



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 7.00 PM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 16 November 2022

Note: Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council's Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/jSQhZiBR3-E>

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.

Our Vision
<i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i>
Enriching Lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion excellent education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. • Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to enable healthy choices for everyone. • Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of. • Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.
Providing Safe and Strong Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people. • Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care. • Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish. • Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.
Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future. • Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy. • Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity. • Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.
Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future. • Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, to support and enable our Borough to grow. • Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment. • Help with your housing needs and support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.
Keeping the Borough Moving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways. • Tackle traffic congestion and minimise delays and disruptions. • Enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough with good transport infrastructure. • Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.
Changing the Way We Work for You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relentlessly customer focussed. • Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers. • Communicate better with customers, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough. • Drive innovative, digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.
Be the Best We Can Be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice. • Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working. • Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business. • Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient. • Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough. • Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Clive Jones	Leader of Council and Business and Economic Development
Stephen Conway	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Housing
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty
Prue Bray	Children's Services
Lindsay Ferris	Planning and Local Plan
Paul Fishwick	Active Travel, Transport and Highways
David Hare	Health and Wellbeing and Adult Services
Sarah Kerr	Climate Emergency and Resident Services
Ian Shenton	Environment, Sport and Leisure
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey	Finance

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
60.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
61.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2022.	7 - 16
62.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and any non-registrable interests relevant to any matters to be considered at the meeting.	
63.		STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER To receive a statement from the Leader of the Council.	
64.		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice. The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of the Executive Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Council or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	
64.1	Arborfield	Colin Watts has asked the Executive Member for	

Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

Wokingham Borough Council recently published the 250 page LPU: Report on Initial Consultation Outcomes document. Page 20 of this document states that "A local MP supported the identification of a new garden village at Hall Farm / Loddon Valley, particularly its links to the Thames Valley Science Park." Most people I have spoken to assumed that Sir John Redwood was the MP referred to, but he has confirmed that he did not make this statement. For the sake of transparency and accountability, please advise which MP made this statement and can the Initial Consultation Outcomes document be amended to state the name of the MP?

64.2 None Specific

Wayne Cannon has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

Lower Earley has around 31,000 people as residents. The only recognised football club in Lower Earley is Laurel Park [by recognised I mean offers football at all age group from under 7s to under 18s for girls and boys]

The club supports its local community. Why are we now forced to use training facilities away from our area in places such as Woodley Wokingham to name a few and offer training at times that no one else wants ie 2100 - 2200 hours [when kids should be at home]

The local residents should be supporting the club and in offering the best for their community. Clubs that are far smaller in areas with much less people have better options than we currently do and this needs to improve for the future of the club and all involved.

64.3 Maiden Erlegh

Rich Jarvis has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question

I would like to open that I am very much fully behind the introduction of the proposed 3G pitch at Maiden Erlegh and believe it will bring many benefits to the community. I've lived in Earley for most of my adult and family life and have seen the positive impact sport has had on our neighbouring communities, such as Woodford park (new 3G pitch).

I am currently a police officer where I've served 20 years and also recognise the positive impact sport and

sporting facilities have on children's and teenagers lives.

I am very concerned on the negativity this project is getting from so called local residents. I for one am local to it (7 min walk away).

Just looking back to the recent pandemic, one thing that helped all of us and everyone's mental health was sport and activities. Children living in Earley need a voice and feel that if they were allowed to, most would vote hugely in favour of this project.

My question is how would you promote the 3G pitch within the community and get it to work in harmony with the school?

64.4 None Specific

Andy Bailey has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

Given the state of the economy and the dire economical outlook, does WBC intend to 'borrow forwards' to enable infrastructure to be built in good time to support developments arising from the revised Local Plan ?

65.

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

To answer any member questions

A period of 20 minutes will be allowed for Members to ask questions submitted under Notice

Any questions not dealt with within the allotted time will be dealt with in a written reply

65.1 None Specific

Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

Can the Exec Member for Planning explain the relationship to conditions placed on planning applications at their inception and their eventual sign off. Is there a scheme or time frame to ensure their compliance?

66.

MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

To consider any items referred to the Executive.

Matters for Consideration

67. None Specific

DRAFT TREE STRATEGY PUBLIC CONSULTATION

17 - 102

68. None Specific

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE, AND
BERKSHIRE WEST INTEGRATED CARE
PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE**

103 - 118

A decision sheet will be available for inspection at the Council's offices (in Democratic Services and the General Office) and on the web site no later than two working days after the meeting.

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Clive Jones (Chair), Stephen Conway (Vice-Chair), Prue Bray, Lindsay Ferris, Paul Fishwick, David Hare, Sarah Kerr, Ian Shenton and Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

48. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Bishop-Firth.

49. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive meeting held on 29 September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

50. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER

‘These are very difficult economic times. The Council has been left with a shortfall for the current financial year of just over £2.2m.

This was covered by the previous Administration by raiding the general reserve to balance the budget. We can't use general reserves to do this again. To do this would mean the general reserve would drop below £7m which would then see the government taking over the running of the council as they have in Labour controlled Slough and Conservative controlled Thurrock.

We all know that Wokingham is the lowest funded unitary local authority. I have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ask him to find more money for Wokingham.

The Conservatives have put us in this position of being the lowest funded authority, probably for the last eight years.

In recent days, the government have once again shuffled the ministers around the Cabinet table. Some have suggested that there could be cuts in services and it has been suggested this could mean less money for local councils. If there is less funding from the government, Wokingham borough council will be in serious trouble and it will be the Conservative government's fault.

Many residents have told me about their concerns about increases in their mortgages following Liz Truss's disastrous budget. Many will have to find an extra £500+ a month in interest charges. That's £6,000 a year that could have been spent in the local economy, especially our shops.

Increases in energy costs are also hurting our residents and local businesses, energy costs have doubled since last year.

Increases in mortgage costs, increases in energy costs and inflation is doing far more to hurt local retailers than increases in car park charges.

I am really concerned about the local economy so I hope the government will keep energy costs low, will keep interest rates low and I hope they will continue to support local councils and find more money for local authorities like Wokingham that has been underfunded for far too long.'

52. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

52.1 Sarah Evershed has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

In the absence of Sarah Evershed, Jeremy Evershed asked the following question on her behalf:

Question:

The proposed football pitch at Maiden Erleigh School will increase pressure on the restricted access to the site. The entrance is through an already congested shopping parade, which includes the only chemist on the estate; and in close proximity to 2 bus stops and a pedestrian crossing. During big school events/parents evenings the queuing traffic already extends out along Silverdale road. Adding into this the traffic from the 3G pitch will create this scenario every evening of the week as parents/people overlap during the change over of sessions on the new pitch. The school have already accepted that congestion occurs in the vicinity. Bearing these facts in mind, and that visiting teams are likely to be coming from outside the Borough, are the Council accepting that this pitch will increase pollution, congestion and increase risk to the community's safety?

Answer:

It is recognised that there is restricted access to the site and due to the buildings by the access, there is little opportunity to improve this. It is also recognised that there is congestion in the area during drop-off and pick-up times from the schools. To avoid conflict the uses of the football pitch during the week would be restricted to after school time to ensure that there will not be any overlap between the school and the pitch. This is the current situation with football activity during the winter months.

There is ample parking on site for the use of the pitch during out of school hours operation as the parking standard for pitches is 20 spaces per pitch. However, there would need to be an agreement between the school and the Borough Council to ensure that there are no conflicts with large events such as parent-teacher evenings.

The key partner clubs will encourage players and parents to walk or cycle to the site to reduce the impact on residents. Promotion to encourage parents to share lifts, particularly on midweek training nights, will also be a key feature. These actions are expected to more than offset any increase in pollution from visiting teams on match days.

52.2 Sandra Spencer has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

An online petition against the plan for a large manmade 3G pitch to replace most of Maiden Erleigh school's grass field has attracted at least 164 signatures. Almost everyone

I have spoken to in Earley is totally opposed to the plan, given the massive negative impact on their quality of life the non-stop renting out will bring. The council claims it wants to enhance the lives and well-being of local people, but this will cause untold misery as residents never get a break from the noise, traffic and parking problems. People also have many other serious concerns about the pitch. Does Wokingham borough council care about the impact on residents at all, and how many signatures do we need for the council take us seriously?

Answer:

The purpose of the consultation was to establish the views of residents, demonstrating that the council does care. It has elicited almost 1,000 responses and numerous other inputs, highlighting several issues that need careful consideration and will be taken very seriously. Prior to the consultation, the council had already identified the need for noise and parking management plans and will now assess what other mitigation would be required were it to proceed further. In that event, it would still be required to go through the same process and be subject to the same tests as all other Planning Applications.

Supplementary Question:

When would the consultation period start and when would the Planning application be submitted if this was to go ahead?

Supplementary Answer:

I don't have a date for the consultation as yet, the Planning application will be some way off.

52.3 Elizabeth Newman has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

Question:

Environmental and flooding concern.

The proposed 3G pitch will cover yet more ground with plastic, which, over time as the plastic degrades, will shed its load of microplastics into the local environment and in due course water courses, that feed into our rivers.

Rain water that would previously have sunk into the ground, will flow down towards Avalon Road, and we're told be captured. Has there been a risk assessment of precisely how, and where the water will then be directed, and how the micro plastics, large enough to be physically captured, will be dealt with? Given the severe flooding of Radnor Road after heavy rain, natural drainage would appear already to be a problem in the locality.

Answer:

Following a review of the drainage systems on the site, drainage has been included to utilise a Thames Water service outlet in the Northeast corner of the potential pitch. If the proposal were to progress beyond the current feasibility stage, a full drainage survey would be carried out as part of design works, prior to a planning application being made.

In line with "Guidance on How to Minimise Infill Dispersion into The Environment" the Football Foundation AGP Framework currently includes within all new projects tendered infill retention measures to include but not limited to:

- Perimeter infill containment barriers within the fence line
- Smooth bar industrial grate and recess pits to prevent it being washed into the drainage system

- Perimeter margins on all boundaries
- Boot cleaning stations

The design of the pitch drainage will reflect the findings of the Flood Risk Assessment and the standard practice for modern 3G pitches is for a holding tank to be placed underneath the pitch to hold rainwater to then be slowly dispersed into the ground. The system also has filters to capture any potential rubber crumb penetrating the sub levels of the base.

Supplementary Question:

Will the maintenance of the drainage system fall to the Council or the school?

Supplementary Answer:

This will be part of the Council's operation, as far as I am aware.

52.4 Michaela Thomas has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

In the absence of Michaela Thomas, Karen Brown asked the following question on her behalf:

Question:

I am concerned about the proposal for a 3G pitch at Maiden Erleigh school and the increase of these pitches in the borough. The known environmental and health issues caused by the tyre rubber crumb infill in 3G pitches is a huge concern across the world, and yet the local authority continue to install these at a rapid rate, without seeking other possible alternatives. Have you considered the financially viable long term future of plastic pitches if within the next few years, central government's view changes and they lean towards an alternative non rubber infill or even a complete ban (as is the case in Europe and other parts of the world)?

Answer:

I would like to refer you to the research conducted by the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) which was released in 2019 concluding that "*ECHA has found no reason to advise people against playing sports on synthetic turf containing recycled rubber granules as infill material*". In 2020, the results of a major pan-European scientific study undertaken by internationally respected independent researchers and published in the scientific journal *Science of the Total Environment*, concluded that no health concerns were found for AGPs with End-of-Life Tyre-derived infill material.

The council has no desire to build and promote 3G pitches for usage by residents if the scientific findings conclude that they are unsafe, but that is not the case. Furthermore, Sport England has stated that the ECHA report "found no reason to advise people against playing sport on 3G pitches with rubber crumb". Any such government action as you suggest would therefore be unsupported by research and thus unlikely.

52.5 Judith Clark has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

In the absence of Judith Clark, Sandra Spencer asked the following question on her behalf:

Question:

An artificial 3G pitch at Maiden Erleigh School has been put forward as an environmentally friendly solution for Earley football teams because it will allow young people to play locally

and cut down on car journeys outside the borough. However, Maiden Erlegh school is not in central Earley but on the western side both of Earley and of Wokingham borough, so is also further from London, but your own consultation material admits that players will be making car journeys of up to 45 minutes duration, and Laurel Park football club admits it wants players from as far away as Teddington to travel here. Given this, how can a pitch at this school be the right location to meet the environmental argument of cutting down on motor traffic?

Answer:

I would refer you to the third part of my answer to question EP1

The key partner clubs will encourage players and parents to walk or cycle to the site to reduce the impact on residents. Promotion to encourage parents to share lifts, particularly on midweek training nights, will also be a key feature. These actions are expected to more than offset any increase in pollution from visiting teams on match days.

Those actions would also be expected to result in a reduction in vehicle movements.

52.6 Chris Thomas has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

In the absence of Chris Thomas, Elizabeth Newman asked the following question on her behalf:

Question:

How does the installation of 3G pitches fit in with your commitment to delivering a greener future and your climate emergency action plan? Instead of opting for plastic pitches have you fully investigated other options like simply investing in improving existing Grass Pitches? The Football Foundation run a Grass Pitch Revolution scheme which offers funding to improve existing pitches as an alternative to 3G pitches. Could this be a solution for Laurel Park pitches instead of shoehorning a new plastic pitch into a residential area when nearby residents are opposed to it.

Answer:

The Football Foundation does work closely with local football clubs and local authorities to support the enhancement of grass football pitches. However, a host of local clubs still train on substandard surfaces and in cramped school halls and on expensive, commercially run sites. The 3G pitch provision aims to reduce the impact on local clubs of having to use out of date or unsuitable training facilities.

The Football Foundation looks to improve the opportunities for teams to enjoy 3G facilities and have the ability to host teams on safe and modern floodlit pitches. Training is a key part in supporting the wellbeing of participants and 3G provides coaches with a medium to improve technical and physical elements of the game. 3G pitches allow for year-round use and do not get waterlogged or muddy. 3G pitches also offer a safe surface and players will reduce the risk of injury, unlike the old-style concrete base pitches.

52.7 Emily Thomas has asked the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure the following question:

In the absence of Emily Thomas, Jim Baddoo asked the following question on her behalf:

Question:

Regarding the proposal for a 3G pitch at Maiden Erleigh school. The 'grass' blades are made from plastic that is the equivalent of about 1½ million plastic bags, and the rubber crumb comes from about 20 thousand end of life tyres, can I please ask what will happen to the plastic pitches when they reach the end of their very short lifespan of around 10 years? Will the pitches be recycled or do they end up in landfill? In a time of climate emergency, it seems ludicrous that these pitches are seen as a sensible solution just so football matches can play on in wet weather.

Answer:

The 3G pitches allow for evening usage particularly in the winter months when the light fades and outdoor pitches are not suitable, as indicated in my answer to question EP6.

Furthermore, the Football Foundation AGP Framework supports and endorses the handling of end-of-life synthetic turf pitches in accordance with the Waste Regulations which seek to ensure waste is handled in the most sustainable way.

To ensure that end-of-life synthetic turf pitches are processed in a way considered acceptable by the Football Foundation and its partners, only the recycling companies and their listed processes will be authorised for use on AGP Framework funded projects. Under no circumstances shall end-of-life synthetic turf surfacing be disposed of by repurposing or land fill. All end-of-life synthetic turf components shall be disposed safely.

Also worth noting, a recent change to 3G projects going forward is that the perimeter infill barriers within the fence line are to comprise 100% recycled material with the majority of content from recycled synthetic turf pitches.

52.8 Paul Stevens has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:

Question:

We were repeatedly told by the previous administration that large Strategic Development Locations are the best mechanism for delivery of essential infrastructure. Can the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan confirm or deny that this is still considered to be the case?

Answer:

Our new planning strategy will require a range of development types, including both large and small sites. I expect larger scale development designed holistically with infrastructure, similar to our existing Strategic Development Locations (SDL), to continue to play a role in any future proposals.

I personally believe that our existing planned SDL have been successful, however there are always learnings that we can take forward.

The SDL approach has to date led to the provision of five new primary schools, one new secondary school, new affordable homes, hundreds of hectares of new open green spaces, and new road links including the Eastern Relief Road, Shinfield; Observer Way, Arborfield; and the Northern Distributer Road, Wokingham.

As I mentioned, there are always things we can do better, and we have a team that recognises this. Notwithstanding, having visited some larger developments outside of the borough, what we have achieved is often of visibly higher quality than elsewhere.

Supplementary Question:

If SDL is the best way to deliver infrastructure, why are residents running a petition? Residents were sold properties based on facilities being available. Following consultation in 2022 and a Planning application in September 2022, this never happened. Bankfield Green residents had been let down badly.

Supplementary Answer:

I share your concerns about the range of issues you raise. Consultation will be taking place this autumn, there will be consultation on the shopping area and neighbourhood centre this week. I will be pushing hard on this.

53. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members

53.1 Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan the following question:**Question:**

Unlike the previous Conservative administration has the current administration a public view on building housing beyond the Governments Plan period of 15 years.

I refer in particular to the 2200+ houses written into the Local Plan housing Update at Hall Farm or are they content to keep the building of 2200 houses beyond the government's plan period within its evolving plans or will they simply just publicly say now they will not be planning and future building beyond the Governments 15 year plan in the LPU.

Answer

National planning policy requires local plans to look ahead over a minimum of 15 years from adoption. Recent amendments also introduced the expectation for larger scale developments to be set within a vision that looks further ahead, referring to 30 years.

As you are aware, I have some concerns about planning beyond the 15 year period and as such I have asked for counsel advice on this matter to be sought to help inform our future decisions.

Supplementary Question:

The Council is required to carry out another public consultation, when might this be?

Supplementary Answer:

Public consultation would be carried before a plan was published, the Executive Member was engaging closely with officers. At this stage, he was unable to say when the public consultation would be.

54. RENT SETTING POLICY

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing reported that this Policy was no different to that of previous years and related to the process of rent setting as opposed to the setting the rent itself. The Council recognised that a significant number of tenants were struggling and were ensuring that targeted help was in place for those already in arrears or at risk of going into arrears.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i) approved the Rent Setting Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report attached to the agenda papers. The 'Rent Setting Policy' primarily relates to the Housing Revenue Account (2567 properties) plus a small number (18 properties) of General Fund properties.
- ii) noted the economic challenges that many of our tenants' face and that the Executive Member for Housing in consultation with the Director of Place & Growth, would explore all opportunities to minimise any increase between now and the budget setting process in February/March 2023.

55. CAPITAL MONITORING 2022/23 - Q2

The Executive Member for Finance reported that this year the budget that had been inherited from the previous Administration was significantly inadequate to fund service provision. Significant inflationary pressures had exacerbated this, with costs rising much higher than expected.

This had necessitated the Administration to carefully consider how services were run. The Council had looked across all services to consider where savings could be made. The capital programme had been significantly reduced.

The Deputy Leader queried how much borrowing had been reduced. The Executive Member for Finance agreed to provide a written response.

The Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance thanked officers for all their tremendous hard work to meet budgetary challenges.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- i) noted the position of the capital programme at the end of Quarter 2 (to 30 September 2022) as summarised in the report and set out in detail in Appendix A of the report.
- ii) approved and noted the proposed carry forwards in the capital programme as set out in Appendix B of the report.
- iii) noted that due to the current uncertainty surrounding higher interest rates, as part of our enhanced financial management process, a review is to be undertaken to determine what capital projects can be postponed this year, to minimise exposure to borrowing at high rates. Approval from the Executive will be sought for any proposed postponement.

56. REVENUE MONITORING 2022-23 Q2

The Executive Member for Finance reported that savings within the Council had made of £2.2 million. There was an emerging picture of increased numbers of children in care and increasing numbers of children moving into the area, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children, this had led to increasing pressures on Council budgets. This was coupled with a reduction in income from car parks and leisure activities.

She reported that the Council would need to continue to make difficult and unpopular decisions to ensure that the Council did not go into special measures. Every part of the Council had been asked to consider where savings could be made. The report showed that the Council was moving in the right direction.

The Deputy Leader thanked officers and the Executive Member for Finance for all their hard work.

RESOLVED that the Executive noted:

- i) the overall forecast of the current position of the General Fund revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) illustrated in the Executive summary and appendices attached to the report.
- ii) delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure to discount or uplift Leisure charges.

57. LEASE FOR LEARNING DISABILITY RESPITE CENTRE

The Executive Member for Health & Wellbeing and Adult Services reported that this facility was very well utilised. If this facility was not available, there was increased potential for incidence of family breakdowns leading to increased demand for high cost supported living accommodation. 60 families used this service and the lease was in need of review. No increase in costs were anticipated, bar the need for a refurbishment of the premises.

This was to be considered as an urgent decision as the premises lease had now expired.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved a 15-year lease for the ground floor of the address below. The lease to be signed with Ability Housing Association.

289 Lodden Court,
Wokingham Road,
Earley,
RG6 7ER.

58. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE

No referrals were made to the Executive on this occasion.

59. TO CONSIDER ANY REPORTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

59.1 Officers' response to the recommendations from the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task & Finish Group

The Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure reported that in summer 2021, Council had considered a Motion which proposed that the Council declare an ecological emergency. Due to the fullness of agendas, this Motion had not been heard until November 2021.

