



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



TREE STRATEGY



FOREWORD

North Hertfordshire is described as a green and pleasant place to live. I believe this is largely due to the abundance of trees not only in our rural areas but also in our urban settlements. We may not realise it but trees form an essential element of our every day lives.

On a more personal note, living in the Worlds First Garden City, I truly appreciate the importance of trees in the urban environment, they really do bring an element of the countryside and calm into all our lives.

Executive Member Environment
Cllr Michael Weeks



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BENEFITS OF A TREE STRATEGY

The strategy aims to conserve and improve the character of North Hertfordshire's towns and their environs by caring for the Council's trees with primarily proactive planned maintenance and tree renewal programmes.

Trees are long-lived plants and their life span may be between 20 and 100 years in urban conditions or longer in favourable situations such as parks and gardens. It should be recognised that while some of the benefits of introducing a tree strategy may be immediate or become apparent over a comparatively short period in tree terms, i.e. less than five years, others will take much longer to achieve.

The development and maintenance of quality green space with adequate provision of trees is an intrinsic part of that well being. The benefits of the ability to enjoy moderate activity in pleasant surroundings are well documented, with the added advantage that the landscaping itself also helps to reduce noise nuisance, a contributor to stress, and pollution.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Trees are important. They are essential to life and their importance must not be undervalued. We all rely on plants for our existence and trees rank high on any plant list of life givers. Trees provide amenity, food, wood, shade and shelter. They provide habitats for wildlife. They bring the countryside into the town and add to its character. They absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Their foliage reduces pollution including chemical, particulate and noise pollutants. Trees may reduce the risk of flooding and soil erosion. Property values may be less where trees are not present. They reflect the changing seasons with new leaves, flowers, seeds and fruit, autumn colour, bark patterns and winter branch tracery. The presence of trees often adds calm and tranquillity to an area reducing human stress and improving the quality of life.

Most people like trees. Trees often appear permanent, immovable and timeless yet put simply, they are large, living organisms with a finite lifespan often no longer than our own. They may fall into ill health and often die prematurely. However, unlike humans and most other animals and plants, they can cause serious injury or damage if their condition causes them to fail.

In a modern environment, the need for periodic maintenance of trees and long term planning of treescapes is an essential pre-requisite to providing a safe and healthy population of trees now and in the future. This fact is well recognised by arboriculturists but not always appreciated by the general public. In 1994, the Department of Environment published the results of case study research on Urban Tree Strategies. This illustrated the range of techniques and opportunities when planning tree surveys and strategies and followed earlier recommendations by the DoE that tree strategies should be adopted. The following short extract from one such publication issued in 1993 is reproduced here. "Changes in the overall tree stock occur slowly due to the longevity of many species. As a result, the role of trees in the urban environment is often taken for granted. However, over the next 20 to 50 years there are likely to be major changes in the tree stock in those towns which have a legacy of broad-leaved native and introduced species. Large street trees often dominate major approaches or occupy central sites and, as they die, their loss will greatly impoverish the urban scene. Positive steps are needed to replace such trees".

LOCAL CONTEXT

The North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) was formed in 1974 with the amalgamation of the former urban districts of Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston together with 33 parishes administered by Hitchin Rural District Council. The District covers an area of 147 square miles and most of this area is rural in character. Its present people population is approximately 127,000 (2011 Census). The majority of the Council's tree maintenance responsibilities are confined to the District's four main towns of Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston. Baldock, Hitchin and Royston are ancient market towns and Letchworth Garden City is Britain's First Garden City. Each town has its own character to which their treescapes contribute. The recent adoption of woodlands at Great Ashby has increased the Council's tree ownership responsibilities outside the established urban areas. The Parish Council maintains trees in villages or if on designated highway the responsibility falls to the County Council. Although NHDC do not own trees on the highway it is responsible for their maintenance.

The Council's tree stock is an important resource, which is impossible to value in monetary terms. The complexities and costs of maintaining and managing trees and treescapes in public places has increased over recent years. Changes in the law, more emphasis on public safety, increased insurance claims for injury and damage, concerns about the environment, a greater awareness over the loss and replacement of trees, and complaints about the problems trees cause have all contributed to this need for improved maintenance and management.

SCOPE OF STRATEGY

The Tree Strategy focuses on the Council's management and maintenance of its tree stock. This includes trees that are either owned or managed by the Council in parks and playing fields, housing estates, highways, cemeteries and churchyards, car parks, woods and commons and other sites where trees exist. Selected maintenance of hedges, screens and semi-natural scrub generally over three metres in height is included but not garden hedges or shrubs.

The Tree strategy recognises the importance of trees in private ownership. As private bodies undertake this management they are excluded from this document.

The general policies section will apply to trees maintained by the Council in most situations throughout the district. More site-specific policies, which relate to a particular town, site type or specific locality or area, will be developed where appropriate. Existing or proposed management plans for any particular site are not contained within this document but such plans are listed under Appendix A.

The strategy provides more detailed information and guidance on the arboricultural aspects of the Council's Green Space Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Tree strategy is compliant with the:

Vision for North Hertfordshire:

"Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live work and prosper"

And specifically to the councils strategic objectives,

"To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints"

Green Space strategy:

"To provide a sustainable, strategic approach for the future management of green space".

OBJECTIVE

To provide the Council with a management tool that clearly sets out agreed priorities for the long-term management of the Council's tree stock.

AIMS

- a) Provide a basis to perpetuate the character of towns and other areas and provide for a continuity of the local treescape by establishing a tree population with a balanced age structure and diverse species mix.
- b) Allow the identification, quantification and evaluation of the Council's tree resource.
- c) Enable the preparation and execution of maintenance regimes and the prioritising and programming of a periodic maintenance or conservation works appropriate to the nature of each site. The Council's legal obligations would also be met more effectively as would resistance to claims for damage or negligence.
- d) Improve the service to the general public. By increasing proactive maintenance and prudent replacement, trees would cause less danger, damage and nuisance thus reducing complaints, claims for damage and emergency situations.
- e) Enable the true cost of maintaining the Council's tree stock in a responsible manner to be established and allow realistic annual estimates to be compiled. Initial costs could increase significantly, but in the longer term as the health and condition of the tree stock improves, subsequent maintenance costs should reduce.
- f) Make the general public aware of the strategy by appropriate publicity thereby projecting the Council as an environmentally responsible body. Generally encourage and educate people not only to appreciate trees but also understand the reasons and need for tree renewal.
- g) Establish a more positive form of tree management which would allow both Council Members and its officers to deal with representations from the public, which may conflict with the views of others, in a firm, fair and more orderly manner.

TREE DESCRIPTION SUMMARIES

The majority of trees for which the Council is responsible are situated within the urban areas of the district. The following brief descriptions summarise the key arboricultural features in each town.

The surveying of all trees under the Council's control is being currently undertaken on a three yearly cycle across the district. This is a time consuming exercise as, with the exception of woods and other semi-natural sites, each tree has to be inspected and its details recorded. Woods and semi-natural sites are recorded as an area. Information on these sites relates to trees only and do not consider grass, low scrub or water courses. Therefore, this condition survey is based on sample areas from each town but it is considered that the information given below is a fair reflection of the current situation. Details of each site category are give under their respective town heading with a summary of areas of concern at the end of each town section.

