A Tree and Woodland Management Strategy for Watford

2020-2030

Contents

1. A Vision for Watford

"To ensure that Watford's trees and woodlands are well planted, maintained, protected and managed in line with best arboricultural practice, to help create a more attractive, sustainable and healthy place to live, work and visit and critically taking into consideration, conservation, wildlife and the impact of climate change".

This strategy is underpinned by the council's Green Spaces Strategy (2013-2023) in creating a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to enhance the quality of life for local communities in Watford and creating a more attractive, healthy place to live and work and visit. It also supports Watford Borough Council's Corporate Policies:

The Council's Vision – "**To Create a Bold and Progressive Future for Watford**"

Our vision reflects our approach to the current challenges and opportunities facing the Council as an organisation and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. We want to champion our town so that it is a place where all our communities thrive and prosper, benefitting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. This will require the Council to be innovative, explore new ways of working and champion initiatives that will transform the town and the organisation. More of the same isn't going to secure the future we want for Watford, which is why bold and progressive lie at the heart of our ambitions.

Supporting this vision, the Council has 5 priority areas of work which are critical to the Council achieving successful outcomes for its ambitions for the town.

1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs;

2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity;

3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities;

4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community; and

5. Secure our own financial future.

In addition, our core, day to day business underpins everything we do and all of our work and effort must contribute to our success. In particular, we recognise the importance of 3 key areas in making us an effective organisation, in touch with our residents and delivering in the areas and in a way that they expect. These are:

- Effective two-way engagement and communication;

- Sound management and high performance; and

- Improving the town's environment.

This document therefore details the strategy for the enhancement of our trees and woodlands over the 2020 to 2030 period and how we continue to manage them to provide a cleaner, greener Watford which is conducive to improving the working, residential and leisure environment of the town.

2. The Benefits of Trees to Watford

Watford's trees within parks, woods, open spaces and the many tree-lined streets form an important component of our landscape, linking the urban area with the surrounding countryside and contribute to long-term sustainability. They provide many benefits to people's wellbeing and for enhancing the quality of life in the following ways:

A. Environmental
- Trees have a positive impact on mitigating the effects of climate change (7);
- Trees help improve air quality by absorbing pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. Dust and other particulates are trapped by leaves, making the air healthier to breathe and minimising health risks (1);
- Over a single year, a mature tree removes about 22kg of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (2);
- They reduce the "urban heat island effect" of localised extremes of temperature by absorbing radiation which would otherwise be stored and emitted by buildings and highways, leading to towns having a higher temperature than surrounding countryside (3);
- Trees can play an important part in water management, including safeguarding water quality and contributing to flood alleviation as part of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (4). Tree canopies intercept rainwater, helping to prevent localised flooding during flash floods (1);
- By screening traffic, trees can reduce noise pollution adjacent to busy roads (5); and
- They provide a habitat for supporting local wildlife throughout the Borough and green corridors for wildlife migration (6).

B. Economic
- The presence of tree lined streets, green corridors and open, green spaces can enhance property values, adding a premium to house prices of 5-17% (8);
- Tree planting can improve the appearance of vacant development, derelict or underused land providing valuable screening and creating an attractive place in which people want to live, work and invest (9);
- Office workers who have views of trees feel happier, aiding increased performance (10); and
- Trees help to create attractive, welcoming areas within our town centres, encouraging people to visit and stay for longer, spending more at shops and restaurants (11).

C. Social and Amenity
- Planting and caring for trees bring people together, strengthening communities and increasing their sense of ownership of surroundings (7);
- Trees make public spaces and developed areas more appealing, giving variety

of scale, form, colour and shape (1);

- Trees can make inspiring outdoor classrooms and provide an educational resource for our Forest Schools Programmes in Watford;
- They can be important local landmarks and make neighbourhood more distinctive and provide cultural and historical links (1); and
- They soften/hide the impact of buildings and other structures in a densely populated urban environment;

D. Healthy living

- Trees and woodlands are known to calm people, relieve stress and provide a spiritual value that supports improved mental health and wellbeing (12);
- Office workers and residents who have views of trees feel happier;
- A view of trees has been known to speed up recovery from surgery (13); and
- Children living in areas with more street trees have lower prevalence of asthma (14) due to the cleaner air.

E. Biodiversity

- A tree-rich landscape can increase biodiversity and bring more varied wildlife close to where people live and work (7);
- Trees are an important habitat for local wildlife across the borough providing nesting and foraging opportunities. A mature oak can host up to 5,000 different species of invertebrate that supports other birds and mammals (15);
- Woodlands are our richest wildlife habitats and often contain the greatest numbers as well as many of our rarest and most threatened species. They are important for most forms of wildlife, from trees and shrubs to mosses, lichens and fungi, and from mammals and birds to beetles, slugs and moths (16);
- Hedgerows and lines of trees are important for connecting greenspace, creating important green infrastructure links, and allowing wildlife commuting routes between sites, providing shelter, breeding and feeding places for many animals (17). Hedgerows over 1m in height are important habitats for most bat species, especially where they create a double linear feature with hedgerow, treeline or woodland (18); and
- Veteran trees have great conservation value as individual trees and are important because of their size, age or condition; they will have developed lots of niches that wildlife will settle into such as cavities for bats and birds, and decaying wood for invertebrates (19).

