

North Kesteven District Council



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tree Strategy 2020

A district where everyone has flourishing landscapes



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Foreword



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Wright', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Cllr Richard Wright
Leader of North Kesteven
District Council

North Kesteven District Council is committed to improving the health, wellbeing and environmental sustainability of the District, and aims to work with our partners to achieve this.

We recently launched a new 'Our Environment' corporate priority, which will continue to develop over the coming months. One of our key ambitions in introducing this new priority is to 'conserve and improve NK's heritage and natural environment'

Open spaces are hugely important and valuable assets, and are proven to improve public health, wellbeing and quality of life. They make our communities enjoyable places to live, work and visit, and provide opportunities for all people to engage in healthy and active lifestyles. High quality and accessible open spaces are essential to the success of our existing 'Sport and Physical Activity' and 'Cycling' strategies, and we aim to use all three strategies to deliver our ambition of a 'healthy, fit and vibrant NK'

In producing this Strategy, the Council will explore opportunities to deliver the quantity and types of open spaces our communities need, and to encourage and promote outdoor leisure participation. We also aim to increase opportunities for our communities to access our beautiful countryside, and to work with our partners to maximise biodiversity in open spaces across NK.

Our communities have shown overwhelming support for this strategy, and we are strongly committed to supporting the delivery of high quality open space for all, so that our communities continue to flourish.

North Kesteven Open Space Strategy: One page summary

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Vision | North Kesteven, a District of flourishing communities | | |
| Objective | To provide and support a healthy, environmentally sustainable and resilient tree population that meets local needs and aspirations | | |
| Aim | To deliver high quality public open spaces that meet local needs and aspirations | | |
| Objectives | Trees and Climate Change | Trees and Prosperity | Trees and Wellbeing |
| Why this is a priority | Trees play an important role in tackling the harmful effects of climate change | Trees have a significant positive impact on the amenity and vitality of our communities | Trees are positively associated with good physical and mental health outcomes |
| What have we done already | We currently have a robust Tree Policy, and have proactively managed our tree assets for many years. | We adopted our Open Space Strategy in 2019, and we take an active approach to tree protection through the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and proactive use of TPOs. | We have a range of existing strategies focused on improving health and wellbeing, and we actively support the Lincolnshire-wide Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. |
| What are we going to do | Increase trees on Council owned land by 5,000 by 2027, with further increased tree planting in the longer term, and take a range of actions to increase tree canopy cover on all land types across NK. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan review will also refresh our approach to tackling climate change alongside new development | Use trees to enhance our streetscenes, reinforce tree protection and landscaping on development sites, and work with other land owners to encourage tree retention. We will also facilitate delivery of high quality landscaping alongside new development, including through master planning of our strategic housing sites. | Improve public access to woodlands, collaborate with a range of stakeholders to create new woodlands, and take all opportunities to use trees as a means of improving communities' health and wellbeing |
| When we will do this | Long term | Medium term | Medium term |
| How will we measure success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By continuing to monitor NKDC's tree assets and act in response to emerging trends and threats By repeating our assessment of canopy cover across NK in 2027 and 2032 By annually monitoring the progress of our Action Plans | | |
| Who will we work with | Residents and businesses in NK, Leisure and Cultural Services Partners, town and parish councils, Lincolnshire County Council and other Lincs district councils, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Lincolnshire Rivers Trust, Hill Holt Wood, Woodland Trust, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, Natural England, Active Lincolnshire, Public Health Lincolnshire, Public Health England, Sustrans, Forestry England, planning agents and developers, community groups, Diocese of Lincoln | | |
| Outcomes | To plant a minimum of 5,000 more trees on Council owned land by 2027 | To deliver, across NK, 50 hectares of additional tree canopy cover by 2032 | |

North Kesteven District Council has long championed environmental, social and economic sustainability, and has taken a broad range of steps over several years aimed at reducing our carbon footprint and improving the quality of life of our communities. In 2018 we further strengthened our commitment to sustainability by introducing a new corporate priority: 'Our Environment'

In July 2019 we declared a climate emergency, signalling our intention to go even further by putting climate change and the natural environment at the heart of everything we do. The NK Plan 2020 – 2023 defines how we will deliver this.

1.1 Introducing our Vision, Aim and Objectives for trees in NK

Trees are a vital environmental asset, and the Council intends to maximise the benefits of trees in North Kesteven as part of its commitment to tackling the effects of climate change.

This Tree Strategy will support our existing strategy framework, including the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, and our Sports and Physical Activity, Cycling and Open Space Strategies, and will also assist us in fulfilling our role in supporting the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire.

Many trees in North Kesteven are owned by the Council, and therefore there are plenty of opportunities across NK for us to contribute to tackling climate change by maximising tree canopy cover on our open spaces. However as most trees in NK are privately owned, the Strategy also aims to promote increased tree retention and new tree planting on all land regardless of ownership.

Our Vision for North Kesteven is “a district of flourishing communities”, and our Aim for this Strategy is:

“To provide and support a healthy, environmentally sustainable and resilient tree population across NK that meets local needs and aspirations”

The Strategy has three key Objectives, intended to deliver this Vision and Aim:

- **Trees to tackle climate change;**
- **Trees to encourage prosperity; and**
- **Trees to promote wellbeing.**

1.2 Content and Purpose of this Strategy

This Strategy sets out:

- The key issues and challenges affecting trees in NK;
- The key outcomes that the Strategy aims to deliver;
- Why the Strategy's Objectives are important;
- What we have already done to work towards these objectives;

1

Introduction and Background

- What we are going to do to meet these objectives and who we will work with; and
- How we will measure success

Two appendices are included with this Strategy:

- **Appendix A:** NKDC Green Infrastructure Inspection and Maintenance Policy – this document sets out how we will maintain trees and other green infrastructure in Council ownership
- **Appendix B:** Tree Protection and Landscaping on Development Sites – this document enhances the Council’s current measures for protecting trees while developments are under construction, and seeks to improve the quality and type of soft landscaping that developers will provide.

1.3 Key Outcomes

| Outcome | How we will measure success |
|---|---|
| To 5,000 more trees on Council land by 2027, followed by further increases over the longer term | Recording and monitoring of all new tree assets using NKDC’s existing tree asset management software |
| To increase canopy cover by at least 50 Hectares across North Kesteven by 2032 | Repeat of procurement of reassessment of canopy cover in NK, as set out in section 3.1 of this Strategy, in 2027 and 2032 |

1.4 Status and Scope of this Strategy

The Strategy Objectives are intended to cover all land in North Kesteven. For simplicity we have split ownership into three categories:

- **Trees owned by the Council** – land where the Council has the greatest influence over trees and tree maintenance;
- **Trees on development sites** – where the Council can exercise regulatory controls through the planning system; and
- **Trees owned by other landowners (including but not limited to Town and Parish Councils, residents, businesses and community groups)** – although regulatory controls may exist, the best outcomes for trees are likely to be achieved by providing advice, support and, where available, incentives.