BALDOCK

Baldock has a significant number of mature street trees the most prominent of which line its wide High Street. Many roads in the housing areas to the south and west of the town centre also have prominent tree avenues. The housing areas to the east, and particularly Clothall Common have mainly informal plantings of trees at early-maturity growing on amenity land.

The Weston Hills includes one of the largest wooded areas in the district maintained by the Council. It is an important area for wildlife. The main wooded area is recovering well from the damage sustained in the great storms of 1987 and 1990 with new, young woodland emerging.

The town's parks, playing fields, cemetery and churchyard contain both formal and informal tree features of mixed age.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

Details of each site category are given under their respective heading with a summary of areas of concern at the end.

- a) **Cemetery:** The trees here are generally in a reasonable condition. A majority of trees are aged at early to full maturity. There is very limited space for new planting. The larger boundary trees overhanging adjacent gardens are occasionally a source of complaint.
- b) **St Mary's Churchyard:** The situation here is very similar to the cemetery but with few complaints from adjacent residents.
- c) **Recreation Grounds:** Avenue Park is the main park in the town but sports and play facilities occupy much of the available space. There is a range of tree species and ages here including a few rare species. Most trees are in a reasonable condition. A small number of trees have been identified for attention. Other, smaller parks and play areas include Holroyd Crescent, Chiltern Road and Pryor Road recreation grounds where they exhibit a range of tree ages.
- d) **Clothall Road Playing Field:** This site is known locally as Bakers Close. There are a number of mature trees around the boundary areas primarily in the mature to over-mature range. Occasional maintenance on some of the larger trees is required to maintain safety and appearance. New planting here, involving excavating the soil, is generally not allowed as this site is a scheduled ancient monument.
- e) **Highway trees:** The majority of street trees are planted in verges around the town. There is a reasonable range of ages and species. The condition of trees is also variable with younger, healthy stock and older specimens nearing the end of their life. In roads such as Weston Way, Chilvers Bank and The Leas, new planting undertaken in the 1980's has led to a generally healthy population of trees in early-maturity. The reintroduction of pollarding Lime trees in the Nightingale Way area should reduce complaints and the maintenance requirement here in future years. The trees in the High Street consist of a diverse age range from young Alders to the southern end of the road to early and over-mature but includes the semi-mature Limes in the market car parking area.
- f) The age and condition of the trees were considered as part of the High Street improvement scheme which was completed in 2011 and necessary works were undertaken. To the north of the town centre, the verge trees in Salisbury Road are generally in a poor condition. There are also areas of semi-natural highway land including the steep banks in London Road and at the entrance to Bygrave Road. The banks in London Road, in particular, were in need of improved management.

The coppicing of selected areas has been undertaken to remove leaning trees and encourage dense, safer regeneration to bind the soil.

- g) **Public amenity land:** This category of land is found primarily within housing areas and in Baldock, forms an important part of the character of the Clothall Common estate. The trees on Clothall Common range in age from young through semi-mature with some of the early plantings entering early-maturity. Most of the trees are in good health and growing well. The early plantings prior to building on the site were planted in groups of six different tree species and are becoming quite dense as they increase in size. This has led to number of complaints about nuisance.
- h) **Woods and commons:** At Weston Hills, most of the trees are young to semi-mature in age and have grown largely from natural generation since the 1990 storm. There are also areas of older trees some of which are in poor condition. Ash dieback has been recorded at this site. Ivel Springs has a large number of young trees which were planted in 2005 adjacent to the railway by local volunteers including the Rotary Club and Scouts. Mature trees and scrub are located further north on the site. The spinney to the east of Chilvers Bank and Hilltop contains some large trees at the rear of the houses. The trees here are in a reasonable condition owing to some periodic maintenance recently.
- i) **Miscellaneous sites:** Of the two Council owned allotment sites in Baldock, North Road allotments has some arboricultural interest. There are a few older trees in the wetter area towards Ivel Springs. Some new trees have been planted near the railway bank which is presently under the management of the Countryside Management Service. The Baldock Allotment Association currently maintains the allotment sites in Baldock. This includes maintenance of trees.

The car park and market area in High Street contains a row of Limes at a semi-mature age. One of these trees at the front of the telephone kiosks was planted on memory of Ron Page: a well respected Baldock resident. One over-mature Lime remains here and will require removal in due course. The trees at The Twitchell car park and to rear of the adjacent Community Centre are of mixed ages but the larger, older trees have a limited life expectancy because of the need for safety. There is quite limited scope for replanting here.

SUMMARY

- a) The trees in the cemetery, churchyard, and recreation grounds are generally in a satisfactory condition but should receive periodic maintenance and the need for tree replacement monitored.
- b) The groups of maturing trees on Clothall Common will require selective thinning at an early date to avoid overcrowding and excessive nuisance if future problems are to be avoided.
- c) Maintenance of highway trees has improved due to regular inspections and appropriate pruning.
- d) The emerging new area of wood at Weston Hills will require management taking into account Ash Dieback, to ensure continued satisfactory growth. Some of the older trees will require attention to improve safety especially near paths and areas where children are known to be active.
- e) The older trees in The Twitchell car park will need careful monitoring and may need replacing over the next five to ten years.



