those considered worthy through the planning system.

9.5 The council's adopted Local Plan has key policies within it on environmental assets. Policy SP11 sets out the strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of the Borough's critical and environmental assets within the planning process. Policy SP12 states the council will work with partners to actively support the creation and enhancement of strategic green infrastructure across the Borough. The opportunity to implement these policies can be achieved through the use of planning conditions, Section 106 Agreements, Hedgerow Retention Notices and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

9.6 TPOs are used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant detrimental impact on the amenity of the area. An order can apply to one or many trees, including woodlands. Priority for TPOs is usually, though not exclusively, given to trees considered to be under threat; for example where imminent development is proposed. Welwyn Hatfield currently has over 550 TPOs in effect.



9.7 Conservation Areas can be defined as special areas of architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are eight such areas within Welwyn Hatfield where all trees have protection. Anyone proposing works to trees must give the council six weeks' notice of their intention to do so. This enables the council to examine the proposal and decide whether or not to place a TPO on the tree(s) in question.

9.8 The Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme relates to specific neighbourhoods within the town. Its aim is to protect the amenities and values of the area. This designation protects most trees and hedges and enables the council to protect the trees which are considered important.

9.9 It is recognised there is a need for development often at high densities in order to facilitate the demand for housing in the Borough. It is anticipated that landscape proposals for developments will need to incorporate aspects of vertical and roof top greening and initiative tree planting as space becomes a premium.



10 | POLICY 6: WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

10.1 The council will maintain and enhance Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in accordance with their adopted management plans

10.2 The council will maintain its remaining woodland, Mardley Heath which is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), in accordance with its adopted management plan.

10.3 The council will seek to provide good access to council-owned woodlands on public and permissive footpaths and bridleways for a wide range of abilities. Paths will be managed and upgraded where necessary on an annual basis, with support from Friends Groups.

10.4 Public access will be discouraged in some parts of Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood to reduce disturbance to more sensitive wildlife, especially during breeding seasons.

10.5 Sherrardspark Wood, Mardley Heath and Northaw Great Wood have management plans agreed by Natural England. These plans are the first step in allowing the council to apply for and receive grants, to ensure that they are maintained in a 'favourable conservation condition'.

10.6 Access is an important aspect of our land management programme. Interpretation boards at principal entrances to sites show visitors the best routes to walk and some general information. Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood have extensive directional signage to inform people of permissive routes and Rights of Way that connect into the wider landscape. Notice boards give updates on forthcoming habitat management work and events.



11 | POLICY 7: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The council will support, insure and equip Friends Groups who come together to execute agreed works to trees, woodlands, footpaths and bridleways and any other maintenance task that can be tackled safely.

The council will promote the health and well-being benefits of trees and woodlands and of volunteering and will invite local residents who are keen to get involved or learn more to join a Friends Group or the Tree Wardens Scheme.

An annual programme of events will be arranged, and support given to initiatives taken by these groups.



11.1 The council is fortunate to have a large group of people who are organised into friends groups and volunteer to work on a site of their choice. There are friends groups at three of the nine woodland sites and the largest group, with over 70 members, is the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens society which has been running for over 50 years.

11.2 In 2023 local volunteers gave over 806 days of work, in financial terms, this fantastic contribution was worth over £56,430. Common tasks include coppicing, tree planting, scrub and grassland management, hedge laying and fencing. Some volunteers lead guided walks and help survey important wildlife species.

11.3 A Tree Warden group was launched in 2006 for those interested in street trees. These volunteers are the 'eyes and ears' for the trees in their neighbourhood. A series of informative meetings are held each year to increase knowledge, allowing individuals to discuss issues within their community. There are currently around 60 members and the focus in recent years has been on the planting and maintenance of community orchards across the Borough.

11.4 The members of the community who freely give their time to help protect and preserve the amenity, ecology and biodiversity of the Borough are invaluable and the council recognises the need to match enthusiasm with support if their involvement is to be maintained.



12 | POLICY 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

12.1 The council will seek to deliver its Green Infrastructure Strategy in collaboration with statutory bodies, landowners, developers, the public and others. This will include the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funding and Section 106 Agreements.

12.2 Green infrastructure is the network of multi-functional green space that can be proposed, newly designed or existing. These spaces can be rural or urban and include areas such as woodlands, farmland, river valleys, open spaces and country parks. This matrix of open land is made up of both privately owned land and council open space.