The Council intends to use this Strategy as a ‘material planning consideration’, which will be taken into account when determining applications for planning permission.

The Strategy will be reviewed every three years as a minimum; additional reviews may be undertaken should significant legal or policy changes require it.

2.1 Benefits of Trees

Trees are integral to our wellbeing, health and quality of life, and define the landscape where we live, work and visit.

The environmental, social and economic benefits of trees are well documented. Trees mitigate the impacts of climate change by removing and storing carbon dioxide and harmful pollutants from the air, and absorbing water to reduce the risk of flooding. Trees also have a cooling effect, counteracting the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. They have a significant positive impact on the amenity and prosperity of our communities, and aid human development by improving physical and mental wellbeing. Trees also contribute to biodiversity and provide habitats for wildlife, thereby protecting and preserving the natural environment for future generations.

At present, North Kesteven emits approximately 603,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year across the entire district, amounting to just under 164,500 tonnes of carbon. Whilst this is significantly lower than many parts of the UK, carbon emissions in NK are nonetheless substantial. Tree planting alone cannot offset these emissions, however it will, alongside a broad range of other actions, support the Council to work towards delivering Government's ambitions to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

North Kesteven, supported and guided by the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, will undergo considerable housing and employment growth over the next two decades. We believe it is crucial that this growth provides opportunities for the preservation and enhancement of trees and green infrastructure, so that existing and future generations across North Kesteven experience the best possible quality of life whilst contributing to the fight against climate change.

2.2 Legal and Policy context

2019 saw the introduction of a broad range of new and updated national legislation, guidance and policy.

2.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework was updated in February 2019, outlining the national approach to delivering sustainable development. Insofar as it relates to trees and green infrastructure, the Framework can be summarised as follows:

- Developments should enable and support healthy lifestyles, including through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure.
- Communities should have access to a network of high quality open spaces, and planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access.
- The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

- Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes, and sites of biodiversity or geological value, and should recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services including trees and woodlands.
- Developments should prevent new and existing development from contributing to or being put at risk from air, water or noise pollution or land instability.
- Planning policies and decisions should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks, and pursue opportunities for securing net gains for biodiversity.
- Unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and compensatory strategies, developments that result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodlands) should be resisted.
- Developments should, in qualifying cases, take opportunities to improve air quality.

These objectives are supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's '**National Design Guide**' (updated October 2019).

2.2.2 The Environment Bill was announced by Government in October 2019, with the intention for UK *"to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than in which we inherited it"*. The Bill is expected to become legislation some time in 2020/21, and to incorporate broad range of long term, legally binding targets focused on air quality, water, biodiversity net-gain and waste/resources.

As the Government recently launched its **25 Year Environment Plan**, and a £50 million fund to boost tree planting in the fight against climate change, it is anticipated that this new legislation will make specific reference to trees and tree planting.

The Government also announced its **Agriculture Bill** in January 2020. Whilst the implications of this Bill are not yet fully understood, we know that the Bill's main purpose is to protect and strengthen the UK's agriculture sector post-Brexit and to enhance the ways that agricultural land, which amounts to around seventy percent of all land in the UK, can be used to improve the environment and increase biodiversity.

2.2.3 The protection of important trees and hedges is already enshrined in existing legislation such as the **Town and Country Planning Act 1990** and associated **Tree Preservation Regulations**, and the **Hedgerow Regulations 1997**.

2.3 Local Context

2.3.1 The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, covering the City of Lincoln and both North Kesteven and West Lindsey Districts, was adopted in April 2017. Policies LP17, and LP20 – LP24 of the Plan set out the approach to trees, open spaces and other green infrastructure across the Central Lincolnshire area. Collectively, these policies seek to protect our landscape including our trees and woodlands, protect and enhance local green infrastructure and biodiversity, and provide high quality public open space.

2.3.2 'Our Environment' corporate priority

The Council's 'Our Environment' priority was first introduced in early 2018 and aims to meet the challenges of climate change, by championing greenhouse gas reduction, and by conserving and enhancing our heritage and natural and built environment.

2.3.3 NKDC Open Space Strategy

The Council adopted its Open Space Strategy in March 2019. The Open Space Strategy contains a range of actions that link with this Tree Strategy, including a commitment to review the design of Council owned open spaces, and to use open spaces as a means to increase biodiversity.



3.1 Canopy cover in NK

Tree canopy cover in NK currently comprises 5.9% of land in the district, amounting to approximately 5,450 hectares². These trees are expected to sequestrate up to 2.57 million tonnes of CO₂ over their lifetimes³.

Canopy cover in North Kesteven significantly lower than the national average (16.1%), and the average for the East Midlands (10.1%)⁴.

These figures are unsurprising. North Kesteven is predominantly rural, and up to ninety percent of land in the district is in mainly arable agricultural use. Tree canopy cover is therefore expected to be much lower than in parts of the UK less dependent on the agricultural economy.

Concentrations of trees are higher in our towns and villages, with a significant proportion located in residents' gardens. Trees in the countryside are mostly comprised of small woodlands and copses, and the character of our arable landscape is largely influenced by trees along the roadside and within hedgerows. We know that a large proportion of trees in NK, particularly those in the countryside, are Ash trees; many of these trees are likely to be affected by Ash Dieback over the next few years, and are therefore the greatest threat to our ability to increase or maintain canopy cover across the district.

3.2 Tree Preservation in NK

There are almost 750 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in NK covering many thousands of trees, including individual trees, groups of trees, large areas and woodlands.

North Kesteven also has 37 designated conservation areas. Most trees in conservation areas are automatically protected by similar legal restrictions to those that control works to trees subject of TPOs.