HITCHIN

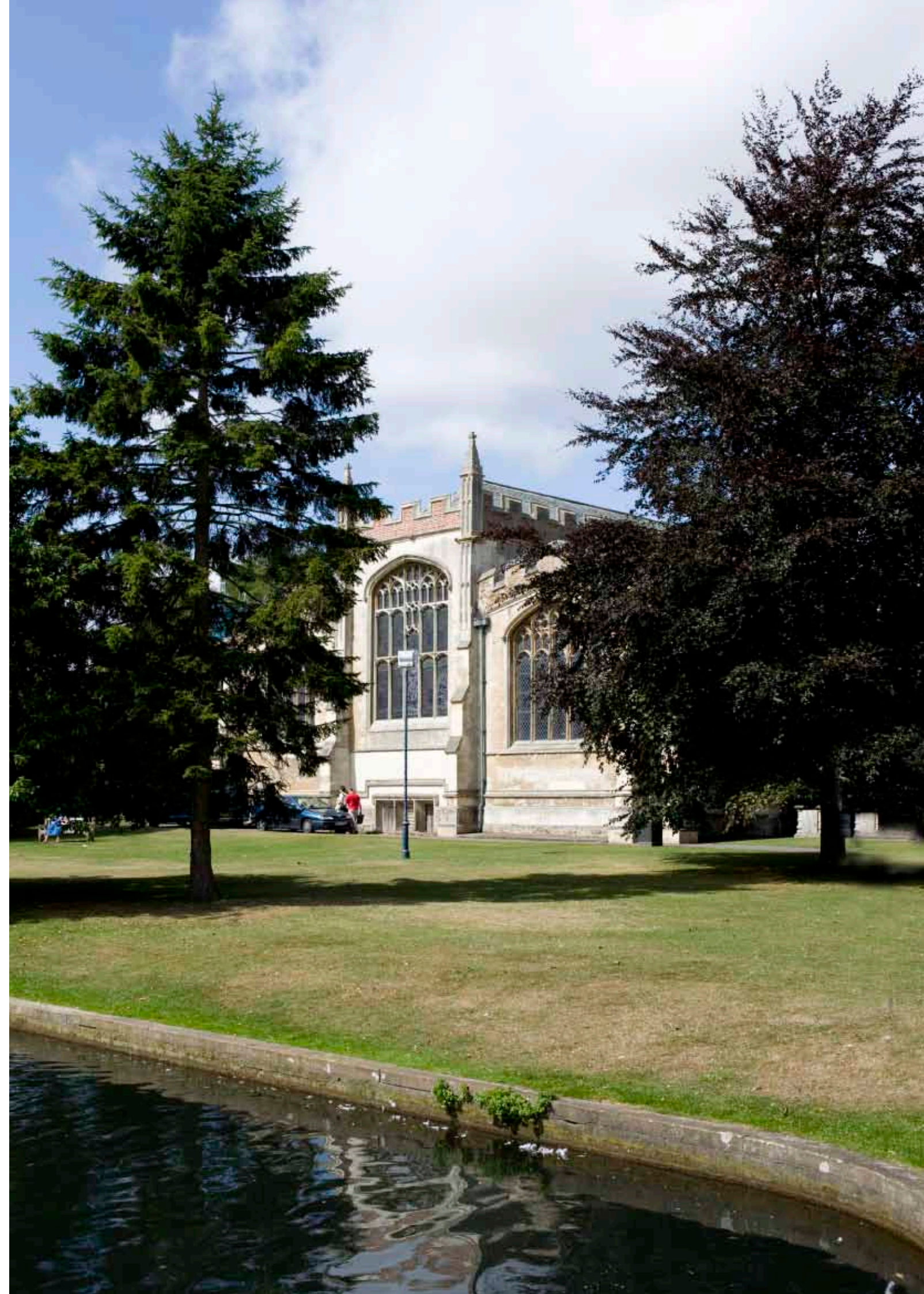
Hitchin, including Ickleford, has many roads with smaller, ornamental trees at a range of ages. It also has a small number of prominent street tree avenues such as The Avenue, Chiltern Road (where the trees are actually in the carriageway) and Hampden Road. The management of these trees in the past, has been contentious and the problems exacerbated by a lack of funds. The recent reintroduction of pollarding in Hampden Road has considerably eased the problems here after years of disagreement and controversy.

The town has numerous recreation grounds in the form of parks, playing fields and open spaces and allotments where both formal and informal tree features exist. Most tree age groups are represented at these sites.

The semi-natural sites include Oughtonhead Common, Bury Mead Springs, St Ippolyts Brook Rural Walk and Purwell Meadows. The latter site was replanted with numerous trees mainly around its boundary areas. All four sites comprise a range of wildlife habitats such as grass, shrubs, trees and water. Parts of the Woodside area in Walsworth Road is also semi-natural in nature.

St Mary's Churchyard and its riverside frontage contain prominent, specimen trees of all age groups. In Hitchin cemetery there is a substantial population of trees but many of these are now over-mature and the loss of older trees is frequent, however, selective re-planting has been undertaken.

The Market Square and St Mary's Square have individual and groups of specimen trees of varying age and amenity value.



CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) **Cemetery:** Hitchin cemetery is divided into two main sections. The older and larger north east section containing the chapel and a smaller south west section. Many of the trees in the older section are in a poor condition and a gradual erosion of these over-mature trees will continue in future years. This is especially true of the Silver Birch which have a comparatively short life span. There has been some limited planting of specimen trees in this section over the past 20 years where space permits but these will not compensate for the losses being incurred. The younger, south west section also has some ageing Silver Birch along its St John's Road boundary and these are being lost gradually. The remaining mature trees in this section are in a variable condition with some younger, healthy trees at a semi-mature age. The current budget allocation for cemetery trees is not sufficient for the long term maintenance of the tree stock consideration should be given for a growth bid.
- b) **St Mary's Churchyard:** The trees in the churchyard are generally in a good condition. Only one or two older trees have a limited life expectancy at present. A number of young and semi-mature trees are present which should offset any tree losses over the next ten to twenty years.
- c) **Recreation Grounds:** The main ornamental park in Hitchin is Bancroft Recreation Ground. Trees here are a mixture of older specimens which are now fully to over-mature and younger trees planted over the last 25 years. The general condition of the trees is good but more work has been necessary on the older trees in recent years to maintain safety. Butts Close accommodates an important avenue across its main open area. The original trees were Horse Chestnuts and it is generally accepted that these trees were planted in 1937 to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI. However, photographs exist dated 1906 and 1943 both showing very young trees planted in the approximate positions of the present trees. The trees in the central area of this feature have performed poorly because of the wet growing conditions and with the added intrusion of bacterial infections and canker which has led to a large number of Horse Chestnuts being felled. A replanting scheme has commenced with Alder being the chosen species. Other trees on the Close appear reasonably safe and healthy. Windmill Hill (and Dell field) has a healthy number of young and semi-mature trees present with a small number of prominent ageing trees with a limited life expectancy. Oughtonhead Way and Smithsons Recreation Ground both have young and older trees in a generally good condition.

Notable playing fields include King George V, Ransome Recreation Ground, Walsworth Common and St John's Road. King George V playing field has a number of younger trees planted around its boundaries and also a limited number of semi-mature trees to provide arboricultural interest in the future. The trees at Ransome Recreation Ground are in a fair condition with a few older trees needing attention. At Walsworth Common, many of the large riverside Willows are showing their age with decay and defects which have led to a programme of pollarding. Young trees planted adjacent to the railway bank have suffered from vandalism. Trees at St John's Road recreation ground are mostly at semi or early-maturity requiring limited maintenance at present. Other playing fields include Burford Way and Swinburne Avenue where a significant amount of new planting was undertaken as part of the Trees for Life programme. Purwell Lane has some older trees in average condition and a small number of healthy semi-mature trees. Cadwell Lane has little of arboricultural significance.

- d) **Public amenity areas:** One of the main amenity areas in Hitchin is in Passingham Avenue where there is a large selection of young and semi-mature trees. There are numerous other smaller areas within the housing areas of the town. While no major problems have been noted, periodic maintenance is required to maintain both young and older trees.
- e) **Highway trees:** The main street tree issues in Hitchin over past years have been where large, older street trees exist. Roads such as The Avenue, Chiltern Road, Hampden and Granville Roads and the upper end of Wymondley Road have been particularly problematic along with Ryder Way in Ickleford. The issues revolve primarily around nuisance and damage to footways and kerbing. The trees may not be dangerous but a lack of routine maintenance pruning and some trees with large roots growing in footways rather than grass verges have exacerbated the problems. There are numerous other highway trees where their condition has previously been less than satisfactory because of a lack of maintenance funding.
- f) **Semi-natural sites:** Oughtonhead Common has a number of locations where older trees are present and occasional problems with fallen trees or branch shedding are experienced. Most of the young trees at Purwell Meadows are becoming established but some the older trees and larger scrub vegetation is in need of inspection and attention. The large trees alongside the St Ipolytts Brook Rural Walk, and particularly the Poplars, are becoming prone to limb shedding.
- g) **Miscellaneous sites:** The two main allotment sites with trees are Nightingale Road (located within Ransome Recreation Ground) and Old Hale Way. The former site has a row of pollarded Limes in reasonable condition. Old Hale Way has a number of riverside Poplar trees which are in a poor to fair condition.