Sources

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3. Watford's Tree and Woodland Resource

Tree and woodland cover

The council is currently responsible for approximately 10,500 trees that are located on:

- Highway verges and street (as part of a service level agreement with Hertfordshire County Council);
- Parks and public open spaces; and
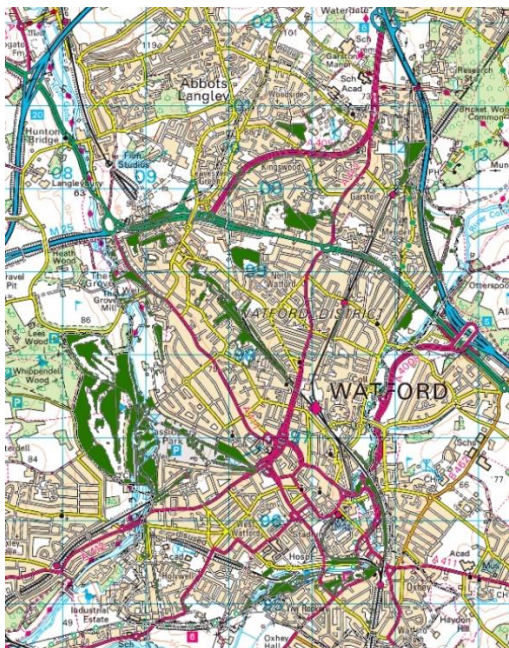- Cemeteries and churchyards.

In addition, the council manages thousands of trees across 506 hectares of public open space including the woodlands of Whippendell Wood, Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland areas in Oxhey Park, and Orchard Park.

Tree and woodland canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above, is 18.2% across the borough against the average tree canopy cover figure of 16% in England. Whippendell Wood accounts for a large percentage of this cover but opportunities exist in the town for increasing this cover in other parts of the town, including parks and playing fields. A bold and progressive ambition would be to increase cover to 20%.

The value of Watford's tree and woodland resource

Currently we have no true value of Watford's tree stock, although we can acknowledge the benefits they bring to people's wellbeing and quality of life as documented in the research in section two. The ability to value the individual and collective tree stock will help us in terms of allocation of resources and will provide an essential management tool to protect our assets and also seek compensation from any external organisation responsible for damaging or removing any council-owned or protected tree. There are several tree valuation methods available, the leading one being the
Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) developed in partnership with London Tree Officers Association (LTOA).

A map of Watford indicating woodlands and tree cover (2) This does not include Whippendell Wood as this is a WBC site but in Three Rivers District.

Actions
1. Maintain and update the EzyTreev database and develop a system so information can be shared easily with council departments
2. Use a recognised tree valuation system to place a value on individual trees and through this a value on the entire local authority and county council owned tree population in Watford
3. Undertake regular safety inspections of all local authority and county council trees at a frequency based on the graded analysis of threat to the public covering perceived target area, frequency of public use and appreciation of duty of care
4. Ensure training to keep tree managers up to date with good arboricultural management practices

4. Trees in Council Ownership

The council's trees are managed by Veolia as part of the Parks and Open Spaces maintenance contract and a Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. The ownership of trees brings certain legal responsibilities and obligations as to how they should be managed. Watford Borough Council seeks to be a good and responsible manager of trees, to fulfil its duty of care by delivering a programme of tree management aimed at keeping the public and property safe from harm, and by preserving the health and future sustainability of its tree stock.

Legal

Tree inspection programme

Under the Occupiers Liability Act (57 & 84) the council has a duty of care to make sure it has taken reasonable steps to minimise the health and safety risks resulting from trees under its management. The Council undertakes a robust tree inspection programme on a three-year cycle to identify dead, dying and diseased trees that are within its ownership and responsibility. Once trees have been surveyed, the data is held on Ezytreev, a tree management programme used by the Council and its contractors. The work is prioritised, in an emergency situation which poses a high risk to people or property, instruction will be given to our tree contractor to make the tree safe as soon as possible, less urgent works are scheduled for three-month, six-month or one-year programme based on precedence.

The statutory obligation to manage all the trees that we own and trees within areas of our control also relates to the following:

- Highways Act 1980;
- Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & 1984;
- The New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991;
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 including the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Appeals) Regulations 2009;
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990; and
- Tree Preservation Order (TPO) process.

There is a wide range of common law cases which has helped shaped the legal boundaries for tree law which the Council uses to inform policy and practice.