It was reported that a report would be brought back to the Executive on the matter if an ecological emergency.

The Executive Member for Climate Change and Resident Services stated that it would be prudent to consider the work of other councils who had achieved a biodiversity net gain, such as Cambridge and the Cotswolds.

The Executive Member for Planning and the Local plan stated that it would be important to future proof the Local Plan and embed the introduction of significant numbers of trees in the borough.

The Executive Member for Climate Change and Resident Services asked that any volunteers or residents who wished to assist with taking care of veteran trees in the borough should contact the Council, this work was critically needed.

RESOLVED that the Executive approved the Officers' responses contained within the report.

TITLE	Draft Tree Strategy Public Consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 24 November 2022
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure - Ian Shenton

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To seek Executive approval to publish the Draft Tree Strategy on Wokingham Engage to undertake an 8-week public consultation.

The key benefit to residents of the Borough of this decision is an opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategy and the actions the Council intends to take to improve tree management and maintenance and guide the authority's approach to trees and woodlands across the borough.

The strategy links with the Core Strategy, Climate Emergency Action Plan, Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan, Borough Design Guide, Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2019) and Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (2004).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve the undertaking of an 8-week public consultation on the Draft Tree Strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2021, officers were given Executive approval to develop a Tree Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to provide improved direction to the management and maintenance of trees across the Borough as a whole, taking into consideration the Council's legal obligations as a tree owner. The strategy will provide Wokingham Borough Council with standards and goals to ensure it continues to care for its tree assets. It takes the risks and benefits into account, sets out the Council's aspirations for increasing tree planting, whilst continuing to protect existing trees for the benefit of future generations.

This report seeks approval to undertake an 8-week public consultation on the Draft Wokingham Borough Council Tree Strategy. This will provide opportunity for internal and external stakeholders to have input into WBC's approach to Borough wide tree management prior to formal adoption.

The financial implications of undertaking a public consultation on the Draft Tree Strategy are minimal and include only the costs of publishing and publicising the draft strategy. These costs have already been factored into the overall Tree Project budget which was approved by Executive in July 2021.

The Draft Tree Strategy includes a proposed Action Plan with short, medium- and long-term goals however, any actions within the final strategy will only be undertaken when the opportunity, funds and resources become available. The strategy goals are aspirational, and proposals will be accommodated within existing funding sources/budgets or will only be undertaken when additional funds and resources become available. Officers will continue to identify and apply to appropriate grant funding opportunities to support the implementation of the strategy Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

In Jul 2021, in response to Target 18 'Carbon sequestration by design' of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, officers were given Executive approval to begin Phase 1 of the Tree Project which included the production of a Tree Strategy.

In November 2021, an early engagement survey was published on Wokingham Engage to provide opportunity for internal and external stakeholders including Members, Town and Parish Councils, community groups and residents to have early input into the strategy development.

In January 2022, the results of the early engagement survey were collated into a report for Overview & Scrutiny review. Following selection of an external consultant to write the strategy, a cross-party working group meeting took place in March 2022 to steer the criteria of the strategy.

In February 2022, Officers attended the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group meeting to provide an update on the Tree Strategy and Tree Project. Subsequently, in March 2022 a report was submitted to Overview and Scrutiny by the Tree Protection and Biodiversity Task and Finish Group. The report and recommendations have been reviewed by Officers and considered throughout the development of the Draft Tree Strategy.

In May 2022, consultation workshops were held at Shute End with the following internal and external stakeholders: Wokingham Borough Operational Tree Officers, Wokingham Borough Trees and Landscape Team, Planning Policy Team, Planning Regulation Team, Development Management Team, Estates, Green and Blue Infrastructure, Countryside Services, Cleaner and Greener, Highways, Flood & Drainage, Climate Emergency Officers, Woodland Trust and Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association. Feedback from the consultation workshops have been taken into consideration and internal officer engagement has been sought throughout the strategy development.

BUSINESS CASE

Wokingham Borough Council currently have a policy in place for the ongoing Maintenance of Council Owned Trees and a Tree Inspection Framework for Council Trees. In July 2021, officers were given Executive approval to develop a Tree Strategy to guide WBC's approach in the management and maintenance of trees across the borough as a whole.

The Draft Tree Strategy that has been developed assesses how the borough will manage its responsibilities to trees and woodlands under statutory legislation and Council policies.

The Canopy Cover and Tree Survey which are being developed as appendices to the Tree Strategy will help Officers progress with the Tree Planting Project and provide the Council with the necessary data to understand the value and condition of Council owned trees. Any maps that highlight areas for potential tree planting are indicative only and will be subject to discussions and negotiation with internal and external stakeholders as part of the continued Tree Project plan.

The continued development of the Draft Tree Strategy, through a public consultation, will provide opportunity for internal and external stakeholders to have input in Wokingham Borough Council’s approach in the management and maintenance of trees across the borough.

An accessible version of the strategy will be available during the public consultation period.

The decision to undertake an 8-week consultation does not bind the Council to adopting any of the proposals within the strategy.

Timescales for next steps

The next steps will be to undertake an 8-week consultation from 28th November 2022 to 22nd January 2023 as detailed below.

2022-2023	
Oct	Draft strategy report submitted to CLT for approval to take to the Executive
Nov	Executive decision on approval to consult (24 th November Executive meeting)
Nov-Jan	8-week draft strategy public consultation (28 th Nov – 22 nd January 2023)
Jan - Feb	Public consultation feedback reviewed and considered
Mar	Consultant to provide a revised strategy
Apr	Revised strategy report submitted to CLT for approval to take to the Executive
May	Executive decision on approval to adopt (25 th May Executive meeting)
May	Executive adoption of Tree Strategy

Notification of the consultation will be communicated via press releases, newsletters, online surveys, direct email contact and social media. Following this consultation, the feedback will be fed into a revised draft which will be submitted for approval as the final Tree Strategy in May 2023.

The public consultation will be in the form of an online survey through Wokingham Engage where participants will be able to make comments on the contents and action plan of the Draft Tree Strategy. Comments will be reviewed by officers and the strategy consultant and fed into a revised draft which will be submitted for approval as the final Tree Strategy in May 2023.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
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Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Approximately £1000	Yes	Capital. The cost for carrying out the public consultation on the Draft Tree Strategy have already been included within the previously approved Tree Project budget.
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	N/A	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	N/A	

Other Financial Information

Implementation of the Tree Strategy Action Plan (which is not binding) will be accommodated within existing funding sources/budgets or will only be undertaken when additional funds and resources become available. Officers will utilise grant funding opportunities where appropriate and as and when they become available.

The strategy assumes income will be generated through the sale of biodiversity net gains, with the income refunding the initial investment and funding ongoing annual maintenance of the trees. The risk exists around the level of income that can be generated and possibly timing. Although based on initial estimates income levels would have to be significantly different to those estimated before the project was not viable.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

If approved, the public consultation will take place between 28th November 2022 – 22nd January 2023.

Public Sector Equality Duty

An initial equality impact assessment has been carried out and has not identified any negative impact to the proposal.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

The Draft Tree Strategy takes into consideration the benefits that suitable management and maintenance of existing trees and planting of additional trees will have on the carbon sequestration targets set out within the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Supporting surveys including the Canopy Cover and Tree Surveys will support officers in making recommendations for sites suitable for future tree planting in order to maximise carbon sequestration, biodiversity and canopy cover benefits. Publicly sharing the assessments will support future collaborative working with Town and Parish Councils, community groups and residents. The decision to approve an 8-week public consultation will allow officers to continue the development of the strategy and provide opportunity for public input into the final strategy.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

Draft Tree Strategy

Draft Tree Strategy Appendix A: Tree Survey

Draft Tree Strategy Appendix C: Wokingham Borough Council Tree Preservation Order Process Flow Chart
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Draft Tree Strategy Appendix D: Hedgerows for Screening and Wildlife
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Appendix B will contain the canopy cover survey maps and will be ready for inclusion within the final revised Tree Strategy.
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Wokingham Borough Tree Survey

Trees and woodlands in the Wokingham borough help create a quality of place and life that attracts people to live, study, visit and work in the area. As part of the green infrastructure, trees provide the backdrop to our towns and villages.

Trees and woodlands are an essential feature of the Wokingham landscape with many veteran and ancient trees and woodlands creating the 'story of the place'; indeed, the importance of trees, particularly the oak is recognised by the acorn and oak leaf that form the Town's heraldic charge.

While it is generally understood that trees provide a range of benefits understanding and rationalising those benefits is often difficult. Wokingham Borough Council as part of the tree strategy project commissioned an assessment of the tree stock within the borough to ascertain the value of these benefits and to inform on the numbers, condition and diversity of the tree asset across the borough both within their ownership and across the broader land area of towns, villages and parishes.

Two surveys were undertaken during the summer of 2022. These surveys included an assessment of the borough's tree coverage in general using the desk based i-Tree canopy assessment online tool and a ground survey collecting specific tree information across Council ownership across various random locations within each parish.

i-Tree Canopy Cover Assessment

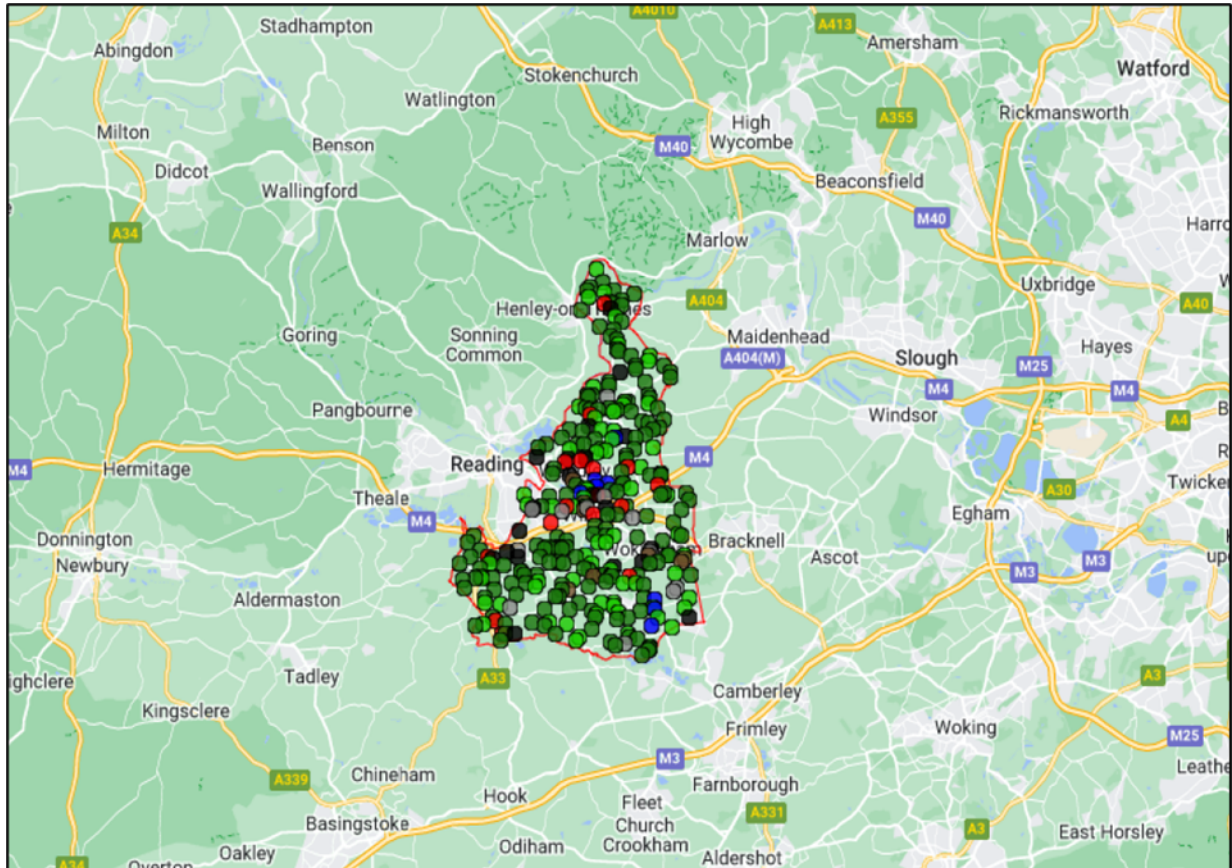
i-Tree is a state-of-the-art, peer-reviewed software suite from the USDA Forest Service that provides urban and rural forestry analysis and benefits assessment tools. i-Tree tools can help strengthen forest and tree management and advocacy efforts by quantifying forest structure and the environmental benefits that trees provide.

i-Tree canopy is a desk-based assessment using aerial imagery to randomly select location points within the borough, each location point is then assessed as to the ground cover identifying whether it is a tree/shrub, grass/herbaceous, impervious building, impervious road, impervious other, soil/bare ground or water.

The collected data is then automatically analysed by the built-in algorithm to produce an overview of the tree canopy coverage, the amount of carbon sequestered per annum and its value rationalised in monetary terms to the borough, the data also highlights the total amount and value of the stored carbon asset. Further information is also provided on the amount of surface runoff that is intercepted and the monetary saving this provides to the borough.

The i-Tree canopy survey for Wokingham assessed 301 sample points across the borough for their ground cover, a plan of the various points is shown below in Fig.1.

Fig.1 – Location plan of all i-Tree sample points across Wokingham borough

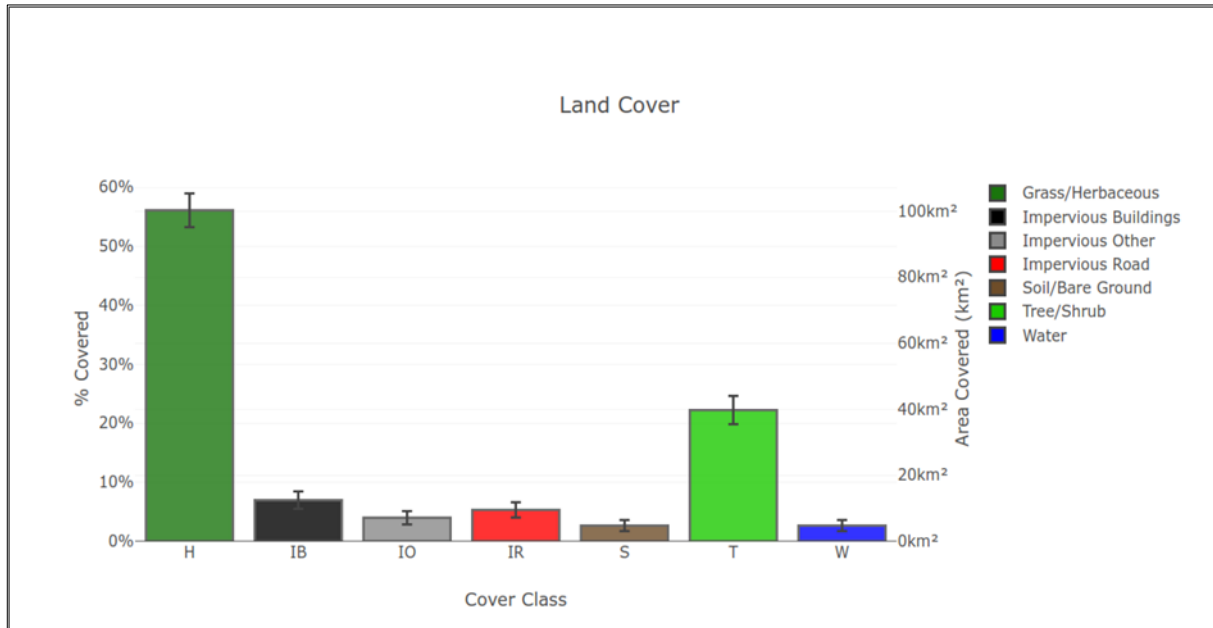


In summary the assessment of the borough indicates that approximately 22% of the borough landmass is under tree or shrub canopy Fig.2 and Fig.3. The average tree canopy cover is 16% in England (Treeconomics, 2017), it is therefore clear that Wokingham borough has an above average tree canopy.

Fig.2 – i-Tree Canopy breakdown of percentage ground cover class in Wokingham borough

Abbr.	Cover Class	Description	Points	% Cover \pm SE	Area (km ²) \pm SE
H	Grass/Herbaceous		169	56.15 \pm 2.86	100.39 \pm 5.11
IB	Impervious Buildings		21	6.98 \pm 1.47	12.47 \pm 2.63
IO	Impervious Other		12	3.99 \pm 1.13	7.13 \pm 2.02
IR	Impervious Road		16	5.32 \pm 1.29	9.50 \pm 2.31
S	Soil/Bare Ground		8	2.66 \pm 0.94	4.75 \pm 1.68
T	Tree/Shrub		67	22.26 \pm 2.40	39.80 \pm 4.29
W	Water		8	2.66 \pm 0.94	4.75 \pm 1.68
Total			301	100.00	178.80

Fig.3 – i-Tree Canopy breakdown of percentage ground cover class in Wokingham borough



The canopy of Wokingham provides an annual carbon sequestration Fig.4. of over 12 kilo tons of carbon which would have a value of over £3 million, in total the current tree asset stores over 305 Kilo tons of Carbon with a value of over £77 million.

Fig.4 – i-Tree Canopy sequestered carbon from the tree canopy in Wokingham borough

Description	Carbon (kt)	±SE	CO ₂ Equiv. (kt)	±SE	Value (GBP)	±SE
Sequestered annually in trees	12.18	±1.31	44.66	±4.81	£3,081,265	±331,907
Stored in trees (Note: this benefit is not an annual rate)	305.86	±32.95	1,121.48	±120.80	£77,382,117	±8,335,428

Currency is in GBP and rounded. Standard errors of removal and benefit amounts are based on standard errors of sampled and classified points. Amount sequestered is based on 0.306 kt of Carbon, or 1.122 kt of CO₂, per km²/yr and rounded. Amount stored is based on 7.685 kt of Carbon, or 28.178 kt of CO₂, per km² and rounded. Value (GBP) is based on £253,000.00/kt of Carbon, or £69,000.00/kt of CO₂ and rounded. (Metric units: kt = kilotonnes, metric kilotons, km² = square kilometers)

Further benefits Fig.5 indicate that the tree canopy intercepts and prevents over 985 mega litres of rainwater runoff, this has a value of over £1.5 million per annum.

Fig. 5 – i-Tree canopy hydrological benefits of tree canopy in Wokingham borough

Abbr.	Benefit	Amount (Ml)	±SE	Value (GBP)	±SE
AVRO	Avoided Runoff	985.91	±106.20	£1,528,052	±164,598
E	Evaporation	5,563.00	±599.23	N/A	N/A
I	Interception	5,591.58	±602.31	N/A	N/A
T	Transpiration	15,993.78	±1,722.81	N/A	N/A
PE	Potential Evaporation	13,964.68	±1,504.24	N/A	N/A
PET	Potential Evapotranspiration	10,856.37	±1,169.42	N/A	N/A

Currency is in GBP and rounded. Standard errors of removal and benefit amounts are based on standard errors of sampled and classified points. Hydrological Estimates are based on these values in Ml/km²/yr @ £/Ml/yr and rounded:
AVRO 24.771 @ £1,549.90 | E 139.773 @ N/A | I 140.491 @ N/A | T 401.850 @ N/A | PE 350.868 @ N/A | PET 272.771 @ N/A (Metric units: Ml = megaliters, km² = square kilometers)

The assessment also indicates that approximately 56% of the land is covered by grass or bare earth. While much of this is utilised for agricultural production, changing land use by only a small percentage through woodland creation and tree planting could provide significant benefits to the borough and help the Council's goal of addressing the climate emergency.

The Council recognises that while planting woodlands can sequester large amounts of carbon, many of the extra benefits that trees can provide, for example reduction in air pollution and reduction in surface water runoff, are found in our urban areas. As such while technically more challenging to accomplish, it is recognised that where resources allow increased tree planting in our towns and villages should be a goal of the tree strategy.

Tree Condition Survey

The purpose of the tree survey was to ascertain the number of trees within the borough, the makeup of the 6 main tree species and their general condition. This data was collected through a desk-based analysis and a ground truthing survey of random plots within the borough. The various survey datasets are provided in the tables and charts Fig.7 and Fig.8.

Desk based assessment

The desk-based survey utilised the BlueSky's National Tree Map™ (NTM™), a detailed dataset derived from high quality aerial imagery. The NTM™ dataset provides a unique, comprehensive database of location, height and canopy/crown extents for every single tree 3m and above in height. The dataset for Wokingham Borough was analysed to provide the following information:

- The number of trees identified on the NTM as being within WBC including both council and privately owned trees.
- The number of trees from NTM within the ownership of WBC.
- Number of trees within each parish including both WBC and privately owned trees.
- Number of trees from NTM within each parish under WBC ownership.