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Most of the town car parks have a tree presence. Woodside car park has the highest population of trees and these are considered to be reasonably safe, although regular maintenance is still required. Trees in other car parks are in a reasonable condition.

A small number of the trees at the Hitchin Library complex are in a poor condition and require attention. Others planted when the Tilehouse Street bypass was constructed are now at a semi-mature age and would benefit from thinning to leave the best specimens room to grow. The trees at the Hitchin Swimming Centre and Archers have received occasional maintenance over past years. Some of the older trees especially adjacent to Butts Close are showing evidence of over-maturity and decline

SUMMARY

- a) A gradual loss of trees in Hitchin cemetery can be expected over the next decade or two. A planned programme of removal and replanting may be appropriate here but the need for grave space is paramount. The current budget allocation for cemetery trees is not sufficient for the long term maintenance of the tree stock consideration should be given for a growth bid.
- b) The town's recreation grounds generally support a healthy range of tree species of an acceptable age structure. There will be a loss of older trees over future years and the need for replacement planting monitored.
- c) The maintenance of highway trees is reasonable at present with urgent, essential and general maintenance being undertaken.
- d) Areas of mature and over-mature trees within semi-natural sites are poorly managed at present. There is a need to review the maintenance and management of these areas to ensure their future health, safety and conservation.
- e) Periodic inspections and maintenance of trees in car parks is ongoing, especially in areas where tree safety is a high priority. Trees in allotment sites also need attention at appropriate intervals. Some of the trees in the jointly owned library (NHDC/HCC) require attention.
- f) Older trees at Old Hale Way Allotments and the Hitchin Swimming Centre will need attention in the near future.

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

Letchworth Garden City is Great Britain's First Garden City. One of its most prominent features is the avenues of large, mature street trees which line many of the roads around the town centre. Since the early 1970's, attempts to replace some of the older tree avenues have been made with varying degrees of success. The two main problems have been a lack of funding continuity and resistance to mature tree removals by residents. The presence of wide grass verges in many roads lend themselves to planting with street trees and more success has been achieved in recent years.

The town centre has seen a number of improvement schemes over the past twenty-five years including the refurbishment of Broadway Gardens (formally Kennedy Gardens) the Broadway Walk area and the main town centre thoroughfare redevelopment. Many of the trees in the town centre are young or in early-maturity.

Beyond the town centre, the older housing areas have avenues of street trees of varying ages. The Grange estate, a 1950's development, has a mixture of avenue trees and less formal plantings while the Jackman's and Lordship estates, 1960's and 1980's respectively, have most of their trees on open grass areas.

The Garden City also has a number of playing fields and parks with primarily informal plantings of trees. New plantings at some of these sites increased the numbers of trees present and should improve species age and diversity.

Letchworth has two cemeteries now. The old cemetery in Icknield Way has a largely established population of mature trees while the new Wilbury Hills cemetery has only young trees at present.

Norton Common is the prime and unique semi-natural site in the town which has a range of habitat types as well as both formal and informal tree features. There are a number of smaller woods and spinneys dotted around the town including Murder Lane spinney and Jackmans plantation.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) **Cemeteries:** The two cemeteries in the town are Letchworth cemetery in Icknield Way and Wilbury Hills cemetery in Stotfold Road which opened in 2003. In Letchworth cemetery, many of the trees are fully to over-mature. The general condition of these older trees has improved over recent years following the pollarding of the main tree avenue through the middle of the site and other pruning works to remove dead wood and reduce nuisance. Some new trees were planted to fill gaps in the aforementioned avenue. The newer Wilbury Hills cemetery contains only young trees at present.
- b) **Churchyards:** The Council is responsible for trees in two churchyards: St Nicholas's at Norton and St Mary's in Old Letchworth. The trees in both churchyards are in a fair condition with a mix of old and young trees.
- c) **Recreation Grounds:** Howard Park and Howard Gardens have a significant population of trees many are/were becoming over-mature and their life expectancy may be less than fifteen years. There are, however, some young and semi-mature trees among the more mature trees which are growing well. Since the refurbishment of these sites, with Heritage Lottery Funding a large proportion of potentially poor trees were removed and a healthy number of young trees replanted. Broadway Gardens and Broadway Walk (which is strictly public highway) refurbished in 2003 and both sites now contain a significant number of young trees. The young trees in Broadway Gardens are growing quite well although three of the original mature Oaks at its north end were retained one was unfortunately felled due to extensive root decay. The Sweet Gum trees in Broadway Walk were variable in condition and struggling to establish. A decision was made to replace these with a species of Himalayan Birch which is proving successful. The main Garden City playing fields are Jackmans, Baldock Road, Hillbrow, Wilbury, Grange and Temple Gardens. All these sites have areas of older trees in the form of specimens or groups, tree belts, and a few areas of tall scrub. Most of the mature trees are in an average to good condition but the scrub areas appear more neglected. The Jackmans, Grange and Temple Gardens sites are all planted with young trees and shrubs as part of the "Trees For Life" programme.
- d) **Public amenity areas:** There are significant areas of public amenity space within some of the housing estates around the outer town despite the transfer of much amenity land around former Council housing areas to North Hertfordshire Homes. The trees in these areas are generally in a fair to good condition. As most of the housing estates with significant amenity areas are less than 50 years of age, the original tree plantings range from semi to fully-mature in age.

- The amenity areas in Waysbrook, and Westholm and Eastholm Greens contain a range of tree ages and most trees are in reasonable health but require some pruning maintenance. The maintenance of a locally prominent Hornbeam Screen in Sollershott East has been complicated by a land ownership issue. Arrangements for its regular maintenance to preserve the feature are currently undertaken by NHDC, but ideally the ownership requires clarification for future works.
- e) **Highway trees:** The street or verge trees in the Garden City exhibit a wide range in age, condition, size and species. Many of the trees are planted in formal avenues. It is a generalisation, but the normal life span of street trees roughly equates to the human life span, ie. Between 50 and 100 years. Therefore, many of the original avenue plantings are being gradually eroded by tree losses. The condition of the older trees will continue to deteriorate over the next 20 years. A significant amount of new tree planting has taken place since the 1970's some of these younger avenues, which are generally much healthier, should contribute to a continuity of the town's treescape into the foreseeable future. The choice of tree species to plant the new avenues has not been trouble free. In the 1980's and early 1990's, two tree species have given rise to ongoing problems. In Willian Way, the planting of an Ornamental Ash species has led to problems with weak forks and limb shedding which was not foreseen. A similar problem has been experienced with certain clones of Plane tree, eg. those planted in Pixmore Way (east section), and nursery suppliers now acknowledge the importance of clonal selection at the propagation stage of tree production. Pests and diseases have also contributed to the restraint of planting selective indigenous species such as Horse Chestnut and Ash.
- f) **Woods and commons:** The prime semi-natural site is Norton Common. In the late 1970's and 1980's regeneration was encouraged by an annual coppicing of selected areas. This annual maintenance ceased owing to a lack of resources and there has been no similar periodic maintenance since. A recent range of tree works has been undertaken concerned primarily with safety requirements over adjacent roads and new cycle path. The trees in Jackmans plantation and the spinney's in Howard Drive and Radburn Way are in a good condition but concerns by adjacent residents arise occasionally over potential danger and damage. The wooded belt adjacent Pix Brook at Wilbury Road contains a numbers of specimen mature Oaks, which pre-date the Garden City.
- g) **Miscellaneous sites:** Trees have a presence at all the main allotment sites and tree condition is variable.