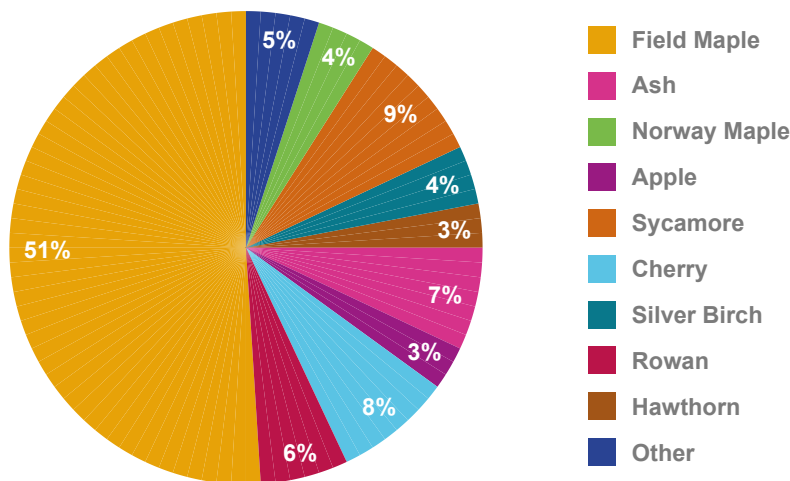
3.3 Council owned trees

The Council owns approximately 7,750 trees on its public open spaces, and many thousands more in our nature reserves and woodlands.

A recent assessment of the Council's tree assets indicates that these 7,750 trees have a structural value of over £9.2 million, store almost 2,500 tonnes of carbon, and reduce surface water runoff by up to 99,000 cubic feet per year⁵.

These figures do not include Whisby Nature Reserve or Tunman Wood, which are managed by third party organisations on the Council's behalf. The total environmental benefit of all trees in Council ownership will therefore be significantly greater.

Council Owned Trees



² Data obtained under license from National Tree Map (NTM); Bluesky International Limited (Company Registration Number 04789469), January 2020

³ Data obtained from Forestry Commission (2018) 'Forestry Statistics 2018: Chapter 4 – UK Forests and Climate Change'

⁴ Data obtained from Forestry Commission (2017) 'Tree Cover outside woodland in Great Britain' Statistical Report

⁵ Data obtained under license from 'iTree Eco'; www.itreetools.org

3.3.1 Species distribution of Council owned trees

The Council benefits from having a relatively diverse tree stock, and no one species comprises more than ten percent of all trees in Council ownership.

Notwithstanding this, there are still risks presented by our tree assets being seven percent Ash, and therefore we may lose some of these assets over the coming years if they succumb to Ash Dieback.

An interactive map showing the location of all Council-owned trees is available on our website, at www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/planning/tree-protection-and-hedges/council-owned-trees/.

3.4 Challenges and threats

In addition to the threats posed by pests and diseases, the Council has identified a range of other challenges that may affect its ability to increase tree cover across the district, including:

- Our agricultural landscape – agriculture is an important part of the local economy. Much of the nation's food is grown here, and our agricultural heritage is to be celebrated. However having so much land in the district allocated to arable farming in particular reduces the potential for significant increases in canopy cover. This challenge may ease in light of central government's recently announced Agricultural Bill, which aims to utilise the agricultural

economy to improve the natural environment and contribute to tackling climate change.

- Resilience of trees to future impacts from climate change – changes in our climate over the coming years may affect the resilience, wellbeing and longevity of trees in NK.
- Attitudes of tree owners – whilst the public appear to place more value than ever on trees and their benefits, they continued to be viewed by many as a burden or inconvenience, and too unnecessary or harmful maintenance remains fairly prevalent.
- Development – trees on development sites are at a high risk of being damaged or destroyed. However existing trees on development sites usually have the greatest environmental, social and economic value as they are larger, provide greater canopy cover and visual amenity benefits, and store more carbon and other harmful pollutants than newly planted trees.
- Legacy issues affecting some existing Council owned trees – a significant proportion of Council owned trees were planted in the 1970s and 1980s, of which some were planted in locations that are now becoming problematic as they mature. Of all trees owned by the Council, these face the greatest pressure for felling.



4.1 Key Outcomes

The following tables set out what we have already done to contribute towards our Objectives, and what actions we intend to take to fulfil them. These actions are intended to help the Council achieve the following outcomes:

- To plant 5,000 additional trees on Council land by 2027, followed by further increases over the longer term; and
- An increase in canopy cover of at least 50 Hectares across North Kesteven by 2032.

The canopy cover target represents a relatively modest proportional (0.1%) increase in canopy cover over a ten year period. In setting this target the Council has taken into account the limitations of 90 percent of North Kesteven being in mostly arable agricultural use, and the potential for loss of a proportion of the district's trees due to pests and diseases such as Ash Dieback. This target also takes account of the delay between the planting of new trees and, due to the amount of time it takes for trees to mature, when these trees will be capable of making a meaningful contribution to increasing canopy cover.

Ash Dieback in particular presents a significant threat to the district's overall canopy cover; whilst Ash make up a small proportion of Council-owned trees, they are very common in the general tree population and are a prevalent feature in countryside hedgerows. The Council therefore acknowledges the impact Ash Dieback could have on our ability to increase canopy cover.

The Council hopes to significantly exceed this canopy cover target, and will review it if either Government policy, or the threat posed by either Ash Dieback and other re-emerging pests and diseases, change.

The Council will take all available opportunities to maximise the wellbeing, resilience and longevity of trees when achieving these key outcomes.



4

Action Plan

4.2 Objectives and actions

Objective 1: Trees to Tackle Climate Change**Why this is a priority:**

The Council has declared a climate emergency, and is committed to working with residents, businesses and other partners to tackle climate change, and to lobbying for support to address this emergency by 2030. Trees have a significant positive impact on the Council's ability to achieve this target, whilst delivering a range of additional benefits such as absorbing harmful pollutants in the air and reducing flood risk.

What we've done already:

The Council has proactively managed its own trees for several years, and since 2012 has implemented a robust Tree Policy that seeks to minimise the unnecessary loss of Council owned trees.

What we are going to do:**NK-owned land**

| Key actions | | Timescale | NKDC Lead(s) |
|-------------|--|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Implement the 'NKDC Green Infrastructure Inspection and Maintenance Policy' (Appendix A of this Strategy) | Short term | Waste and Streetscene / Trees |
| 2 | Review all NKDC owned land, and take opportunities to replace standard grass with trees and other biodiverse green infrastructure | Short term | Waste and Streetscene / Trees |
| 3 | Replant at least two new trees for every Council-owned tree felled (aim for planting as close as possible to original tree) | Immediate | Trees / Housing and Property |
| 4 | Explore opportunities to purchase land for the creation of new woodlands | Short to medium term | Economic Development / Partnerships |
| 5 | Explore with Town/Parish Councils and community groups opportunities to transform some NK owned open spaces into community orchards/ woodlands | Short to medium term | Waste and Streetscene / Partnerships |

