Interim Corporate Tree & Woodland Strategy

Maximising the benefits Council trees provide to our communities in tackling the climate crisis and supporting biodiversity

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Chair/V-Chair E&GI?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trees, woodland and hedgerows play a vital role in supporting Cambridgeshire's communities and wildlife to thrive. Across the Council's extensive land assets – rural estate, schools, highways verges etc – we have an opportunity to improve the condition of the existing tree, woodland and hedgerow stock and we have a responsibility to influence our partners to make changes themselves. Where appropriate we will make space for nature on our tree and woodland sites, identifying space for new trees and improving our existing tree stock.

Our strategy will focus on ***expanding, protecting and improving our trees, woodlands and hedgerows*** *and how they can connect people to nature, support the economy, combat the climate crisis and recover biodiversity.*

AN INTERIM STRATEGY

We are at an early stage in collating our understanding of our trees and hedgerows. Significant work is required to understand exactly what tree assets we have, where they are and how we can improve and expand them.

AUTUMN 2022: INTERIM CORPORATE TREE & WOODLAND STRATEGY			
Establishes policy for planting taking place ahead of baseline	Establishment of governance and reporting mechanisms	Deliver planting where suitable in the 23/24 planting season	Deliver actions within the interim action plan

WINTER 2023: FULL CORPORATE TREE & WOODLAND STRATEGY		
Update of Interim strategy as required	Delivery plan, based on surveys, to be developed	Integration of new ambitious targets for Tree & Hedgerow planting

SPRING 2024 ONWARDS: IMPLEMENTATION		
Monitoring of planting already taken place since baseline	Project development for planting to commence in the 2024/25 season	Reporting

Ahead of the completion of a tree canopy mapping study, that is already underway, this Strategy remains as an interim document. It sets out the policy framework to which all tree and hedgerow management and planting on the Council's land should be delivered, states our vision for our tree assets and outlines the steps we can take now, ahead of the audits, to make improvements.

Once we have completed our surveys and canopy mapping, we will then be able to set ourselves an ambitious target for tree and hedgerow planting that will truly represent the scale and pace of work deliverable on our estate. We must wait for the data - without it we will not know if we are being ambitious or not. We will then publish an updated Strategy, which will fully set out our targets and how we intend to deliver.

WE ARE NOT STANDING STILL

The pace and scale of planting required means we cannot afford to wait for our full strategy before we start work. Tree and hedgerow planting will continue without our baseline being established and will follow the frameworks set out in this Strategy. We will continue to develop planting schemes and seek funding to deliver in the places we already know we can. These plantings will be recorded, and where planting takes place after the baseline surveys took place they will count towards our target. Where they were included in the baselines, they will not be counted.

This Strategy will enable us to take the first steps in delivering our tree and hedgerow planting ambitions. It sets out the policy framework to which all planting and manegment across the Council's assets will be delivered and sets us on the pathway for making best use of the natural environment for the benefit of our communities, services and nature.

INTRODUCTION

People have been planting trees in the UK for centuries and for a variety of reasons. The Romans were great tree planters, bringing us the cultivated apple, the black mulberry, the fig, the sweet chestnut and the common walnut amongst others. The "plantation movement" beginning in the 17th Century saw plantations established to support ship building and industry. By the mid-18th Century, Capability Brown and others were planting trees to create beautiful landscapes across country estates. After the First World War, trees were planted on a large scale to secure a domestic source of timber.

Today, tree planting is very much associated with improving our natural environment. Down the centuries the loss of tree cover has been one of the most visible signs of ecological decline. However, there are a wide range of other benefits trees and hedgerows bring.

Trees play an important role in the health, social framework and economic sustainability of an area. There is a wealth of research now that demonstrates how trees improve air, soil and water quality; benefit biodiversity; improve mental health and well-being; and provide a sense of place. Increasing canopy cover in urban areas is also a cost-effective means of mitigating urban heat islands and controlling storm water run-off.

Given the multiple benefits trees offer, we are setting out our approach to tree management and protection, ensuring our policies deliver our statutory responsibilities alongside enhancing the overall environmental benefits of all our trees and woodland assets.

The England Trees Action Plan 2021 – 2024 sets out the government's long-term vision for the country's treescape by 2050 and beyond. It sets the ambition to deliver 30,000 hectares of planting annually to 2024.

This strategy outlines our ambitions for how we can better use our Council assets to contribute to England's tree planting target, while also delivering our part in Natural Cambridgeshire's Doubling Nature Vision and our 20% biodiversity net gain target.

We approved our new Climate Change and Environment Strategy in February 2022, which outlines how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to extreme climate driven events, improve Cambridgeshire's natural environment and improve the health and well-being of Cambridgeshire residents. It describes our policy priorities for several actions, including the development of a Tree and Woodland Strategy to guide our tree and hedgerow planting and management.

In this strategy the term "trees" is used to capture planting in all contexts from street trees through to woodlands, hedgerows and orchards. In addition, the strategy sets out how the nature of our tree stock, its function and value will be assessed. Valuation of the current tree stock can help to demonstrate that, whilst tree management brings costs to local authorities,

these costs are often balanced out by the benefits provided by trees, such as carbon sequestration, air pollutant removal, natural flood management, biodiversity and health and wellbeing benefits.

SCOPE AND VISION

The planting of trees and woodlands is a positive investment in our future and that of our children, with the trees planted as a result of this strategy maturing beyond our lifetimes.

"Business as usual" is not sufficient if we are to reverse the climate and ecological crises we are currently witnessing. The Council formally signed the Nature and Climate Declaration in July 2022, showing our commitment to asking Government to increase their ambitions and set a clear target driven pathway to delivery of Net Zero and reversing ecological decline. While we already have a range of targets for how we can play our part in this, we must ensure on our own assets we are making space for nature in a way we have not previously achieved.

The benefits of well planned, well managed trees, woodland and hedges are many. From removing carbon from the atmosphere, contributing to our net zero ambitions for tackling climate change. They encourage and support biodiversity, provide opportunities for people to connect with nature and as a result improve the health and wellbeing of our residents. We discuss their benefits further in the section on Benefits from Trees and Woodlands. Our trees, woodland and hedgerows are just one element we can focus on to help rethink our approach and reallocate space to maximise their benefits for biodiversity and us.

This Strategy is for Cambridgeshire County Council trees, woodland and hedgerows. It describes how we will manage the trees and hedgerows we have responsibility for and how we will increase canopy cover on our property. Much of our property is let out in commercial tenancies, particularly on our rural estate, and we must work with our tenants to deliver our ambition.

We do not discuss how others should manage their trees, however in the section on Working with Our Partners we cover how we will collaborate to share best practice and ensure our residents can benefit from our tree stocks.

Our vision is to expand, protect and improve our trees, woodlands and hedgerows and how they can connect people to nature, support the economy, combat the climate crisis and recover biodiversity

This vision is further broken down into our outcomes for addressing various issues and challenges. To achieve these outcomes, a range of objectives are outlined in this Strategy, and a high-level action plan has been developed.