- h) The town's car parks have few trees. Since the refurbishment of Howard Park and subsequent redevelopment of the Hillshott car park all problematic Lombardy Poplars were removed for reasons of safety and new planting undertaken. The trees at Arena car park had declined and were subsequently removed and recently replaced with new planting.
- i) There is a tree presence at the Council Offices and Town Lodge. These trees appear reasonably healthy.

SUMMARY

- a) The older trees in Letchworth cemetery will require ongoing maintenance to keep them in a safe condition and control nuisance to adjacent residential properties. This will include periodic repollarding of the main avenue of Limes every five to ten years. More replanting may be necessary in the longer term.
- b) At Howard Park and Gardens, short term maintenance will need to include attention to the older trees. The refurbishment of these two sites dictate the priorities for medium and long term maintenance. The performance of the young trees in Broadway Gardens and especially Broadway Walk will require close monitoring especially over the next few years to ensure their satisfactory establishment. In addition to the general maintenance of young and older trees in playing field sites, attention to neglected scrub areas and overgrown hedgerows is required.
- c) While the general maintenance of highway trees is currently satisfactory in all four towns, it has become obvious that more general works are required in Letchworth mainly because of its high population of street trees.
- d) The periodic maintenance of the trees and scrub on Norton Common needs to be considered to regenerate and conserve its character. A management plan is being updated to provide a pro-active approach to programmed works, for which Countryside Management Service and Friends of Norton Common (volunteers) provide immense contributory input.
- e) The need to maintain or replace older trees in car parks and especially ongoing young tree maintenance should be considered.



ROYSTON

Royston has seen much new housing development outside the town centre since the middle of the last century but it has managed to retain a significant amount of its tree belts and plantations particularly in the southern half of the town. The building of houses close to large and old trees has caused problems mainly because of nuisance and the risk of danger which concerns adjacent residents. These concerns are exacerbated by the presence of large, shallow rooting Beech trees growing on a thin topsoil overlying chalk. This situation has resulted in comparatively small wooded areas incurring high maintenance costs. Nevertheless, some of these areas continue to be attractive local amenities and valuable habitats for wildlife.

The various housing estates also contain a mixture of both formal and informal tree features at a range of ages. Many contain older trees of high amenity value where sites have been redeveloped from large old gardens.

The main park in the town is Priory Memorial Gardens and together with the adjacent St. John's churchyard is a pleasant local amenity containing trees in a variety of species and ages. The Gardens accommodate a memorial Cedar and an Evergreen Oak for the late Tom Potter and Harold Greenfield respectively. An Oak was also donated by the town's twin in Germany, Grossalmerode.

The two cemeteries in Melbourn Road both contain some large prominent trees with associated understorey most of which is becoming neglected.



CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) **Cemeteries:** The two cemeteries, one on the east and one on the west side of Melbourn Road, both support an ageing population of trees. The west cemetery also has lengths of neglected trees and scrub along its north and south boundaries. The trees are generally in a fair to good condition but there are very few young trees present to eventually replace the older trees. The trees in St John's churchyard are in a good condition and exhibit a range of ages. The Yew trees adjacent to the Church have given rise to concerns over shading and dampness whereby pruning has been undertaken to assist in alleviating the issue.
- b) **Recreation Grounds:** Priory Memorial Gardens contains a good range of tree species and ages. The condition of the trees is also generally good. There has been a significant amount of new planting over recent years to replace a number of large, old trees which were removed. There is a risk of the gardens becoming over-planted with trees if this continues. The town has three small to medium-sized playing fields. These are Newmarket Road, Ermine Close and York Way. All have a comparatively young population of trees in a good condition.
- c) **Highway trees:** Royston does not have a large specimen street tree population but what it has ranges from young through to over-mature. Some of the older trees are nearing the end of their safe life. This especially applies to certain trees in Green Drift and Sun Hill where a number of trees have recently been removed. Some of the belts of trees adjacent to highways and especially along Newmarket Road do require regular inspection and maintenance. The redevelopment of the town centre square incorporated new plating to the street scene.
- d) **Public amenity areas:** Amenity areas of land exist in many of the housing estates around Royston. The largest is in Burns Road where numerous young trees, including those in the "Trees For Life" programme, were planted on this old amenity tip site. The trees on amenity areas are considered to be in an acceptable condition with new and replacement trees planted on areas in Layston Park, King James Way and the Coombelands estate now entering semi-maturity. Two plantations previously maintained by NHDC were Greenwalk and Stile, although these were handed back to Royston Town Council in April 2014.

SUMMARY

- a) The condition of ageing trees in both cemeteries will require monitoring. The trees and scrub margins in the west cemetery require attention but funding has not been available to date. Works to the mature Horse Chestnuts adjacent to the football field need to be addresses when resources allow.
- b) The safe life expectancy of older street trees is now limited.
- c) The semi-natural belts of trees adjacent to Newmarket Road are satisfactory at present but require a longer term management regime if the character of these areas is to be maintained.
- d) Some of the older trees around the Town Hall and car park have a limited life span.

GREAT ASHBY

Great Ashby is a new area of housing development within North Hertfordshire but on the outskirts of Stevenage. The main arboricultural interest here is the woodlands in and around the developing housing estate area. The woods are of valuable habitat for local flora and fauna as well as providing residents with a pleasant local amenity. The commuted sum of money provided by the developers is helping considerably to deal with safety and nuisance issues as well as providing funds for ongoing management projects.

The District Park has been planted with numerous young trees, which will enhance the area as they establish and grow. In conjunction with NHDC the Countryside Management Service have produced a management plan.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) The increasing housing development around the ancient woodlands is having a detrimental affect. Some boundary trees have to be felled or extensively reduced for safety and nuisance reasons.
- b) Young newly planted trees have to compete with rabbit and deer damage.
- c) Natural regeneration is continuing to occur but is being hindered by trampling from the increased number of visitors.

SUMMARY

In adopting the woods in Great Ashby in 2003, the Council took control of a number of neglected and poorly managed sites. An initial sum of money followed by a commuted sum for maintenance supplied by the developers has allowed safety and essential maintenance works to be undertaken, although this resource expired in 2013. Situations involving dead, dying and defective trees will continue to arise and these will need attention where people and property are threatened. Updates to the management plans are being prepared by The Countryside Management Service so as to continue to provide longer term conservation of the woods. Regular maintenance of the new trees in the District Park will be required to ensure they grow to maturity. Due to the distinct lack of regeneration in certain areas, notably sections of Claypithill Springs, it may be necessary to introduce selective planting.

RURAL AREAS

In general trees on amenity land in the villages are the responsibility of the Parish Council. NHDC do however have a small number of public amenity areas in Orchard Road, Broom Grove and Peters Way, and St Martins Road car park.

There are trees on adopted amenity land in Angells Meadow, Ashwell which are in a reasonable condition.