Fig.6 – Breakdown of tree numbers by parish across both private and WBC ownerships

Parish name	Number of trees		
	WBC-owned land	Privately-owned land	Total land
Arborfield and Newland CP	1537	35464	37001
Barkham CP	3969	20473	24442
Charvil CP	3746	6596	10342
Earley CP	9740	29510	39250
Finchampstead CP	10225	90855	101080
Remenham CP	908	30337	31245
Ruscombe CP	508	11798	12306
Shinfield CP	7031	32768	39799
Sonning CP	969	14031	15000
St. Nicholas, Hurst CP	9118	47945	57063
Swallowfield CP	3533	43255	46788
Twyford CP	2368	7640	10008
Wargrave CP	2352	58762	61114
Winnersh CP	5188	15172	20360
Wokingham CP	11744	37462	49206
Wokingham Without CP	6964	37493	44457
Woodley CP	11453	19467	30920
Total	91353	539028	630381

Analysis of the NTM dataset Fig.6 has identified that WBC are responsible for approximately 91,000 trees with a further 540,000 being within private ownership. The total number of trees within the borough is indicated to be over 630,000.

The results for the breakdown of trees in each parish shows that the spread of trees across each parish is not evenly distributed. This is quite common in relation to land use and to the socio-economic classification of areas; with less trees often being found in the heavily developed urban centres and areas with a lower socio-economic base, the numbers of trees generally increase in suburbia as more undeveloped space is available. Many trees are generally found within the wider rural setting.

The information will help to inform the Council of its tree planting goals to target in part those areas that have significantly fewer trees than those that are already well treed. It is the increase in tree and canopy cover within these lower treed areas that will generally provide the largest socio-economic improvements and the financial benefits highlighted in the i-Tree canopy survey.

Plot survey

By using the NTM data as a basis; a series of sample plots were created across the borough, these were targeted to capture sites within the Council's ownership containing the largest number of trees. The survey consisted of 102 survey plots (50m x 50m) located across the Councils ownership with 6 plots in each of the 17 parishes. The following data was collected for each tree within the plot:

- Tree species
- Tree age
- Tree condition – physiological and structural
- Tree fungus / pest / disease



Image 1: Sample plot selection

Tree Species

The tree survey identified that the most prevalent trees found within WBC ownership across the borough was oak and ash, as can be seen in Fig.7 and Fig.8 Understanding the makeup of the tree asset is important in terms of identifying risk and ensuring that any new tree planting is designed to be resilient.

Figure 7. The 6 most prevalent tree species identified in the tree survey

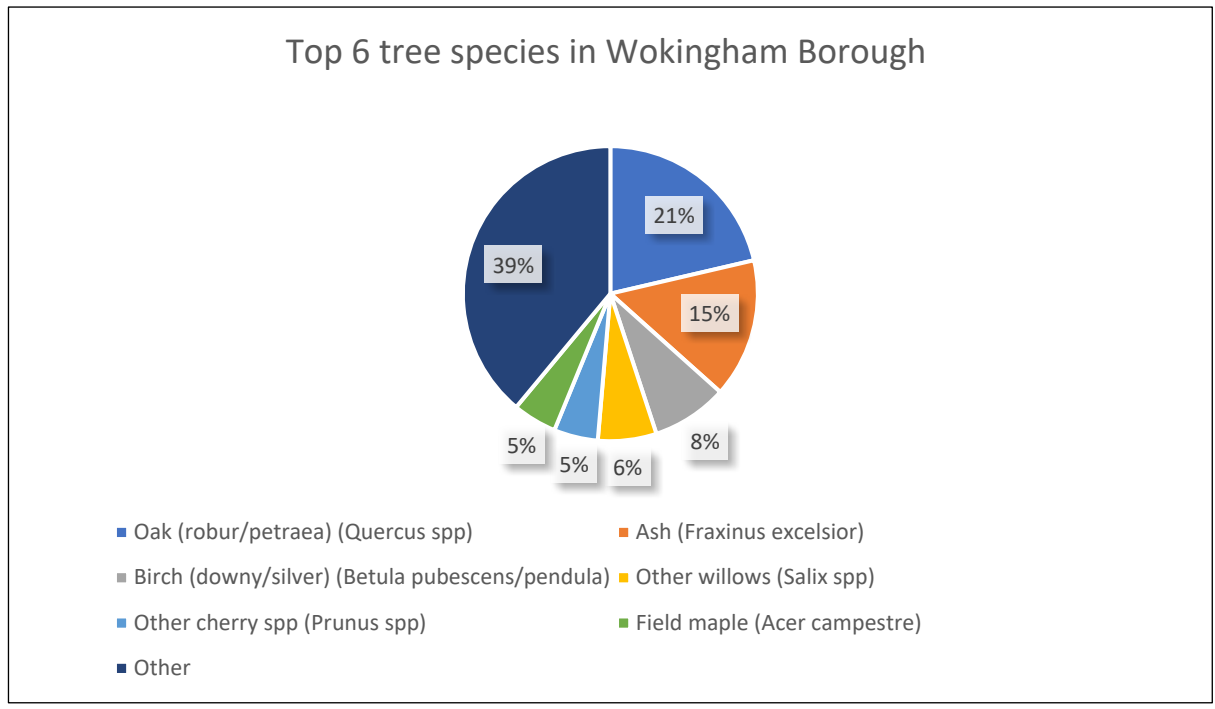


Figure 8. Extrapolated number of each of the top 6 species tree against the number of trees in NTM desk-based analysis.

Species	Tree count	Tree count scaled up to NTM
Oak (robur/petraea) (Quercus spp)	336	19513
Ash (Fraxinus excelsior)	240	13938
Birch (downy/silver) (Betula pubescens/pendula)	131	7608
Other willows (Salix spp)	101	5866
Other cherry spp (Prunus spp)	76	4414
Field maple (Acer campestre)	76	4414
Other	613	35600
Total	1573	91353

Over the last few years, it has become increasingly apparent that the UK is becoming increasingly affected by various tree pathogens that have the potential to cause widespread impacts to our trees and woodlands.

The most significant of these currently is the *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* fungus that causes ash dieback (ADB). This fungus is of particular significance in our broadleaf woodlands where it has the potential to significantly affect the timber yield in commercial hardwood production. It has significant relevance in terms of our landscape often found in roadside verges and hedges as well as planted in our town and cities. As the fungal infection progresses with the ash, the tree becomes increasingly weakened with dead branches and sparse crowns becoming obvious, a link between ADB and *armillaria* spp (honey fungus) has also increased concern in relation to the potential for windthrow to occur.

Concern is so great that The Tree Council have issued guidance on the identification of this infection and on its management. Understanding the potential impact and risk this infection poses are crucial to WBC from both their climate emergency tree planting goals and from a health and safety point of view. ADB has the potential to impact our trees in the manner that Dutch elm disease, caused by the fungus *Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*, ravaged our trees in the 1970's. Widescale felling may be required, especially across the highway network to ensure these routes remain safe. Understanding the potential number of trees this may affect will allow the Council to plan and budget for such work in the future.

Further detail on the number of ash trees by parish can be found in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Number of Ash trees on WBC owned land per parish

Ownership	Parish	Tree count (all species)	Ash count estimate for WBC land
WBC-owned land	Arborfield and Newland CP	1537	235
	Barkham CP	3969	606
	Charvil CP	3746	572
	Earley CP	9740	1486
	Finchampstead CP	10225	1560
	Remenham CP	908	139
	Ruscombe CP	508	78
	Shinfield CP	7031	1073
	Sonning CP	969	148

St. Nicholas, Hurst CP	9118	1391
Swallowfield CP	3533	539
Twyford CP	2368	361
Wargrave CP	2352	359
Winnersh CP	5188	792
Wokingham CP	11744	1792
Wokingham Without CP	6964	1063
Woodley CP	11453	1747
All	91353	13938

Tree age

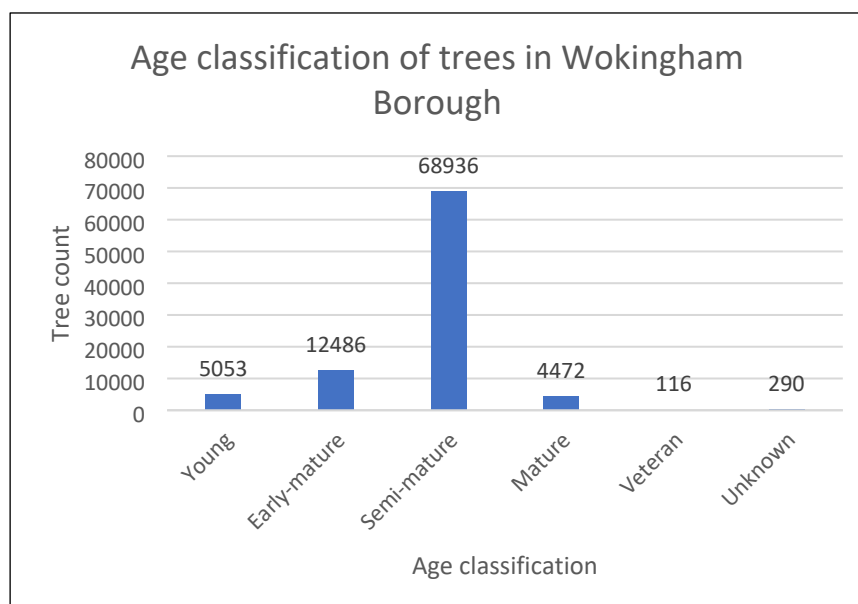
It is generally understood that to have a sustainable and flourishing urban forest you require a diverse age structure, trees will grow, decline and die at different rates and times dependant on a variety of factors including but not limited, to species, environment and climate.

To achieve continuity of trees and woodlands within a landscape it therefore stands to reason that the trees and woodlands must be replaced as fast as they are lost; however, if we simply only plant a new tree every time one is removed or dies, we will slowly lose the age diversity we find in a well-developed urban forest. To ensure continuity of tree canopy cover we must therefore ensure that the age structure of our urban forest is such that we have most tree numbers across the young, early mature and semi mature age classes with lower numbers of mature, veteran and ancient trees.

The sample plot survey, see Fig 10, indicates that Wokingham has many semi-mature trees in comparison to the other age classifications. While at first this appears to be in line with the previous statements regarding a sustainable urban forest the profile, in Wokingham it does highlight a level of risk.

Semi mature trees are required to ensure mature trees develop in the future however these trees are regularly viewed as less important when considering land for development or where highway renewal schemes are undertaken, these trees often do not have the prominence in the landscape that larger mature trees provide and as such they are often removed. This diminishes the available tree stock that can reach the levels of maturity where the greatest number of ecosystem services are provided.

Figure 10. Bar chart indicating the number of trees in each age class

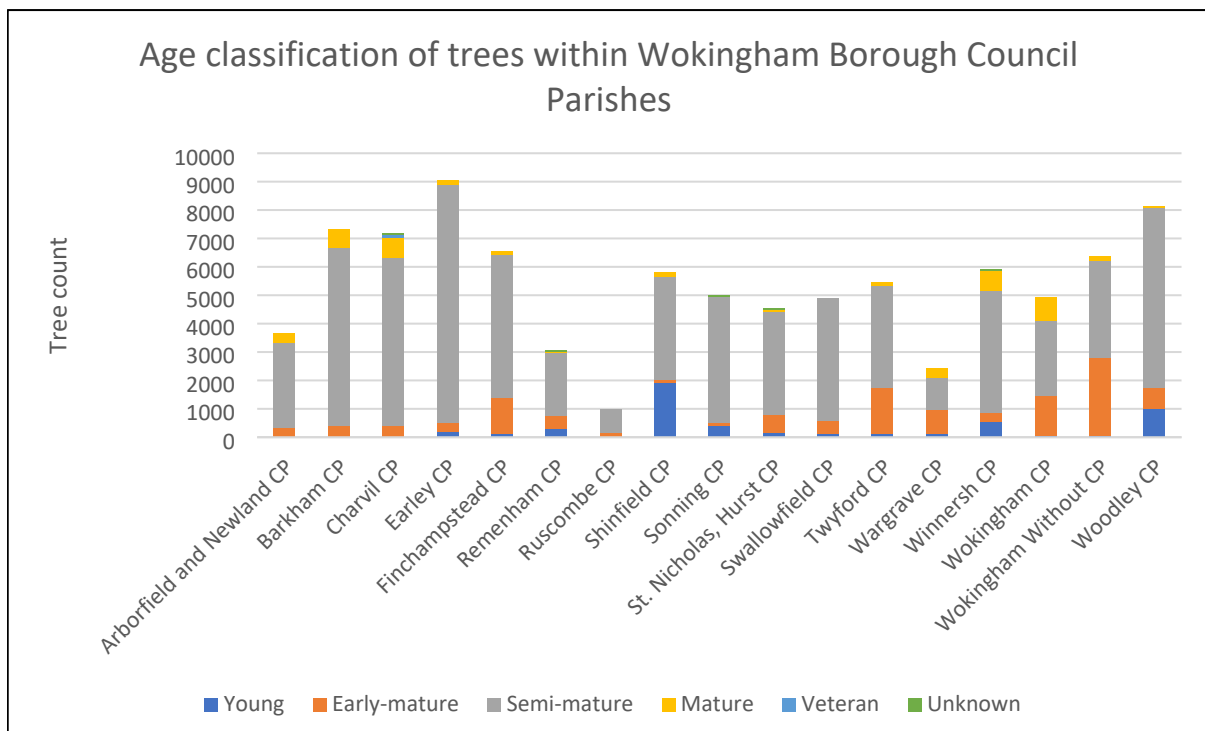


The results indicate that WBC’s goal of planting 300k new trees would go a significant way to addressing the potential risk of decline in the number of mature trees within the borough. It also highlights the importance of both ensuring those newly planted trees are maintained to full establishment and the importance that semi-mature trees play in the developing urban forest.

The extrapolated data from the tree survey against the NTM dataset indicates the statistical presence of 116 Veteran trees within the borough, however the local veteran tree group Wokingham and District Veteran Tree Association have been systematically surveying trees in the borough as part of the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree hunt. This volunteer survey has identified the presence of over 8.5k trees within the borough which it has identified as being ancient or veteran trees. It is recognised that ancient and veteran trees are a significant visual and ecological asset that requires great care and protection. WBC have recognised this within the tree strategy and seek to formally protect these important trees where circumstances and resources allow.

The chart found at Figure 11. provides a breakdown of the age structure of the WBC owned tree cover in each Parish scaled up to the number of trees within the NTM dataset. This data can be used in conjunction with the tree planting potential plans to identify and target those areas most in need of new planting subject to resource availability. (Action plan – target planting to achieve 500-1000 newly planted street/urban trees in each parish -still leaves 283k trees for woodland block planting)

Figure 11. Age structure of WBC owned trees within each parish.



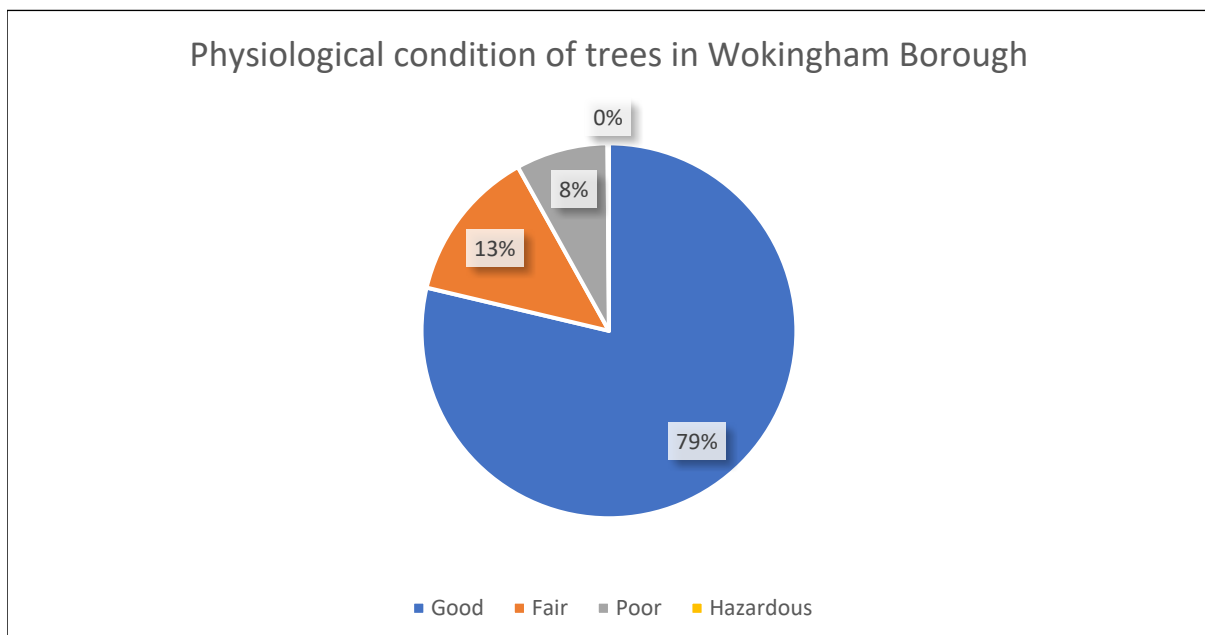
Tree condition

During the plot survey each tree was assessed for both its physiological condition and that of its structural condition. This information again is important to planning and maintaining a resilient and sustainable urban forest. Physiological condition considers the abiotic and biotic factors that may be affecting the health of a tree. Understanding the relationship, a tree has with its natural surroundings and how these may affect the trees health are important to ascertain whether remedial action should be taken to address significant issues or in some cases whether a tree can be left to its own devices.

Visual cues such as thinning canopies, small leaves, prolific production of epicormic growth, wilting and premature leaf loss can all be evidencing a tree is under stress. Stresses may be caused by the environment such as through extreme changes to our climate such as the summer drought conditions of 2022 or through the impact of human actions such as use of herbicides or road salt. Trees that are under such stresses are often more prone to infection by fungal pathogens such as the previously mentioned *Hymenocyphus fraxineus*.

The results of this element of the survey can be found in the chart below Fig 12. In general, the surveyed trees were in a good physiological condition with only a small percentage falling into the fair or poor category. This indicates that most of the tree asset is in a healthy condition, considering the large bias in age classification toward semi mature the future may be positive for seeing many trees developing into maturity, this may however also rely on sufficient resources to both maintain and protect these trees.

Figure 12. Breakdown by percentage of the physiological condition of trees within WBC

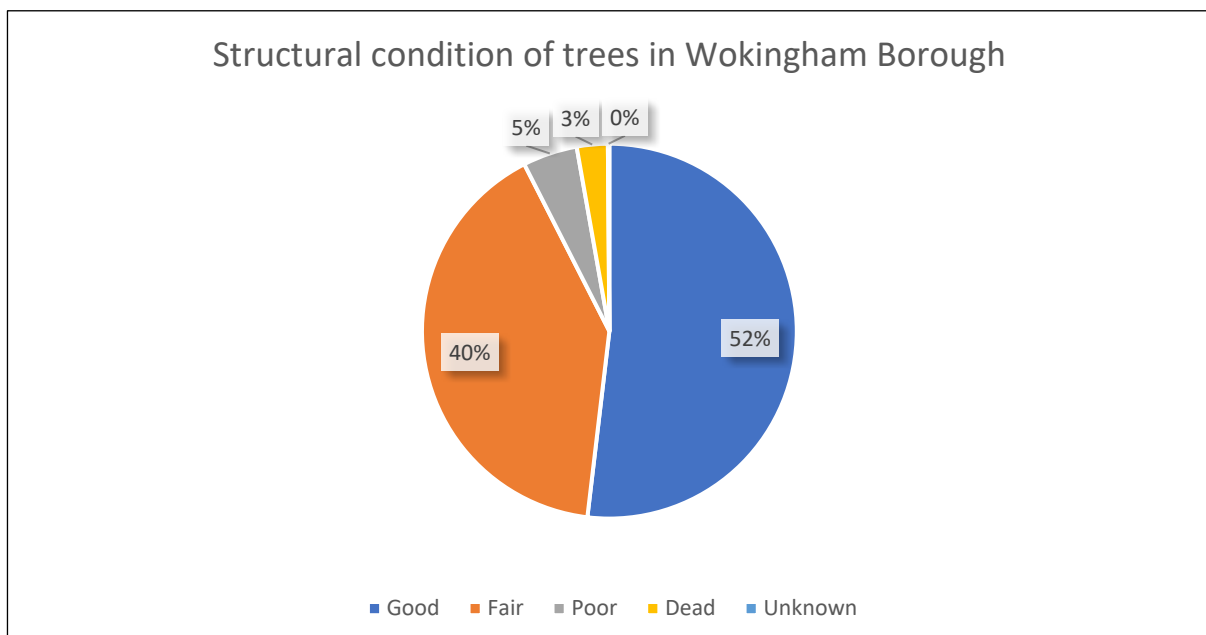


The second element of tree condition is that of its structure, this comprises of both natural elements, such as the growth habit of a particular tree species e.g., the propensity of a Norway maple *Acer platanoides* to produce included unions which can later lead to branch failures, from the action of weather, e.g., storm damage or from the actions of humans, e.g., mechanical damage to tree roots from inconsiderate trenching or sub-standard tree works.