Development sites

| Key actions | | Timescale | NKDC Lead(s) |
|-------------|--|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Enact the improved requirements set out in the document 'Tree Protection and Landscaping on Development Sites' (Appendix B of this Strategy) | Immediate | Development Management / Trees |
| 2 | Use the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan review to increase and enhance tree protection and landscaping requirements | Medium term | Central Lincs Local Plan Team |
| 3 | Lobby central Government to reinforce the National Planning Policy Framework to improve the profile of tree issues, and strengthen the ability of Councils to make Tree Preservation Orders in the interests of nature conservation and climate change | Short term | Development Management / Trees |

Land in other ownership

| Key actions | | Timescale | NKDC Lead(s) |
|-------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Promote to residents national and local incentivising tree planting schemes | Immediate | Sustainability |
| 2 | Work with and advise Town/Parish Councils and community groups, to increase canopy cover on their land | Short to medium term | Partnerships / Trees |
| 3 | Explore the feasibility of creating an incentivised NK residents' tree planting scheme | Short term | Sustainability |

Objective 2: Trees to Encourage Prosperity**Why this is a priority:**

Trees have a significant positive impact on the amenity and vitality of our communities, and enhance their desirability as places to live, work and socialise.

What we've done already:

The Council adopted its Open Space strategy in 2019, and takes an active approach to tree protection, including use of Tree Preservation Orders where trees of high amenity value are identified as being at risk.

What we are going to do:**NK-owned land****Key actions****Timescale****NKDC Lead(s)**

| | | | |
|----------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Take opportunities for grant funding and partnership initiatives to enhance the design of our green spaces | Short term, and ongoing | Sustainability |
| 2 | Plant trees, shrubs and/or meadow grasses on smaller areas of Council-owned grass, to improve streetscenes | Short term | Waste and Streetscene / Trees |
| 3 | Work with our social enterprise partners to offer educational and community based opportunities on our existing and future woodlands | Medium term | Partnerships |

Development sites**Key actions****Timescale****NKDC Lead(s)**

| | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Reinforce the Council's approach to the use of Tree Preservation Orders for trees believed to be at risk of harm from development | Immediate | Trees |
| 2 | Use the document 'Tree Protection and Landscaping on Development sites' (Appendix B of this Strategy) to require developers to plant tree species that will offer higher long term amenity value | Immediate | Development Management |
| 3 | Review and update the Council's model planning conditions for tree protection and landscaping | Short term | Development Management |
| 4 | Explore ways for developers and communities to work together to enhance tree planting and green infrastructure alongside new development | Medium term | Development Management / Trees |

Land in other ownership**Key actions****Timescale****NKDC Lead(s)**

| | | | |
|----------|--|------------|----------------|
| 1 | Offer advice and guidance to Town and Parish Councils on maintaining and enhancing their tree assets | Short term | Trees |
| 2 | Take all available opportunities to encourage and publicise to residents, businesses and other land owners the benefits of retaining trees and planting new ones | Short term | Sustainability |

4

Action Plan

Priority Outcome 3: Trees to Promote Wellbeing

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|------------------|
| Why this is a priority: | Trees are positively associated with better physical and mental health. In addition to their ability to absorb harmful pollutants, trees improve the quality and enjoyment of outdoor spaces, and living within close proximity to trees has been proven to improve mental health. | | |
| What we've done already: | The Council has adopted and implemented a series of different strategies focussed on cycling, sports and physical activity, and open spaces. The Council also supports the Lincolnshire-wide Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy | | |
| What we are going to do: | NK-owned land | | |
| | Key actions | | Timescale |
| | 1 | Ensure that trees are planted on as many NK-owned open spaces as possible, to maximise the access available to trees and woodlands | Medium term |
| | 2 | Ensure that new woodlands are located close to communities so that they reap their benefits | Medium term |
| | 3 | Take opportunities for partnership working with schools and other community organisations to create woodlands and copses collectively | Medium term |
| | Development sites | | |
| | Key actions | | Timescale |
| | 1 | Use the document 'Tree Protection and Landscaping on Development Sites' (Appendix B of this Strategy) to ensure new developments support the health and wellbeing of their residents and surrounding communities | Short term |
| | 2 | Seek maximum possible retention of appropriate trees on development sites, so that communities experience immediate benefit from surrounding green infrastructure | Short term |
| | Land in other ownership | | |
| | Key actions | | Timescale |
| | 1 | Work with private landowners to increase recreational public access to woodland areas | Medium term |
| | 2 | Support and advise residents and the public of the health benefits of trees, and how these outweigh negative perceptions | Short term |

4.3 Delivery partners

We will work with a variety of partners and stakeholders to achieve the actions set out in this Strategy. These include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Residents of NK
- Businesses in NK
- Our Leisure and Cultural Services partners
- NK Town and Parish Councils
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Local schools
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
- Environment Agency
- Lincolnshire Rivers Trust
- Hill Holt Wood
- Woodland Trust
- Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership
- Other Lincolnshire district councils
- Natural England
- Active Lincolnshire
- Public Health Lincolnshire
- Public Health England
- Sustrans
- Forestry England
- Planning agents and developers
- Community groups
- Diocese of Lincoln

5

How we Will Monitor Success

5.1 Monitoring of Key Outcomes

This Strategy contains two key outcomes, intended to satisfy our Aim ***“to provide and support a healthy, environmentally sustainable and resilient tree population across NK that meets local needs and aspirations”***.

The table below outlines these key outcomes, and how we will monitor them:

| Outcome | How we will measure success |
|---|---|
| To 5,000 more trees on Council land by 2027, followed by further increases over the longer term | Recording and monitoring of all new tree assets using NKDC’s existing tree asset management software |
| To increase canopy cover by at least 50 Hectares across North Kesteven by 2032 | Repeat of procurement of reassessment of canopy cover in NK, as set out in section 3.1 of this Strategy, in 2027 and 2032 |

5.2 Monitoring of Action Plan

Part 4 of this Strategy lists a range of actions that the Council intends to undertake to deliver the outcomes set out above.

Roles and responsibilities for leading the delivery of these actions will be assigned to specific teams within the Council, and progress will be monitored annually to ensure that we continue to be able to deliver on our stated outcomes.



In developing this Strategy and action plan, we have focused on three key Objectives:



The actions associated with these objectives seek to achieve:

- To plant 5,000 additional trees on Council land by 2027, followed by further increases over the longer term; and
- To deliver an increase in canopy cover of at least 50 Hectares across North Kesteven by 2032.

Appendix A: NKDC Green Infrastructure Inspection and Maintenance Policy

Summary

This Policy aims to provide guidance to officers, elected Members, residents, businesses and all other stakeholders, on the Council's approach to inspecting and maintaining green infrastructure within its ownership.