The Council also has a number of tree maintenance responsibilities in Knebworth including part of St Martin's Churchyard, Knebworth Cemetery also St. Mary's Churchyard in the grounds of Knebworth Park and Martins Road car park.

Historically NHDC maintained the village trees associated with Council Housing developments. Since the transfer to North Hertfordshire Homes they undertake their own tree maintenance.

There are approximately 3,000 trees located on the highway in village locations. Unlike in the urban areas where NHDC maintain trees on behalf of the County the County maintains these trees direct. This has resulted in a two-tier approach to tree maintenance on the highway.

POLICIES

It is intended that these policies will provide information and guidance, which will help the Council and its Officers to base future decisions on agreed standards and procedures. The policies are divided into three groups. These are General Policies, Site Specific Policies and Tree Specific Policies.



GENERAL POLICIES

CONTRACT AND CONTRACTORS FOR TREE WORKS

The Council will employ specialist arboricultural contractors to undertake tree works. These contractors will operate within the conditions and specifications contained in the Council's Contract for Tree Works and under the general direction and supervision of its arboricultural officer. The tree works contract will be revised and renewed periodically as required. Specialist contractors will be invited to tender at each renewal under a framework agreement and the selection of one or more suitable contractors based on a combination of price and best value. The best value element will include proven performance considerations such as levels of service, skill, experience, competence and health & safety.

PRIORITISING TREE WORKS

The need and reasons for tree works are many and varied. Therefore, with limited resources in finance, staff and time together with the constraints of weather and seasonable considerations, it is necessary to prioritise tree works. The following system of prioritising works shall be used:

- a) **EMERGENCY AND URGENT WORKS** - these works are where there is an immediate or imminent risk of danger or damage (emergency works) or where a situation requires action within a few days to avoid more serious danger or damage occurring (urgent works).
- b) **PRIORITY ONE WORKS** – this priority will normally be applied to dead, dying or hazardous trees where there is a significant risk of potential danger or damage.
- c) **PRIORITY TWO WORKS** – this priority will be given to essential or important maintenance.
- d) **PRIORITY THREE WORKS** – this priority will embrace general maintenance operations.
- e) **PRIORITY FOUR WORKS** – these will normally be low priority and non-essential works

LEGAL POWERS

This policy deals with the main legal powers vested in the Council to deal with dangerous trees and nuisance hedges.

- 1) The Highway Act 1980 empowers the Council under its Agency Agreement with the County Council to require landowners to deal with dangerous trees threatening the safety of users of the public highway.
- 2) The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 gives powers to the Council to require landowners to render safe dangerous trees threatening persons or property on adjacent land.
- 3) The High Hedges Act (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Part 8) empowers the Council to require landowners to cut and maintain high, evergreen hedges where valid complaints from neighbouring residents are received.

The Council will continue to delegate its powers to the appropriate officers where implementation of the above powers is required.

INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

It will not be possible to inform residents generally in advance of smaller scale tree maintenance works or indeed emergency and urgent tree work situations. The Council will, however, endeavour to inform local residents of proposed or imminent tree works where such works are likely to cause concern, disruption or inconvenience. The information will normally be disseminated by letter but additional or alternative means may be used where appropriate, e.g. by house or telephone calling or press release.

Localised community consultation will generally be undertaken where a genuine choice exists between differing non-essential proposals which will affect the local treescape. Views and preferences will be sought from residents and other interested parties consulted or informed as necessary. The results of consultation will be considered along with other factors affecting the proposed works in order to achieve, as far as practicable, the most satisfactory solution or course of action.

ALLEGATIONS OF TREE RELATED DAMAGE OR INJURY

Where it is alleged that a Council tree is implicated in damage to property, with or without an accompanying claim for compensation, the Council will investigate the allegation and, if necessary, ask the property owner or their insurer for evidence in support of their claim. Subject to the circumstances and strength of evidence, the Council/its insurers may employ its own/external expertise to assess the extent and cause of the damage and collect evidence. The Council may decide at this point to take non-prejudicial action to reduce the risk of further damage and/or invite the property owner to substantiate any losses for consideration by the Council/ its insurers. The Council/ its insurers will refute any claim if the evidence produced fails to substantiate the allegation.

The Council will not pay for any preliminary survey or excavation costs incurred by a potential claimant but these may be included in any final settlement if the claim is successful. Claims will be passed to the Council's insurer for assessment and settlement but subject to the deduction of the policy excess which is paid by the Council.

Claims for alleged personal injury caused by trees owned or managed by the Council are relatively uncommon. Where such claims are made, the Council will follow a similar procedure to claims for damage. Where a serious injury has occurred, the Council will act with appropriate urgency to minimise any contriving risk of danger to people.

LIMITED OR SEASONAL NUISANCE

The presence of trees near dwellings, especially in urban areas, can cause a limited or seasonal nuisance leading to complaints from residents. Examples include the shedding of leaves, seeds, fruit, petals and other debris, honeydew secreted by aphids, bird droppings, squirrel activity, shading of sun or daylight, obstruction of views, minor rubbing of telephone lines, interference with television and satellite entertainment and also solar panels.

The Council does not consider these nuisances to be sufficiently serious to warrant high priority action except in special circumstances. Requests to alleviate such nuisances will, therefore, generally be given low priority status and only minimal action taken to avoid spoiling the appearance of the tree.

PRIVATELY OWNED TREES

The Council will not generally supply detailed advice or guidance on the maintenance or management of private trees. Instead, a list of local tree contractors and consultants of whom the Council has some knowledge of their competence will be sent to the person requesting assistance. The standardised information will mention that checks need to be made for legal protection. Officers may give some general verbal guidance or supply written guidance through the planning system where trees are protected or of some public value.

The Council will not undertake works to privately owned trees. In exceptional circumstances, eg. where there is an immediate or obvious risk of danger and the tree's owner cannot be traced or is not in a position to organise tree works, the Council may use its tree contractor to rectify the situation and recover any costs from the tree owner subsequently. Alternatively, contact Herts County Council to progress should the situation involve issues to the public highway.

SPONSORED TREE WORKS

Third parties will be allowed to sponsor the costs of tree works in appropriate circumstances. Offers of sponsorship usually relate to tree planting. In relation to sponsoring a tree to be planted, the provision of plaques etc will not be permitted. The only exception will be cemeteries.

All trees planted as a result of sponsorship will be treated as normal Council trees post planting and the Council will not guarantee to replace the tree if it is damaged or fails to establish. No plaques will be allowed.

The Council will not normally allow third parties to organise or carry out tree works on its land. Where an exception is made, the Council will require the sponsor to employ one of the Council's own tree contractors to execute the works in accordance with the Council's contract conditions.

CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV)

The increased use of CCTV for surveillance purposes has led to annual requests for pruning where tree foliage obstructs the view of cameras. It is hoped that those responsible for siting such cameras will take account of the presence of trees and their effect on camera vision to minimise problems. However, some conflict is inevitable.

The Council will carry out the pruning of trees to maintain and improve the vision of CCTV cameras in liaison with the CCTV operatives. This pruning will generally aim to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the trees. Excessive pruning or tree removal shall only be considered where serious circumstances justify such action.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE

Acts of criminal damage includes unauthorised attempts by third parties to fell or destroy mature trees and acts of vandalism which can result in the loss semi-mature or young trees.