Vision	Challenges and Opportunities	Outcomes
To locate and look after trees in ways that maximise their benefits for everyone	Biodiversity and Climate	Planting and maintenance enhance biodiversity value and plants can tolerate the effects of climate change.
	Safety	Planting and maintenance ensure both safety and social value are appropriately delivered.
	Tree Issues vs Tree Benefits	Achievement of an appropriate resolution between the interests of individuals, the Council's statutory obligations and climate and environmental benefits.
	New Planting	Planting is delivered on a "right tree in the right place" principle, considering the tree's surroundings and species suitability.
To enhance and expand the Council's own trees, hedges and woodlands to ensure the benefits can be realised and shared.	Education & Accessibility	Communities understand the vital role trees play and can take ownership of tree projects, ensuring new woodlands are, where appropriate, accessible to residents.
	Climate Change and Air Quality	Canopy cover across the county is strategically increased to reduce carbon, improve air quality and manage climate impacts.
	Revenue	Local investment in trees and woodlands is enabled through existing funding regimes (e.g. English woodland Creation Offer, government grants), new business models and new revenue generating opportunities.

BENEFITS FROM TREES AND WOODLANDS

Trees and woodlands can provide many benefits for people, nature, climate change and the economy and this strategy and accompanying action plan will aim to maximize these building on the ambitions set out in our Climate Change and Environment Strategy (1).

These benefits (often referred to as ecosystem services) include food production, regulation of flooding and climate, pollination of crops, and cultural benefits such as aesthetic value and recreational opportunities. These natural benefits can also be described as the "social value" of trees. Methods to monetarise this social value are increasingly being developed to enable better incorporation of social value into commercial decision making.

We have already highlighted the need to consider these benefits in our Climate Change and Environment Strategy and ensure their equal value alongside cost and is establishing a new Triple Bottom Line approach.

TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

The 'Triple Bottom Line' is a framework to enable organisations to evaluate their impact and performance in terms of effects on social, environmental and economic (financial) dimensions. We are developing our approach to triple bottom line in Cambridgeshire County Council to enable up to make better decisions.

Tree and hedgerow planting has a wide range of impacts, many of which are beneficial but not incorporated into traditional financially based decision making.

While there is opportunity for financial benefits arising from planting and appropriate management of tree stock, as set out in the section on **Error! Reference source not found.**, a much wider and significant range of benefits can also be realised across the spectrum of environment and social. We discuss these some of these non-financial benefits below.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change Mitigation

Trees, woods and hedgerows have a key role to play in alleviating and helping us cope with the effects of climate change. These roles support the council's key objectives for its Climate Change and Environment Strategy – Mitigation[1], Adaptation[2] and Natural Capital[3].

Carbon storage and sequestration is one of "the most effective strategies for climate change mitigation". The importance of managing land and vegetation as a carbon store has been recognised in UK Policy and has a major role to play in national carbon accounting (2).

All trees and woods - whether planted for amenity, flood prevention, timber or nature – catch and hold ("sequester") carbon. The difference in how much carbon they sequester is complex and can be as much down to the location, management and fate of the harvested wood product as the tree species. In Cambridgeshire, over a 30-year period, 5-13t CO_2 per hectare per year could be sequestered, depending on the tree species planted (3). These figures are based upon treating carbon sequestration as the only goal form the tree planting, focussing on species like alder, aspens and sycamore tree mixes. These are not traditional native woodland to the UK and will be unlikely to deliver the best possible biodiversity benefits that a natural mix would: it is important that we focus on delivering the widest range of societal benefits from new woodlands, hedgerows and trees, and are not tied only to carbon outcomes.

Mitigation should not be looked at in isolation. According to the UK's Committee on Climate Change combining agriculture and trees through agroforestry, discussed further in our section on Generating Income from Trees, could result in UK carbon emissions savings of 5.9 $MtCO_2e$ per year by 2050 if planned and managed appropriately (2). This represents approximately 13% of the total current UK emissions from the agriculture sector.

Nature Recovery

Woodlands, especially veteran trees, hedgerows and ancient woodlands, are amongst our richest habitats. The highest levels of biodiversity are often found in woodlands that are actively and sensitively managed. Connectivity between woodlands is also especially hedgerows linking woodlands act as wildlife corridors and stepping-stones so greatly promote the extent and range of wildlife. Numerous studies have shown the removal of hedgerows and the abandonment of hedge management, primarily on farmland, is likely to have adversely affected different species groups (4).

[1] Mitigation – prevention and removal of greenhouse gas emissions
[2] Adaptation – actions taken to help us cope with the effects of climate change
[3] Natural capital – elements of the natural environment that provide us benefits. E.g. soils, fresh water etc

Even where trees must be removed due to disease or decay, they can provide homes for a wide range of species. Leaving tree stumps *in situ* is particularly beneficial for fungi, lichen and beetles – some of our most diverse wildlife in the UK. (4).

Hedges may support up to 80% of our woodland birds, 50% of our mammals and 30% of our butterflies. The ditches and banks associated with hedgerows provide habitat for frogs, toads, newts and reptiles. Thick hedges with wide bases that provide plenty of cover are best but there should be a variety of shapes and sizes from shaped hedgerows to lines of woods. Hedgerows with large numbers of woody species hold more birds. Trees, particularly oaks, support a rich variety of insects and are good song posts. Old trees have holes where blue tits, owls and kestrels, as well as bats, can nest.

Dead timber is also a rich source of insect food and should be left in the hedge unless it is unsafe. The greater the variety of shrubs and trees, the better. Different species flower at different times, providing nectar over a longer period, and so will support more insects. They will also supply a variety of berries over a long period.

They will also protect watercourses against polluting fertilisers and sediment by acting as a physical barrier. By preventing the water run-off from agricultural fields, hedges help to ensure that the ground is less likely to dry out and even help to reduce flooding.

Making the most of our hedgerows and increasing their biological complexity as well as their physical size (length, height and width) helps to maximise the benefits they provide to themselves and other assets like woodlands

SOCIAL

Climate Change Adaptation

Even with mitigation, the impacts of Climate Change will continue to exist into the foreseeable future.

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows, particularly in urban areas, can reduce these impacts. When located appropriately, trees provide shading and counter-act heat–island effects to help us cope with higher temperatures. They reduce wind speeds and cool the air as they lose moisture and reflect heat upwards from their leaves. It's estimated that trees can reduce the temperature in a city by up to 7°C. Similarly, they provide adaptation to flooding by holding and slowing down rainwater, reducing the speed to which the water reaches the ground. This "green infrastructure" will help support communities to cope with the effects of climate change while bringing other benefits too.

Adaptation actions taken today to manage these risks will have benefits long into the future, and tree planting is a key part of this.

Air Quality

In Cambridgeshire, 5.5% of deaths can be attributed to air pollution. It plays a major role in cancer, asthma, heart disease and can exacerbate other respiratory diseases such as Coronavirus.