This Policy applies to all land owned by the Council, and all forms of planting including but not limited to:

- Trees and hedges
- Shrubs
- All grasses and flowers

This Policy will:

- Ensure that all Council owned trees within North Kesteven are regularly inspected, managed and cared for;
- Ensure that the quantity, quality, resilience and biodiversity of trees is sustained and enhanced through appropriate maintenance and new planting;
- Provide a decision making framework for the maintenance of Council-owned trees that prioritises tree safety and health, and prevents unnecessary or harmful works; and
- Support the appropriate planting of trees and/or wild grass/wildflowers on Council-owned land where doing so will enhance biodiversity and reduce the need for grass cutting

Where relevant, all decisions made in accordance with this Policy will also have regard to the following legislation, guidance and British Standards:

- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
- The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012
- The Occupiers Liability Act 1984
- The Environment Act 1995
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- BS 5837: Trees in Relation to Construction (2012)
- BS 3998: Tree Work – Recommendations (2010)
- National Tree Safety Group: Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2011)
- HM Government: 25 Year Environment Plan (2019)

1 Location of Council owned trees

The management of Council owned trees can be divided into four key areas. This is not an exhaustive list, however the majority of the Council's trees can be placed into one of the following categories.

1.1 Trees on public open space

These are generally the most significant trees managed by the Council, as they have the greatest influence on the amenity and character of our communities. Trees on public open spaces make an important contribution to the local environment and the wider landscape.

1.2 Trees on NKDC Housing land.

These are found in communal areas on Council housing developments or in the vicinity of residential properties owned and managed by the Council.

Trees in the gardens of Council owned properties are the responsibility of the tenant(s), and will only be inspected on a reactive basis.

1.3 Woodlands and Walks

The Council owns and maintains several woodlands and copses throughout the District. These areas are maintained primarily for landscape and nature conservation, and therefore natural regeneration is encouraged. Proactive woodland maintenance is required to maximise the sustainability, biodiversity, education and landscape value of these areas, and to ensure these areas remain accessible and can be enjoyed by all.

The inspection and management of some woodland areas is undertaken in partnership with other organisations.

The Council is not responsible for the inspection and maintenance of trees affecting its 'Stepping Out' Walks; these walks are made available for public use by private landowners who retain responsibility for all inspections and maintenance.

1.4 Closed Churchyards.

The Council currently maintains six closed churchyards that are no longer used for burial. In addition to inspecting and maintaining trees in closed churchyards, the Council also takes steps to minimise damage to historical structures in churchyards by trees.

2 Inspections and Maintenance

The Council has a duty to take 'reasonable care' to maintain its trees and woodlands in safe condition. The Council meets this legal responsibility by maintaining a comprehensive record of all tree inspections and maintenance.

All trees owned by the Council are inspected by professionally qualified persons. All inspectors will hold a LANTRA professional tree inspection qualification, and will use Quantitative Tree Risk Assessment methods to assess tree safety and risk.

2.1 Proactive inspection

All Council owned trees are maintained as part of a rolling three year proactive inspection programme. Reactive inspections are also undertaken where necessary, and additional maintenance undertaken if required.

The purpose of the proactive three year inspection and maintenance programme is to:

- Minimise the risk of tree-related injury or death or damage to property within the District; and
- Reduce opportunities for civil and criminal proceedings to be taken against the Council.

The Council manages its tree inspection and maintenance programme using software that enables it to effectively store and update data on trees within its control, including details of their condition, species, asset value, age and maintenance history. This software also enables the Council to:

- Identify areas in the District that would benefit from increased tree planting or greater species variation
- Efficiently monitor individual trees that may be causing concern (eg. those trees that may have suffered damage)
- Assess common species-related ailments or defects, to ensure tree species are located in the most appropriate areas
- Effectively manage risk and prioritise maintenance works
- Produce work schedules and plans for contractors and calculate the costs incurred
- Organise the Council's rolling inspection and maintenance programme
- Suitably defend itself against litigation and insurance claims by providing evidence of proactive tree management

2.2 Proactive maintenance

Following inspection, any tree(s) that present an imminent danger to the safety of the public or property will be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Such urgent works will likely include felling or remedial pruning to alleviate any hazard(s).

Non urgent works will be prioritised according to the professional judgement of the Council's qualified officers. Such works are categorised as either 'essential' or 'desirable'. All works identified as 'essential' will be undertaken during the same financial year that the relevant tree was inspected. 'Desirable' works are of lower priority, and are usually considered towards the end of each financial year if sufficient budget is available.

2.3 Reactive inspection and maintenance

In addition to proactive inspections and maintenance, the Council also receives a number service requests each year relating to the condition of trees. The majority of enquiries arise due to the conflict between the natural growth and development of trees, and the lifestyle expectations of residents.

When assessing these service requests the Council will start with a presumption against removal of trees that are healthy, unless the basis for their removal has a clear and overriding legal, arboricultural, or ecological justification and no alternative management practice can be undertaken.

Similarly, the Council will ensure that pruning or other maintenance is undertaken in a way that benefits the health of the tree(s). Careful judgement will be given to each request, and all requests will be assessed based on the trees' environmental, amenity and biodiversity value and any other relevant criteria. Where requested works are not considered to benefit the health, future development or conservation of the tree, or where they do not assist in abating a statutory nuisance, in most cases the Council will decline to undertake the works.

The Council has long established approaches to dealing with the most commonly reported tree problems, as set out in section 3 of this Policy. Other than in extenuating circumstances, the Council will adhere to these established practices when responding to reports associated with these common problems.

The Council aims to resolve such queries as quickly as possible. Inspections are prioritised based on the level of harm reported. Following inspection the requester will be contacted and advised of the Council's intended course of action. Where remedial works are required, the Council's appointed contractor will undertake these works in accordance with the timescales set out in paragraph 2.2.

3 Common Problems Associated with Trees

Many people in North Kesteven live in close proximity to trees, of which some are owned by the Council. Some trees can be perceived negatively, particularly if located close to buildings or boundaries.

Common problems associated with trees include:

- Overhanging branches
- Excessive shade/loss of light
- Leaf/fruit fall
- Sticky deposits on property
- Physical obstruction
- Damage to property (eg. root penetration)

3.1 Structural damage

A very common concern for homeowners is the potential for structural damage caused by soil moisture extraction by tree roots. This type of damage usually only occurs in areas where the soil type comprises heavy, shrinkable clay. This soil type is prone to fluctuations in volume due to changes in moisture levels.