Where trees are damaged or lost as a result of criminal acts, the Council's Tree and Enforcement Officers will initially investigate the situation and involve the police if necessary. Where sufficient evidence can be obtained to identify the offenders, the Council may consider civil proceedings or support any action the police deem appropriate.

In deciding the costs of criminal damage, the Council will include:

- a) The cost of all corrective, repair and reinstatement works.
- b) The cost of any replacement planting.
- c) The estimated loss of any amenity value (in pounds sterling) based on Haliwell format for assessing such costs.

FLY POSTING

The Council will not allow posters of any kind to be fixed to its trees. Any illegal fly posters will be removed or defaced and reported to the Council's Planning Enforcement Section for action if required.

AGE CLASS AND MONOCULTURES

Tree populations need to contain a range of age groups to provide a continuity of trees and perpetuate particular features or character of an area. There also needs to be a mixture of different species of trees to reduce the effect of pests and diseases. This is especially important where particular tree species or families are susceptible to serious problems in this respect.

The council will manage its trees to ensure that there is an uneven age structure, ie. A mixture of young, semi-mature, mature and over-mature trees relevant to the nature of the site and safety considerations. Similarly, a range of tree species shall be present in any given area and monocultures avoided.

The policy above must not conflict with features such as tree avenues where uniform rows of trees of a similar age and the same species are needed for the desired effect. Different avenues can, however, be at different ages and species to provide the required diversity.

WILDLIFE

All proposed arboricultural works will take account of their effect on the local flora and fauna. Wildlife is protected statutorily by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This means that many tree work operations, especially where the works are undertaken at semi-natural sites and to hedgerows, would need to be undertaken during the appropriate season. There are exemptions, however, where for instance the works have health and safety implications.

The nature and extent of the works may also affect the value and quality of the habitat for wildlife. All such works shall aim at conserving and improving the habitat for wildlife wherever practicable.

ASH DIEBACK

Following advice from the Forestry Commission, the Council is taking the following actions:

Trees in Woodlands and Highways - As the Ash Dieback Disease spores are dormant during the winter there is no chance of infection spreading until the growing season starts in the spring.

Parks and Open Spaces - Leaves from parks and open spaces that are collected are composted at a facility in North Hertfordshire. We will inspect any trees that are suspected of being infected and review this arrangement depending on the situation on a case by case basis.

Street Cleansing - Street Cleansing operations such as autumn leaf fall removal and daily cleansing schedules do remove a mixture of tree debris, including leaves from a number of different species including Ash. All material is currently sent to landfill through the disposal routes determined by Hertfordshire County Council.

Information on how to identify an Ash tree and the symptoms of Ash Dieback can be found on the [Forestry Commission's website](#).

Residents can help monitor the situation by [reporting any suspected sightings of Ash Dieback](#) online.

More information on tree health can be found on the Countryside Management Service's website.

COMMON IVY

Common Ivy is an indigenous evergreen climbing plant which, in its natural environment, uses trees as a means of support to gain increased exposure to light and air. Ivy provides cover and food for wildlife and often contributes to the character of woodlands and similar habitats. It is not a parasite and healthy trees will usually tolerate and control its spread. It is generally only when an ageing tree starts to decline, ie. its vigour decreases and its canopy thins, that Ivy may take advantage of the situation by growing into its crown and in some circumstances, engulf the whole tree and hasten its demise. This is a natural process but it is often perceived that the Ivy is responsible for strangling and killing healthy trees.

General observations over the past few years support the perception of some that the presence and growth of Ivy is on the increase but as far as is known, no scientific research has been carried out to support this perception. The control of Ivy in woodlands and commons by cutting and killing would prove an expensive and probably ill-founded conservation exercise.

The Council's general policy on Ivy shall be that measures to kill or control its growth will normally only be taken where it threatens important trees, may be obscuring defects, impairing inspections, or for other reasons of safety or nuisance. Ivy will not normally be controlled at semi-natural sites.

OVERGROWN HEDGES

Hedges require regular cutting to maintain their size and appearance, to keep them safe, and retain their screening, barrier or partitioning function.

Hedges which have become unkempt or overgrown will be reinstated by tree contractors to the required size to allow regular maintenance to be recommenced by the grounds maintenance contractor. Hedges will normally need to be three metres or less in height to be maintained by grounds maintenance operatives.

ADOPTION OF LAND

Where the Council adopts or inherits new land the following procedures shall apply:

- a) A comprehensive tree survey and report to be supplied by the landowner. The area to be adopted will also be inspected by a tree officer to assess the condition of its arboricultural features and the potential future maintenance requirement. This should include identifying any tree on land which appears to be on 'no man's land' to reduce future problems over tree ownership.
- b) The Council will agree with the landowner, usually a developer, the content of any tree works to bring the area to a standard acceptable to the Council for adoption and to agree arrangements and costs for the works to be completed.
- c) Require the landowner to deposit an appropriate commuted sum with the Council to cover 10 years maintenance of the area. The commuted sum shall equate to the following standard estimates (stated at 2006 prices) but subject to any special factors or considerations. The prices will be reviewed annually.

Single payments:

- (i) Large or over-mature trees - £600.00 per tree.
- (ii) Medium-sized trees - £400.00 per tree.
- (iii) Small or young trees - £200.00 per tree.

Payments per year:

- (iv) Mature or neglected woodlands - £ 700.00 per hectare.
- (v) Young woodland or common - £350.00 per hectare.

- d) The Council will revoke any Tree Preservation Orders or Planning Conditions relating to the trees to be adopted as they will become within the occupation of the Local Planning Authority and, therefore, be exempt from such protection. This will also avoid unnecessary internal beaurocracy. The existence and effect of any other covenants or conditions relating to the trees should be considered as part of the adoption process.

TREES AND DEVELOPMENT

This policy addresses only those tree related issues which may have a bearing on the future maintenance responsibilities of the Council. These general policies are:

- 1) All trees identified for retention on development sites shall be properly surveyed and protected in accordance with British Standard BS5837: 2005: Building in Relation to Construction - Recommendations.
- 2) The Council, through it's Planning Services, shall seek agreement with the developers under Section 106 Agreements to secure, where appropriate, provision for new tree planting or works to maintain or conserve important trees and other arboricultural features. All such works must be carried out in accordance with the Council's Framework Agreement For Tree Maintenance and monitored by the Council's arboricultural or landscaping staff.
- 3) Where there is no alternative but to remove trees on land managed by the Council, the developer will be required to replace two trees for each one lost.



SITE SPECIFIC POLICIES

The Council is responsible for a range of sites each with its particular nature or character. These sites may be owned by the Council, managed under an agency agreement or after adoption or by agreement with the site owner. The following general policies will be applied to the various categories of sites where trees are present.

RECREATION GROUNDS

The management of trees in parks and playing fields must take account of the character and usage of the site. While trees often make a valuable contribution to such sites, they must be in balance with other features and facilities such as flower beds, shrub borders, open grass, sports and play areas, and buildings. Over-planting with trees will be avoided.