The results of this element as indicated in Fig 13. below, are still broadly positive; however a significant proportion of trees are identified as being within the fair category. This seeming decrease in the condition of the tree stock is however not a significant issue. Most trees found in our towns and cities will be affected in some way through specific growth traits as previously mentioned or through some form of mechanical damage via either natural or human interaction which will have caused damage to the tree.

The low numbers of trees in a poor or dead condition highlight the quality of condition the trees bring to the borough. Had the results indicated a significant percentage of trees of being in a poor structural condition, this would highlight a potential significant liability for the Council, it should be noted however that these percentages are derived from a physical survey of trees extrapolated against the NTM dataset – which indicates that WBC have approximately 91k trees under their responsibility, if around 8% of these are in a poor or dead condition this still equates to over 7k trees that may require some action to ensure the tree is in a safe condition that poses little or no risk to the public or property.

Figure 13. Breakdown by percentage of the structural condition of trees within WBC.



Pathogens

The pressure on the borough's trees has never been higher from pest and disease. Nationally we are seeing the increase in foreign pests and diseases. Some of these pests and diseases have been present in the UK for many years while others are more recent. While some of these pests and diseases are endemic and well understood others are less so. It is however recognised that pests and diseases have

the potential to significantly impact both tree health and safety; and some may also affect the health of the local population.

While undertaking the tree survey several pests and diseases were identified, see Figure 14. and 15. Dutch elm disease (DED) was identified 30 times across the borough, while this is now endemic across the UK the impact is clear in the decline and death of many of our elm trees. The disease generally affects the semi mature elm growing from original root stock of trees that were infected and either died or were removed in the last 40 years. The survey indicated the presence of 30 trees with the infection which when extrapolated against the NTM indicates there are around 1750 trees within the borough that have DED. As the trees succumb to the disease they are at increased risk of branch and stem failure posing a risk to highways, property and people.

Ash dieback caused by the fungus *Hymenocyphus fraxineus* is perhaps of more relevance than DED as this fungal infection as previously noted has the potential to cause the rapid decline and death of our mature ash trees. This has the potential to dramatically and suddenly change the view of our landscapes and woodlands while also placing a significant burden and liability on the local authority resources. It is recommended by the Tree Council that all local authorities undertake surveys of their trees to identify the presence of both ash trees and the prevalence of the disease, the Tree Council provide a useful guidance note with the recommended approach for the management of ADB based on a 4-tier classification system.

Regarding the potential of pest and disease to also affect the health of the residents of the borough the survey identified 1 tree with Oak processionary moth, the caterpillars of this moth and their nests contain fine hairs which can cause severe skin irritation and affect breathing if inhaled.

Significant infestations of the oak processionary moth may place a significant burden on the local authority with a requirement to undertake nest removal and the use of pesticides to kill the moth and caterpillars. The use of such chemicals however is nonselective in the various moth (*Lepidoptera spp*) they affect, given the importance of the ancient and veteran trees that are found within the borough and the ecological communities they support, it is important to identify and address infestations an early stage.

Fig 14. Overview of the most common identified pests within the tree survey.

Pests	Tree survey count	Tree count scaled up to NTM
Dutch elm disease (<i>O. novo-ulmi</i>)	30	1742
Oak processionary moth (<i>Thaumetopoea processionea</i>)	1	58
Other	1	58
None	1541	89495
Total	1573	91353

Fig 15. Overview of the most common identified pests within the tree survey.

Fungus	Tree survey count	Tree count scaled up to NTM
Ash bracket (<i>Innonotus hispidus</i>)	1	58
Ash dieback (<i>Hymenocyphus fraxineus</i>)	75	4356

Other	1	58
None	1496	86881
Total	1573	91353

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WBC TPO Process flow chart

- 1) TPO inquiry received, from staff member, Councillor, or member of the public; Go to 2. If urgent, then TPO priority meeting process (see point 5) undertaken by emails and TEAMS. Go to 9.
- 2) Link to WBC guidance on requesting a TPO and to TPO Request form (Appendices 1 and 2) sent emailed out, or posted, as required. Go to 3.
- 3) Completed TPO Request form received? Yes - go to 4, no – finish.
- 4) Completed TPO Request form-sent to monthly TPO prioritisation meeting. Go to 5.
- 5) TPO Request assessed and rated for priority at TPO Prioritisation meeting (attended by T&L team manager who has delegated authority to make TPOs, Snr Tree Officer and Tree Officer, as available). TPOs are assessed against Government Guidelines. Three possible outcomes:
 - a. Priority Red are the TPOs that will be prioritised for service during the period ahead. Go to 6,
 - b. Priority Amber are the TPOs that will be worked on during the next period if there is resource to do this. Go to 7,
 - c. Priority Green are those that will not be prioritised. Go to 8.(Where required the Green Blue Infrastructure team manager (the line-manager of the T&L team manager), attends the meeting. Where relevant, other officers, e.g. planning officers, enforcement officers, T&L team Landscape Architects may attend, or their opinion is sought either before or after the meeting, to input specialist and/or site specific knowledge and information).
- 6) Priority Red TPOs made and served by TO. Go to 10.
- 7) Some Priority Amber TPOs are made and served by TO. Amber Priority TPO to be served?
 - a. Yes – go to 9,
 - b. No – go to 5.
- 8) Those who have requested TPOs that have been allocated to Priority Green receive a response explaining why the TPO request has not been prioritised. They are advised that if they become aware of new and updated information, then they are at liberty to put in a new request which will be considered. TPO not served – Finish.
- 9) TPO served. Two outcomes:
 - a. Comments received? Yes - go to 10, no - go to 11.
 - b. TPO challenged on point of law? Yes – go to 14, no - go to 15
- 10) Letter sent to those who have commented/objected telling them that their opinions will be considered in the light of Government guidance when the TPO is confirmed, if it is confirmed. Go to 11
- 11) TPO considered in the light of comments or lack thereof. TPO to be confirmed? Yes – go to 12, No – go to 13
- 12) TPO confirmed as served or modified. Finish.
- 13) TPO rescinded. Finish.
- 14) TPO sent to Court. Court decides – Finish.
- 15) Letter to challenger confirming invalid challenge. Go to 11

APPENDIX A GUIDANCE NOTE FOR INCLUDING TREES IN TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

APPENDIX B TPO REQUEST FORM

APPENDIX C TPO ASSESSMENT FORM

Hedgerows for Screening and Wildlife in Wokingham

Hedges form an essential part of the structure of the landscape. They are important for biodiversity conservation in their own right but also because they link woodland habitats & form wildlife corridors. The physical structure, species mix & composition of hedges changes from region to region & even between the different landscape character areas in the Borough. This Guidance Note is a simple guide to planting hedges in Wokingham & will assist in the design & planting of new hedgerows in the Borough.

SPECIFICATION

Ground Preparation:	Ground to be thoroughly de-compacted by hand, if necessary, prior to planting.
Size of stock:	Transplants 45-60cm tall or whips 60-90cm tall as appropriate to the species selected. Hedgerow standard trees should be half standards under-planted with shade tolerant hedge species. Trees spaced at 6 to 15 m intervals as appropriate.
Form:	Bare root or pot grown as appropriate for each species.
Type:	Certified local provenance.
Density:	For most hedges double staggered row, generally 'notch planted', 0.33 metres apart at 0.33 metre centres (this works out at 6 plants per linear metre). Hedgerow standards should be 'pit planted' (where appropriate) at 6-15m centres.
Support and protection:	Protection (rabbits & deer) – individual Tubex tree shelters of appropriate size, staked & secured or stock fencing around new trees & rabbit proof wire at base.
Establishment:	For 2 years after planting, maintain an area of 1m ² weed-free around each new plant, either by hand (where replanting hedges & which will appropriately preserve remnant field-layer plants) or by another weed control regime appropriate to the circumstances.
Maintenance:	Any plants that die or become diseased within 5 years of planting must be replaced to the above specification. Watering of hedge to ensure establishment of all plants to be carried out as required.
Plant Specification:	All whips to be young trees without feathered growth, 0.6–1.2m high. All transplants to conform to BS 3936: Part 1:1992 and to be no less than 2 years old. All trees and shrubs to be delivered to site clearly labelled with botanical name. For specification of hedgerow standard trees see WBC advice note on 'Tree planting in Wokingham'. Holly to be pot-grown ensuring establishment.
Standard trees:	Where standard trees are required tree species should be left uncut to grow through the hedge, at least one every 6m, with existing standard trees incorporated into the new hedge wherever possible. Standard trees planted either side of gateways encourages the use of hedges as natural networks by birds, bats, dormice, etc.

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CHOICE OF SPECIES FOR DIFFERENT HEDGES/HEDGEROWS

Countryside Hedges: Some of our hedges are ancient, dating from very early plantings of stock–proof boundaries, or were the thin belt of trees and shrubs left over when woodland was originally cleared to make fields. They tend to be very rich in species, mainly because of their antiquity. Simpler hedges, mainly of hawthorn & blackthorn, tend to be the more recent ones, planted as common land was enclosed within the last 200 years. Except on the most sandy soils the following species should be used:

Shrub / hedge plants

50% Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
23% Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
5% Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
5% Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)
5% Hornbeam (*Carpinus betula*)
5% Holly (*Ilex Aquifolium*) shade tolerant so good under hedgerow trees

with:

1% each of Dog rose (*Rosa canina*), Field rose (*Rosa arvensis*), wild service (*Sorbus torminalis*) guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), oak (*Q. robur*) and ash (*F. excelsior*) transplants, (7% of total

Hedgerow standard trees

Oak (*Quercus robur*) half standards or larger (70% of total standards)
Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) half standards or larger (30% of total standards)

River Floodplains: Hedgerow mixtures in the floodplains of the Thames, Loddon and Blackwater rivers can be similar to those for the open countryside. However, in damper areas the species mix can be tweaked to include hedgerow standards of large species trees requiring damp conditions e.g.

Willows (*Salix* species such as the large trees *S. fragilis* and *S. alba* or the smaller, more shrubby *S. caprea* and *S. cinerea*) but not to be planted near buildings.

Black poplar (*Populus nigra var. betulifolia*) only confirmed local stock.
Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)

Designed Formal Landscapes: Most such hedges are designed for formal landscapes and use a limited number of plants to form single species clipped, formal, hedgerows. Suitable species are as follows: beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), box (*Buxus sempervirens*). Mixes of these species can be used to form 'tapestry hedge mixes' which are rich in texture with colours which change throughout the year but which need only minimum maintenance. A relatively low maintenance tapestry hedge, requiring only one or two cuts per year can be achieved by planting 33% each of yew, hornbeam and beech.

Choice of species: Some other species are favoured for their quick establishment & rapid growth. However, they are often poor in terms of their nature conservation benefits or look out of place in the landscape. An example of such a species is Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*) which is often cited in formal High Hedges complaints. Its use is generally discouraged. On the other hand, Yew (*Taxus baccata*), makes an exceptional formal hedge, the finest of all green architecture. Yew is not as slow growing as is popularly believed & a hedge of 6 feet can be achieved in five or six seasons if the ground is well prepared. Where berries are required to encourage fruit eating birds, then both male and female plants must be planted.





WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Draft Tree Strategy





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1. INTRODUCTION

Main principle

Right Tree, Right Place, Right Reason

Tree strategies are a plan for the management of trees in a specific area, this includes tree planting and felling. This strategy provides Wokingham Borough Council with a set of standards and goals to ensure it continues to care for the trees of the borough. It takes the risks and benefits into account, setting out the Council's aspirations for increasing tree numbers and canopy cover, whilst continuing to protect existing trees for the benefit of future generations.

Purpose:

The Council recognises the positive impact trees have on the environment and the lives of people who live in and visit the borough. Trees provide multiple benefits, which include improvements in human health and well-being, biodiversity and carbon capture.

When the term 'tree' is used in this strategy, it refers to all forms of trees, including saplings, mature trees, veterans, hedgerows, orchards and woodlands.

This document will provide a useful resource to anyone interested in conserving and enhancing the trees of our borough. It seeks to provide additional guidance and detail to

support policies in the Council's decision-making process to ensure that Climate Emergency Plan goals are achieved.

The strategy is designed to cover the next 10 years and includes short-, medium- and long-term goals, including achieving the required standards to gain recognition as a Tree City of the World.

Aims:

- To promote awareness of the value of trees in our environment.
- To interpret the policy framework on trees at international, national and regional levels to help define the Council's responsibilities.
- To set out Council policies to enable us to conserve and enhance the Wokingham Borough treescape.

Objectives:

The Tree Strategy will provide the Council with a framework to help manage its tree assets and to achieve the following objectives:

- Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers.
- Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes.
- Fulfil the Council's legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues.

- Help inform residents of our legal obligations relating to trees and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately.
- Help establish sustainable management programmes for Council woodland utilising external funding from central government agencies.
- Promote and increase the current level of tree-planting on public and private land to address the recent decline of individual trees.
- To contribute to the 2030 carbon-neutral target and to mitigate the potential effects of ash dieback and other potentially harmful diseases.
- Help improve air quality, mitigate climate change, increase biodiversity, improve residents' health and well-being, and provide the socio-economic benefits that trees provide.
- Provide guidance to developers on how the Council expects tree-planting to be integrated into the design and construction of development proposals.

The success and effective implementation of the goals and ambitions of the strategy are subject to adequate financial and staffing resources being made available, along with full support from Councillors and Senior Management.

2. SUMMARY

As part of the development of the Council's emerging Tree Strategy, consultations have been held with the following internal and external stakeholders:

Internal stakeholders:

- Wokingham Borough Operational Tree Officers
- Wokingham Borough Trees and Landscape Team
- Planning Policy Team
- Planning Regulation Team
- Development Management Team
- Estates
- Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Countryside Services
- Cleaner and Greener
- Highways
- Flood & Drainage

External stakeholders:

- Woodland Trust
- Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

There are many laws which protect the environment and govern or guide the way some parts of the landscape are managed. These laws help ensure the country is an attractive place to live, work and visit. There is now an increasing focus on law to help protect biodiversity (wildlife) and ensure sustainable uses of the land.

Many of these laws have been in place for decades, including the [Town and Country Planning Act \(1947 + 1990\)](#), the [Occupiers' Liability Act \(1957 + 1984\)](#), the [Forestry Act \(1967\)](#), the [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act \(1976\)](#), the [Highways Act \(1980\)](#), the [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act \(2006\)](#), the [Agriculture Act \(2020\)](#), the [Local Nature Recovery Strategies \(LNRS\)](#), and more recently the [Environment Act \(2021\)](#).

Whilst legislation to help protect the environment has been in place for many years, the government has more recently acknowledged that our way of living is having a significant impact on the environment. These impacts are not only on local environments within the UK but also



on a global scale. The single greatest impact on the environment is that of humans, and as such the government has sought solutions to address changes in the climate caused by use of fossil fuels in every sector of human activity, from transport and development to farming and fashion.

In January 2018, the government released 'A Green Future', a 25-year plan setting the goal to improve the environment so that the next generation inherits an environment that is of better quality than that which we have today.

The approach is underpinned by a commitment to increasing natural capital, the stock of natural environment assets that deliver a range of benefits for people and wildlife. Section 6 of the Strategy expands on The Value of Trees.

Trees and woodland feature prominently in the Plan, including increasing woodland in England in line with the government aspiration of attaining 12% cover by 2060, and focusing on woodland to maximise its many benefits.

To facilitate the government's goals, several documents have been produced which this strategy takes into consideration. These include:

a) The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

This Act came into force in October 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) list has been drawn up by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee as required by the Act. **Section 40** of the NERC Act places a duty on public authorities in England, in exercising their functions, to have regard to the purposes of conserving. The act does not limit the requirement to have regard to conserving biodiversity to any specific functions so then such functions would include waste management, highways works and maintenance, planning decision making and policy making. Paragraph 40(iii) states that 'Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'. Of course, trees, particularly native species, must be considered to be both wildlife and wildlife habitat for the purposes of the Act. Follow this [link](#) to view NERC Act 2006.



b) The Localism Act 2011

This Act has placed a greater emphasis on the sub-national, local and neighbourhood levels' roles in planning and in the decisions about designations of local green spaces, including woodland, for community use. Importantly the duties to conserve, restore or enhance biodiversity (including trees and woodland) under the NERC Act (2006), (see above), apply to parish councils as well as to the borough council. A consequence of this is that, although there is no duty under the Localism Act for parish councils to produce a Strategy like The London Environment Strategy required by paragraph 225 of this Act; it is a duty of the parish council to consider 'restoring or enhancing a population or habitat' under Section 40(3) of the NERC Act. This includes trees and woodland. Follow this [link](#) to view the Localism Act 2011.

c) Agriculture Act 2020

The update of the Agriculture Act has provided a mechanism where financial assistance for farmers must provide 'Public Goods', the Commons Library briefing from December 2020 (follow this link for the [Agriculture Act 2020 briefing paper](#)) provides within chapter 3.1 (clauses 1-6) an example in table 1 of the envisaged benefits that the Act will provide through the Public Goods. Clause 1(a) suggests the act will incentivise tree planting to capture ammonia emissions and to protect sensitive habitats from

agricultural nitrogen deposition which can damage them. Follow this [link](#) to view the Agriculture Act 2020.

d) National Planning Policy Framework and guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and reinforces the importance of sustainable development.

The Framework demonstrates its contribution not only to the environment, but to economic and social agendas health. In addition, the NPPF states that an approved Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications.

Further detail is set out in the government's planning practice guidance (PPG). Follow this [link](#) for NPPF guidance. The PPG provides an online resource of detailed policy guidance that sits alongside the Framework.

In addition, the National Design Guide illustrates how well-designed places can be made more beautiful, healthier, greener and more enduring. The guide complements the PPG and covers thematic areas. Consideration is given to trees and landscape within several areas such as public spaces, nature, homes and buildings, and movement. Follow this [link](#) for the National Design Guide.

e) Defra Forest Policy

Defra published its latest Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement in March 2013. This also incorporated its response to the Independent Panel on Forestry. It affirms the government's commitment to protecting trees, woods and forests. Follow this [link](#) to view the Defra Forest Policy.

f) Natural Environment White Paper

The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, published in 2011, recognises that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal well-being. It makes the case for the economic valuation of the services natural systems provide to our society, and for these values to be properly accounted for in economic decision making across all government departments. Follow this [link](#) to view the paper.

g) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, published in 2011, has as its mission to halt overall biodiversity loss; support healthy, well-functioning ecosystems; and establish coherent ecological networks, by providing better habitat for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

In line with the UK Forest Standard Guidelines, conservation of biodiversity is an essential part of Wokingham Borough Council's Tree Strategy. Biodiverse woodlands and urban forests are not only more resilient to a range of external factors such as pests, diseases and climate change but provide a wider range of green infrastructure benefits. Follow this [link](#) to view the Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem.

h) Circular 36/78 Trees and forestry

This document consolidates advice on trees and forestry and the preservation of trees and woodlands.

- It enshrines Local Authority powers to plant and protect trees and a duty to make provision for them when granting planning permissions.
- It advises on the treatment of trees and forestry in plans and on staffing for, and public involvement in, proposals relating to trees.
- It describes the purpose and scope of Tree Preservation Orders. Follow this [link](#) for link for the Councils guidance on protected trees.

i) UK Forestry Standard

The UK Forestry Standard sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of all forests and woodlands in the UK. The Forestry Commission employs the Standard in

the management of its own forests, and private forests receiving grant aid must be managed in accordance with the Standard. Follow this [link](#) for the UK Forestry Standard.

Eight areas of activity are covered by the Standard:

- General forest practice
- Biodiversity
- Climate change
- Historic environment
- Landscape
- People
- Soil
- Water

j) Local plans

Local plans are prepared by the local planning authority (LPA), usually the Council or the national park authority for the area. LPA's have a statutory duty to prepare and review Local Plans for their area. The NPPF states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area and a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities. Wokingham Borough Council has produced a development plan which comprises several documents, including the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Wokingham Borough Council are in the process of producing a Local

Plan Update (LPU) which is expected to go to Public Inquiry in 2023. This will replace the current Local Plan which comprises the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plans. See Section 4 of the strategy for further detail on the Local Plan. This [link](#) will take you to the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Update webpage.

k) Neighbourhood plans

Neighbourhood planning gives communities the opportunity to prepare a vision for their neighbourhood and help shape the development and growth of their local area. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. This includes opportunities to prepare policies that help protect valued areas of green space and influence the design and type of new development.

Wokingham Borough currently has two adopted neighbourhood plans: Shinfield, and Arborfield & Barkham, which include planning policies and guidance relating to localised matters in their area, such as trees and hedgerows.

Policies within a neighbourhood plan provide additional detail to strategic policies covered in the local plan.

Follow this [link](#) to view Wokingham Borough Council Neighbourhood Plans.

l) Climate Emergency Action Plan

The UK was one of the first countries to ratify the Paris Agreement on limiting greenhouse gas emissions to levels that prevent global temperatures from increasing to more than 2°C above the temperature benchmark.

Following a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, advice was given stating the 2°C target was too high and a lower target of 1.5°C should be the limit. The publication of the report triggered several councils across the world to declare a climate emergency.

Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency on 18 July 2019. The declaration set out the commitment to play as full a role as possible, leading by example as well as by exhortation, in achieving a carbon-neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030. The motion committed Wokingham Borough Council to produce a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) within six months, to report the actions that the Council will take to achieve its target and to set up a cross-party working group to monitor progress. With the publication of this CEAP, all these commitments are now in place.

The Council's CEAP can be found using the following [link](#).

4. LOCAL PLAN

Local Plans are statutory documents prepared by an LPA in consultation with its community and other stakeholders. The document sets out a long-term vision and a policy framework to guide how future development is managed in the area, including the location, amount and type of new development, and supporting infrastructure. Once in place, local plans become part of the statutory development plan.

The development plan for Wokingham Borough includes the Core Strategy (adopted 2010) and the MDD (adopted 2014) which govern how development will occur in the borough until 2026. Work is underway on a new Local Plan Update (LPU) that will guide the long-term development of the borough. Once adopted, the LPU will replace the Core Strategy and MDD.

The Council's local plan must continue to consider changes to national planning policy and guidance.

This includes the current standard approach for calculating the number of homes each local authority must plan for.

The Core Strategy sets out a list of goals which includes a desire to protect the character of the borough by maintaining/improving the built/natural environment while mitigating the effect of new development on the environment.

Policy CP1 on Sustainable development seeks to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and to provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes.

Policy CP3 sets out the general principle of development, including ensuring proposals:

- Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life; have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or watercourses.
- contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping.

By following this link, further detail can be found on the Council's [Managing Development Delivery Local Plan](#).

This document provides further detail to the policies contained within the Core Strategy which ensure the borough's unique ecology, landscape, heritage and environment will be protected and, where possible,

enhanced so that Wokingham Borough's strength of character prevails in these times of change.

The MDD contains Policy CC03 on Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping requires that, which includes the following detail:

- Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieve the following criteria within scheme proposals:
- Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development,
- Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside.
- Protect and retain existing trees, Landscaping, tree-planting, hedges and other landscape features,
- Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.
- Policy TB21 on Landscape Character requires that:
- Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, Including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.
- Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The Council recognises the value that existing and new trees add to any development. To help ensure that important assets such as trees are retained in development, the Council has put forward several policies within the draft LPU. The draft LPU was subject to public consultation in February 2020¹, and included the following:

Policy NE3: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

1. Trees, woodland and hedgerows are important visual and ecological assets in towns, villages and the countryside. To retain and provide local character and distinctiveness in the landscape, trees (including ancient or veteran trees), woodland, ancient woodland and hedgerows are of particular significance. Development proposals should:
 - a) Ensure existing trees, hedgerows and other landscape features are protected, and where possible enhanced, as an integral part of the development,
 - b) Retain the existing pattern of fields, hedgerows, woodlands, trees, watercourses, water bodies, underlying topography and other landscape features,
 - c) Provide appropriate buffer zones around woodlands, including semi-natural ancient woodlands, planted ancient woodland sites, orchards, hedgerows and individual trees.
2. The loss, threat or damage to any tree, woodland or hedgerow of visual, heritage or nature conservation value will only be acceptable where:
 - a) Development proposals have sought to avoid, reduce or minimise impact,
 3. b) Mitigation measures, such as structural tree planting are incorporated as part of the development proposals providing equivalent scale, canopy cover, habitat connectivity and character. Development proposals that would result in the loss or deterioration of woodland, ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees will only be permitted if there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

¹ Right Homes, Right Places – Draft Local Plan Public Consultation (February 2020 – March 2020)

Policy NE4: Development and Existing Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

1. Development proposals that may affect a tree, woodland or hedgerow should:
 - a) Assess the health of all trees, woodland and hedgerows affected, including describing and assessing their value and the potential impact of the development on them as part of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 - b) Incorporate existing woodland, trees and hedgerows and ensure integration into the public realm within a suitable landscape setting,
 - c) Ensure the layout of new developments provide sufficient space to enable trees to grow and thrive, including maintaining adequate root protection areas and limiting excessive shading to residential properties.
 - d) Ensure appropriate tree protection measures are in place prior to development commencing on site as part of an Arboricultural Method Statement, including a Tree Constraints Plan and Tree Protection Plan and actively monitor tree protection throughout the construction process.

Valued Landscape Topic Paper

This paper provides background evidence and justification for Wokingham Borough Council's designation of valued landscapes as per Policy NE6 of the Draft Local Plan. The paper, a draft version of the paper can be viewed by following this [link](#), sets out the relevant legislation, policy guidance, appeals and case law and details the methodology used for discovering and defining valued landscapes across the Borough. It is intended that this paper will inform the development of the LPU and will demonstrate how the Council's LPU process and policies will seek to conserve and enhance the borough's valued landscapes in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Once finalised the Topic Paper will assist the Council's Development Management and Planning Enforcement teams in the assessment, prioritisation, determination and defence of planning decisions.

Work on discovering and defining the borough's Valued Landscapes combined with the Council's most recent Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2019), and the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (2004) offers an objective assessment and description of the borough's landscapes. The strategic Valued Landscape assessment and the Landscape

Character Assessment provide an evidence base to help formulate policies for the LPU and will help guide decision-making around development and the management of future change. They are designed to be used both as a positive tool to guide new development or land uses in a way that understands and responds to local variations in landscape character and to protect and enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of Wokingham's landscapes. Taking into consideration the main strategy principle of 'Right Tree, Right Place, Right Reason', using the LCAs, Wokingham Borough Council's tree and landscape and ecology officers will develop a 'tree palette' which will provide a useful tool to support developers, residents, community groups and landowners in making informed decisions on which trees would be most suitable for the borough landscape characteristics. Work is already underway to develop the tree palette and completion of it has been included as a short-term goal on the strategy action plan.

The emerging Local Plan Update also contains several other linked policies including NE1 and NE3-NE7 which consist of policies relating to NE1: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation, NE3: Trees, woodland and hedgerows, NE4: Development and existing trees, woodland and hedgerows, NE5: Landscape and Design, NE6: Landscape Character, Value and Green Routes and NE7: Sites of Urban Landscape Value.

The LPU will guide where and how growth will take place in the borough. The Council must plan for more housing, which is always a complex and controversial subject. They will also plan for new employment, schools, roads, parks, shops and community facilities necessary to create places people want to live, work and do business.

The LPU will interact with themes to include the aforementioned natural environment policies, to ensure that any development should optimise unit density, while also consistently achieving quality design which provides sufficient space to allow the integration or juxtaposition of trees and woodland within development in a sustainable manner. The integration of existing trees and good landscape planning for enhanced contributions will reinforce or even sometimes create the sense of place and local distinctiveness.

Additional information on the emerging LPU can be found by following this [link](#).

Further to the above aims of the local plan and Core Strategy, MDD and emerging LPU, this strategy seeks to provide additional detail to support policies within the local plan and provides further weight and guidance in the Council's decision-making process to ensure that Climate Emergency Plan goals are achieved.

5. WOKINGHAM ENVIRONMENT

Borough Design Guide

Adopted in 2012, the Borough Design Guide, is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which augments planning policies in the Development Plan Document (DPD), in this case, the Wokingham Borough Core Spatial Strategy (January 2010) (Core Strategy). The Borough Design Guide is an important material consideration in the determining of planning applications and elaborates on policies in the Core Strategy, explaining how they will be interpreted and applied to common topics and forms of development.

The Borough Design Guide has been prepared to help deliver the vision and objectives of the borough. The overall aim of the guide is to enhance the quality of development and make sure proposals are of the highest quality of design. That means inclusive, safe, harmonious, welcoming, sustainable places that are well related to the surroundings.

The Borough Design Guide can be viewed by following this [link](#).

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

The current Wokingham Borough BAP covers the period 2012-2024, and aims to build on the achievements and successes of the previous BAP.

The overall aims of the Wokingham Borough BAP are to:

- raise awareness of the issues impacting on local biodiversity.
- outline targets and actions which will enhance biodiversity in the borough.
- encourage and support community engagement; enabling local action to deliver targets.
- encourage management practices sympathetic to wildlife, promoting “good practice” and providing guidance.
- ensure policies are in place for the protection, management and enhancement of the local wildlife resource.

The BAP aims to contribute to and build on biodiversity delivery at a county level. This includes progressing actions in the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs): Blackwater Valley; Chilterns Escarpment; Thames Basin Heaths; Loddon Valley South; Loddon Valley Gravel Pits; Waltham Woodlands and Parkland; Ashley and Bowsey Hills.

The Wokingham Borough Biodiversity Action Plan can be found by following this [link](#).

Tree stock

An assessment has been made of the trees within the Council's ownership to ascertain the numbers, condition and benefits they provide. Data was initially collected through a desk-based survey utilising the BlueSky's National Tree Map™ (NTM™), a detailed dataset derived from high quality aerial imagery, which was followed by a ground survey on sample sites across the borough. A canopy cover assessment using i-Tree was also carried out to assess the canopy cover across Wokingham and to ascertain the value of tree assets in the borough. The methodology and results can be found at Appendix A.

The results of the i-Tree Canopy survey indicate that the borough's trees currently provide annual carbon sequestration of over 12 kilo tons of carbon (1 ton of CO₂ is the equivalent driving 2482 miles in a family car)² the cost of attenuating this amount of CO₂ would be in the region of £3 million³, in total the current tree asset stores over 305 Kilo tons of Carbon with a value of over £77 million.

Further benefit is indicated that the tree canopy intercepts and prevents the over 985 mega litres (million litres) of rainwater run off; an Olympic

swimming pool holds approximately 2.5 mega litres of water, Wokingham's trees therefore intercept the equivalent of 394 Olympic swimming pools per year. This has a value in terms of savings to water companies etc of over £1.5 million per annum⁴.

Canopy cover

An assessment carried out of the borough's trees using the i-Tree Canopy model indicates that approximately 22% of the borough landmass is under tree or shrub canopy. The average tree canopy cover is 16% in England⁵, it is therefore clear that Wokingham borough has an above average tree canopy. An assessment was also undertaken analysing high-quality aerial imagery and data from Bluesky™ National Tree Map™ this indicated the borough has a canopy cover of approximately 25%. An assessment of WBC owned land indicates canopy coverage of 6.26%. The full results of this survey can be found at Appendix B.

² <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>

³ i-Tree Survey report - appendix A

⁴ i-Tree Survey report - appendix A

⁵ [https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/tree-canopy-coverleaflet/#:~:text=The%20average%20tree%20canopy%20cover,%20\(Treeconomics%2C%2020170](https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/tree-canopy-coverleaflet/#:~:text=The%20average%20tree%20canopy%20cover,%20(Treeconomics%2C%2020170)

6. VALUE OF TREES

Environmental

Trees benefit our environment in the following ways:

Improving air quality

Trees are effective agents in enhancing air quality by producing oxygen (via the process of photosynthesis), and through the capture of urban pollutants e.g., sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide and lead and other heavy metals. Some air pollutants such as dust, ash, pollen and smoke are absorbed by leaves and bark or are temporarily intercepted from the air and washed into the ground or collected by drainage system filters.

Urban cooling

As summer temperatures increase through climate change, the importance of trees and other vegetation in reducing the 'urban heat island effect' through shading and evapotranspiration during the day and cooling the built environment at night-time has become ever more apparent. In the winter, trees lower wind speeds, reducing heat loss from buildings and offering shelter to pedestrians and cyclists. This is true of deciduous trees as well as evergreens and deciduous trees have the advantage of allowing more light into dwellings and gardens in winter.

Climate change mitigation

Trees play a crucial role in mitigating climate change⁶. Over a year, a mature tree can remove approximately 22kg of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, whilst the soil in the tree's root protection area can also provide durable carbon stores⁷.

Reducing noise and calming traffic

Trees can help reduce noise pollution through the absorption of sound waves muting noises from building façades, mitigating the impacts of, poorly designed, canyonised street configurations. There is evidence that roadside trees significantly increase a driver's perception of spatial edge⁸. The evidence for a positive impact on driver behaviour is so compelling that the Department for Transport (DfT) has reported several schemes aimed at using tree-planting to lower speeds and thereby reduce the number and severity of road accidents⁹.

The document 'Psychological' traffic calming by Kennedy et al., (2005)¹⁰ produced for the DfT provides details of scheme on the C419 at Latton in Wiltshire. This scheme re-engineered a former trunk road through the village, incorporating buildouts with the planting of an avenue of trees. Traffic surveys both before and after having indicated a substantial decrease in the proportion of drivers exceeding 40mph; while in part this is attributable to the reduction in speed limit, it is not considered that this alone would result in more than a 3mph reduction in speed. It is envisaged that as the trees mature and the parking bays utilised more frequently, this will result in further speed reductions as the traffic flow is constrained by the perception of a narrowing of the road.

⁶ Oke, T.R. (1989). The micrometeorology of the urban forest. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B 324: 335-349.

⁷ European Environment Agency: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/articles/forests-health-and-climate-change/key-facts/>

⁸ Rosenblatt, J., Kweon BS. and Maghelal, P. (2008) The street tree effect and driver safety. ITE Journal on the Web, 69-73.

⁹ Clark, J. and Matheny, N. (2009). The Benefits of Trees. Arborist News 18(3), 12-18.

¹⁰ ISBN 0968-4107 Author J Kennedy, R Gorell, L Crinson, A Wheeler and M El Pages 40 Reference TRL641. <https://www.trl.co.uk/publications/trl641>

Sustainable urban drainage and bioremediation

Trees play a vital role in reducing the rainwater runoff from hard surfaces that is associated with flash flooding. They slow down the quantity and rate of runoff by intercepting rainwater with their foliage and by the active process of evapotranspiration, taking water from the soil in drier periods and improving its ability to absorb more during times of spate. In addition, their roots help stabilise soils and improve soil porosity. Fine tree roots also reduce runoff by aiding the infiltration of rainwater into soil and rock strata. Some tree species also help to ameliorate soil and water conditions by absorbing, processing or neutralising a wide range of pollutants in a process known as bioremediation.

Biodiversity

Urban trees and woodlands are intrinsic to biodiversity through their contribution to creating green corridors, enhancing the ecological permeability of the built environment. Trees provide habitat and a food source for a wide variety of flora and fauna species, both in densely built-up areas as well as urban woodlands. Some trees are more important than others in providing habitat, food and

shelter to other wildlife dependent on their species, age, location and other circumstances. For example, a single mature oak tree can support up to 500 different species of flora and fauna¹¹.

Woodlands in the borough provide some of the most important habitats in Wokingham. All woodlands are subject to a measure of protection under the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended). The Forestry Act 1967 provides mechanisms that control tree removal through the use of felling licences, further detail can be found by following this [link](#). Many of the borough's woodlands are also protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

The ancient woodlands of the borough are irreplaceable habitats and are subject to strong protection when considering development proposals under the government's NPPF (2021). On behalf of the government Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced guidance on how planning should approach ancient trees and woodlands The 'ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions' guidance can be found by following this [link](#).

¹¹ Mitchell, R.J.; Bellamy, P.E.; Ellis, C.J.; Hewison, R.L.; Hodgetts, N.G.; Iason, G.R.; Littlewood, N.A.; Newey, S.; Stockan, J.A.; Taylor, A.F.S. (2019). Oak-associated biodiversity in the UK (OakEcol). NERC Environmental Information Data Centre. (Dataset). <https://doi.org/10.5285/22b3d41e-7c35-4c51-9e55-0f47bb845202>

Health and well-being

Urban trees can help build stronger community cohesion and enhance how safe and healthy people feel. Most people prefer to live and work amongst greenery, recognising the value of their own local treescape and greenspaces, particularly in built-up and densely populated areas. Within green spaces, trees provide inviting areas for exercise, providing shade, reducing the risk of skin cancer and heat-related health problems. A rich and diverse treescape has also been shown to help reduce stress and contribute to other health benefits as well as reducing the recovery times of patients in hospital¹².

Socio-economic

As the awareness of the benefits of trees increases, social demand for trees has never been greater. Trees help to create welcoming areas within our town centres, encouraging people to visit and stay for prolonged periods, using shops and restaurants, whilst workers who have views of trees feel happier, aiding increased performance. Trees also help to provide a sense of place and community and provide an educational resource through community orchards and the Forest Schools programme.

The presence of well-managed trees encourages shoppers to spend more time in a business district, and research has shown¹³ they will travel a greater distance to visit that centre, ultimately stimulating the local economy.

Cultural heritage trees in the borough

Trees are mentioned as boundary markers in various Anglo-Saxon charters. It is not known whether any such trees survive in Wokingham although this is unlikely, if they do, they would be confined to the longer-living species such as yew and oak.

The borough is the setting for several trees that, when their age is assessed, would appear to have first grown in the early modern or Tudor period. However, the earliest documented trees are part of woodlands that appear on the 1607 Description of the Honor of Windsor, a series of maps, plans and illustrations showing the Royal Forest. These detailed early maps show woodlands, such as Hazelden's copse (now Hazleton's copse ancient woodland in Arborfield), that are still recognisable in the modern landscape. The copse was protected by a woodland TPO in 1971 and again in 2019, this time including all species of trees.

¹² Ewert A, Chang Y. Levels of Nature and Stress Response. *Behav Sci (Basel)*. 2018 May 17;8(5):49

¹³ Wolf, K.L 2014 City Trees and Consumer Response in Retail Business Districts (pp. 152-172)

Parkland trees appear in many locations throughout the borough, even where the parkland itself no longer exists or has been subject to development and landscape changes over the years. Such trees can be large in girth, and therefore old, and may date from the late medieval or early modern period. Examples of such trees are oaks and chestnuts and oaks at Ravenswood Park, and oaks now standing in open countryside north of Barkham Manor.

In later centuries, trees were planted for ornamental or aesthetic reasons or grew up along new boundary features as the Royal Forest was enclosed. A good example of this category are the numerous trees lining the historic straight rides built for Queen Anne (regnant 1702-1714) and later for King George III (regnant 1760-1820). The rides centre around Finchampstead and Crowthorne and many of these trees (mostly oaks) appear to be contemporary with the rides. Also, in Finchampstead is the iconic Wellingtonia Avenue. Here, 111 *Sequoiadendron giganteum* trees form an avenue along over a kilometre of straight ride (with 88 TPO trees and a further 23 trees in the care of the National Trust). The ride was laid out by John Walter III of Bearwood Manor in memory of the Duke of Wellington, the hero of Waterloo. Whilst this

avenue is probably the finest such avenue in the land, there is a far more prominent wellingtonia avenue at Spencers Wood. This avenue marks the entrance to the former Wellington Court House, now replaced by more modern housing. Sitting on the high clay ridge that marked the western extent of the medieval Forest of Windsor, this significant avenue is a substantial landmark visible from half of Berkshire. A more bucolic setting for a wellingtonia avenue is in the greenbelt east of Wargrave, where stately wellingtonias line the driveway of Yeldall Manor. An example of an institutional avenue is the planting of wellingtonias which flank the main entrance of Bearwood Manor. This large imposing building was for generations the home of the Walter family, proprietors of the London Times, but is now a private school - Reddam House.

Commemorative trees have been planted in the borough since at least the reign of Queen Victoria. A sycamore was planted in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in the grounds of St Sebastian's Primary School on Nine Mile Ride. Sadly, the tree, planted in 1897, was removed on health and safety grounds around the time of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Another example of a royal commemorative planting is an English oak, brought from Windsor Great Park, and planted in 1937 at the King George V playing field in Farley Hill to commemorate the coronation of King George VI.

Although, like the commemorative sycamore at St Sebastian's, the lives of all trees are finite, there is always a good reason for planting trees. So, unlike Percy Shelley's memorial to Ozymandias, the 'lone and level sands' of the south of the district, the clay band in the centre and the chalk of the north are not empty; they are generously clothed in silvan plantings to replace those commemorative trees that have been lost.

At the time Queen Victoria's sycamore was felled in St Sebastian's, 60 oaks were planted across the borough for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. One of these graces a garden in the grounds of the Council offices at Shute End. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations have provided further opportunities for royal commemorative planting. Which, in line with The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative, will continue during the planting season and up until the end of the Jubilee year.

7. ANCIENT AND VETERAN TREES

Definition of veteran and ancient trees

An ancient tree is one that has passed beyond maturity and is old, or aged, in comparison with other trees of the same species.

It will have all or most of the following characteristics:

- a) Biological, aesthetic or cultural interest, because of its great age.
- b) A growth stage that is described as ancient or post-mature.
- c) A chronological age that is old relative to others of the same species.

The term 'veteran tree' describes a tree that has survived the 'rigours of life' and, irrespective of chronological age, shows signs of ancientness. To qualify as a veteran, the tree should show sufficient signs of ancientness, for example: crown retrenchment and signs of decay in the trunk, branches or roots, exposed dead wood and fungal fruit bodies, etc. According to the current distinction, a tree can be a veteran without necessarily being very old. Thus, if a tree has the physical characteristics of an ancient tree but is not ancient in years compared with others of the same species, it is classed as veteran but not ancient.