Most residential areas in North Kesteven are built on non-shrinkable soils, and therefore trees and tree roots are usually unlikely to cause damage to buildings. Lightly loaded structures such as garden walls, driveways and patios may be affected, although damage to heavily loaded structures such as houses is rare. This section also applies to structural collapse affecting drains and sewers.

The Council will investigate cases of alleged root damage on an individual basis, and will seek to strike a balance between the actual nuisance experienced and the trees' benefit to the wider community and environment. Removal of a tree may not necessarily be an acceptable solution when alternative options, such as root pruning and/or installation of root barriers may be more appropriate.

Incidents involving structural damage can be very complex, and the Council will not undertake works to trees without sufficient evidence. Where a particular tree is alleged to be causing damage to property, owners will be expected to provide:

- A report on alleged damage to the building
- A plan and profile of the property foundations
- A plan of the site showing the location of the building in relation to all trees and significant vegetation in the vicinity
- A trial pit cross section to underside of foundation depth plus a bore hole through the base of the trial pit to a minimum depth of 3m
- Root identification from beneath the underside of foundation.

More detailed evidence may be requested in cases where higher value trees are alleged to be causing structural damage.

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3.2 Instability/uprooting of trees

Although trees are naturally able to withstand most stormy weather conditions, a small proportion can suffer failure, either through the loss of branches or complete uprooting. Fortunately extreme weather events are relatively rare and, provided that trees are regularly inspected, tree owners including the Council should not need to take pre-emptive action.

The Council's rolling three year proactive inspection programme is designed to minimise the likelihood of damage to people or property, by identifying trees susceptible to failure before they can cause damage.

3.3 Other common problems caused by trees

This section outlines a variety of commonly reported tree problems, and sets out how the Council will respond to these. Other than in extenuating circumstances, the Council will adhere to the following established approaches when responding to reports associated with these common problems:

3.3.1 Leaves, seeds and fruit

The Council will not usually carry out works to trees to control the fall of leaves, seeds or fruit. These are natural events in the life of a tree, and are not considered to be a nuisance. Leaf, seed and/or fruit fall cannot be controlled without damage to the trees' health and amenity value.

In very extenuating circumstances and in order to fulfil its legal duties as a social housing provider, the Council may elect to undertake such works to trees on NKDC Housing Land where it is deemed essential to protect the health and safety of a vulnerable tenant. Where these circumstances apply, the Council will undertake compensatory tree planting.

3.3.2 Honeydew

Honeydew is a sugary fluid excreted by sap feeding insects, and creates a sticky coating on leaves and stems. This is a natural occurrence and is not considered to be a nuisance. The Council will therefore not undertake any remedial works to alleviate problems caused by honeydew.

3.3.3 Ivy

Contrary to popular belief ivy is not a parasite, although a dense covering of ivy on a tree can prevent thorough inspection, and may restrict a tree's ability to photosynthesise if large areas of their canopy are covered. Ivy can also add extra weight to branches, causing branches to fail.

However ivy can serve as an important habitat for wildlife, providing food and shelter for insects, birds and small mammals. The Council will assess the effects of ivy on a case by case basis, balancing the conservation benefits of the ivy with any adverse effects caused by its retention.

3.3.4 Roosting birds

Roosting birds are a natural occurrence that cannot be actively controlled by tree pruning. The Council will not usually consider pruning or felling healthy trees that are home to roosting birds.

3.3.5 Overhanging branches

The Council is not obliged to remove branches that are overhanging properties. Trees located close to and/or growing over walls and fences will be assessed on a case by case basis, and works will not be undertaken where doing so would adversely affect tree safety or health. Property owners have rights under common law to prune branches overhanging their property, however the Council recommends that advice is sought prior to carrying out any tree works to ensure tree health is not compromised.

3.3.6 Obstruction of street lights and road signs

The Council takes steps to ensure that its trees do not obscure road signs or street lighting, and therefore will give full consideration to reports regarding such obstructions.

The Council will not usually take similar steps in relation to lighting on private property.

3.3.7 Obstruction of a public highway, public right of way, or access to property or footpath

The Council will provide adequate clearance for traffic within a tree's canopy. In most circumstances this will involve a minimum clearance of 2.5m over footpaths, and a minimum clearance of 5.2m over a highway used by vehicular traffic.

If obstruction cannot be resolved by pruning or other reasonable measures, the Council may have no option than to consider removal of the tree(s). Where this applies, the Council will undertake appropriate compensatory planting nearby.

3.3.8 Size of trees

Lopping or topping of mature trees is generally considered to be poor practice. The Council will therefore not carry out works to trees on the basis that they are perceived to be too large or too tall.

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3.3.9 Loss of natural light/excessive shade

The Council will not usually carry out works to trees to reduce the effects of loss of natural light or excessive shade. In most circumstances these problems cannot be resolved without adversely affecting tree health. Individual cases will be assessed on their own merits, taking into account the trees' species, size, and proximity to habitable rooms in a property. In most circumstances the Council will not "top" trees to reduce the effects of excess shade or loss of natural light, unless high hedges legislation takes precedent.

3.3.10 Obstruction of view

There is no right in law to a view, and loss of view is not considered to be a nuisance. The Council will therefore not undertake works to improve the view from a property.

3.3.11 Security/fear of crime

The Council will treat concerns that trees provide access and/or cover for criminal acts, vandalism or harassment sympathetically and seriously. In these circumstances pruning or selective thinning of a tree may alleviate the problem.

The Council will only carry out such works after giving full consideration to the benefits of the works and their impact on tree health and amenity.

3.3.12 Television/radio reception

Tree owners have no legal obligation to carry out remedial works to address poor television or radio reception. A television licence is a permit to operate a television receiver; it does not guarantee or represent entitlement to any reception and as such is not considered to be a nuisance.

Notwithstanding this, the Council appreciates that difficulties may arise due to trees obstructing television reception. The Council will consider requests to prune trees to improve reception where it is satisfied that:

- The requester has demonstrated that there is no practical engineering solution; and
- The work required is consistent with good arboricultural practice, and will not unduly affect the trees health, amenity, future development or conservation value.

3.3.13 CCTV

The Council will give full consideration to pruning trees adjacent to CCTV cameras or within their field of view where it will not cause significant harm to tree health and amenity. Where

new cameras are to be installed, the Council will expect the organisation responsible for installation engage in pre-installation discussion to minimise the impact of the CCTV cameras on future tree maintenance.

This only applies to CCTV cameras on land operated or maintained by public institutions, where the purpose of the CCTV is to protect the general public. The Council will not carry out works to trees to improve the operation of CCTV on private property.