Currently, there are seven Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Cambridgeshire - areas where air quality surpasses the level permitted by national standards. These areas are primarily urban and focussed on transport emissions. Measurement and monitoring of key identified pollutants is undertaken and reported annually to Government.

There are several key elements that cause poor air quality: particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), ozone, sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and nitrogen oxides (NO_X). Trees are highly effective at reducing the effects of all of these, either through catching airborne particulates on leaves or by absorbing polluting gases.

Health and Wellbeing

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted further our awareness, around the important role access to nature or "nature connectedness" plays, in improving our wellbeing and mental health. A large percentage of these benefits are derived from people becoming more connected and being physically active in outdoor settings through activities like walking and cycling. The importance of having accessible greenspace on the doorstep has been recognised through the increased use of local greenspaces because of the Covid pandemic.

The County Council has 36 Community Woodlands, planted for and by local community volunteers, over the past 25 years. Some of these are adjacent to towns and villages other are more rural and isolated. There is potential, and where appropriate, to look at how to make these woodland sites more accessible for local communities to use, promoting them and providing information on where they are and their accessibility.

Mental and physical health benefits of green space are increasingly well established. Research carried out as preparation for New Housing Developments and the Built Environment JSNA has evidence on how the provision of parks and green spaces/woodland supports health benefits. Universities of Bristol and East Anglia have also found that people living closer to green spaces/woodlands were likely to be more physically active, and were less likely to be overweight or obese, than people who lived further away from public parks/greenspaces.

Access to greenspace, particularly the presence of trees, reduces our cortisol (stress hormone) levels, increases physical activity and speeds recovery from illness.

Hedgerows also have a major role to play on indirect health and wellbeing through helping to protect agricultural crops from pests and disease in rural settings they can help control insect pests as predatory insects overwinter in them and move into the crops in spring when aphid

numbers start to increase. They also act as barriers to windborne pests, and insects in the hedgerows pollinate crops, particularly bumblebees, which need hedge banks (5)

Education

Our woodland can also provide opportunities for innovation in outdoor education and learning through Forest Schools activities such as those run by our Early Years and Outdoor Education Services. Forest Schools is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting, providing children who otherwise might have only limited interaction with nature to have those experiences. The approach is increasingly recognised as being beneficial for children, particularly in early years settings.

Ensuring a healthy stock of trees and woodland, accessible to all our communities, will help provide the well-being benefits trees provide us in our daily lives. Our Early Years' Service has a vision for Forest School provision across all age ranges ensuring our children benefit. Our vision is for every child and young person in Cambridgeshire to have access to regular and ongoing child-initiated outdoor experiences following the Forest School ethos. We would like Forest School sessions to be available for all children and young people to enhance the curriculum, accelerate achievement and bring learning to life.

The Forest School ethos provides children and young people with a sense of responsibility as they explore, make discoveries and investigate new mysteries. Extended time in the outdoors encourages children and young people to take responsibility for themselves, their peers and the world around them.

Objective 1: Improve the condition and resilience of our trees, woodlands and hedgerows to maximise benefits they bring our communities

This means we will:

- Plant and manage our trees and hedgerows to maximise their wide range of benefits, tailored to their location, whilst also recognising the need to ensure trees are of an appropriate species mix for Cambridgeshire.
- Favour planting native species mixes, procured from bio-secure sources that can, where possible, also provide trees with greater genetic diversity protecting against disease and increasing resilience to the drier environmental conditions anticipated for Cambridgeshire

OUR TREE & WOODLAND RESOURCE

Cambridgeshire is one of the least wooded County's in England with only 3.6% of the land cover being woodland (6) Of this 149 ha is owned by the Council giving a figure of 1.13% land cover. Data for individual trees is not known.

Although there is no specific figure available, trees are also found on highway verges, roadside hedgerows, within school grounds and on our nature reserves.

In this Strategy, the Council's 'trees' estate is defined as:

i) The trees, woodlands and hedgerows located on County Council owned land, including those leased out to others as commercial tenancies, highways and schools and local nature reserves.

ii) The trees, woodland and hedgerows located on land the Council leases from others and where our leases give us remit over management of those trees.

Within this definition there are differing levels of control over planting and management, and collaboration with others will be required to deliver the strategy's ambitions.

Work is already underway to understand the Council's tree assets and manage them effectively, especially on our rural estate. We must develop this and expand our efforts to incorporate the wider suite of assets we hold.

WHERE DO WE HAVE TREES?

Currently we have limited data on our own trees and hedgerows, but we can broadly describe where and how they feature on our assets.

Trees on our Highways

The Council is the Highways Authority for Cambridgeshire. This means we have responsibility for the safety of many of the county's roads.

Many of our roads have green spaces – our verges host trees and hedgerows while our pavements often have trees planted along them. We have approximately 87,000 trees on our highways and a verge length of 4389km: we have a lot to play with when considering how we improve.

Trees present both a challenge and an opportunity for verges. For example the benefits trees offer for air quality while ensuring the safety of Cambridgeshire's highways.

Urban Trees provide a range of benefits from: colour and beauty; food and sanctuary for wildlife; enhancing health and wellbeing by keeping us cool, cleaning the air and connecting us to nature

Trees on our streets and verges play a key role in slowing down water and preventing erosion – both important to alleviating flooding and its impacts. They are also well placed to maximise the benefits already described in this strategy since the benefit are greater in places where there are more people to interact with the trees in their everyday lives. Estimates of the benefits street trees ranges from £1200-£8000 per tree over 50 years.

Trees on our Urban Estate

The Council has approximately 70 corporate buildings as well as many other sites our residents use like community centres, libraries etc. All these sites have trees and/or hedgerows within their grounds.

Our Grounds Maintenance contract delivers primarily reactive maintenance works across our corporate offices, libraries, children's centres and adult respite centres. Storm damage, disease, vandalism, overgrowth obscuring CCTV cameras or infringing on walk ways, access road, neighbours' properties the main triggers for this reactive works. Additional surveys are undertaken at some selected sites with trees designate under Tree Protection Orders. Currently, tree replacements are not delivered at these sites unless incorporated into specific projects.

Across our wider building portfolio there are a range of management arrangements in place, recognising that we have either direct control or a great level of influence over how that management take place.

With over 240 schools across the County, most with trees and hedgerows, there is great opportunity to deliver benefits directly at the heart of our school communities. The Council doesn't always directly manage the trees at all our schools: in most cases these are the responsibility for each school. However we provide a management policy and support to school managers to enable them to make the best decisions for each site.

Trees on our Rural Estate

Across our Rural Estate there are large numbers of trees, woodlands and hedgerows. None of our woodland estate has any statutory or non-statutory designations such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) or Local Wildlife Sites. Two sites that contain woodland include; Beechwoods (let to the Wildlife Trust) and Worts Meadow and these are designated as Local Nature Reserve's (LNR).

Much of the woodland is mixed native broadleaved woodland plantation and was planted in the last 25-30 years as part of the rural estate.