Street trees

Watford has a street tree population of **5230** trees which are an integral part of the urban landscape and valued by residents for contributing to a greener and more sustainable environment to live, work and visit. There are a variety of tree species of different ages. The top five tree species planted in Watford are *Acer (Sycamore)* (20%), *Sorbus (Rowan and Whitebeam)* (17%), *Prunus (Cherry)* (14%), *Crataegus* (*Hawthorn*) (5.6%), *Tilia (Lime)* (5.5 %). The most unusual species planted include Eucalyptus, Indian Bean Tree, Tulip Tree, Dawn Redwood, Swamp Cypress, Wild Service Tree and a number of Giant Redwood.

Large numbers of trees were planted in the Victorian and Edwardian era, so we now face a population of over-mature street trees. Increasingly these trees are becoming diseased or are dying, are vulnerable to climatic variations, and need maintenance or removal.

The roadside environment is a difficult place for trees to become established and survive. There is often intense pressure for space from underground services, poor soil, pollution from emissions, road salt, and vandalism.

The main issues Watford faces:

With any population of street trees there are several management challenges:

- Increased costs of inspecting and maintaining trees, specifically the high numbers of old trees and declining populations;
- Increased pressures to remove old trees due to an increased risk to the public;
- Lack of an integrated database and mapping system of trees that all council departments can access easily;
- Replacement tree planting with smaller trees is reducing the canopy cover and reducing the valuable services that street trees perform in Watford;
- Limited budget resources for replacement planting and maintenance to successfully establish young trees;
- No financial value of Watford's trees is known so therefore no compensation value for trees lost to development can be calculated; and
- Protecting healthy trees from unnecessary damage or felling.

Street tree removal

Generally, the council will not take any action to remove a healthy tree in response to complaints or requests from residents unless it is deemed necessary to do so. These circumstances would be if trees are dead, dying or diseased or can be proven to be linked to damage caused to buildings, footways and other structures. The Council reserves the right to refuse felling or potentially disfiguring forms of tree work in order to reduce the amount of shade being cast or to improve the reception of television signals, for CCTV operations, to reduce leaf and seed fall, aphid or bird droppings etc. These are not reasons to justify the removal of a healthy tree which are regarded as a community asset. The views of all residents in the immediate area will be considered before a decision is reached.

Vehicle Crossovers

Increasing demands for off-street parking has led to more public requests for the construction of new vehicle crossovers. The Council will not agree to the removal of healthy, established trees for the construction of new crossovers except in extenuating circumstances where the outcome is supported by good arboricultural practice.

Tree pruning

With any population of trees there are several common sources of complaint. Most tree problems can be mitigated with careful pruning once the tree is established.

The Council will endeavour to investigate such concerns using a strict criterion to deem if pruning is necessary and will take appropriate action to prevent further damage or liability to the council. We will only prune our trees for the following reasons:

- To prevent vehicle damage and personal injury from obscured sightlines on the highway and for the purposes of public safety;
- To prevent blocking street lighting, road signs or traffic lights;
- To abate an actionable nuisance;

- To mitigate the risks to the council; and
- Where remedial works are advantageous to maintaining our tree stock to preserve their amenity, conservation, and environmental value.

We will not prune trees for the following reasons:-

- To reduce leaf/seed fall, sap, aphid or bird droppings;
- Because they are blocking light;
- To improve television reception;
- Because they are swaying in the wind; and
- We can refuse requests for other reasons.

Subsidence

A common concern for homeowners is the potential for structural damage caused by tree roots. This is caused by the roots removing some moisture from clay-based soils which can cause shrinkage. We have a relatively low occurrence of this source of subsidence as the soil in Watford tends not to be the shrinkable clay associated with this issue. The onus is on the owner of a property to prove a tree is an effective cause of subsidence damage.

Street tree planting

The council is committed to planting new trees and to finding new and suitable sites. Where a tree is lost, it will be replaced unless there are good reasons not to do so. The Arboriculture Officer will recommend suitable and appropriate tree species for planting in streets and urban areas.

Tree works on council land

With the exception of tree work adjacent to electric cables (electric line clearance) all tree work undertaken on council land will be carried out by WBC tree contractors following best arboricultural practice as set out in British Standards 3998:2010 They are required to provide a method statement outlining their health and safety procedures, insurance, and risk assessment for the work to be undertaken, and must comply with all relevant British Standards. A robust monitoring system of contracted work is in place to ensure good value for money, compliance and best practice.

Trees and construction

Where construction works affect street trees, the council will work with those responsible in construction activity to ensure compliance with British Standard 5837:2012 for tree protection during the course of works. We will seek compensation from any external organisation responsible for damaging or removing any council-owned or protected tree.

Trees and the planning system

Under the UK planning system, the council has a statutory duty to consider the protection and planting of trees when granting planning permission for development. The effect of development on trees, whether protected (e.g. by a TPO or Conservation Area) or not, is a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

Utility work and root zones

Works to the highways, service routes and street furniture are essential but can have a detrimental effect on Watford's tree stock if not managed carefully as work often requires excavation within or near the tree root zones. It is important that all work for utilities services affecting trees will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines and standards set out by the National Joint Utilities Group.