3.3.14 Interference with telephone cables or power cables

Where Council owned trees are reported to be affecting telephone cables or power cables, residents will be advised to contact their service provider in the first instance. The Council will work with the service provider to verify and resolve the problem.

3.3.15 Blocked drains

Tree roots may exploit existing faults in drains and sewers. By ensuring drains are in good repair, the blockage of drains by tree roots is unlikely to occur. The Council will consider requests for tree works that relate to drain blockages on their own merits. In some circumstances the Council will not consider removal of a tree or its roots, and property owners will be responsible for any necessary repairs. Where trees are believed to have caused structural collapse of a drain or sewer, residents should follow the advice outlined in section 3.1.1 of this Policy.

3.3.16 Pests and disease

Pests and diseases are a constant threat to trees and woodland cover. In recent years certain diseases affecting trees, such as Ash Dieback, have become more prevalent within the District. The Council will take account of new and existing pests and diseases as part of its inspection and maintenance programme, and will manage its own tree stock accordingly. Trees affected by pests or disease will not necessarily need to be felled, and often good tree management will ensure that problems are kept under control. If felling is necessary the Council will undertake appropriate compensatory planting nearby.

4 Tree Planting

The Council aims to take all available opportunities to increase tree cover across North Kesteven. Although Council owned land makes up a relatively small proportion of all land in the District, the environmental, social and economic benefits of new planting on these sites should not be underestimated.

The Council, through its Tree Strategy, is aiming to increase the number of trees on Council owned land by twenty percent before 2025. This is a challenging endeavour requiring careful planning and execution to ensure we deliver the right trees in the right place, supported by appropriate aftercare and maintenance.

4.1 What and where we will plant

Planting choices will be made flexibly, and will take account of a range of factors including:

- **Location** – the Council will avoid planting new trees in locations where they could interfere with highway safety or the proper maintenance of local infrastructure;
- **Proximity to buildings** – the Council will avoid planting new trees in places where problems such as subsidence or other damage to property might occur. Similarly the Council will avoid planting trees in locations where there are likely to be excessive maintenance pressures;
- **Biodiversity** – planting choices will be made in order to maximise opportunities for creating a more biodiverse environment;
- **Biosecurity** – to minimise and control the spread of pests and disease, the Council will only source new trees from suppliers that can demonstrate adherence to biosecurity best practice
- **Density** – the Council will give careful consideration to planting densities to prevent over-crowding
- **Species** – the Council will not restrict itself to indigenous species, although non-indigenous species will be chosen with care; and
- **Opportunities to enhance local communities with street trees** - the cost of cutting small areas of standard ‘amenity grass’ is high, and many small areas of Council owned land are largely or entirely comprised of amenity grass with little biodiversity value. Where possible, the Council will seek to redesign these spaces by planting one or more trees, to improve their biodiversity and overall amenity value.

4.2 Compensatory planting

The Tree Strategy acknowledges that, whilst there are ambitions to plant new trees and retain as many of our existing trees as possible, there will from time to time be a need, for various reasons, for certain trees to be felled. Where this is the case, the Council will deliver compensatory planting at a ratio of two new trees for every tree felled.

When carrying out compensatory planting the Council aims to plant replacements as close as possible to where the original tree was felled. In some cases, depending on the reason for felling or the amount of space available, replacements will not be capable of being accommodated on the same piece of land. Where this is the case the Council will aim to plant the replacements as close as possible to the original location.

5 Planting of Other Green Infrastructure

The Council acknowledges the contribution that other forms of green infrastructure can make to creating a sustainable and biodiverse natural environment. Other planting such as shrubs, hedgerows, meadow grasses and wildflowers can create more interesting natural spaces for people to enjoy, whilst simultaneously improving the environment and providing new and enhanced habitats for wildlife.

The Council intends to take opportunities, where appropriate, to carry out these forms of planting on our land.

5.1 What and where we will plant

When determining what Council owned land is suitable for naturalistic planting, the Council will consider the impact of such planting on adjoining land owners and land users and will take account of the way in which the land is used by the public.

In most cases the Council envisages that naturalistic planting will be a positive addition to our communities. However we acknowledge that this form of planting may not be suitable in all locations, such as on land that has established use for outdoor sports activities or in heavy use areas.

Planting decisions will follow similar principles to those set out in section 4.1 of this Policy.

5.2 Maintenance of naturalised planting areas

The Council acknowledges that at certain times of the year naturalised planting can be perceived by some as untidy. However as one of the key objectives of naturalising our land is improving biodiversity, the Council aims to strike a balance between maintaining for tidiness and encouraging wildlife to flourish. Naturalised planting areas will therefore be mown less frequently than the Council's standard 'amenity grass', and will be maintained in accordance with all relevant industry best practice in order to safeguard biodiversity.

Whilst concerns regarding the appearance of naturalised planting areas will be handled seriously and sensitively, the Council is committed to improving the quality of our natural environment and therefore is unlikely to agree to requests to maintain grass at a short length. Similarly, the Council will adopt a no tolerance approach to the unsolicited maintenance of such land by other parties, and may make physical alterations to some sites to prevent new planting being damaged by vehicle parking.

Appendix B: Tree Protection and Landscaping on Development Sites

Summary

This document aims to outline the Council's expectations for new development, in relation to the protection of existing trees and the planting of new trees and other landscaping.

This document does not seek to override existing planning legislation, policy or practice guidance; its purpose is to clarify, based on the Council's commitments to tackling climate change and improving tree cover and biodiversity, its ambitions for delivering on these commitments through the planning process.

As outlined out in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, North Kesteven is set to experience significant housing growth up to 2036 and beyond. These new developments will realise a range of benefits across NK, such as affordable homes and funding for key infrastructure including roads, education and healthcare.

However new developments place pressure on the natural environment, including trees, hedges and other green infrastructure. These natural assets are at risk of damage and destruction before and during the construction phase, and therefore robust measures are needed to minimise this. Where needs for new landscaping are identified, this also presents opportunities for additional planting.

High quality green infrastructure is vital to ensure that developments both enhance the amenity of their surroundings, and offer accommodation capable of supporting residents' health and wellbeing over the long term.

1 Protection of trees during construction

The protection of existing trees during the construction phase of development is essential. Trees deliver a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits, all of which can come under threat if they suffer damage as a result of construction work. Construction damage can be caused in a variety of different ways, such as by carrying out the following activities within root protection areas:

- Digging/excavation and stripping of topsoils
- Driving of plant/machinery
- Changing site levels
- Storing items such as materials, plant and machinery
- Lighting fires
- Inappropriate pruning

The above list is not exhaustive.