In this document 'veteran' is used throughout to describe all trees that have sufficient markedly ancient characteristics, irrespective of chronological age. The term 'ancient' is applied specifically to trees that are ancient in years.

It is important to note that there are many definitions of the terms 'ancient tree' and 'veteran tree' including a planning definition which can be found in the current (2021), NPPF, see Section 3. The definition in the NPPF

has changed with subsequent updates of that document; so, where Town and Country Planning is involved (and this includes local plans, development management, enforcement and the making and enforcing of TPOs), the most recent definition of the terms will be used.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission on behalf of the government have produced the standing advice - Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions which can be found following this [link](#). The standing advice refers to the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) as the starting point for investigating possible impacts on ancient trees from planning decisions. The Standing advice also refers decision makers to Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory and to Natural England's wood pasture and parkland inventory on their Magic map system. These are all the best starting points when assessing impacts of development or even wildlife conservation works on ancient and veteran trees, ancient woodland and wood pasture and parkland respectively.



Ancient and veteran trees are a valuable natural asset important for:

- biodiversity value as a result of significant wood decay, and the habitat created from the ageing process is valuable for rare and threatened wildlife.
- carbon capture and storage.
- contributing to the seed bank
- cultural and historical value
- landscape and aesthetic value.

Over 180,000 trees have been recorded by the Woodland Trust on their Ancient Tree Inventory, many of which can be found in Wokingham, the data base can be viewed following this [link](#).

By using the ATI data and alongside Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association (WDVTA), the Council will encourage the proper management of ancient and veteran trees as well as succession planting in line with current best practice and guidance.

WDVTA have carried out surveys on and recorded most of Wokingham boroughs finest trees, including many notable, ancient and veteran trees. The WDVTA database can be found by following this [link](#). No inventory is ever complete – absence from this

database should not be taken as evidence that any tree is not of value or is not ancient or veteran. Similarly, presence on this database should not be taken as proof that a tree is ancient or veteran. Each tree should be assessed on its merits in light of the characteristics associated with it at the time of the decision-making process.

The management of ancient and veteran trees is a specialised and evolving discipline within the field of arboriculture. Making management plans for such trees requires significant knowledge and experience and is usually beyond the capabilities of more junior staff. Given this, and should adequate expertise and resourcing be available, the Council will record, map and produce management prescriptions for all Council-owned notable, ancient and veteran trees. Data from the ATI and WDVTA records will be used as well as data from regular inspections by officers.

Useful links:

- [English Heritage](#)
- [Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association](#)
- [Woodland Trust](#)
- [Ancient Tree Forum](#)

8. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF TREES ON COUNCIL-OWNED LAND

Woodlands, SANGS, nature reserves and country parks

The Countryside Service team currently manage approximately 549.35 hectares of Council owned land in Wokingham. These consist of the following categories of open spaces:

- SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) - 144.24 hectares
- Nature Reserves - 181.51 hectares
- Dinton Pastures Country Park - 182.6 hectares
- California Country Park - 41 hectares

Within these, Countryside Service manage approximately 100 hectares of woodland across the following sites:

- Aldermoors
- Heathlake
- Highwood
- Pearmans Copse
- Keephatch
- Millennium Arboretum
- The Moors
- Warren Wood
- The Grove
- Rooks Nest Wood
- Nores Hill Wood

Council-owned woodlands and country parks each have a management plan or statement in place to ensure the sites are managed effectively and appropriately to achieve their overall purpose. The plans differ site to site - specific information can be sought on relevant management plans by contacting the Countryside Service team via email at countryside@wokingham.gov.uk.

More information on Council-owned woodlands, country parks, nature reserves and SANGS managed by Countryside Service can be found by following this [link](#).

Landowners are encouraged to develop woodland management plans for privately owned woodlands and those owned by other community or public bodies. The Council also supports positive conservation management measures for woodlands which are identified as local wildlife sites. If you wish to discuss this further or seek advice regarding woodland conservation management measures, contact the Council's ecology officers at ecology@wokingham.gov.uk.

Public open spaces

Other public open spaces owned by Wokingham Borough Council such as parks, recreation grounds and verges are managed by the Cleaner and Greener team.

Specific information or queries relating to how these areas are managed can be sought by contacting the team via email at cleanerandgreener@wokingham.gov.uk.

Highways and Street Trees

The Council will prune trees for the following reasons only: where there is a risk to public safety; to abate an actionable nuisance; to mitigate the risk of building subsidence; routine maintenance, and in accordance with good arboricultural practice.

The Council will aim to respond to urgent reports of trees obstructing the public highway within two hours.

Requests for management of dangerous trees can be registered by using this [link](#).

If you are reporting an urgent issue that requires immediate attention, call 0118 974 6000 and select the 'Highways' option.

An urgent issue is defined as something that is very likely to present an imminent threat to life or serious injury or serious damage to property

Operational Tree Team

The Council has a dedicated Operational Tree Team that carries out inspections and arranges required maintenance on all Council-owned trees, including those in public open spaces, verges and along the adopted highway to maintain public safety or the health of the tree. While an inspection framework procedure is followed to minimise the risk that trees pose to people and infrastructure, it may occasionally be necessary for residents to report non-urgent tree enquiries.

Non-urgent tree enquires should be reported via the interactive map by using this link: [Non-urgent Tree Enquires Interactive Map](#) and with the following supporting information:

- The exact location of the tree - please select the nearest road and use the location information box to direct us to the tree(s).
- The nature of the problem.
- Photo(s) showing the problem (if possible) and the location of the tree).

The Council aims to respond to non-urgent tree enquires within 28 days.

A map which indicates the roads and verges maintained by Wokingham Borough Council can be found by following this [link](#).

Tree inspections

Appropriate and effective tree inspection procedures should ensure that changes in tree condition are noted and, where necessary, addressed before any tree becomes hazardous and death or injury to persons or damage to property occurs. The Council's tree inspection procedures consider a range of criteria, including species, age, size, health and condition, location, site usage, hazard risk and landscape and ecological value.

The tree inspection programme aims to balance the management of trees for public safety with the ecological and landscape value of trees. Both management objectives are important, but the nature and use of each site normally dictates which one should take precedence. Different management prescriptions may therefore be applied depending on the tree's location.

When managing trees for public safety reasons, only the minimum work required to remove the danger shall be undertaken. This will ensure that the multiple benefits of trees are retained.

Trees are best inspected from mid-summer through to autumn. However, the scale of the Council's tree resource dictates that inspections should continue throughout the year.

Procedures

The Council employs tree inspection procedures that provide information to minimise risk to the public and property. Such procedures are considered reasonable, proportionate to the level of risk at a particular location, recognise the benefits of the trees and are acceptable in legal terms, meaning they follow industry recommendations and codes of practice and take account of case law involving tree failures and subsequent injury and death.

Informal observations about trees which are put forward by members of the public, site officers and other organisations will be acted upon. Informal Observations are when a member of the public passes by a tree whilst going about their day-to-day routines and observe a condition or feature which requires further action. An example of this would be a split in the stem, a hanging broken branch or perhaps a new or intensified fungal infection.

The Council also provides the following two-tier approach to tree inspection:

Formal inspections - carried out periodically by Council staff who regularly frequent sites as part of their routine work. Basic tree inspection training is provided for such staff.

Detailed inspections - carried out by appropriately qualified and knowledgeable arboricultural specialists. Such inspections are carried out at regular intervals and dovetail with the programme of formal inspections. They are commissioned on the basis of being commensurate with the level of risk identified at a given location. Detailed inspections will consider the biological, pathological and biomechanical aspects of tree health and stability along with other considerations such as the effects of weather and site disturbance.

The nature and frequency of such inspections are programmed to respond to the criteria detailed above and the size and distribution of the Council's tree assets.

For further information, the Council's Tree Inspection Framework can be found here: [Trees and pruning - Wokingham Borough Council](#).

Tree maintenance

The Council will prune trees for the following reasons only:

- Where there is a risk to public safety.
- Abate an actionable nuisance.
- Mitigate the risk of building subsidence.
- Routine maintenance, and.
- For accordance with good arboricultural practice.

Where possible, trees subject to pruning will retain their natural form. Where work is required, this will be limited to the removal of dead wood, lifting of the crown and sympathetic crown reduction to ensure the tree retains its natural branch structure.

The Council has a programme of inspections from which necessary remedial works are generated and carried out. This is supported by an online facility for reporting dangerous trees. In addition, requests are periodically made by residents for tree-pruning, and these are managed by the Operational Tree Team, with non-urgent issues being investigated within 28 days. The Council applies strict criteria for when pruning is deemed necessary.

The relevant guidance to the process involved can be found here: [Tree pruning criteria](#).

To ensure an impartial and judicious service is provided to all its residents, the Council will only prune trees for the following reasons:

- Abate an actionable nuisance: such as where trees come into conflict with buildings and light structures. In common law there is something termed a 'nuisance', which can be defined as a matter which is an unreasonable and substantial interference on the use and enjoyment of a person's property. We only act when a tree causes a legal nuisance to a property.
- Public safety: to ensure statutory clearance over the highway,

footway, cycle lanes and public rights of way.

- For a matter to qualify and be actionable as a nuisance in law, it must be a serious matter.
- Mitigate the risk of building subsidence: where risk trees have been identified on shrinkable clay soil. Each case will be dealt with individually.
- Ensure the optimum functionality of street lighting and CCTV cameras (in accordance with pruning standards). Where remedial works are advantageous to the tree or tree stock and are in accordance with good arboricultural practice.
- To ensure clarity and manage customer expectations, the Council will highlight some of the reasons frequently used to justify pruning that are considered beyond its responsibility.

The Council periodically receives requests from residents to prune trees. To help ensure an impartial, reasonable and transparent service the Council will not prune trees in request to allay or resolve the following issues:

- Branches overhanging properties: residents have the right to exercise their right under common law to prune back branches on their property boundary; all arisings must be disposed of at their own effort or expense; pruning must only be carried out following discussion with

a Council arboriculturist and completed to the standard set out in BS3998 (2010) Tree Work Recommendations.


- Interference with satellite, television or other media reception: there is no legal right to television reception and the Council (or any tree owner) has no legal obligation to remove or prune trees to improve reception; when positioning a new satellite receiver, residents are recommended to carefully consider existing trees and their potential for growth to avoid problems in the future.
 - Branches and/or limbs in physical contact with telephone wires: telephone wires are plastic coated - faults on the line are very rarely caused by contact with branches; residents will be encouraged to contact their service provider to address any faults or interference experienced with their phone line.
 - Excessive leaf fall: this is a seasonal problem generally localised to a short period of the year. Residents are expected to clear any undesirable leaf litter falling on their properties themselves or at their expense; leaf litter on publicly owned footways and highways will be addressed by the borough's Street Cleansing contractors.
 - Fruit fall: this is a seasonal problem generally localised to a short period of the year. Residents are expected to clear any undesirable fruit falling on their properties themselves or at their expense;
- fallen fruit on publicly owned footways and highways will be addressed by the borough's Street Cleansing contractors as notified.
 - Problems associated with pollen.
 - Excreta caused by insects or birds: honeydew (aphid excreta) and bird droppings are not recognised in law as a 'legal nuisance'; hazards on the footway can be addressed by contacting Street Cleansing to notify them of the problem; measures to address the problems associated with honeydew can be made by residents by regular car washing, covering or parking in an alternative location.
 - Obstruction of view: there are no rights associated with maintaining trees in accordance with maintaining views in British law.

For further information, the Council's Policy for Ongoing Maintenance for Council-owned trees can be found here: [Trees and pruning - Wokingham Borough Council](#).

Tree Removal

Trees will only be removed where there is a risk to public safety or significant damage to property or in line with good arboricultural practice (for example to reduce crowding and allow other, better trees to thrive).

Publicly owned trees are a valuable resource for the people of Wokingham. Therefore, the removal of publicly owned trees will be resisted wherever possible.



The Council will not normally fell a healthy tree; however, there are some circumstances where this may be necessary where supported by evidence from suitably qualified and experienced professionals:

- Address public safety concerns.
- Mitigate building subsidence.
- Abate an actionable nuisance, whereby a tree is interfering with land or property owned by a third-party.
- Reduce the risk of the spread of pests and disease.
- Where the highway and/or footway condition determine that retention is unsustainable.
- Where an approved planning application or essential development works requires tree removal.

These decisions are carefully considered by Wokingham Borough Council's Trees Tree and Landscape and Operational Tree teams following consultation with residents and other stakeholders wherever possible. The effective implementation of the objectives in relation to management of the Council's tree stock is subject to sufficient financial and staffing resources being made available for tree management, along with long-term, member support.

9. TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

Overview and aims of Tree Preservation Orders

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is made by an LPA (usually the borough, district or county council) to protect specific individual trees, a particular area or group of trees or to protect a woodland from deliberate or permissive damage and destruction.

The legislation is usually applied to those trees that are important for the amenity of the area although 'it may sometimes be appropriate to proactively make Orders as a precaution'¹⁴. A TPO makes the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or otherwise wilful damage of protected trees without the permission of the LPA a criminal offence.

The legislation is a part of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is administered following the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012. Further information on the Act can be found following this [link](#).

Tree officer's role in TPO process

The Council employs a specialist tree officer to administer Tree Works Applications for trees protected by TPO and Section 211 notifications for tree works in conservation areas. This officer is currently assisted, two days a week, by a consultant.

The specialist tree officer undertakes the relevant consultations and assesses the detail provided within the application. A site visit will be undertaken where necessary and a decision made.

Decision letters are signed off on authority delegated to the Trees and Landscape team manager under the Council's scheme of delegation.

Guidance notes for applying to the Council to protect a tree with a TPO

A TPO protects trees and woodlands. The term 'tree' is not defined within the Act, nor does the Act limit the application of TPOs to trees of a minimum size, species or type. Fruit trees, for example, may be included in a TPO provided it is in the interests of amenity to do so and they are not currently used for fruit production.

¹⁴ Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 36-010-20140306, Revision date: 06 03 2014

The dictionary defines a tree as a perennial plant with a self-supporting woody main stem, usually developing woody branches at some distance from the ground and growing to a considerable height and size. But for the purposes of the TPO legislation, the High Court has held that a 'tree' is anything which ordinarily one would call a tree. In woodland the High Court has concluded that saplings, seedlings and even 'a shoot emerging from an acorn' are trees and are therefore protected by a woodland TPO. The Act does not define the term 'woodland'. In the Secretary of State's view, trees which are planted or grow naturally within the woodland area after the TPO is made are also protected by the TPO. This is because the purpose of the TPO is to safeguard the woodland unit which depends on regeneration or new planting and, in woodland, this includes 'future trees' in the words of one High Court judge.

The Act does not define 'amenity', nor does it prescribe the circumstances in which it is in the interests of amenity to make a TPO. This is a matter of fact and judgement.

The Council will continue to use TPOs to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public. In line with government guidance, the Council will continue, at times, to consider whether it

appropriate to proactively make TPOs as a precaution¹⁵.

The Council will continue to ensure that a degree of public benefit before making or confirming TPOs. Trees, or at least a significant part of them, should therefore normally be visible from a public place, for example, from a public road or footpath. However, in some circumstances, the inclusion of other trees may be justified. The public benefit afforded by the tree may be current or foreseeable as a future benefit because of a change of circumstances: for example, tree growth or land being opened up to the public through development allowing views of the tree that did not previously exist. Orders may also be served on trees where new evidence supports inclusion because of increased biodiversity benefits in the case of newly discovered bat roost for example. The Council will continue to consider such trees for protection by TPO.

The Council will continue to consider a range of characteristics when making and confirming TPOs¹⁶.

The Council will also continue to consider other factors, such as the importance of trees as a wildlife habitat or for their role in carbon capture attenuation as part of its decision-making process; however, these factors alone would not normally be sufficient to warrant a

¹⁵ Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 36-010-20140306, Revision date: 06 03 2014.

¹⁶ Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 36-008-20140306

TPO unless a rare species for example was found to be using the tree as habitat¹⁷. The Council will not consider trees that are dead, or dangerous as suitable for a TPO unless work to trees can be carried out to make them safe and sustainable in the longer term.

The Council recognises the special circumstances regarding ancient and veteran trees, and - further details can be found in Section 7 These are trees, often of significant age and often of substantial size that may have a range of defects, diseases or fungal infections that would otherwise preclude a tree from the protection of a TPO. However, however, their importance within the landscape, and for the great ecological benefits they offer in terms of habitat and as a seed source will be given weight when considering these categories of trees as candidates for TPO. Each case being assessed on its merits. Notable trees are often veteran or ancient trees in waiting and good examples of notable trees will be assessed in a similar way to ancient and veteran trees.

The Council has a power to consider any tree for protection by TPO¹⁸ and will continue to consider, each case on its merits. The process commences with submission of a standard TPO request form which is then initially assessed by the tree officer. The request will be considered as soon as possible and where

resources allow. This information in conjunction with the tree officer's advice will progress through the TPO Prioritisation Committee (which includes all tree officers and any other officer with relevant local site or specialist knowledge). Where the decision is made to make a TPO, this will be signed off (under the Council's scheme of delegation) by the Trees and Landscape Team Manager, or any other Team leader in planning or enforcement or senior managers in the T&L Manager's absence.

The Council will assess trees for the suitability of a TPO using criteria described in government guidance.

Process of applying for a TPO

A request for a TPO should be made to the Council on a TPO request form and should include the following details:

- a) A map clearly showing the area of trees or location of an individual tree that you wish to be considered for protection, if possible, include a photograph of the tree or trees.
- b) The reason(s) why you wish the tree(s) to be considered for protection.

A request for a TPO can be made by anyone, and you do not have to be the owner of the tree.

¹⁷ Although see the statutory duty to have regard to the purposes of biodiversity in the NERC Act (2006) for example.

¹⁸ Town and Country Planning Act 1990 paragraph 198(1) Power to make tree preservation Orders

Breach of a TPO

The Council will continue to take reports of TPO breaches seriously, all reports will be assessed and action taken where warranted.

A report of a possible TPO infringement may be received by the Council in whichever form the informers wish to make them but the more information that is volunteered by informers the better the Council are precluded by law¹⁹ from requesting information such as photographs of suspects undertaking the work, but the public may provide such evidence if they want. Investigations are governed by the Council's Local Planning Enforcement Plan and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984).

While the Council will accept anonymous reports, we prefer reports from members of the public with whom we can correspond with by email or talk to on the telephone. This is because eyewitness testimony through a qualifying call provides better details of location and what works have been carried out. The Council does not disclose the identity of informants as it considers this information exempt from Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Reports are investigated in line with the [Wokingham Local Planning Enforcement Plan](#).

Investigations are led by any suitable officer but in practice this means a Planning Officer, a Planning

Enforcement Officer, a Tree Officer or the Trees and Landscape team manager. This depends on the caseload and availability of officers and on the technical complexity of each case. Where enforcement cases are not led by a Tree Officer then a Tree Officer gives technical support to the case officer leading.

Additional technical support is provided by other officers and the Council's legal department as required.

The Council understands that there may be various circumstances where proceeding to a criminal prosecution may not be in the public interest. Criminal prosecutions are expensive, and there is not always a guarantee that costs will be awarded. It is also noted that the level of evidence required to secure conviction is high, the same as for any other criminal offence.

There will be occasions where the level of resource required to prove a case to the level required in a courtroom far outweighs the harm caused to the public amenity, for example, some minor pruning works undertaken without permission. In such circumstances, the Council may choose to follow alternative processes, including the use of Simple Cautions, warning letters, negotiated agreements for remedial works or replacement planting, or the use of tree replacement notices.

¹⁹ Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

10. SUBSIDENCE

What is subsidence?

Subsidence, in simple terms, is the sinking of the ground. There are a variety of causes, both natural (changes in soil moisture) and man-made (mining etc.).

Subsidence usually occurs as a result of the shrinkage of clay soils due to changes in the level of moisture held within the soil matrix. This change is more pronounced during periods of prolonged dry weather.

Properties built on shrinkable clay soils are prone to the effects of soil shrinkage, and where the soil volume decreases to the extent that the property foundation is no longer able to support the weight of the property, damage will occur. Damage is often identified as diagonal cracking through walls and around windows and doors.

While the process of soil moisture loss is natural and is of a seasonal nature, it is often exacerbated by other factors. Trees, for example can have a significant effect. Trees create movement of water through the ground by drawing it up through their vascular systems. This flow of water helps transport the nutrients required for growth. All tree species move quantities of water daily. The movement of large volumes of water by trees can significantly exacerbate the effects changes in soil moisture levels have on surrounding structures.

Trees can therefore have a significant impact in relation to subsidence.

The Council is clear that whilst trees can affect properties through the action of subsidence, their other qualities and attributes need to be considered when deciding how to manage each particular subsidence case and what remedial actions should be taken.

Before the Council will consider action in relation to trees within its ownership and protected trees, see Section 9. The Council will require evidence to be provided by the affected party or their insurers.

The Council will require the following evidential tests to be met:

- Were the buildings foundations adequate in the first place?
- Have drainage issues been ruled out?
- Has damage occurred that is consistent with subsidence damage?
- Have live roots from the tree encroached under the foundations that are damaged?
- Was the damage from the adjacent tree foreseeable?
- Is the tree subject to protection by a TPO?
- Are there alternatives to tree removal or management (underpinning for example)?