Damage to council trees

Watford's trees are an important asset and we will seek to prosecute anyone found to be damaging or pruning its trees without permission or disposing of tree waste illegally, and where appropriate apply the maximum penalty. Any private individual or external organisation that undertakes actions to damage or remove council owned or protected trees will be pursued for compensation for the full amenity value of the tree based on CAVAT or similar tree evaluation system.

Actions
5. Review and update tree works specifications to recognise current standards and best practice with a vigorous monitoring system in place to ensure contractors adhere to this and that council tree stock is protected against avoidable damage
6. Ensure all development and construction work impacting on trees comply with the recommendations of BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction
7. Develop an approved list of trees for highways and parks ensuring that new trees can contribute to biodiversity and seek opportunities for large canopy cover trees
8. Ensure all work for utility services affecting trees will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines published by NJUG, Volume 4 Guidelines for the planning installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees
9. Monitor council appointed tree contractors to ensure they are following best arboricultural practice as set out in British Standards 3998:2010
10. Develop a long-term plan for replacement of tree stock where dead, dying or diseased or where tree stock is over mature to ensure a diversity of species and ages
11. Develop a long-term tree planting programme to target areas where tree cover is lowest, greatest community need, softening new development
12. Identify funding and develop a long-term pruning schedule that is area specific and prioritises stock in most need

13. Improve dialogue between Hertfordshire County Council and the Arboricultural Officer on issues that affect street trees and produce an annual report covering issues for the previous year.

Trees in woodlands

The council's woodland sites are valued and extremely important in terms of providing habitats for wildlife as well as green space for recreational activities and environmental education.

Sites

Watford has 50ha of woodland. These are largely mixed broadleaf with some small areas of coppice and conifer plantation. We are fortunate to have ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) surviving fragments of woodland which has been continuously present on the same site since at least 1600 AD with a high importance for nature conservation and heritage. Secondary woodland, which has been planted or grown on areas that were not formerly wooded. The largest woodland is Whippendell Wood, it has been a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) since 1954 due to its diverse range of fungi and invertebrates. Other smaller sites include Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland in Oxhey Park and Orchard Park.

Legal context

Watford Council has a statutory obligation to protect SSSI sites against any activities or management that would cause damage or degradation, consent for works or activities is overseen by Natural England.

Threats to woodland trees

The main threats facing Watford's woodland sites are:

- Decline in woodland management;
- Recreational pressures such as horses and bikes;
- Utility and maintenance of assets (eg National Grid, Gas, Network Rail)
- Antisocial behaviour including fly tipping, vandalism and green waste;
- Invasive, non-native tree species and problem species;
- Pests and disease, particularly Ash Die Back, Oak Processionary Moth (OPM), and Horse Chestnut blight;
- Changing climate; and
- Difficulty in securing funding for woodland management.

The importance of woodland management

The management of broadleaved woods has declined over previous decades as the demand for wood products has decreased due to cheaper imports from abroad. Without regular thinning, woodlands become dominated by shade tolerant species and overcrowded thus restricting the growth of new trees. Without the increased light levels that regular thinning brings, woodland flowers such as bluebells and primroses will decline, and invasive species like rhododendron will take over threatening the quality of woodland habitats and the wildlife they can support. There is often a

misconception amongst some conservationists that felling trees will harm the woodland community, where in fact no intervention is often a bigger threat.

By following the principles of continuous cover forestry (CCF) and using low-impact management systems, we are creating uneven aged woodlands that are biologically diverse. Small gaps are created in the woodland canopy through selective felling and thinning which results in increased light levels, creating many woodland layers from saplings to veteran trees and deadwood. We know that management based on CCF will support the most wildlife habitats.

Biodiversity

'Biodiversity' or 'biological diversity' can be defined as the variety of living organisms on both land and water. The Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sets targets for priority habitats and species to protect and preserve, the woodland BAP highlights the following which influences the way we manage the woodlands for the benefit of:

- Bluebells
- Coral root Bittercress
- Common Dormouse
- Silver washed fritillary butterfly
- Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
- Little Owl
- Purple Emperor
- White Admiral
- Purple Hairstreak

- Bats
- Hawfinch
- Stag Beetle

Veteran trees

Veteran trees are an important habitat found in woodlands providing dead and decaying wood which supports fungi and invertebrate species. The Hertfordshire BAP identifies how valuable these trees are, sympathetic management is required including removing competing vegetation from the drip line (haloing) of the tree canopy and then looking at an individual plan for the tree as it deteriorates, retaining deadwood (standing and down) wherever possible.

Selling timber

When woodland management results in timber and coppice products available to sell, we will work with partners to ensure the best prices possible and ring-fence that

funding so it can be invested back into the woodlands to improve public access, biodiversity, education programmes etc.

Education/forest schools

Using woodlands for learning has become increasingly popular through Forest School programmes. We will consider requests from organisations wishing to use a public woodland for this purpose and will carefully monitor the condition of the environment to protect it.