The Council's tree assets on the rural estate are:

- predominately deciduous
- distributed through the western half of the County, on areas of clay and chalk soils

- much of this woodland is plantation and is being thinned to allow complex canopy structure to develop

While management of the tree stock has been undertaken, there is further work that could be delivered to improve the biodiversity outcomes on our estate. Some planning has already been completed, identifying where existing woodlands could be expanded, but there is more to do.

There are several well used community woods, planted for and by the local community, and adjacent to settlements, including; Landbeach, Foxton, Rampton, Manea, Girton, Histon, Oakington and Somersham. All of these are, mainly native, deciduous plantations and there are opportunities to introduce woodland management techniques that will enhance these areas for biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

LIMITATIONS OF OUR CURRENT UNDERSTANDING

Our understanding what trees we have and where is limited. This means we are unable to gain a complete picture of the condition and value of our tree stock, and therefore what scope we have for new planting. Without this information we do not have a baseline from which to set and measure new planting targets.

We must undertake a comprehensive tree survey and canopy mapping to understand our trees better. We can build off the information described in the previous sections to map and value our trees and significant hedgerows. This will also mean we will, for the first time, be able to share the true benefits Council trees are providing – hopefully including the air quality, carbon sequestration and wellbeing values – along with the potential magnitudes of improvement we can deliver.

This process is underway, but due to the seasonality of environmental survey work, we must wait at least 12 months before we will have the results. Once we do, these will be shared and used to update this Strategy document.

NON-COUNCIL TREES AND OUR ASSETS

We must also be aware of how other people's trees interact with our assets. For example, trees and hedges can encroach onto footpaths making use of the highway by all our residents challenging.

In some circumstances, like on the public highway, we have legal powers to intervene – first by asking the owners to cut back the tree or hedges, and then to act ourselves should our request not be actioned.

Management decisions taken by owners of trees near to our assets can also have an impact. For example, where trees have been removed and replaced with hard flood defences, which in

turn cause more water to funnel onto our lands. The opportunity to collaborate with our neighbours to avoid such impacts, for wither of us, is welcomed.

Where trees or hedges interact with our assets, we are keen to work with the owners to ensure mutually beneficial outcome are achieved.

Objective 2: Improve our understanding of our tree and hedgerow assets and design planting approaches that support access to trees and woodlands

This means we will:

Undertake a complete tree canopy survey to map our existing trees/woodlands/hedgerows that will provide a baseline for developing a planting target that can be measured and inform where the most appropriate places are for future planting schemes

PLANTING AND MANAGING OUR TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS

THE OPPORTUNITY

"Business as usual" is no longer good enough. We must embrace new attitudes to trees and hedgerows, and our natural environment in general. New approaches that account for and respect nature must be delivered.

Our extensive estate provides a great opportunity to find, test and deliver planting at scale that means we can work with nature to share the benefits rather than exploiting only for humans. Taking established best practice from across sectors we will bring a step change in our tree management and planting on Cambridgeshire's publicly owned land.

THE APPROACH

The **"right tree in the right place"** is an established principle for sustainable tree planting. It means considering the local wildlife, landscape and soil type when selecting species and locations to ensure trees or hedgerows benefit their surroundings and will not cause damage to the local environment (natural, built and historic) in the long term.

Considerations for this include:

i) Wildlife and landscape: how the trees or hedgerows fit into the existing context
ii) Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS): areas where there has historically always been woodland
iii) Accessible woodland: if the woodland has public access
iv) Certification: depending on objectives of the planting, there are certifications available that can be helpful – e.g. Woodland Carbon Code which enables carbon credits to be generated
v) Heritage & archaeology: tree or hedgerow planting that supports heritage rather than damages it

Beyond selecting appropriate species and locations for planting, a system wide rethink on how we consider trees and hedgerows on our assets is needed. We will shift our thinking from seeing trees as a "nice to have" primarily aesthetic enhancement, to being a functional asset on our estate: we must make our trees work for us, just as we must work to better look after them.

This means we must fully appreciate their benefits, integrate them into our decision making and business planning activities, and actively plant and manage our trees and hedges to deliver these benefits for our communities. Some approaches for how we can do this are outlined below in our section on Planting and Management in Different Settings.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

The management of the tree stock on these sites seeks to retain and enhance the habitat types for which the sites were designated. Grassland and watercourse habitats can be significantly degraded if trees are not managed to reduce shading and silt input. In these situations, tree regeneration may be managed through a variety of methods including coppicing, pollarding, removal, mechanical cutting or livestock grazing.

We have opportunities through our management approach to work with our partners and communities. Friends Groups, Community Groups and others are already telling us they want to play their part in planting and looking after our trees. We must design our approaches to, where appropriate, incorporate as much community involvement as possible. The role our communities can play is further discussed in our section on Working with Our Partners.

The safe and appropriate management of trees is vital, and we need to ensure that we recognise the imperative for public safety while also sustaining a healthy tree population. We must be proactive - especially where trees and people mix, such as on our highways or in publicly accessible woodlands. In delivering this careful balance it is important to be transparent, allowing residents to understand our decisions and providing a clear mechanism for comments or complaints to be heard.

As we react to our changing climate and increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather, we must also ensure we manage our trees and hedgerows to ensure they are resilient. Species selection; improving genetic diversity to reduce vulnerability to disease and drought; and creating rides which act as natural fire breaks are all steps we will integrate into plans as we move forward.

Our general Appendix 1: Tree Management Policy is available at the end of this Strategy. It sets out the legal and safety position for tree management and provides residents with the "default position" in dealing with tree related issues. However, all concerns will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and residents are encouraged to contact us using the details set out in the Policy. Over and above this policy sits detail on how we will plant and manage trees and hedgerows differently on different assets. This is detailed below.

TREE REMOVALS

Removing (or felling) a tree is always an action of last resort and only done where there are no other options available. However, in some circumstances where a tree is dead, dying or dangerous – e.g. following storm damage – or to facilitate projects with wider social or environmental benefits and no alternative options are suitable.

Where a healthy tree needs removing to facilitate a project, an options appraisal exploring the alternative options is necessary. This might include options to redesign a project to incorporate

the tree or more innovative solutions such as “lift and shift” where a fully grown tree can be moved to another location. Only where all options have been exhausted should a tree be removed.

Where trees are removed, for whatever reason, we will seek to plant replacement trees. Different approaches to replacements exist – the minimum position is, where possible, a 2for1 replacement policy. More innovative approaches are being explored by some areas of the Council, such as using established systems to ascertain the “value” of an individual tree in terms of biodiversity, carbon, air pollution etc and planting trees of an equal or greater value.

In some situations when trees have been felled, we will encourage leaving the dead standing wood *in situ*. This brings a host of biodiversity benefits to the wide range of wildlife that thrive in these setting.

PLANTING AND MANAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS

Across our types of asset, there are differing opportunities for tree and hedgerow planting and management. Understanding how this opportunity differs enables the best decisions to be made for each setting.