12.3 The council's adopted Local Plan has key policies within it on Environmental Assets. Policy SP12 state the council will work with partners to actively support the creation and enhancement of strategic green infrastructure across the Borough. The opportunity to implement these policies can be achieved through the use of planning conditions, Section 106 Agreements, Hedgerow Retention Notices and Tree Preservation Orders.

12.4 Across the Borough there is a wonderful legacy of publically owned open spaces, woodlands, ponds, amenity green urban open spaces with shrubs and flowers, old hedgerows and individual mature trees. All these green features support a varied wildlife of great ecological significance and they are integral to the health and quality of life in the Borough.

12.5 The key to accessing a large percentage of this green infrastructure is the network of Rights of Way across the Borough that links both council and private land, a valued asset that is managed by Hertfordshire County Council.

12.6 All guidance given on planning consents will endeavor to protect suitable existing trees on development sites. However, the retention of valuable habitats or the creation of new opportunities for wildlife will be sought in larger applications and the potential for linking open spaces through new developments will be promoted.

12.7 All new developments over a certain size threshold are required to make a contribution to local green infrastructure through planning legislation, Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. All contributions offered for existing green infrastructure sites are invested in council-owned open spaces.

13 | MONITORING AND REVIEW

13.1 The policies set out in this strategy reflect the current circumstances, issues and trends anticipated to be relevant to tree management to 2029. An early review may be considered if there are any changes to legislation or council business which have implications for this strategy.

13.2 With regard to disseminating information, we intend to add the following information to the website:

- Monthly felling lists which give the location, species and removal reason.
- We will fix felling notices on landmark or prominent trees and where a set is to be removed and replaced during the following winter. These tree removals may also be subject to press releases or letter drops to immediately surrounding residents.
- We are committed to planting at least 300 street trees across the Borough every year. The planting season is from November to March and at the conclusion of every planting season in May we will post a list of all the trees planted, their location and species.
- An annual summary of the tree removal (outside of woodlands and dense tree groups 4 and 5 Policy 1) and planting. In most years this will show that more trees have been felled than planted due to the removal of self-sets and thinned groups.