Biosecurity

With the advent of introduced pests such as Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumeotopoea processionea*) and diseases such as Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*), the council will request that in the interest of biosecurity, any nursery stock destined for Watford must be held at the nursery for one full growing season following importation. This is detailed in the Arboricultural Association's position statement to minimise the possibility of introducing new pests and diseases. (Arboricultural Association, 2016). This is known to Planning and can be passed on to any landscapers planting trees on development sites as an informative during the application process and can be added as a landscape condition.
Information regarding country of origin should be requested and the nursery able to produce an audit of plant movement on demand.
If this proves unachievable for a specific tree, the council may permit trees that do not follow this control measure providing strict inspection and monitoring are in place.

The council will take appropriate measures to prevent or reduce the risk of the transmission of emerging pests, diseases and invasive species detrimental to the health of trees and will insist that contractors are required to adhere to the biosecurity policy and should always exercise good practice as detailed on LTOA and Forestry Commission websites.

The advice to be given to developers should be as follows:-

Tree and shrub species selected for landscaping/replacement planting provide long term resilience to pest, diseases and climate change. The diverse range of species and variety will help prevent rapid spread of any disease.

In addition to this, all trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants must adhere to basic bio-security measures to prevent accidental release of pest and diseases and must follow the guidelines below.

"An overarching recommendation is to follow BS 8545: Trees: From Nursery to independence in the Landscape. Recommendations and that in the interest of Bio-security, trees should not be imported directly from European suppliers and planted straight into the field, but spend a full growing season in a British nursery to ensure plant health and non-infection by foreign pests or disease.

This is the appropriate measure to address the introduction of diseases such as Oak Processionary Moth and Chalara of Ash. All trees to be planted must have been held in quarantine."

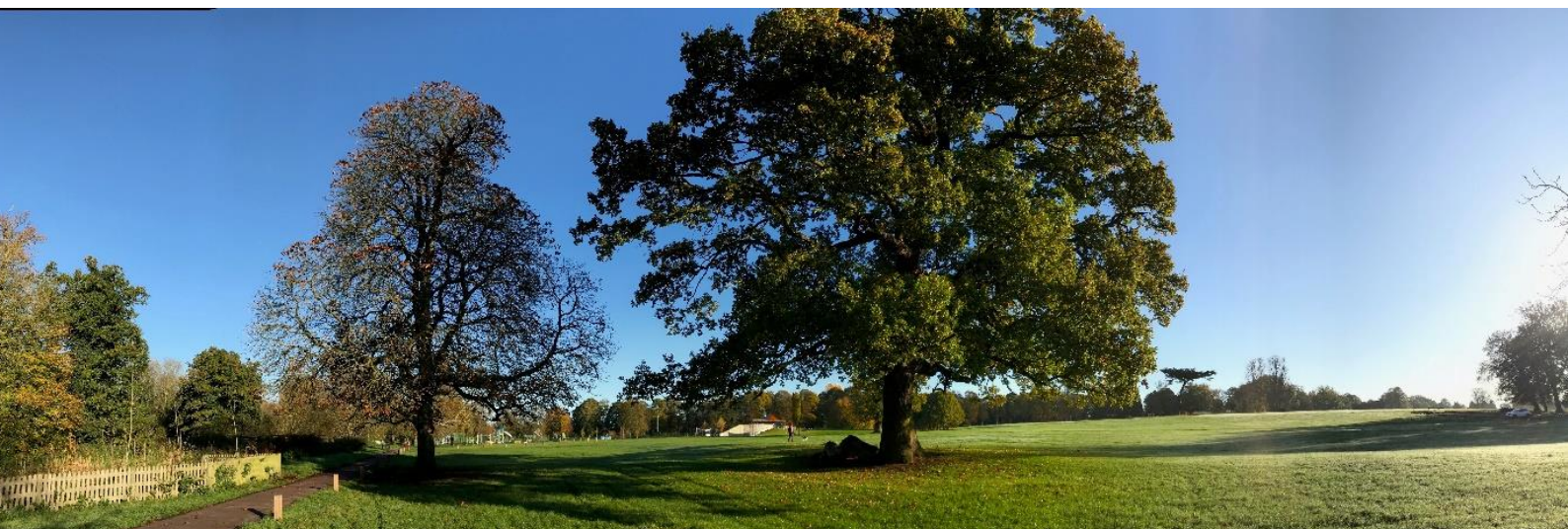| Actions |
| --- |
| **14**. Preserve and enhance woodland trees through best practice as set out in the England Forestry Strategy, favouring low-impact management systems such as continuous cover forestry (CCF) to develop a diverse population in both age, species and structural diversity. |
| **15**. Ensure all our woodlands (and Local Nature Reserves) have up to date woodland management plans in place and to involve Friends Groups, Residents Associations and Volunteers where appropriate |
| **16**. Fulfil our obligation to ensure the safety of people and property through a cyclical inspection programme of Dead, Dying and Dangerous trees, whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places, with the level of acceptable risk reflecting this. |
| **17**. Retain standing dead wood (snags) and fallen trees in woodlands where possible, pruning rather than felling to ensure recommended deadwood habitat, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for their removal |
| **18**. Encourage natural regeneration in woodlands, but where direct planting is required, to follow good practice in plant biosecurity to ensure that trees are sourced from reputable suppliers of local/regional provenance and that no contaminated materials are introduced into any woodland sites to prevent outbreaks of disease. |
| **19.** Retain favourable condition on our SSSI woodlands through monitoring and control of activities |
| **20**. Encourage public access into our woodlands where footpaths or public right of way exist through good access and site signage. |
| **21**. Deliver public education programmes on the value of woodland sites, advise on Forest Schools and continue to protect sites. Deliver Watford in 50 Trees as a project celebrating trees in the town. |
| **22**. Seek opportunities to increase canopy cover and the tree stock in the borough, particularly through community tree planting and volunteer projects |
| **23**. Engage with residents, volunteer groups, community groups, universities and organisations to assist in woodland planting projects, monitoring wildlife, woodland management projects, veteran trees and community events in woodland sites. |
| **24**. Seek funding for the continued management of woodland sites through timber sales and external funding such as Countryside Stewardship |