1.1 Physical protection of trees on development sites

To ensure that damage to trees is minimised developments do not cause unnecessary harm to the natural environment, the Council will require developers to install tree protection barriers/fencing along the extent of root protection areas. Tree protection measures should be installed in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 (or subsequent editions if updated).

Tree protection barriers/fencing should be installed to protect:

- Trees subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO); and
- All other mature and semi-mature trees, unless the planning permission specifically states that the tree(s) are going to be removed as part of the development.

The above requirements shall apply to all qualifying trees at risk of harm from a development, including trees located on land adjoining the development site.

These requirements will be imposed by use of planning conditions.

1.2 Replacement of destroyed and damaged trees on development sites

In addition to the tree protection measures set out in paragraph 1.1, where a development is identified as being likely to affect protected trees and/or mature or semi mature trees and one or more of those trees is destroyed, removed, is uprooted or dies within a period of 2 years from the date the development is completed, the Council will require the trees to be replaced during the next planting season.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Council, replacement trees will be required to be of the same species as the original tree(s), and to be of 'heavy standard' size (usually with a girth of between 12 and 14 centimetres).

These requirements will be imposed by use of planning conditions.

1.3 Removal of trees prior to development

The Council will expect developers, wherever possible, to retain existing mature and semi-mature trees and incorporate them into proposals.

In the event that trees are removed, or it appears to the Council that they have been deliberately damaged either:

- within 12 months of the date a planning application is submitted; or
- at any time during the period between submission of an application and commencement of the development

the Council may require compensatory landscaping to mitigate these tree losses. Due to the environmental impact of such losses compensatory planting may, depending on the size of the original trees, exceed a replanting ratio of 1: 1.

1.4 Protection, retention and replacement of hedgerows

In addition to the numerous benefits of trees, hedgerows deliver a range of important biodiversity benefits. For this reason, the Council will adopt the same approach to the protection and replacement of hedgerows as that set out in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3.

1.5 Tree Preservation Orders

Where the Council considers one or more trees on a current or future development site to be at risk of destruction or harm, it will likely 'make' a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to safeguard their viability.

The Council will 'make' and 'confirm' TPOs in accordance with relevant Planning Practice Guidance. When determining whether a TPO is required the Council will take account of a range of 'amenity' factors, including but not limited to:

- Visual prominence and impact
- Species
- Historic significance
- Shading/cooling benefits
- Air quality
- Biodiversity and ecology
- Climate change (although not in isolation)
- Community health and wellbeing

In assessing whether trees are 'at risk' the Council may take account of land ownership and reserves the right to deem trees to be 'at risk' if they are under the control of a person known to have previously shown disregard for trees on development sites.

2 Landscaping

High quality landscaping can deliver substantial enhancement to new developments, by providing interesting and engaging green spaces and improving residential amenity, health and wellbeing.

The Council is committed to ensuring new developments are accompanied by high quality landscaping. Landscaping should meet the needs of communities for the lifetime of the development, and be designed to deliver both short and longer term environmental, social and economic benefits.

The Council will therefore be most supportive of landscaping proposals that take account of the following:

2.1 Species and diversity

In the interests of biodiversity and resilience, developers are encouraged to incorporate an increasingly broad range of species into landscaping proposals. This approach is likely to enhance and safeguard canopy cover in the longer term, whilst simultaneously contributing to tackling climate change.

Whilst developers should design landscaping schemes to maximise the number of trees planted, the Council strongly supports the planting of larger species where feasible. This may reduce the number of trees that can be planted due to larger trees requiring more space to grow. However larger trees can have a greater visual impact in the streetscene compared to smaller species, produce greater canopy cover over time, and generally deliver more environmental benefits such as absorption of carbon and other harmful pollutants, and surface water run-off.

Emerging government policy is strongly advocating for developments to deliver biodiversity net-gain in the near future. By combining trees with other forms of naturalised planting, developers are more likely to be able to deliver this. The Council is therefore likely to support landscaping proposals that incorporate opportunities for biodiversity net-gain.

2.2 Planting specification

With the exception of new and replacement hedgerows and woodlands, the Council will generally expect new planting to be comprised of 'heavy standard' sized trees. These trees usually have a girth of 12 – 14 centimetres, and are container-grown making them suitable for planting most of the year. Trees of this specification are also better established, and with appropriate planting techniques and aftercare are less likely to fail.

All new planting will be expected to be planted and cared for in accordance with industry best practice. The Council will, by use of planning conditions, require new planting to be replaced if, within a period of 7 years from the initial planting date, it is destroyed, removed, uprooted or dies.

2.3 Multi-functional planting

The Council recognises the importance of providing multifunctional open spaces, and in particular acknowledges the role trees can play in reducing surface water flooding. All major developments are required to utilise 'sustainable urban drainage systems' (SUDS); the Council strongly encourages developers to design SUDS that incorporate trees to improve water absorption and land stability, whilst simultaneously providing high quality and biodiverse recreational and amenity space.

3 Enforcement

3.1 Breaches of planning control related to tree protection and landscaping

The aim of this document is to support the Council in achieving positive outcomes for climate change and green infrastructure through the planning system. The vast majority of developers engage very positively with the Council, provide high quality environments for users of their developments, and comply with their planning obligations and conditions.

However there will be a small proportion of developments where this does not happen. This can result in developments that cause significant environmental, social and economic harm to the surrounding community and the district as a whole. The Council takes these cases seriously, and aims to investigate and resolve all breaches of planning control in accordance with its existing Compliance and Enforcement Policy, available here.

When considering expediency of enforcement action, the Council will take account of the aims of this document and its overall Tree Strategy.

3.2 Offences involving protected trees and hedges

Illegal tree works can have a severe impact on communities and the environment, and ineffective enforcement only serves to diminish deterrents for those considering committing environmental offences.

When investigating criminal offences the Council takes all enforcement decisions in accordance with its Corporate Enforcement Policy, available here. The Council will consider if formal action is in the interests of the public, by having full regard to the nature and extent of any harm(s) caused to the safety, health and wellbeing of the public, and the extent of any harm to the environment.

As offences involving protected trees are likely to involve some degree of harm to the environment as a minimum, the Council will take a robust approach when dealing with these offences. Prosecution may not be an appropriate sanction in all cases, however it may be the most suitable option available if an offender has caused irreparable harm.

Penalties for these offences can be very high, and therefore the Council strongly urges all land owners and occupiers, and all tree surgeons and contractors, to check before carrying out works to trees that they are not in a designated conservation area or subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). An interactive map showing the extent of all conservation areas and TPOs are available on the Council's website, at www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building/planning/tree-protection-and-hedges/map-of-tree-preservation-orders/.

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