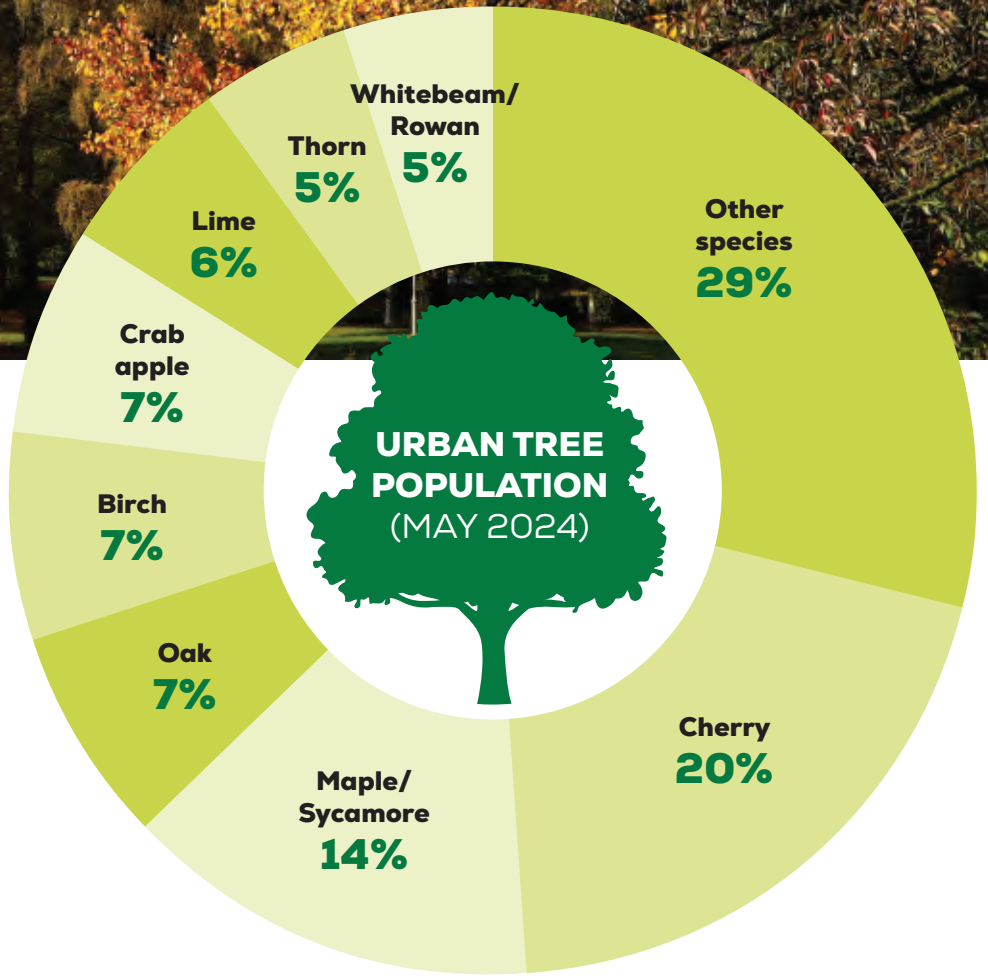
14 | APPENDIX 1: STREET TREE AUDIT

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council currently manages the urban trees on an individual basis. These are individually managed trees in open spaces, roadside verges and highly frequented areas such as shopping parades and church yards.

The pie chart to the right highlights the eight most common species of urban trees, with cherry trees being the most frequently found. Together, these eight species make up 71% of the total urban tree population.

Understanding the composition of the urban tree population is crucial for effective management. This knowledge becomes particularly important when a disease or pest outbreak occurs, which can devastate a specific species. For example, the elm population was significantly reduced by Dutch elm disease in the late 1970s and early 1980s. To mitigate such risks, it is wise to maintain a diverse range of tree species.

Currently, no single tree species dominates the urban landscape. This means the council can continue planting a wide variety of species, promoting biodiversity and reducing vulnerability to future outbreaks.



15 | APPENDIX 2: PESTS AND DISEASES

Some examples of pests and diseases that the Borough has recently been affected by are:

Brown tail moth

Brown tail moth has a caterpillar that not only defoliates the trees on which it lives, but also causes public health issues due to irritant hairs from the caterpillar affecting people, particularly those with respiratory problems. This has been found in the Panshanger area and has resulted in the loss of a number of street trees as no effective treatment for the pests is available.

Bleeding canker

Bleeding canker is present in horse chestnut trees across the Borough and has already led to the removal of several trees due to the interruption of conducting vessels within the tree leading to splits and cracks of structural branches and even the death and decline of whole trees.

Horse chestnut leaf minor

Horse chestnut leaf minor is an insect that 'mines' the centre of the leaves leaving the tree visibly affected. Whilst this is not thought to be significant in terms of the tree's health it does have an aesthetic affect.

Acute and chronic decline

Acute and chronic decline is evident in our woodlands such as Sherrardspark Wood and even some of our mature oak street trees. Symptoms of acute oak decline include dark fluid bleeding from splits in the bark on tree trunks. As affected trees approach death there is a notable deterioration of the canopy, or tree tops, and 'dieback' of the branches. The condition can kill a tree in as little as four or five years.

Oak processionary moth

The issue of oak processionary moth has been given much press coverage, again due to the irritant hairs on the caterpillars and the devastating effect that infestations have to the mature oaks that host it. The attempts to contain the outbreaks in London have failed and the aim is to now keep infection rates as low as possible. Welwyn Hatfield now sits within the Established Zone for OPM. This means that the council is not obliged to deal with OPM cases by the Forestry Commission when it is found in the Borough. The council decides how best to deal with each incident on a case-by-case basis. There have now been numerous cases of OPM in the Borough in 2022/23.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is working with the Tree Council and Hertfordshire County Council on an OPM strategy which is to be completed in 2024/25.

Asian longhorn beetle

Asian longhorn beetle is a native of China that has been confirmed in Kent in March 2012 and work is continuing to try to eradicate it. In the United States and Italy, where it has been accidentally introduced in recent years, it has caused extensive damage to host trees. It can affect a wide range of broadleaved trees and shrubs such as maple (including sycamore), elm, horse chestnut, willow, poplar, birch and some fruit trees.

Ash dieback

Chalara dieback of ash is a serious disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called Chalara fraxinea (C. fraxinea).

The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback in affected trees, and it can lead to tree death. For more information and advice about the symptoms and spread of Chalara through Europe and into the UK please see the Forestry Commission website.[6]

6. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission





16 | APPENDIX 3: SUBSIDENCE POLICY

Amenity Tree Evaluation

Historically Tree Officers have made a judgment about the quality of a tree subject to any insurance claim. In recent times it has been that judgment, coupled often with the view of the structural engineer and the Insurance Officer which has decided whether or not to retain the tree pending further investigation.