Trees in parks and open spaces

Sites

Watford has approximately 5000 trees in 506 ha of parkland and open spaces. The council is proud of its network of accessible, high quality parks and has twelve Green Flags awarded for the improvements and management of sites including Harwoods Rec, Cassiobury Park, Woodside, Orchard Park, Oxhey Park, Cheslyn Gardens, Callowland Rec, Waterfields Rec and Goodwood Rec (2019).

The Watford Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023 recognises that trees are essential to creating sustainable, bio-diverse parks and open spaces that contribute to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the town and people's overall quality of life. The Green Spaces Strategy sets out key priorities and the council's vision for the future management of all these sites, and in particular

- *Seek to maintain and enhance the role of undesignated green infrastructure assets such as urban street trees and incidental green spaces in reducing the impacts of climate and other environmental changes.*

Parkland tree management

The parks are well stocked with trees, from large specimen trees to small copses and woodlands. They add to the character of the parks and reflect the popular interests and fashions of the time in botany and horticulture. They offer a rich wildlife habitat by offering shelter, food and connectivity to other green spaces.

Park trees are surveyed every three years for dead, dying and diseased trees and work is prioritised. The parks offer an opportunity to plant larger canopy trees and to retain old and veteran trees through proactive management.

Due to the increase in incidence of bacterial diseases currently affecting the Cherry and Horse chestnut tree population, additional re-planting may be required. This will avoid the possibility of extensive loss of continuous tree-canopy and also allows for a diversity of species and ages to evolve.

Tree species selection, planting and maintenance

The Council will follow the guidance set out in British Standard 8545 for transplanting young trees from the nursery through to their successful establishment in the landscape so the trees can deliver the benefits they were planted for.

The choice of tree species will relate to its location and soil conditions to ensure suitable selection. Native broadleaf tree species support the greatest range of wildlife and offer the most favourable opportunities for biodiversity. Trees will be sourced from reputable nurseries where bio-security measures are proven and the tree provenance known.

Trees that have been removed will be replaced unless there are sound arboricultural reasons not to. The demand to plant trees in parks often outstrips the availability of tree planting spaces, it's important to retain some open spaces. Tree sponsorship and memorial trees are very popular in the larger parks and a good opportunity to generate the money for tree establishment and maintenance as well as creating stronger links with local families.

All newly planted trees require aftercare, to include watering as required, weeding and adjusting stakes and ties for the long-term success of tree establishment. Pruning must be delivered to address the requirements of individual trees and is usually necessary to:

- Maintain the health and safety of the tree;
- Clear obstruction to users of the highway and/or private property; and
- Abate actionable nuisance.

Intervals for pruning will vary between species and locations. Minor works, such as the removal of basal growth, will need annual attention in some cases. Pruning can take place at most times of the year, but ideally leaf flushing and fall should be avoided as well as flowering periods.

Friends Groups

Where a Friends Group exists, the council will work alongside and involve groups to establish tree management priorities, and if necessary to notify them of works as well as further involvement in other projects such as planting, monitoring, walks and talks. The staff at Cassiobury Park run regular walks and talks so visitors can learn more about the trees, woodlands and wildlife.

Nesting birds and bats

All work must be carried out to recognised, modern safety standards, such as BS3998 and BS5837 and their subsequent revisions. Precautions must be taken to avoid disturbing nesting birds between March and September. Bats are protected species and their existence must be considered prior to undertaking any tree work. Advice from qualified persons should be sought in all instances before starting work.

Ivy removal

The presence of ivy on the main trunk of a tree is not usually damaging, it will live in harmony with the tree and cause little or no damage as a healthy tree is able to restrict the growth of the ivy sufficiently through shading.   It's only when the tree is in decline or dying that ivy may dominate and hide structural defects. Ivy provides a valuable habitat for wildlife and should not be removed during the bird nesting season. Trees colonised by ivy can be left undisturbed unless the tree is becoming visibly suppressed, it may also be removed to allow closer inspection of the trunk.