It is a common practise for insurers to carry out an investigation of the damage prior to a claim being made to a tree owner. The insurer will often undertake a variety of investigations which may include:

- Drainage survey: identifying defects that may result in rainwater or wastewater washing away soils supporting foundations.
- Ground level and crack monitoring over a period usually 3-6 months (but preferably 12 months) - to establish seasonal movements indicative of subsidence events.
- Soils plasticity: higher clay content soils are more plastic i.e., shrink more readily when they dry out. Soils with high levels of montmorillonite, smectite or vermiculite are particularly prone to shrink and swell as water content changes.
- Foundation type and depth: was the foundation constructed to the appropriate specification?
- Arboricultural report: what trees are present, and are they within the influencing zone of the damage?

Once this evidence has been collected, the affected party should contact the Council's Customer Services team who will allocate the

case to the appropriate officer. The Council will then investigate the case following the Joint Mitigation Protocol of the London Tree Officers Association. This protocol provides a detailed process with timelines in which to investigate and decide on the most appropriate solution for managing the trees and addressing the damage. Further reading on the Joint Mitigation Protocol²⁰ can be found by following this [link](#).

Where a tree implicated in subsidence is subject to a TPO or is of particular importance in terms of public amenity or historic or cultural value, the Council will undertake a Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT)²¹ valuation to help inform the decision-making process. Greater detail on CAVAT can be found by following this [link](#).

CAVAT assesses the tree against set criteria, including public amenity and other benefits and gives it a monetary value. The CAVAT valuation can then be used in decision-making, weighing a monetised public benefit against the cost of rectifying the damage. Particularly in cases where the proposed action includes tree removal, CAVAT can thereby be used to help agree suitable remediation and tree retention where the benefits equal or are greater than the costs.

²⁰ <https://www.ltoa.org.uk/resources/joint-mitigation-protocol>

²¹ <https://www.ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat>

11. DEVELOPER RESPONSIBILITIES

Over the years a raft of policies and legislation has been created to achieve the government's objectives and to influence how citizens interact with trees, see Sections 3 and 4 of the Strategy. More recently the government has recognised the value of trees and their importance in helping address the climate emergency.

The importance of trees and the value they provide is recognised in various planning legislation, policy and guidance (see Sections 3, 4 and 6).

The Council has been given duties and powers to help ensure that development is undertaken in a manner which helps protect and enhance the local and natural environment.

The Council is clear that developers have a role to play in taking full responsibility for the land they control and their developments. The Council is clear that developers should in line with planning and arboricultural policy, guidance and best practice place trees at the forefront of the survey, assessment, design, construction and management process.

All development should consider existing trees at the earliest stage. The Council requires all development affecting trees (including off-site trees) to be supported by a tree survey that accords with BS5837 BS 5837:2012²². Early engagement between developers and arboricultural specialists is key to informing the development process and ensuring the retention and protection of significant trees and woodlands, and those with potential to become significant as they grow (including category C trees) within the layout and detailed design of the development. This is in line with existing CS and LP policies and proposed new policies NE3, NE4 and NE5 of the draft.

Consideration must also be given to the existing and proposed location of all utilities and services within the development to ensure they do not conflict with any retained trees, or any proposed new trees as they grow. The Council will require that developers give trees the appropriate amount of available soil, moisture and space to thrive and ensure that they are located a suitable distance from properties. This will result in a robust and sustainable landscape. The revised NPPF 2021 advocates the inclusion of trees within new streets (paragraph 131) and a high-quality integral landscape scheme is required by MDD Local Plan Policy CC03.

²² British Standard 5837 (2012) Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations

Therefore, a scheme of landscape works, and management will be required for all significant developments, integrated into the overall development scheme design and will need to demonstrate how it incorporates structural tree-planting in the public realm and especially in the street scene.

Achieving a sustainable landscape is paramount to any development if government's objectives are to be met. The Council will continue to seek the protection of both existing and newly planted trees on development sites. This may include the use of TPOs, Article 4 Directions and removal of permitted development rights where appropriate, particularly for sites where the protection of notable, veteran or ancient trees, ancient woodland or wood pasture is an important consideration

Biodiversity net gain and the Green Bond

Current government planning policy for biodiversity and geological conservation interests is set out in the NPPF, -2021. For biodiversity offsetting, the most relevant principles and policies in the NPPF are:

'The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.' (Para 174(d))

'When determining planning applications, ... if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternate site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.' (Para 180)

'... development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists' (Para 180[c])

The Defra biodiversity metric is a habitat-based approach used to assess an area's value to wildlife. The metric uses habitat features to calculate a biodiversity value.



The biodiversity metric can be used by:

- ecologists or developers carrying out a biodiversity assessment.
- developers who have commissioned a biodiversity assessment.
- planning authorities who are interpreting metric outputs in a planning application.
- communities who want to understand the impacts of a local development.
- landowners or land managers who want to provide biodiversity units from their sites to others.

Wokingham Borough Council, as the, LPA will be applying the biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment process to planning applications in line with current regulations and local plan policy.

The Council will use the Defra metric in making a BNG assessment and expect developers to provide the baseline record of all hedgerows, scrub and woodland - individual trees will be incorporated using the tree calculator tool.

Developers are expected to integrate trees and woodlands into their schemes and should understand that the calculator does not allow the post-development scenario to trade between broad habitat categories, (e.g., baseline units of woodland to be compensated by post-development units of grassland), except in justified and exceptional circumstances.

Where an exceptional circumstance is thought to apply, the developer must justify the trade between broad habitat categories that results in a gain in woodland habitat/units with reference to the BAP and LNRS priorities/targets/objectives/aims. Further, the Council understands the benefits that tree-planting can bring and, as such, recommends that all tree-planting projects are assessed using a BNG calculator (regardless of whether they are part of development or not). The Council is committed to the environment and will assist landowners, where possible, in recognising and registering the BNG value of their tree-planting projects where these are in line with the Tree Strategy/BAP/LNRS and wider Landscape Character Assessment objectives.



The Environment Act contains a new BNG condition for planning permission. At present this is not mandatory but is expected to be made law in late 2023 through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act.

Developers will need to measure the biodiversity gains using the associated metric to ascertain the existing wildlife value of the area prior to development.

This information will then be used to inform the development layout and the level of mitigation required. It is a requirement of the bill that all development must see an enhancement to biodiversity by a minimum of 10%, this can be either on-site or off-site.

The update to the Wokingham Borough Council LPU mirrors the 10% minimum increase in biodiversity for all development.

The Council will expect developers to take this requirement into consideration and ensure the development protects and enhances the habitats of a proposed site first and foremost and only offset any development when there is a suitable planning reason to do so.

Developers will be encouraged to finance their projects using the principles of the green bond. Green bonds (also known as climate bonds) are fixed-income financial instruments (bonds) which are used

to fund projects that have positive environmental and/or climate benefits.

They follow the Green Bond Principles (GBP) stated by the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), and the proceeds from the issuance of which are to be used for the pre-specified types of projects.

The GBP seek to support issuers in financing environmentally sound and sustainable projects that foster a net zero emissions economy and protect the environment.

Developer Replacement Planting- Developers: trigger for obligation & level of contribution

Wokingham Borough Council understands the importance of trees within all development but the Council understands that, in some circumstances, tree removal is justified. The Council is, however, committed to improving the environment for everyone and, as such, expects any development to provide replacement trees in line with local and national guidance.

Wokingham Borough Council expects all developers to integrate important existing trees within their designs. Except in the case of wholly exceptional reasons and where a suitable compensation strategy exists, any development which would result in the loss of ancient woodland, ancient trees or veteran

trees will not be permitted. While meeting the above requirements, developers are also reminded that replacement planting should meet the compensation and enhancement requirements of the proposed 10% minimum BNG, which is likely to come into force in late 2023. This requirement is mirrored within the Wokingham Borough Council LPU.

Wokingham Borough Council understands that in some circumstances such replacement planting and enhancement may not be possible on the site itself. In such cases, the Council will require the developer to provide off-site tree-planting in compensation. Where the developer does not have suitable land for such planting, the Council may negotiate compensatory payments under S106 agreement to provide enhancements elsewhere.

Obligations in respect of trees will be required where either:

- new planting is required on public land to mitigate the impact of a development; or,
- where trees covered by categories A, B and C of BS 5837 (Trees in relation to construction) are felled as part of a development, and replacement planting is required on public land.

Tree-planting will either take place on open ground or be integrated into areas of hard landscape such as pavements and car parking areas. Where planting can take place directly

into open ground, the contribution will be significantly lower than where the planting is in areas of hard landscape. This is due to the need to plant trees located in areas of hard standing in a substantial engineered tree pit (or alternative) with drainage.

All tree-planting on public land, whether developer funded or not, will be undertaken by the Council to ensure a consistent approach and level of quality, and to reduce the likelihood of new tree stock failing to survive through lack of weed control or watering. See also Sections 12, 13 and 14 of the strategy.

Ensuring developers are held accountable for their commitments is reliant on sufficient financial and staffing resources being made available to the relevant departments, along with full member support for their execution.

12. REPLACEMENT TREE-PLANTING - COUNCIL LAND

Replacement tree-planting

Where it is necessary for the Council to fell trees, we will commit to providing a replacement tree as close to the location of the felled tree as practicable, and during the next planting season (November - March).

A sign will be placed in the original location of the felled tree detailing that the tree will be replaced, subject to resources.

Replacement ratio

Replacement stocking levels:

- Street trees 1:1
- Commemorative 1:1
- Parks and gardens 2:1
- Countryside sites 3:1
- Broadleaf/mixed woodland mainly aimed at biodiversity/amenity 1100 or 1600 stems per hectare (3m and 2.5m spacing, respectively) with 20% open ground for recreation and / or biodiversity depending on aims and objectives.
- Conifer plantations restocking at 2m spacings with 20% open ground depending on aims and objectives.

Natural regeneration

Natural regeneration is the process by which areas are restocked by trees that develop from seeds that fall, or are buried by animals or birds, and germinate in situ. This method provides trees that are well adapted to their environment, minimises soil disturbance, ensures that the seeds are all local provenance, and once fully matured, provides a more natural habitat. Natural regeneration will only be considered an acceptable approach if there is a programme of monitoring and, if necessary, recourse to protection or selective restocking based on the monitoring observations.

13. TREE-PLANTING

Right tree, right place, right reason

Evidence of the positive contribution that trees make to society is extensive and increasing the number and quality of trees we encounter can enrich our lives. Trees are directly associated with a range of benefits such as cooling, flood mitigation, aesthetic impact or as a wildlife habitat, see Section 6. Tree species selection can, therefore, have a profound impact on the delivery of benefits to the people of the borough because of issues such as potential size, longevity, suitability for wildlife, etc.

The Council will continue to select appropriate trees which are sustainable and will provide maximum benefits for biodiversity and aesthetics amongst other criteria. An important objective of species selection will be to improve the resilience of tree populations to both known and unknown threats. Consideration will be given to ensuring that the species selected are appropriate, sustainable, and that the locations and micro-climates chosen for planting will encourage

the long-term survival of the trees planted so that they fulfil their growth potential. Choice of tree species will aim to maximise the contribution to ecosystem services, will allow for climate change, and will avoid problems associated with poor species choice.

The Council will favour the selection of native tree species that naturally have high benefit for wildlife and indigenous cultural resonances in poetry, art, music, literature, etc. In special circumstances and where non-native species are appropriate the Council will follow tree species selection guidance as set out in Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure by Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG). This has information for over 280 species of trees with detail on their potential size and crown characteristics, natural habitat, environmental tolerance, ornamental qualities, potential issues to be aware of, and notable varieties. It provides the Council with clear, robust information to enable appropriate species selection and will aid the diversification of the urban forest.

Use this link to download the full document [Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure - TDAG](#).

Tree-planting and the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP)

In order to address the Council's Climate Change Emergency status and in line with the Council's CEAP, the Council will undertake an ambitious program of new tree-planting and projects with the aim of increasing carbon sequestration and biodiversity across the borough, and thereby contributing to the goal of being carbon-neutral by 2030. Carbon sequestration is a process whereby the trees draw CO₂ from the atmosphere and store it. Wokingham Borough Council's initial CEAP was approved by council in January 2020 and outlines the steps that will be taken to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. Within the action plan, a target was set to carry out an ambitious tree planting project to increase carbon sequestration by greening the borough. In July 2021, the Council was given executive approval to begin Phase 1, and the project commenced in September 2021. Central to this programme of new tree-planting is the Council's partnership with the Woodland Trust. Through the Emergency Tree Fund, its support of the project is central to its realisation. In addition, many officers across the Council are collaborating with the Green Infrastructure Special Project Manager to bring this project to fruition.

To reach the target and by using data produced through the tree inventory and canopy cover surveys,

see Appendix A and B, council officers will work to identify potential planting sites across the borough. A collaborative approach is essential to reach the tree-planting ambitions, with assistance provided to the Council from councillors, community groups, volunteers, town and parish councils, schools, and private projects.

Informed by ecosystem services analysis and working with local stakeholder groups, Wokingham Borough Council will undertake tree-planting on suitable Council-owned sites, with a focus on the conversion of land into woodland, orchards and hedgerows. The Council will also encourage and support planting on school grounds, privately owned sites, town and parish council land and estates owned or managed by other public bodies in the borough. The planting programme will also deliver the socio-economic benefits that trees provide in a peri-urban environment and benefit the environment through an increase in biodiversity, heat island cooling and softening of the landscape as well as helping strengthen community cohesion, see Section 6.

Tree-planting schemes implemented as part of this project will consist of bare-root UK- and Ireland -sourced and grown native seedlings, transplants and whips.

The planting project would not be achievable without the generous assistance from the Woodland Trust, whose Emergency Tree Fund has provided a £300,000 grant to

help support tree purchase, tree protection, ground preparation and planting costs.

Tree-planting on the adopted highway and verges

When planting along the highway and verges, consideration will be given by the Council to the long-term suitability of each planting location. This will involve assessing the location of service runs, the proximity of the site to buildings and existing infrastructure, visibility splays and ensuring adequate drainage, growing space and quantity and quality of the growing medium.

See Section 13: 'Residents' requests for planting on Council-owned land' for further information.

Along the adopted highway verges, new or replacement street trees will generally be nursery half-standard (HS) or standard (Std) trees measuring approximately 1.5m-2m at the time of planting. Suitable trees will be selected for transport corridors, with tolerance to salt and air pollution.

Tree species prone to epicormic growth issues shall be avoided alongside the highway verge due to their potential to block visibility splays and obstruct footways and cycleways. Similarly, species with brittle failure characteristics, for example, poplar and willow, will be avoided except in exceptional circumstances or where already present.

What is most important when selecting the right tree for the right place is considering the size of the tree at maturity and the species appropriateness for the location. The tree must be able to grow freely without affecting the integrity of the highway, highway infrastructures such as bus shelters, utility services, or buildings (including both above and below ground impacts).

Trees, planted on the highway verge, will require an area of mulch around the base of the tree, up to 1m in diameter and 50-75mm thick, to help suppress weeds and retain moisture.

Species selection for highways, new developments and open spaces

Choosing the right tree is essential, whether it's a replacement tree or a new tree to be planted on the highway, a new development or within an open space.

In all cases, all tree replacements should seek to improve BNG (see Sections 11, 12 and 13) with a greater emphasis on natives or native cultivars wherever possible. However, it is important to consider non-natives and exotic species in some scenarios to ensure that the tree population remains resilient to future biotic and abiotic threats or for other reasons for example as a result of aesthetic considerations.

Using guidance from the Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure - TDAG (see Section 13), council officers will work to produce a refined list of trees that are typically better suited to the difficult conditions found within urban areas and adjacent main streets.

Avoidance of invasive alien species

The Council will adhere to and follow guidance and best practice in avoiding the planting of invasive alien species.

Young tree maintenance of new or replacement street trees

Replacement or new street trees planted by the Council on Council-owned verges or alongside the adopted highway will be subject to a five year establishment period, where the Council will be responsible for watering at a frequency necessary to ensure the establishment and survival of all trees that form part of a planting scheme. The guidance in BS 8545:2014²³ - 'Recommendations' will be followed where appropriate.

As part of the ongoing establishment of newly planted trees, where required over the early maintenance period, tree guards, stakes, and ties will be replaced, formative pruning will be carried out, the planting pit will be kept free of weeds and rubbish, and mulch will be replaced as necessary.

²³ British Standard 8545 (2014) Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape: Recommendations

To help address sun scorch, additional watering is likely to be required during periods of abnormally hot or dry weather. Water, at a rate of 20 measured litres, will be applied to each tree, once a week, between March and October, for three years, minimum. In exceptionally dry, hot, or windy weather, this will increase to two to three times a week.

Further guidance on young tree establishment can be found at [Arboricultural Association Young Tree Establishment Guide](#) and [The Woodland Trust Guidance](#).

Residents' requests for planting on Council-owned land

The Council is committed to increasing the number of trees and, importantly, the amount of canopy cover provided by trees across the borough. Tree canopy cover provides many environmental and health benefits, for example: the greater the canopy coverage, the more CO₂ is absorbed²⁴, rainfall intercepted²⁵, and shelter provided.

The Council has significant plans to increase tree cover but also understands that residents may wish to be involved. In recognition of this the Council will welcome suggestions

for the planting of new trees within Council-owned open spaces and country parks.

Residents will need to provide the following:

- The location where the trees are to be planted.
- Tree species suggestion (for a list of suitable species, refer to [Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure](#)).
- Number of trees to be planted.

Once a request is received, Wokingham Borough Council will undertake several checks to ensure the following

- The licensing process for undertaking tree-planting.
- The location of underground and aerial services.
- Public liability insurance.
- Selecting the right species and variety (right tree and right location).
- Suitability of the location suitability.

Any planting approved for Council-owned sites -will be carried out during the earliest opportunity and in the planting season, which runs from November to March each year.

²⁴ Nowak, D.J., and D.E. Crane. 2002. Carbon storage and sequestration by urban trees in the USA. *Environmental Pollution* 116(3):381-389.

²⁵ Yang, B., Lee, D.K., Heo, H.K. et al. The effects of tree characteristics on rainfall interception in urban areas. *Landscape Ecol Eng* 15, 289-296 (2019).

Requests for street tree and verge planting are slightly more complex. It is essential that trees planted next to roads offer minimal risk to the health and safety of the public and do not interfere with utilities such as water pipes, electricity supplies or telephone wires. The Council will be stringent on when and where new street trees may or may not be planted. Consideration for planting trees will only be given within verges where the following apply:

- The proposed location has a minimum of 8 cubic metres of accessible soil for the tree's root system to establish.
- The centre point of the proposed tree location must be a minimum of 2m from any utility services.
- The tree must be located a minimum of 3m from the carriageway edge and be of a species that is compact - other larger growing tree species can be considered in areas where they are able to grow unimpeded and without the requirement for excessive pruning to prevent carriageway encroachment.

If the suggested location is unsuitable, the Council will respond by explaining why a tree cannot be planted.

Where a location is deemed appropriate, the Council will confirm the location has been added to the tree-planting list. Approved requests received before 30 September will normally be planted in the next

available planting season. This is usually between November and March.

Please note that, currently, all tree-planting on Council land, including highways, will be carried out or supervised by the Council or its representatives. It is not practicable (for legal and insurance reasons) and therefore not permissible for residents to source and plant trees on Council land without Council approval. It is essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations and are sourced from approved suppliers as this ensures a consistent approach to tree quality and suitability.

The Council will develop a process to allow residents to make requests for new street tree and verge planting. The process will require cross organisation involvement however, once established, it will allow resident to put street and verge locations forward, with requests being reviewed within an agreed timeframe.

Guaranteeing delivery of all tree-planting targets, both on the Council's and residents' land, is reliant on appropriate financial and staffing resources being made available to the relevant departments, along with full member support for their implementation.

14. HEDGEROW AND HEDGE PLANTING

Wokingham Borough Council recognises that formal town and garden hedges and agricultural hedgerows have many benefits:

- Hedgerows are generally inexpensive to create and long-lasting, providing significant wildlife and environmental benefits.
- Hedgerows can provide excellent dispersal, migration and foraging routes for wildlife including dispersal routes for woodland plants.
- A well-managed hedge can be a feature of great beauty and interest while offering privacy and security.
- The use of hedges can provide significant ecosystem benefits to residents in locations where a tree is impractical but where a hedge can offer a similar canopy volume and leaf area. For example, mitigation of road noise and aerial pollution.
- A hedge can provide a useful barrier: reducing the impact of weather, creating shade, deflecting and dissipating wind and intercepting rainfall, reducing surface runoff.
- A hedge can also provide health benefits, acting as a significant filter of harmful particulates and dust.

The Council also understands that many of the problems associated with hedges occur because fast-growing plants have been used for quick results, producing hedges that are difficult to maintain and have become too large for their location. It is therefore important to consider the species of hedge plants used and the purpose of the hedge.