It has become clear that whilst the overall judgment may not change, a clearer, more quantifiable method of reaching that decision needs to be agreed and adopted. There are many methods available of assessing a tree, and most of these are combined with a way of transferring the score into a financial amount that the tree is 'worth'. It was considered that this would not necessarily be helpful when dealing with our subsidence cases as, more often than not, the costs were not known at the outset, or would far outweigh the supposed value of the tree. It was felt that it would be more appropriate to assess the trees and use the score to categorise them into trees which we could remove early on in a claim, trees which would require a level of technical evidence to support the claim before we would remove them and trees which were felt to be valuable enough that the decision would be made by a higher body.

For a number of years, the Tree Officers have been using TEMPO (Tree Evaluation Method for Preservation Orders) which is a system for evaluating whether trees are suitable for placing tree preservation orders on them. The basis of which is looking at the condition of the tree, the safe life expectancy, the public visibility and any other factors such as historical importance.

It is a relatively transparent, simple system that seemed suitable for our subsidence purposes. It was also felt to be a consistent approach to use the same system for both our potential Tree Preservation Orders and our subsidence cases. The importance of the trees and their place in the landscape needs to be similarly appraised in both instances.

The TEMPO system was simplified in its points appraisal, meaning that a score of less than 9 points would indicate a low-quality tree, which could then be removed early in the process – provided the claim was valid. Trees which scored between 10 & 14 would require evidence to back up the claim, the detail of which would be agreed between the Tree Officers and the Insurance Officer. Trees scoring over 15 points would be trees that were deemed to be highly valuable and worthy of retention. Each case would have to be assessed on its own merits, but it is hoped that the decisions on these trees would be taken by a higher authority. This would take into account the financial implications of their retention and the amenity and landscape loss by their removal.

The system was trialed with ten trees and it was felt that the results did match the judgment that would have been made by the Tree Officer. Four of the ten trees would be those which were considered to be worthy of retention. This is an unusually high figure as the cases that were used were the more high profile trees that had that had been around for a few years. It is more likely that many more of our cases would involve trees that were not of such a high quality.



17 | APPENDIX 4: TYPES OF PRUNING



Clear from Overhead Obstructions

Reducing small number of branches back to give clearance to a structure such as building or lamp column, usually specified by a distance of clearance.

Coppicing

Cutting trees close to ground level with the intention of encouraging of multiple shoots.

Crown Lifting

Removal of lower branches to achieve a stated vertical clearance above ground level or other surface.

Crown Reduction

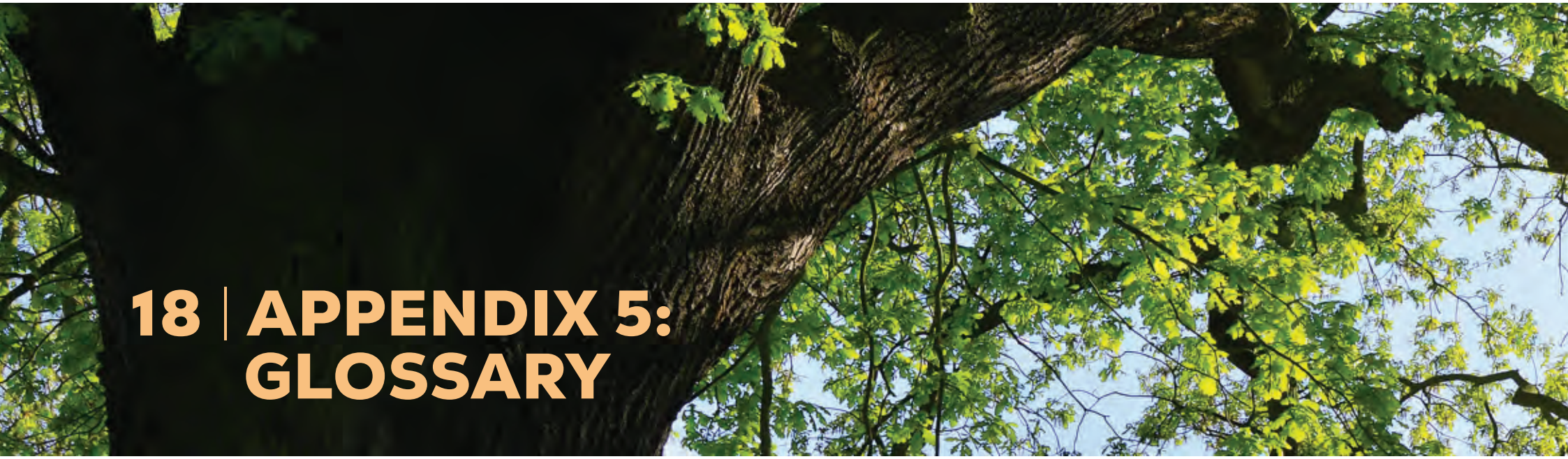
Operation that results in an overall reduction in the height and/or spread of the crown of a tree by means of a general shortening of twigs and/or branches whilst retaining the main framework of the crown.