Actions
25. Incorporate long-term tree management objectives into existing park management plans
26. Continue to inspect trees on a three-year cyclical programme in all the parks within the borough
27. Ensure tree species selection, planting and maintenance follows recommendations of BS 8545 in relation to successful establishment of young trees in the landscape
28. Create a varied and sustainable tree population in our parks and open spaces, replacing dead or dying trees
29. Continue to promote trees and raise awareness through walks and talks, giving advice and supporting community planting events
30. Develop partnerships with local community groups and Friends Groups

Trees in cemeteries and churchyards

Sites

The two principal sites which the council manage have significant tree cover and are North Watford Cemetery, which has a large copse, with mature trees, and Vicarage Road Cemetery, which has a large number of mature trees.
The Council also maintains two closed churchyards – St Mary's Churchyard in the centre of town and All Saints Churchyard, on Horseshoe Lane. Both have a number of mature and established trees.

Memorial trees

The Council will continue to manage the Adopt a Tree and Memorial Trees initiatives funded by individuals and groups.

Actions
31. Tree and site manager to identify suitable locations for memorial tree planting and promote the scheme
32. Incorporate into existing management plans the wider management of trees in cemeteries and churchyards

5. Trees in Private Ownership

Most urban and rural trees in Watford are privately owned and they are valuable to the overall tree canopy cover. All tree owners have a duty under the Occupiers Liability Acts to maintain their trees in a safe condition. In practice this means that if their tree fails and causes damage to a person or property then the tree owner may be liable. Most residents take great pride in their trees and actively seek best advice, engaging competent contractors to carry out required work for their ongoing health.

The Council will continue to offer advice to residents as it's seen as a valuable part of tree protection, and a substantial number of trees have been saved from inappropriate pruning or premature felling.

Tree Protection Orders (TPO)

The most commonly known form of statutory tree protection is the TPO, although equally important is the designation of Conservation Areas within which established trees are protected. A TPO makes it an offence to cut down, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy a tree without written consent. There are substantial fines involved for a breach of a TPO and/or Conservation Area Order.

As the local planning authority, the council has a statutory duty to take steps to protect trees that it believes make an important contribution to our area. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (and subsequent revisions), the council has powers to make and enforce TPOs and designate Conservation Areas within which all established trees are protected.

It is usually only in cases of potential threat that a local authority will protect trees by use of a TPO. Watford Borough Council will take action to protect trees on private land through the use of a TPO where the trees meet the appropriate criteria and may be at risk from the direct or indirect action of residents.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 places a duty on the Local Planning Authority to:

- Ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation and planting of trees; and
- Make such orders (TPOs) under Section 198 as appear to the authority to be necessary in connection with the grant of such permission, whether for giving effect to such conditions or otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) references trees in paragraph 118 when determining planning applications: local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

TPOs and/or appropriate conditions are attached to planning permissions to safeguard existing trees and ensure that new planting is established and protected.

Detailed landscaping schemes will normally be required as part of full planning applications to show existing trees and shrubs to be retained/felled; and the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass, screening and paving. Preference should be given to the use of native trees. Wildlife corridors shall be established wherever opportunities occur.

Actions
33. To protect trees with TPOs and within Conservation Areas
34. To resist development proposals that result in damage or loss of trees and woodland
35. To ensure that all works undertaken on publicly owned trees or protected private trees will be done in accordance with BS 3998 Recommendations for Tree Work
36. To ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation as well as planting of trees

6. Key actions to deliver

Key actions	Who	When
1. Maintain and update the EzyTreev database and develop a system so information can be shared easily with council departments	Veolia	Ongoing
2. Use a recognised tree valuation system to place a value on individual trees and through this a value on the entire local authority owned tree population in Watford	Veolia	Ongoing
3. Undertake regular safety inspections of all local authority trees at a frequency based on the graded analysis of threat to the public covering perceived target area, frequency of public use and appreciation of duty of care	Veolia	Ongoing
4. Ensure training to keep tree managers up to date with good arboricultural management practices	Veolia	Ongoing
5. Review and update tree works specifications to recognise current standards and best practice with a vigorous monitoring system in place to ensure contractors adhere to this and that Council tree stock is protected against avoidable damage	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
6. Ensure all development and construction work impacting on trees comply with the recommendations of BS 5837 Trees in Relation to Construction	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
7. Develop an approved list of trees for highways and parks ensuring that new trees can contribute to biodiversity and seek opportunities for large canopy cover trees	Veolia WBC	Dec 2019
8. Ensure all work for utility services affecting trees will be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines published by NJUG, Volume 4 Guidelines for the planning installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
9. Monitor council appointed tree contractors to ensure they are following best arboricultural practice as set out in British Standards 3998:2010	Veolia	Ongoing
10. Develop a long-term plan for replacement of tree stock where dead, dying or diseased or where tree stock is over mature to ensure a diversity of species and ages	WBC	Dec 2020
11. Develop a long-term tree planting programme to target areas where tree cover is lowest, greatest community need, softening new development	WBC	Dec 2020
12. Identify funding and develop a long-term pruning schedule that is area specific and prioritises stock in most need	Veolia	Dec 2020 and ongoing