Planting and Management on our Highways

We currently have around 87,000 trees on our highway, which are looked after by Highway Inspectors with Level 1 Tree Inspectors accreditation. Some of our highway’s trees are managed on our behalf by the District and City Council’s while management of many of our verges are supported by our Parish Council partners. Currently though, this management is limited primarily to ensuring the safety of hedges and trees on our highway.

Our current maintenance approach is set out in our Highways Operational Standard (HOS). While we do have provision for tree planting within the HOS, it is focussed on facilitating third party activities and is very much based on more traditional highways management approaches.

Planting on highways has, for a long time, been considered problematic, and indeed it is not without its challenges: maintaining visibility, location of underground utilities, maintaining pavement widths and accessibility and preventing damage to the road are all issues. However, none of these are insurmountable and we must become more pro-active in our pursuit of greening our highways.

We are changing our approach to trees, and wider verge management, so we can make best use of this extensive asset which we currently underutilise. We know our communities are keen to improve our verges and we must work with them to deliver, and maintain, improvements that achieve our ambitions as well as those of our communities.

When we build new or significantly redevelop our roads, we must also consider trees. Integration of trees and hedges "by design" at the early stages of highways construction projects must be further developed. While biodiversity net gain requirements in the planning system will lead to further planting, we much treat our trees in these setting as key "green infrastructure" playing a functional role in the resilience of the highway and legitimise their incorporation into schemes as fundamental to their success. We must work with our partners at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Greater Cambridge Partnership to ensure the roads and footways they build but we take on management responsibility for also deliver our tree and hedgerow ambitions.

Where we must remove a tree to deliver essential highways construction and maintenance, we are exploring methods to value a tree prior to any removal, such as Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) which considers the value of a tree over its remaining expected lifetime. Should a tree require removal, we can then replace with trees of greater value than that removed.

Planting and management on our Urban Estate

Like on the highway, trees on our urban estate must be maintained in a suitable condition given their interactions with people. For example, on our school sites we must ensure that a safe environment is maintained for the students. That's being said, there is great opportunity arising from these interactions – shading, cooling and air quality improvements are particularly important in these settings.

Our Education Capital team have produced a specific Tree Management Guide for our schools. This sets out the minimum requirements for trees in a school setting. As with Highways' HOS, this is predominantly about ensuring safety of tree stock rather than planting.

Broadly, these sites operate, where possible, a 2-for -1 replacement policy. Where new planting take place, species must be selected not only for their biodiversity value but also with regard to the types of interactions that may take place. Nut trees, for example, would not be recommended for early years settings, as an example.

We must work with our schools and building management teams to build capacity – both in our officers and school staff - but also in how we procure arboricultural services, to ensure we pursue maintenance and planting approaches that deliver benefits beyond health and safety compliance.

Where we have new builds or extensions, delivery of biodiversity net gain required through the planning process will support our tree and wider biodiversity ambitions. But we must also think about trees as functional green infrastructure rather than merely an aesthetic with a few bonus benefits. Our section on Benefits from Trees and Woodlands makes clear that trees will play an important role helping us to adapt to the effects of climate change, particularly in regard to

natural cooling and shading and flood prevention. Going forward trees must form part of our approach to alleviating climate risk.

Planting and Management on our Rural Estate

Our rural estate represents a huge opportunity for delivering increased tree canopy cover and greater lengths of hedgerows. Already work to understand where we can expand our existing woodlands and join them up to deliver landscape scale connectivity has been completed. Work to strategically include elements of tree planting, and other agri-environmental approaches, into farm management plans already underway, but these require our tenants accepting and delivering these changes – this will be a long term piecemeal challenge and may only be deliverable at contractual breaks. We must, however, do more.

The estate has a strong commercial function, with much of it tenanted, so we must fully explore the commercial benefits trees can provide us and our tenants. Working with our tenant farmers to manage trees is a big task but also a great opportunity. Agri-Environment schemes will pay landowners and farmers to support environmental projects delivering tree and hedgerow planting at a variety of different scales, although the finances remain challenging.

Having trees across the Council's assets provides opportunity to deliver a wide range of benefits and develop new business models that value trees. However, it also means we must have in place processes for their management, particularly where people and trees mix giving rise to potential health and safety concerns.

Through making our trees and hedgerows functional, working for us as a core element of how we optimise our land holdings to deliver commercial returns, we can create sound business cases for planting. Agroforestry, biodiversity net-gain, carbon offsetting and the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) are all opportunities discussed in our section on Funding the Strategy.

Taking this commercial approach will mean we will be able to reallocate space for trees, and indeed wider nature, on our estate while minimising any adverse financial implications. It will mean we can deliver large scale planting across the County and provide an opportunity to work with our neighbouring farmers to deliver significant planting projects.

We must also work with our tenants on management of trees and hedgerows. For example, as we are primarily an arable area, we have more scope to encourage "lighter touch" approaches to hedgerow management – our farms tend not to have animals to keep contained. We can work with our tenants to encourage cutting of hedgerows only in alternate years as advocated by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). These approaches are better for the wildlife and can cut down on time and expense for the farmer (5).

We must appreciate however, that not all land is appropriate for new tree planting, especially where we might be considering taking lots out of agricultural production or where we have significant areas of peatland, such as in the Fens.

National debate is emerging around use of high quality agricultural land for non-food production, with Government and partners exploring what strategic approach should be taken, especially considering international geo-politics increasing pressure on food supply,

We must ensure best use or "optimisation" of our estate, so tree and hedgerow planting are considered holistically within the wider land management context of our estate. This may mean developing a heterogeneous landscape, punctuated with smaller scale planting or hedgerow improvements rather than planting at scale. This could improve farming efficiency while also delivering biodiversity and carbon benefits. Similarly, we may need to consider purchasing new, poorer quality, land specifically to deliver tree planting or other biodiversity benefits on.

Objective 3: Expand and connect our trees, woods and hedgerows

This means we will:

- Identify through woodland opportunity mapping, suitable areas for new planting schemes based around the principle of bigger, better and more joined up
- Develop plans to improve the ecological condition, resilience, carbon sequestration potential, biodiversity and connectivity of our woodlands, encouraging a more diverse age structure and species mix. Following the principles set out in toolkits such as the Woodland Wildlife Toolkit
- Working with partners to develop and promote our tree management policy

FUNDING THE STRATEGY

Developing the commercial case for investment into trees and woodlands is of growing interest. The value of the benefits to climate, health and wellbeing are being recognised, monetised and incorporated into our financing mechanisms, for example through triple bottom line approaches. As these become more prevalent and the investment risks and benefits better understood, demand for natural capital investments are forecast to grow. Importantly, these new business models are crucial to the scaling up the ambition for natural capital and tree planting.

GRANTS AND FUNDING

There are several funding models available to Local Authorities:

i) Financial grants – Where all or part a project is covered by a grant. There are many different grants, each with their own eligibility specifications.
ii) Free Assets – Where trees or land are provided for free to facilitate a planting project.
iii) Payment for Services – Where the trees provide a marketable service that individuals or organisations can pay for.