Where space permits, trees will generally be allowed to grow naturally with minimum maintenance but some features will require periodic maintenance, eg. pollarded screens. Additional inspections and maintenance will be needed for trees near play areas.

Provision will be made for the gradual replacement of older trees to ensure the presence of mature trees in the future.

CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

Trees can play an important role in cemeteries and churchyards adding to their character and tranquillity. Trees do, however, occupy space which otherwise might be used for burials and this fact must be considered when replanting is undertaken in cemeteries. Trees can also cause damage to graves by root action or falling branches, etc.

The management of trees in cemeteries and churchyards shall aim to maintain a reasonably safe and healthy population with provision for tree removal and replacement as required. Many sites contain a combination of both informal and formal tree features which must be accommodated within the maintenance regime.

HOUSING ESTATES

Most trees in modern housing estates are planted informally on grass amenity areas. Older estates may have both large and small trees on highway verges with only a few trees on amenity land (see highway trees below).

The trees will generally be managed as for trees in parks including additional maintenance where they are near buildings or play areas.

HIGHWAY TREES

The management of highway trees is concerned with two prime criteria. These are the maintenance of safety and provision of amenity. Trees may also perform other secondary functions of varying importance including the reduction of noise and air pollution, traffic calming, physical barriers, screening, shade and shelter.

The need for highway trees to be maintained in a safe condition is very important. The trees should be inspected on a three yearly cycle to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that they are in a healthy condition, are free from defects which might cause them to be prone to wind blow or branch shedding. They should not obstruct users of the highway or obscuring sight lines, traffic signals, street lights or road signage.

Verge trees also have amenity value often adding significantly to the character of a particular road or town. The size and form of trees as well as their flowers, fruit, foliage and bark may all contribute to their amenity value.

SEMI- NATURAL SITES

The trees at semi-natural sites may range from dense woodland through more sparsely treed areas with groups or single specimen trees to open common with a few scrubby or hedgerow trees. The trees and other woody vegetation at these sites shall be managed to conserve and enhance the value of the site which can include amenity, wildlife habitat and the management of public access. Where an agreed management plan exists, maintenance works should comply with or compliment the plan's aims.

MISCELLANEOUS SITES

These include trees in car parks, around public buildings and at allotment sites.

Trees in car parks and around public buildings need to be in a safe and healthy condition and maintained similarly to trees along side highways or near play areas.

Trees at allotment sites may be given lower priority except where there is an obvious risk of danger to people or adjacent property. Trees which unreasonably affect the ability of allotment holders to cultivate their plots will also require attention.



TREE SPECIFIC POLICIES

TREE INSPECTIONS

The Council will undertake periodic inspections of all trees and woodlands under its control. These inspections shall be carried out between one and five year intervals subject to available resources, location, age and condition of the trees but may be shorter or longer in some circumstances. Subject to available funding from the County Council inspections of Highway trees will take place at three yearly intervals. Inspection intervals will, however, inevitably depend on available resources. A record of each inspection will be kept on the Council's computerised tree management database including details of any action required and its works priority rating.

TREE FELLING AND REMOVAL

Trees will only be felled in one or more of the following circumstances:

- a) The tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous, and its removal is the safest or the most prudent course of action.
- b) The tree is causing, or there is a significant risk of it causing, unacceptable damage to the surrounding area or an adjacent structure. Substantial evidence should be supplied to support any proposed removal.
- c) In exceptional circumstances trees may be felled in conjunction with a tree replacement scheme.
- d) As part of a thinning exercise to improve the growth of other adjacent trees.
- e) Where the tree is unsuitable for its location because of its size, shape or form, or is causing an unacceptable nuisance to adjacent residents or its surroundings over and above what is listed in the Limited or Seasonal Nuisance Policy.

- f) Where the tree occupies the space required for an approved structure or construction and there is no satisfactory alternative to felling.
- g) There may occasionally be special or exceptional circumstances that warrant the removal of a tree.

Tree stumps will normally be removed wherever practicable for safety reasons and also to control disease, prevent unwanted regrowth and to allow proper reinstatement and replanting if required. Stumps may be left in situ especially at semi-natural site where regrowth is encouraged or wood is left to decay and provide a wild life habitat.

TREE PRUNING

Trees will normally be pruned for one or more of the following reasons:

- a) Where part of tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous to rectify the defect and maintain safety.
- b) To remove or alleviate an unreasonable source of nuisance or potential damage to people or property.
- c) To remove obstructing branches or foliage for safety reasons, clear overground services or improve the vision of CCTV cameras,
- d) To encourage the formation of a safe and balanced tree or control its overall size.
- e) To prune or sever roots to remove or reduce the risk of existing or future damage. This may include entering private land, with the owner's consent, to deal with roots originating from a Council maintained tree.

TREE REPLACEMENT

The two main modes of tree replacement undertaken by the Council are tree planting and natural regeneration.

Tree planting will be the prime form of replacing trees in both formal and informal treescapes including parks and playing fields, highway verges, cemeteries and churchyards, and housing estates. New tree planting may be necessary on sites which are being improved, developed or adopted by the Council. Where tree planting is being considered, factors such as the aims and purpose of the planting, timescale and scope, tree species, size and siting, and need for protection, aftercare and long-term maintenance implications must all be considered. Where the nature of the planting site allows, indigenous plant species and their varieties will generally take preference over exotic species. Great Britain does, however, have a rich and diverse population of exotic species and these will often prove more suitable for specific sites especially where size, habitat and ornamental value are prime considerations.

The replanting of tree rows or avenues has proved to be especially contentious over past years and policy is aimed to overcome historic problems.

- a) Allow a significant number of gaps to appear in the row or avenue.
- b) Consult third parties, eg. residents, statutory undertakers, highway authority, on replanting proposals
- c) Prepare a replanting plan for the whole feature and commence replanting in the gaps.
- d) Continue planting as older trees are removed creating additional gaps.

Natural regeneration will be favoured at semi-natural sites such as woods, commons, hedgerows and locations where replanting would be difficult to establish and/or which may be dangerous or difficult to access, eg. steep banks. Sites where natural regeneration is deemed appropriate will be managed to encourage such regeneration by selective felling, thinning and protection as required.

APPENDIX A

SEMI-NATURAL SITES WITH MANAGEMENT PLANS

The following sites have existing management plans or plans which are being prepared or proposed.

Generally, these plans are prepared by The Countryside Management Service (CMS) in liaison with the Council.

LIST OF SITES AND STATUS

Burymead Springs, Cadwell Lane, Hitchin – Management plan.

Butts Close, Fish Ponds Road, Hitchin - Greenspace Action Plan

Dell, Walsworth Road, Hitchin - Management Plan

Great Ashby Woodlands - Greenspace Action Plan

Ivel Springs, Great North Road, Baldock - LNR – Greenspace Action Plan.

Norton Common, Ickniel Way, Letchworth - LNR – Greenspace Action Plan.

Oughtonhead Common, Burford Way, Hitchin – LNR- Greenspace Action Plan.

Purwell Meadows, Cambridge Road, Hitchin - LNR – Greenspace Action Plan.

Walsworth Common, Woolgrove Road, Hitchin – Greenspace Action Plan

Weston Hills, Chiltern Road, Baldock - LNR – Greenspace Action Plan.

LNR = Local Nature Reserve.