13. Improve dialogue between Hertfordshire County Council and the Arboricultural Officer on issues that affect street trees and produce an annual report covering issues for the previous year.	Veolia	Annually
14. Preserve and enhance woodland trees through best practice as set out in the England Forestry Strategy, favouring low-impact management systems such as continuous cover forestry (CCF) to develop a diverse population in both age, species and structural diversity.	WBC Veolia	Ongoing
15. Ensure all our woodlands (and Local Nature Reserves) have up to date woodland management plans in place and to involve Friends Groups, Residents Associations and Volunteers where appropriate	WBC Veolia Volunteers	Dec 2020
16. Fulfil our obligation to ensure the safety of people and property through a cyclical inspection programme of Dead, Dying and Dangerous trees, whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places, with the level of acceptable risk reflecting this.	Veolia	Ongoing
17. Retain standing dead wood (snags) and fallen trees in woodlands where possible, pruning rather than felling to ensure recommended deadwood habitat, unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for their removal	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
18. Encourage natural regeneration in woodlands, but where direct planting is required, to follow good practice in plant biosecurity to ensure that trees are sourced from reputable suppliers of local/regional provenance and that no contaminated materials are introduced into any woodland sites to prevent outbreaks of disease.	Veolia WBC	Ongoing
19. Retain favourable condition on our SSSI woodlands through monitoring and control of activities	WBC	Ongoing
20. Encourage public access into our woodlands where footpaths or public right of way exist through good access and site signage.	WBC	Ongoing
21. Deliver public education programmes on the value of woodland sites, advise on Forest Schools and continue to protect sites. Deliver Watford in 50 Trees as a project celebrating trees in the town.	WBC	Ongoing
22. Seek opportunities to increase canopy cover and the tree stock in the borough, particularly through community tree planting and volunteer projects	WBC	Ongoing
23. Engage with residents, volunteer groups, community groups, universities and organisations to assist in woodland planting projects, monitoring wildlife, woodland management projects, veteran trees and community events in woodland sites.	Veolia WBC	Ongoing

24. Seek funding for the continued management of woodland sites through timber sales and external funding such as Countryside Stewardship	WBC	Ongoing
25. Incorporate long-term tree management objectives into existing park management plans	WBC	March 2020
26. Continue to inspect trees on a three-year cyclical programme in all the parks within the borough	Veolia	Ongoing
27. Ensure tree species selection, planting and maintenance follows recommendations of BS 8545 in relation to successful establishment of young trees in the landscape	Veolia	Ongoing
28. Create a varied and sustainable tree population in our parks and open spaces, replacing dead or dying trees	Veolia	Ongoing
29. Continue to promote trees and raise awareness through walks and talks, giving advice and supporting community planting events	WBC	Ongoing
30. Develop partnerships with local community groups and Friends Groups	WBC	Ongoing
31. Tree and site manager to identify suitable locations for memorial tree planting	WBC Veolia	Ongoing
32. Incorporate into existing management plans the wider management of trees in cemeteries and churchyards	WBC	Ongoing
33. To protect trees with TPOs and within Conservation Areas	WBC	Ongoing
34. Resist development proposals that result in damage or loss of trees and woodland	WBC	Ongoing
35. Ensure that all works undertaken on publicly owned trees or protected private trees will be done in accordance with BS 3998 Recommendations for Tree Work	WBC Veolia	Ongoing
36. Ensure whenever it is appropriate that, in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation as well as planting of trees	WBC Planning	Ongoing

7. Implementation, Monitoring and Review of Watford's Tree and Woodland Strategy

This strategy will be monitored on the following outputs to measure the success of its implementation. The strategy and policies will be reviewed every five years.

Note - a structure for monitoring the effectiveness of delivery, identifying obstacles to delivery, monitoring achievements and reviewing processes and procedures wherever this is necessary.

Key monitoring data
Number of trees inspected in 3 yearly cycles: streets, parks, woods
Number of enquiries processed by Trees Team
Number of new and replacement trees planted in annual programme
Mortality rate of newly planted trees (%)
Number of trees removed per annum: streets, parks, schools, woodland and conservation sites.
Number of trees pruned per annum
Number of trees planted in community projects
Number of active Tree Friends Groups and details of activities
Number of Conservation Area applications processed
Number of Tree Preservation Order applications received
Quantity of new Tree Preservations Orders requested and confirmed
Number of tree planning contraventions that have been investigated
Total compensation paid to WBC/HCC in relation to trees removed/damaged in relation to development (including section 106 monies)