Government Funding

Many of the grants coming forward are from government backed sources, such as the Forestry Commission or Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Schemes include the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), Woodland Creation Offer and Woodland Carbon Code amongst others.

While each functions slightly differently, they all provide payments to plant and maintain trees, woods and/or hedgerows - mainly in rural settings. The grants are designed to mitigate the loss of income that might be experienced resulting from reallocating the land from agriculture to trees. However, in areas of particularly high quality agricultural land – much of our estate is grades 1 and 2 – the grants often offer funding levels that are well below the returns that can be derived from agriculture. As such these grants will not always be suitable for our rural estate and we must also layer on revenue generating approaches.

GENERATING INCOME FROM TREES

Agroforestry

This is where trees or hedgerows are co-located with agriculture on the same piece of land. It plays an important role in creating woodland on farms and provides two sources of income to farmers:

1. the agricultural products (livestock or crops)
2. forestry-generated products (fuelwood, fruit and nuts)

This diversity helps reduce the risk from changes in the agricultural markets and strengthens the rural economy.

They bring further benefits including increased pollination and resilience to climate change: the trees shelter crops from the wind which means they are less stressed in summer dry periods.

Our rural estate already hosts pioneers of agroforestry from whom we can continue to learn more from.

Wood products

Production of woodland products – both small and larger scale - can be integrated into sustainable management approaches to ensure the ecological complexity and biodiversity of woodlands are retained.

Coppicing is a traditional management technique which can rejuvenate a tree and allow it to last for many years and provide further crops of timber or wood. This wood may be used for a range of purposes, including small-scale charcoal making. These techniques do not require high levels of experience or machinery so can also provide strong community engagement. For example, community coppicing days could be established – these would both engage residents in woodland management but also help tackle on-going maintenance of the woodlands. Coppicing, and the creation of rides and glades, mimic natural processes of fires and storms which open expanses of woodland to sunlight, allowing ground plants to flourish, taller grassland areas to thrive, and fallen trees to rot down. Eventually, scrub takes over, saplings grow, and the woodland canopy closes again. All these areas provide unique habitats for an array of species making coppicing highly beneficial for nature too.

Larger scale schemes, like woodlands for timber, can be established. Creation of construction timber has the added benefit of being a long-term carbon store with recent studies estimating timber buildings can "lock away" carbon for many years, sequestering up to $1tCO_2$ per $1m^3$ of wood. These schemes must be carefully designed to balance wood production needs with biodiversity.

REVENUE FROM TREES

As environmental concern grows and legislation changes, new opportunities come forward for us to generate income from the creation and maintenance of woodland. As new legislative requirements come into force, so do new mechanisms for their delivery that enable individuals and organisations to meet these new requirements. Increasingly, these are natural capital approaches that we can use to deliver further investment into our assets.

Carbon Sequestration as a service

Carbon Credits and their use in carbon offsetting has been around for many years. With growing numbers of businesses pledging to become net zero or carbon negative, offsetting 'hard to treat' emissions will be increasingly in demand.

We consider offsetting to be the "option of last resort" used only where methods to prevent emitting have been exhausted. At the same time, we know that there will be some organisations, like ourselves, where some offsetting will be required. Our aim is to create local carbon offsets, where the offsetting activities can be more easily monitored and verified while also retaining those wider benefits, like air quality and wellbeing improvements, within Cambridgeshire.

We are exploring how we can offer business the opportunity to invest in local carbon mitigation projects on Council land, such as afforestation or renewable community heating, with the return being in the form of carbon savings through a Cambridgeshire Decarbonisation Fund.

We recognise that the Council will need to so some limited offsetting of our own corporate emissions in the future and will seek to deliver these offsets inhouse as far as possible. A Corporate Carbon Offsetting Policy will be developed over the coming months to ensure we are being forthcoming and transparent in our approach.

Biodiversity Net-Gain (BNG) as a service (or the "Off-Site Market")

Net gain will soon become a planning requirement for all development. Where a site does not have the physical land space to create an increase in biodiversity, they will be required to create a net-gain areas elsewhere.

We are piloting an approach to allow developers without the space to deliver their BNG requirements on-site to pay to create and manage land for biodiversity on our extensive rural estate. This would be a secure, long-term revenue stream enabling previously un-viable nature projects, such as woodland creation, to go ahead.

The business model's pilot was launched in 2022 and work is ongoing to progress secure marketable investment offerings.

Objective 4: Establishing funding approaches to deliver the future full strategy

This means we will:

- Explore and trial new business **model**s that promote investment into the delivery of trees and hedgerows and the valuation of their benefits to communities and the natural environment.
- Develop grant applications to target specific projects, taking a long-term approach for delivery of planting schemes.

WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS

Collaboration is a cornerstone of our Change and Environment Strategy. Aligning our efforts will enable greater more joined up approaches to how we manage our trees.

OUR LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTNERS

In some areas of the County, our trees are managed by our Local Authority partners on our behalf, using their extensive expertise in looking after their own tree and hedgerow stocks. This helps us to align ambitions and goals for trees across Cambridgeshire.

Funding for trees can often require collaboration between different authorities to be eligible for different funding types. Working together will enable all of us to access these funds.

Parish Councils also play a key role. Many already work with the Council to manage highways verges. Harnessing their enthusiasm and local knowledge can help deliver many of the objectives outlined throughout this strategy.

OUR TENANTS

Across our urban and rural estates there are many trees and hedgerow planting and management opportunities. Survey work has already identified some 250ha where tree planting could be delivered on our rural estate. However, these are reliant on close collaboration with our existing tenants, many of whom welcome the opportunity to improve the environmental benefits their tenancies can provide.

We will not be able to deliver change all at once. This will be a long term exercise in working with our tenets, leveraging change at any contractual breaks and developing peer-learning opportunities to share knowledge and bring those less open to change on the journey with us.

OUR COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES

While this is a Strategy for Council land and trees only, our communities are always at the forefront of our plans. By collaborating on projects we can harness the knowledge and enthusiasm of our local communities to help plan and deliver work on our land. For example, at Little Downham we lease land to the village so that they could plant an orchard.

Listening to our communities and, as far as practicable, incorporating their ideas into projects will maximise the wider benefits our trees, woodlands and hedgerows can offer. Our Think Communities programme is already embedded within our communities and can provide a route to working more closely with our communities.

Similarly, many Cambridgeshire businesses want to deliver environment related projects as part of their corporate social responsibility or team building days. Working to deliver these projects locally will ensure the benefit is felt by Cambridgeshire residents.

Objective 5: Work with our partners to connect people with trees and woodland

This means we will:

- Work to increase the level of understanding, empathy and connection to our woodlands within the community to provide stronger social and economic outcomes from our woodlands
- **Work collaboratively with our local authority partners, tenants and communities to maximise the impact trees can have on our residents and natural environment.**
- **Work together to access funding and deliver projects to achieve the best outcomes for Cambridgeshire residents.**

ACTION PLAN

There are tree and woodland related actions in the Climate Change and Environment Strategy that will be implemented. Over and above these are the actions in the below action plan.