Crown Thinning

Removal of a proportion of small live branches throughout the crown to achieve an even density of foliage around a well-spaced and balanced branch structure.

Pollard

Cutting a tree so as to encourage formation of numerous branches arising from the same height on a main stem or principal branches.



18 | APPENDIX 5: GLOSSARY

Actionable nuisance
Where actual damage to property has been caused, or, if no action is taken to prevent it, damage will be imminently caused. It does not mean just the pure encroachment of roots or branches over the adjoining land.

Ancient semi-natural woodland
Woodland that has existed continuously on that site since before 1600 and is now valued for its locally native species and wildlife habitats.

Bio-diversity
The range of species which live within a particular habitat.

BS 3998 (2010) British Standard 3998 Recommendations for tree work
This standard relates to Arboricultural operations and methods.

Conservation Area
Areas of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve. Anyone wishing to cut down or carry out work on a tree in a conservation area is required to give the council six weeks' prior notice.

Estate Management Scheme
The Estate Management scheme is part of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. This is administered for purpose of maintaining and enhancing amenities and values in Welwyn Garden City. The scheme requires that written consent be obtained to cut down, lop or top any tree exceeding 15ft within the Estate Management areas.

Hazard
(In this instance) a tree which has the potential to harm persons or property.

Industry best practice
The use of techniques, methods or process which have been industry proven to be the most effective.

Natural regeneration
Young trees resulting from germination of seeds, which occur as a consequence of natural seeding.

Landmark trees
Trees which are considered to be prominent identifying features within the landscape.

Lapsed pollard
A pollarded tree that has not been cut in a regular cycle but left uncut for many years.

Native species
Trees which are considered to be naturally occurring in the UK.

Non-intervention
The management of woods where nothing is done to allow the succession of the wood to occur naturally.



Pathogen
A micro-organism causing disease.

Pollard
A tree cut once or repeatedly where the main stem forms the crown. Usually cut on a regular basis, with the whole or part of the crown removed.

Risk
The likelihood that a tree (in this instance) will cause harm to person or property.

Subsidence
The sinking (or movement) of structures due to shrinkage when clay soils dry out, sometimes due to extraction of moisture by tree roots.

Suckers
Shoots that arise from an underground stem or root of a tree.

Thinning
The removal of weak trees or trees with poor form from a group to allow the remaining trees to prosper.

Town and Country Planning Act
The Act of Parliament which consolidates certain enactments relating to town and country planning.

Tree Belts
Areas of trees which are sometimes small areas of woodland throughout the Borough which were originally planted to provide a visual and sometimes audio barrier to separate housing development from other estates.

Tree Preservation Order
A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is an order made by a Local Planning Authority (LPA) in respect to trees, groups of trees, woodlands and areas of trees. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, willful damage or willful destruction of trees without the LPAs consent.

Relevant primary and secondary legislation
Part 4VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and in the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999.

Veteran tree
A tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition.

Visual amenity
The visual amenity of a tree is its intrinsic beauty and/or its contribution to the landscape.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Hertfordshire County Council

Scan the QR code above left to go to Hertfordshire County Council's Highway Tree Strategy and Guidance document.

For reporting tree problems on highways, scan the QR code above right.

www.hertsdirect.org

Arboricultural Association

The Malthouse
Stroud Green
Stonehouse
Gloucestershire
GL10 3DL

01242 522152
admin@trees.org.uk
www.trees.org.uk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

08459 33 55 77
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Forestry Commission GB

www.forestry.gov.uk

Royal Horticultural Society

80 Vincent Square
London
SW1P 2PE

0845 062 1111
gardeningadvice@rhs.org.uk
www.rhs.org.uk

The Tree Council

71 Newcomen Street
London
SE1 1YT

020 7407 9992
info@treecouncil.org.uk
www.treecouncil.org.uk

Tree Advice Trust

Alice Holt Lodge
Wrecclesham
Farnham
Surrey
GU10 4LH

09065 161147
www.treehelp.info

The Woodland Trust

Kempton Way
Grantham
NG31 6LL

01476 581111
enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk



WELWYN HATFIELD