No.	ACTION	TARGET DATE
Objective 1: Improve the condition and resilience of our trees, woodlands and hedgerows to maximise benefits they bring our communities		
1.1	Work with our tenant farmers to identify and deliver tree planting and hedges on the rural estate, utilising community inputs where possible, to improve landscape connectivity, value of our land and environmental value of our existing woodlands. Utilise contractual breaks and Farm Management Plans to support delivery.	2022 then ongoing
1.2	Deliver biodiversity improvements to Council managed hedgerows (where road safety allows) through: ▪ strategic planting of trees to fill "gaps" in the hedgerows and when planting new hedgerows to include understory planting ▪ consideration of co-benefits, such as sheltering road users from dust and wind in rural locations, should be incorporated into delivery plans.	2023 onwards
1.3	Existing management regimes – ▪ Provide greater transparency to residents on the Council's approach to tree management, providing a formalised mechanism for resident's queries regarding our trees to be dealt with and responded to	2023 onwards

	▪ Implement management objectives to enhance the biodiversity and accessibility of our woodland sites and measure contribution towards net gain targets	
Objective 2: Improve our understanding of our tree and hedgerow assets and design planting approaches that support access to trees and woodlands		
2.1	Carry out a condition survey of all woodlands over 1Ha and prepare management statements for their improvement that can feed into the emerging Environmental Land Management schemes	Autumn 2023
2.2	Carry out tree and woodland (incl significant hedgerows) canopy survey across the whole of the Council's asset portfolio to: ▪ Establish baseline to enable a planting target to be agreed and for monitoring progress towards it ▪ Identify tree locations, species, age (where possible) and biodiversity value ▪ Map the canopy cover of our trees and quantify the social and environment benefits they bring ▪ Develop management recommendations that will enhance our existing tree stock and deliver biodiversity net gain	Autumn 2023
2.3	Undertake opportunity mapping to identify areas of the Councils assets that may be suitable for tree and hedgerow planting in line with the landscape character of the area. Natural regeneration of new woodland and expanding and connecting existing woodlands will be considered where practical	Autumn 2023
Objective 3: Expand and connect our trees, woods and hedgerows		
3.1	Secure appropriate resources at the Council to lead and deliver the Interim Tree & Woodland Strategy actions.	2022

3.2	Work with our partners to develop and deliver a County-wide Tree Strategy (to include hedgerows) that supports and aligns existing policy to deliver greater benefits to our communities and biodiversity.	Autumn 2023
3.3	Develop and deliver tree planting where we already have the information to deliver the “right tree in the right place” approach	Spring 2023
3.4	Scope and explore viability of innovative alternatives to tree felling where a healthy tree needs to be removed to enable Council projects to take place. For example, the relocation of mature /semi-mature trees to another location on the same or at a nearby site.	Spring 2023 onwards
3.5	Ensure that we integrate tree/hedgerow planting requirements into Local Environmental Management Plans (LEMPS) for major transport projects where the council will take responsibility for the land in its capacity as the Highways Authority.	Spring 2023 onwards
3.6	Establish internal monitoring and reporting framework for keeping track of tree and significant hedgerow planting activities, their management requirements and potential benefits. This should record the baseline position for the authority and any planting that takes place ahead of the baseline and planting target being agreed.	Spring 2023 onwards
Objective 4: Establishing funding approaches to deliver the future full strategy		
4.1	Work with external partners to secure grant requiring County Council as lead applications; working internally to provide expert advice and support to other officers working with trees; and develop (and deliver) a pipeline of tree and hedgerow planting projects in readiness for grant funding cycles.	Spring 2023 onwards

4.2	Undertake a review of current and known forthcoming grant funding regimes (e.g., Forestry Commission or ELMs (Environmental Land Management Scheme)), to identify the most appropriate funding route for different contexts, even if this means a slower delivery of projects. For example, some funding regimes provide greater financial security to projects enabling their ongoing management to be properly undertaken.	2022 then ongoing
4.3	Building on work undertaken to deliver carbon credits and the emerging biodiversity net gain market, explore the commercial opportunities open to the Council and develop business models to enable investment into trees and woodland projects, including incorporation of shadow carbon price and monetarisation of the wider benefits trees provide such as flood alleviation, water quality and air quality improvements.	Spring 2023 onwards
4.4	Explore potential financial viability for establishment of a CCC Tree Nursery on county land, potentially working with tenants, to provide tree stock for CCC projects.	Autumn 2023
4.5	Establish formalised mechanisms with our District Council partners (and other partners as needed) to enable improved collaboration, particularly to allow all Cambridgeshire local authorities equal access to tree related funding competitions via consortium applications and deliver landscape scale projects.	Sumer 2023 onwards
Objective 5: Work with our partners to connect people with trees and woodland		
5.1	Work with community groups on the management of our woodlands to encourage local ownership and involvement	Spring 2023 onwards
5.2	Carry out an access audit of existing woodland sites where there is already existing public to identify works required to ensure the provision of safe public access	Spring 2023 onwards

5.3	Develop and implement a plan to improve the quantity, quality and permanency of public access to new and existing woodlands	Autumn 2023 onwards
5.4	Work with Public Health and the Strategic Parks and Greenspaces Team to identify sites suitable for green social prescribing activities	Spring 2023 onwards
5.5	Working with the County Council Early Years Early Years Forest School Adviser, identify sites suitable for encouraging Forest Schools activities	Spring 2023 onwards
5.6	Establish community led management approaches for the existing Community woodlands to broaden the ecological benefit, such as coppicing and planting (or enabling natural colonisation) of a sub-canopy.	Spring 2023 onwards
5.7	Enable and empower our communities to act through: • Identifying groups interested in tree planting and management to explore potential for role in Council planting and tree management/maintenance. Developing guidance to enable our residents to identify suitable locations and species and the planting and management of trees and hedgerows on highways verges. This should later be incorporated into a larger guide covering wildflowers and mowing regimes	Spring 2023 onwards

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7. **Bermingham, Vera and Brennan, Carol.** *Tort Law.* s.l. : Oxford University Press, 2008.

APPENDICES & KEY RELATED POLICY

- Cambridgeshire County Council's Tree Management Policy - Appendix 1: Tree Management Policy
- Cambridgeshire Highways Policies - https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-plans-and-policies/highway-policies-and-capital-maintenance-programme
- Trees in Schools policy – Available on request

APPENDIX 1: TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Legal considerations

The risk presented by trees is low, and much lower than the risks accepted by people on a day-to-day basis such as using the roads. These low risks must also be balanced with the benefits trees provide.

The Council has a duty of care to employees and members of the public. Trees are dynamic organisms, subject to the forces of nature, which can fail without showing warning symptoms and can never be classed as entirely safe. However, the Council must try to keep risks presented by trees as low as is reasonably practicable.

The most recent guidance in the Tree Health and Safety Group's "Common Sense Guide to the Management of Tree Safety" published by the Forestry Commission in 2011 sets how out a Local Authority should approach tree safety. This involves zoning areas based on the usage of the ground around the trees, working out a level of tree inspection needed, employing trained and competent staff to complete various levels of survey and recording and storing all findings on a database.

Tree Safety

The safe and appropriate management of its trees is important to the County Council who want to ensure that a balance is maintained between public safety and sustaining a healthy tree population. Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline and collapse and they can be damaged physically or invaded by pathogenic organisms. As trees deteriorate, they are increasingly likely to shed limbs or fail in strong winds and the potential to cause harm increases.

The Council recognises its duty of care in respect of safety of the trees in its ownership and its role in keeping risks presented by trees as low as is reasonably practicable. Trees are uniquely valuable as habitat for wildlife and however poor the physical condition of a tree, remedial action is often only necessary where there is a clearly perceptible risk to life or property.

The level of proactivity required to deliver this role varies depending on the location and context of the tree, and specific policy is in place for trees in different settings, such as in an educational setting or on the public highway. The principles of tree management remain the same, as set out below.

- The risk to life and property, because of tree deterioration, is kept to as low a level as is reasonably practicable;
- A system of tree inspections is in operation in relation to the above risk;
- A record of trees and inspections is retained;
- Staff who carry out inspections are competent to do so;
- Remedial work identified through the inspection programme is to be undertaken by suitably qualified staff or contractors.

Tree Removal

Tree felling takes place when a tree is dead, dying or dangerous and where public safety is at risk. Tree removal is regrettable, but in a few circumstances, necessary. The decision to remove a tree is not

taken lightly and, apart from when a dangerous tree needs priority attention, we will endeavour to inform residents.

The Council will not normally fell a healthy tree. However, occasionally healthy trees may require removal for the following reasons:

- To allow certain works to be carried out, such as Highway improvement works or construction projects. Often these latter types of work are subject to planning legislation or other Council consultation procedures, and there is an opportunity for public debate about proposals before they are approved;
- When the tree has caused damage to property, roads or buildings and remedial pruning is not a viable option;
- Where essential development work requires tree removal. E.g. to facilitate school expansions;
- To follow best management practice and promote tree health e.g., to allow other trees nearby to develop. It may be necessary to remove or "thin" trees that are suppressing or excessively shading other trees;
- Where the inconvenience and detrimental impacts of the tree outweigh its benefits; or
- To protect or enhance biodiversity.

In the first instance the Council will ensure all options that do not involve felling a healthy tree have been explored, such as moving a tree to another location. Felling will be the "option of last resort". Where trees have been felled, the Council will endeavour to provide replacement trees to ensure there is no net-loss of trees, and where possible on a 2 for 1 basis, as close to the location of the felled tree as practicable.

Specific Tree Related Issues

As a landowner, the Council has a duty of care to maintain trees on its land in a safe condition, and to reduce the nuisance that its trees may cause to others. Common law nuisance (as opposed to a "statutory nuisance" as defined within the Environmental Protection Act 1990) is generally defined as where the actions of an individual (or entity) is causing "a substantial and unreasonable interference with a [claimant]'s land or his/her use or enjoyment of that land"[4].

Nuisance in law does not generally include:

a) Loss of light / reduced light to properties - there is no legal right to light under the Town and Country Planning Act
b) Effects on TV reception or obstruction to CCTV Cameras
c) Obstruction of views
d) Interference with private vegetation
e) Allow the implementation of vehicular access
f) Obstruction of BT / Utility Cables (these are the responsibility of the statutory undertaker)

[4] Bermingham, Vera; Carol Brennan (2008). *Tort Law*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-922798-3

g) Minor or seasonal 'nuisances' such as: Honeydew (dripping sap); Bird droppings; leaf fruit or flowers fall.

Most trees in areas where people live have the capacity to cause problems, and it is common to hear that trees are generally appreciated, but not wanted in a particular position. However, the recognition of the value of trees across Cambridgeshire requires that trees be retained for the benefit of wider society, even where they cause minor inconvenience to immediate residents.

The Council will not normally prune or fell a Council owned tree or hedgerow in response to nuisance, including incidence of:

- to remove or reduce leaf fall and/or blossom from private property; to remove or reduce the nuisance of fruit/berries or nuts, or remove such fallen fruit from private property;
- because it is considered to be 'too big' or 'too tall';
- in cases where they cause a reduced amount of light to fall on a property, other than in exceptional circumstances such as where lack of light can be demonstrated as having a negative health impact. This includes improvements to natural light to solar panels;
- to remove or reduce bird droppings from trees, or remove bird droppings from private property;
- to remove or reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees, or to remove or reduce incidence of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals; to remove or reduce the release of pollen;
- to alleviate the nuisance of overhanging branches other than in exceptional circumstances.

Householders also have a common law right to abate nuisances themselves unless the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is within a Conservation Area. The Council encourages residents to contact the Council ahead of any significant work to discuss the proposal. Use of an agricultural contractor is advised to ensure works are completed safely and will not pose a threat to the health of the tree or other species that live within them, e.g. birds during nesting season.

Where a householder wishes to undertake works that fall outside the scope of common law rights, the Council will consider applications from householders to alleviate problems on the basis that they shall be undertaken at the householder's cost and by an experienced arboricultural contractor. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and must be agreed ahead of any works being undertaken.

Tree Related Damage

Where a Council tree is implicated as having caused damage to a property, the onus is on the claimant to provide evidence that the tree is the cause.

In the first instance a claimant must engage their insurance provider and contact the Council to report the claim and check that the tree concerned is owned by the Council. The claimant should look to provide, at a minimum, evidence as set out below:

- Property Owner and address of affected

- Site Plan - To include all relevant vegetation and significant drain layout. Plan to indicate position of rooms
- Photographs - These are indicative and are not a complete record of the full extent of the damage
- Details of Third-Party Vegetation – description of the tree thought to be responsible for damage
- Root Analysis – detailing the roots thought to be causing the damage
- Foundation depth
- Subsoil type
- Factors indicating clay shrinkage
- Date damage discovered
- Mitigation Request
- Arboricultural report – if obtained

Tree related subsidence insurance claims are dealt with on a case-by-case basis treating each case on its own merits. A tree will not necessarily be felled as a result of a claim. Options include remedial action such as heavy and repeated crown reductions, which can reduce a tree's demand for water. This may in turn reduce the clay soil shrinkage and prevent further structural damage to the property.

Where the decision is taken to fell a tree, the Council will assess whether it is appropriate to plant a replacement tree.

The Council will manage all claims directed at Council owned trees, and will challenge unwarranted claims based on poorly investigated or inaccurate evidence

In all cases of alleged tree related subsidence, the climate/property owner or their building insurers must provide evidence as set out in the Joint Management Protocol.

To manage risk and reduce liability regarding tree related subsidence, the Council may choose to remove trees. Where the amenity value of the tree is high the Council may choose to instigate repeated crown reductions or other such mitigation treatments.