The Council will expect hedges to be considered within all new developments as part of the wider landscape master plan, including use in public open spaces and, for property boundaries wherever possible.

In most circumstances, the Council will expect hedgerow planting to utilise native species. When hedgerows are located on public open spaces and adjacent to roads, hedgerow species will be chosen to be diverse and hardy as this will reduce the maintenance costs and allow the hedge to be retained for the long term once established.

Appendix D has been developed by the Councils Tree and Landscape officers to provide guidance on appropriate species for new hedge and hedgerow planting, with species selection being suitable to soil type and landscape character as well as providing structural habitat and fruit and nectar for native insects, bird and mammals. Written in 2017, it is a simple guide to planting hedges in Wokingham and provides assistance in the design and planting of new hedgerows in the Borough. However,

in order to keep the guidance relevant, it is recognised that an update would be beneficial. A short-term goal to update the guidance will be implemented as part of the strategy Action Plan.

Where appropriate, new hedgerows should be planted in two staggered rows 33cm apart (six plants per metre). Minor species can be planted in small, single species groups or randomly within larger blocks of hawthorn.

Where space allows, the Council welcomes hedge planting to be incorporated alongside trees due to the additional ecosystem services this can provide, for example wildlife corridors. Where trees are appropriate within a hedgerow scheme, some tree species should be left uncut to grow through the hedge at approximately 6m intervals, with new nursery standard trees incorporated into a new hedge wherever possible.

15. RISKS AND BIOSECURITY

Pests and diseases

New pest and diseases that are critical to the national economy are often addressed by the government who may provide funding or control services to reduce any impact. However, the Council should also ensure adequate resources are available to control and contain outbreaks of known pests and diseases on Council-owned land. The Council should also continue to ensure proportionate resources are dedicated to addressing pest and disease that are affecting privately owned trees for example the Council may need to identify and deal with ADB affected ash trees that are at risk of falling onto the highway, resourcing notifications to landowners under powers bestowed by the Highways Act 1980.

Over the last few decades, the UK has experienced increasing threats to plant biosecurity as increased global trade acts as a pathway for the arrival of new organisms, with impacts potentially exacerbated by climate change. This has been highlighted by the increasing number of plant disease and pathogen outbreaks, most notably in relation to trees.

The Council will prioritise adequate resources in a timely fashion to deal with such threats, especially when these are related to the health of

the tree stock and may also present serious public health issues. The Council will continue to liaise closely with the Forestry Commission on issues of biosecurity and trees.

The cumulative impact of climate-induced stress and of any associated changes in the impact of pests on the trees is uncertain in the medium to long term, but new pests, diseases and pathogens are appearing. Currently the Trees and Landscape team maintains awareness of these and will, in partnership with other teams, update staff of any further developments.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity measures are not required to be onerous or over-complicated. They generally follow examples of horticultural and arboricultural best practice.

The Council will seek to adhere to the following biosecurity measures during its operations:

- Prevent the spread and transmission of pests and diseases by regularly disinfecting and cleaning tools following pruning works.
- Regularly monitor newly planted trees in the first three years following planting to ensure that latent pathogens, such as *Xylella fastidiosa subsp. multiplex* (a bacterial plant pathogen) are not present.

- Whilst respecting native habitats, increase the species and genetic diversity of the borough's tree stock and avoid planting monocultures, whilst ensuring that any new planting is suitable for current climatic conditions, and as far as reasonably practical, plant tree species that are resilient to climate change. The Council will only plant tree stock and plant material that has met the requirements of the European Union's and United Kingdom's plant passport systems, and, where possible, source UK-grown tree stock or tree stock and plant material that has been the subject of a quarantine period.
- Comply with the requirements of statutory plant health notices.
- Report any tree pests or pathogen of concern via Forestry Research's tree TreeAlert web-based reporting system.

Climate change

It is now recognised and accepted by reputable experts that climate change is happening, and that man-made emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are the main cause. It is predicted that temperatures could rise by as much as 3-5°C by the end of the century. The government now recognises climate change as 'the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today'.

The UK is projected to get warmer, more so in summer than in winter. Changes in projected summer mean temperatures are expected to be greatest in the south and south-east. Using climate modelling, the overall annual rainfall is not expected to change a great extent, but the overall trend will be for winter rainfall to increase and summer rainfall to decrease. Increased evapotranspiration in trees will be driven by the warmer temperatures in the summer months, a by-product being increased summer drought



conditions. With the increase in the effects of climate change, due to higher global greenhouse gas emissions, the rate over time, these changes will increase, and the scale of these changes will be even greater.

Globally, woodland ecosystems play a key role in addressing climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, producing oxygen, retaining water and reducing atmospheric temperatures through transpiration. On a local level, trees and woodlands have an important role to play in mitigating climate change through the absorption and temporary storage of carbon dioxide, intercepting and reducing airborne particulates as well as reducing the effects of climate change by providing shade, cooling and soaking up water and helping to reduce the impacts of flooding. Trees also provide a source of wood, which is a low-energy construction material and a regenerative, short carbon-cycle, energy resource. It is therefore essential that the Council sustains and enhances this vital resource.

Native, naturalised and non-native trees

The Council currently plants a wide range of native, naturalised, and non-native species. Wherever possible, the Council will favour the use of native and non-invasive naturalised trees. However, it is accepted that the use of non-native tree species may, on occasion, be required.

A diverse range of tree species and the avoidance of monoculture planting will help to create a more resilient and robust tree stock, which is then better placed to withstand the predicted impact of climate change.

Planting provenance

In general, suppliers will be required to grow stock produced from British-origin seed sources. With adaptability to climate change in mind, and only where there is extremely robust scientific evidence supporting the introduction and guarding against the introduction of invasive and pest tree and other species, there may be a preference to select seeds from European continental provenance. In such cases, demonstrable biosecurity measures will have to be in place involving effective quarantine procedures and certification of imported material.



16. ACTION PLAN

SHORT-TERM GOALS	
GOAL	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4,000 trees to be allocated to residents via the Garden Forest Scheme by 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement a process for residents to apply for and collect a free tree to plant in their garden. Round 1: Applications were received at the end of January 2022. Trees to be available for eligible applicants at the start of 2022 planting season. Round 2: Application window to open for the second round of the scheme in Autumn 2022, with the aim for eligible applicants to collect their tree before the end of the 2022/23 planting season.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver small-scale woodland, hedgerow and orchard planting on Council owned land in existing parks and opens spaces sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sites for small-scale woodland, hedgerow and orchard planting on Council estate in existing parks and opens spaces. This small-scale planting can be deployed with shorter time scales than larger afforestation schemes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a tree palette of suitable species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the TDAG guidance and taking into consideration the landscape characteristics of Wokingham, officers will develop a palette of tree species appropriate for planting along the adopted highway, verges and public open spaces as a basis to provide recommendations for the Council and public when carrying out tree planting schemes.

MEDIUM-TERM GOALS	
GOAL	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new woodland that will increase the number of trees in the borough to improve carbon capture, BNG and canopy cover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the planting potential maps produced by Savills and by working with relevant WBC stakeholders, identify areas of Council-owned (greater than 5ha) that would be suitable for woodland planting, focussing on high carbon capture potential sites.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support residents wishing to plant trees on Council-owned land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal departments to work together to design a process to support residents to request to either plant a tree or have a tree planted on Council-owned land, including along the adopted highway. • To develop a criterion for applications to be considered and produce guidance on when applications will be reviewed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WBC Tree Inspections Framework to be updated and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection zone maps to be produced, outlining the appropriate frequency of inspection.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Tree City of the World status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to be carried out based on Tree City of the World requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Seed Collection programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a programme to support and encourage local seed collection to supply to nurseries to encourage the growth of locally sourced species.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review TPO process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update TPO process, subject to available tree officer resource and in line with current best practice.

LONG-TERM GOALS	
GOAL	ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase canopy cover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the canopy cover data produced by Savills to identify areas that would benefit new tree-planting and implement planting schemes to achieve an increase in canopy cover. • Undertake a ten-year canopy cover review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Strategy Review and Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ten-year review of the Tree Strategy should take place to ensure the strategy remains relevant and achievable in line with current best practice.

TITLE	Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership Joint Committee
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 24 November 2022
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Adult Social Care and Health - Matt Pope
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services - David Hare

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The Health and Care Act 2022 established Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) as legal entities and created new NHS bodies called Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). Within this legislation all ICSs are required to establish new partnership forums called Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs). These bring together ICBs and Local Authorities (LAs) with responsibility for Social Care and Public Health in order to integrate the services they plan, purchase, and provide for local residents.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:-

1. Notes the establishment of a new joint committee - the Integrated Care Partnership covering the Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West area - and in principle, the working draft terms of reference for this partnership (See Annex 1)
2. Approves the appointment of the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services to this partnership and the Leader of the Council as substitute.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Health and care Act 2022 established Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) as legal entities and created new NHS bodies called Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). Within this legislation all ICSs are required to establish new partnership forums called Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs). These bring together ICBs and Local Authorities (LAs) with responsibility for Social Care and Public Health in order to integrate the services they plan, purchase, and provide for local residents.

These “founding members” of the ICP are working together to agree the terms of reference for this new partnership board. The ICP will cover the Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) area and the founding members are

- a) Oxfordshire County Council
- b) Buckinghamshire Council
- c) West Berkshire Council
- d) Reading Borough Council
- e) Wokingham Borough Council
- f) The BOB NHS Integrated Care Board

BACKGROUND

Integrated Care Systems

Integrated care systems (ICSs) are geographically based arrangements that bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services with local authorities and other local partners to plan, co-ordinate and commission health and care services. They gained formal legal status on 1st July 2022

The aim of ICSs is 4-fold.

- (a) To improve population health and healthcare
- (b) Tackle inequalities in outcome, experience and access
- (c) Enhance productivity and value for money
- (d) Help the NHS to support broader social and economic development

Wokingham borough is within the “BOB” ICS- that is the area of Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West

Integrated Care Partnerships

The Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) is formed in accordance with Section 116ZA of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as introduced by Section 26 of the Health and Care Act 2022.

The ICP is a statutory joint committee of the BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the local authorities in the ICS who are responsible for adult social care: Buckinghamshire Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham Borough Council.

In addition to the Founding Members listed above, it is proposed with the BOB ICP Terms of Reference that wider health and social care partners are also included with the membership of the ICP. This includes; Oxfordshire City or District Council representation, NHS provider trusts for acute, mental health and ambulance services, Primary Care, Healthwatch, VCSE representation, Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network, a Social Care Provider. Full details are within the proposed ToR in annex 1.

The proposed membership of the ICP from Wokingham Borough Council is the Executive Member of Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services with the Leader of the Council acting as substitute.

Integrated care partnerships are required to publish an integrated care strategy to set out how the assessed needs (from the joint strategic needs assessments of the areas the partnership covers) can be met through the exercise of the functions of the integrated care board, partner local authorities or NHS England.

Partnership working, integration of services and development of joint strategies are approaches to improving outcomes for local residents that are already well established within work programmes of health and social care organisations. Much of this current work is overseen by Wokingham’s Health and Wellbeing Board. The creation of ICPs is not intended to duplicate existing arrangements like this but provide opportunity to establish greater integration at a larger system footprint. The principal of subsidiarity is

critical to the establishment of ICPs, meaning that where decisions and planning can happen at a Wokingham borough level it will.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£Nil	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information
There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. More broadly, the establishment of the ICS and its associated structures aims to allow greater integration of services. This may include changes to the current arrangements where Wokingham Borough Council and the local NHS commissioning body (now the ICB) pool some of their budgets through Section 75 arrangements (National Health Act 2006). Any such changes will be subject to separate approval processes.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
Public consultation is not required for the agreement of these Terms of Reference.

Public Sector Equality Duty
One of the 4 aims of Integrated Care Systems is to tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience and access. These inequalities in health can be experience by a range of population groups, including those with protected characteristics. It is therefore anticipated that supporting the establishment of the new ICP will have a positive impact on equality and inclusion.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
This paper does not have any direct climate emergency implications. Where any new or amended services are established because of greater integration, they will be individually assessed for their implications.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
Not applicable

List of Background Papers
Terms of Reference for ICP

Contact Andrew Moulton	Service Governance
Telephone Tel: 07747 777298	Email andrew.moulton@wokingham.gov.uk

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Terms of Reference

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1. Establishment

1.1 Statutory Joint Committee:

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (each a “Place”) (“BOB”) Integrated Care Partnership (“ICP”), is formed in accordance with s.116ZA, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“LGPIHA”) (introduced by s.26, Health and Care Act 2022). The ‘responsible local authorities’ (s.103, LGPIHA) within the BOB Integrated Care System (“ICS”) area are Buckinghamshire Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Wokingham Borough Council (each an “LA”, and together “the LAs”).

The ICP is a statutory joint committee of the BOB Integrated Care Board (“ICB”) and the LAs.

1.2 Terms of Reference and Review:

1.2.1 **Definition:** The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the ICP are defined by the ICB and the LAs and may be amended by them at any time.

1.2.2 **Review:** The ToR will be reviewed at least annually and more frequently if required. Any proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference will be submitted to the Board and councils for approval.

2. Aim, Accountability and Reporting, and Authority to Act

2.1 The overall aim of the ICP is to deliver the expectation set out in the joint declaration between NHS England and the Local Government Association (March 2022) that it shall ‘drive the direction and policies of the Integrated Care System (ICS)’ for BOB.

2.2 Specifically, the ICP will also help deliver the four ICS aims:

ICS aim	Description
Improve outcomes	Improve outcomes in population health and healthcare
Reduce inequalities	Tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience and access
Provide value	Enhance productivity and value for money
Support the local area	Help the NHS support broader social and economic development

2.2.1 **Accountability and reporting:** The ICP is accountable to **the ICB** and **the LAs** and shall report to them on a regular basis on how it discharges its responsibilities.

2.3 **Authority to Act:** As a statutory joint committee of the ICB and the LAs the ICP is authorised to:

Authorised activity	Description
Create Committees and Task Groups	Create committees and/or task and finish groups (together “sub-groups”) to take forward specific programmes of work as considered necessary. The ICP shall determine the membership and Terms of Reference of any such sub-group.
Seek information	Seek information that reasonably relates to any item of business of the ICP from any employee or member of the ICB or LA. The ICB and LAs shall consider such requests having regard to the normal FOI exceptions and commercial or political sensitivity.
Commission reports	Commission reports it deems necessary to help fulfil its obligations.
Obtain advice	Use independent professional advice and secure the attendance of advisors with relevant expertise if it considers such necessary to fulfil its functions, provided this is in accordance with any procedures of the ICB for obtaining legal or professional advice.
Investigate activity	Investigate activity within these ToR.

3. Principles

3.1 In everything it does, the ICP shall uphold the ICS principles:

Theme	ICS partnership principles from the ICS design framework
Improved outcomes focus	Improved outcomes: Focus on improving outcomes for people, including improved health and wellbeing, supporting people to live more independent lives, and reduced health inequalities.
Subsidiarity	<p>Triple aim, cooperation and subsidiarity: Support the triple aim (better health for everyone, better care for all, and efficient use of NHS resources), the legal duties on statutory bodies to co-operate and the principle of subsidiarity (that decision-making should happen at the most local appropriate level).</p> <p>Support for place: Ensure place-based partnership arrangements are respected and supported, and have appropriate</p>

resource, capacity and autonomy to address community priorities, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership: Come together under a distributed leadership model and commit to working together equally.

Professional, clinical, political and community leadership: Draw on the experience and expertise of professional, clinical, political and community leaders and promote strong clinical and professional system leadership.

Collective accountability

Collective accountability: In discussion, operate collective challenge for shared and individual/organisational contributions to joint objectives.

Risk/ benefit sharing: Enable sharing of risks, benefits and support.

Transparency: Agree arrangements for transparency and local accountability, including meeting in public with minutes and papers available online.

Consensus: Partners will use their reasonable endeavours to seek a consensus between them, including working through difficult issues where appropriate.

Innovation and continuous learning

Transformation: Contribute to the transformation of health and care services

Innovation: Enable opportunities to innovate, share best practice and maximise sharing of resources across organisations (additional).

Continuous learning: Create a learning system, sharing evidence and insight across and beyond the ICS, crossing organisational and professional boundaries.

4. Duties

4.1 The ICP's duties are to:

Duties	Description
Develop the ICP strategy:	<p>Develop an Integrated Care Strategy for the ICS, with the agreement of all partners, and submit that Strategy to the ICB, LAs and NHS England.</p> <p>The Strategy will take account of the three Place Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs).</p>

Use data	Base the Strategy on the best available evidence and data, covering health and social care (both children’s and adult social care) and addressing the wider determinants of health and wellbeing including for example, employment, environment and housing issues.
Engage stakeholders	Agree a plan for consulting and engaging the public and communicate to stakeholders in the development of the Strategy.
Enhance relationships	<p>Work with the structures in Places (e.g. Health and Wellbeing Boards (“HWBs”) and Place Based Partnerships) to enhance relationships between leaders across the health and care system in order to consider best arrangement for its local area.</p> <p>The ICP will seek to complement, but not duplicate, the work of the HWBs and to provide an opportunity to strengthen the alignment of the ICS and HWBs.</p>
Review progress	Monitor delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy. Challenge all partners to demonstrate progress in reducing inequalities and improving outcomes.
Seek assurance	Seek assurance that the Integrated Care Strategy has been developed in an inclusive and transparent way and elements of the strategy have been co-produced with people with lived experience and expertise from professional, clinical, social, political, and community leadership.

5. Chair, Membership, Attendees, Sub-Groups

Arrangement	Description
Chair	<p>The Chair will be elected by the six statutory Founding Voting Members, for a one-year term which may be renewed once (i.e. a maximum of two years).</p> <p>References to Chair in these ToR are to the Chair of the ICP or to the Chair of a Meeting (if different) as the context requires.</p>
Deputy Chair	A Deputy Chair will be elected by the six Founding Voting members. The Deputy Chair shall be from a different founding member body or Place to the elected Chair. This would be for a 1-year term which could be renewed once (maximum of 2 years).

<p>Membership</p>	<p>Founding Voting Members (six):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An identified representative of the ICB • An identified elected member from each of the LAs (five) <p>Other Voting Members (17):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two other elected members from Buckinghamshire Council • Two other elected members from Oxfordshire councils (to include at least one elected member from a City/District council) • One representative from an acute NHS provider* • One representative from a mental health NHS foundation trust* • One representative from the South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust • Two representatives from primary care; one to be a GP* • The Directors of Public Health for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West • One representative from Healthwatch • One representative from the BOB VCSE Alliance • One representative from the Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network (AHSN) • One representative from care sector providers (with no direct financial interest) • One representative of child and adolescent mental health <i>(*these four members from NHS providers must between them cover the three Places)</i> <p>In attendance (non-voting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICB Chief Executive Officer • One Director of Adult Social Services (DASS)** • One Director of Children’s Services (DCS)** <p><i>(** each to be from different Place)</i></p>
<p>Substitutes</p>	<p>Each ICP member (“member”) shall identify a named substitute or substitutes to attend a meeting if they are unable to. Where relevant, references in these ToR to “member” include a substitute attending in place of that member.</p>
<p>Other attendees</p>	<p>Only members have the right to attend ICP meetings (“meetings”), but the Chair may invite relevant staff and individuals to attend a meeting (for all or part of it) as necessary in accordance with the business of the ICP. Such attendees will not be eligible to vote.</p> <p>Opportunities will be created for members of the public to attend and be given opportunity to speak at selected meetings.</p>

Stakeholder Participation	It is anticipated that task and finish groups - alongside dedicated workshops, dedicated public meetings and other methods – will be used for broader stakeholder participation and to include views and needs of patients, carers, and the social care sector.
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6. ICP meetings

6.1 Frequency and Chairing:

	Description
Meeting frequency	The ICP will meet at least three times a year.
Virtual Meetings	The ICP may meet virtually (to include any method agreed by the Chair) and members attending using electronic means will be counted towards the quorum.
Extraordinary Meetings	Extraordinary meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chair.
Notice	A minimum of five working days' notice should be given when calling any meeting unless the Chair authorises otherwise in exceptional circumstances.
Chair role	The Chair is responsible for agreeing the meeting agenda and ensuring matters discussed meet the objectives as set out in these ToR.
Procedure in chair absence	In the absence of the Chair and Deputy Chair, or if the Chair and Deputy Chair have a precluding interest, the remaining Founding Voting Members present shall elect one of their number to chair the meeting.

6.2 Attendance, Conflicts of Interest and Quorum

	Description
Attendance	Members expected to make every effort to attend, and be prepared for, meetings. It is expected that members or their named substitute will attend all meetings.
Substitutes	Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, they should advise the Chair and secretariat and arrange for a substitute to attend in their stead (a substitute attending a meeting is treated as a member for all meeting purposes including voting and quorum).
Behaviour and Conflicts of Interest	All members shall behave in a manner complying with the Principles of Public Life (the “Nolan Principles”).

	<p>All members must register any material interests with the ICP Register of Interests.</p> <p>Any member who has a material interest in a matter under discussion must declare the same and the Chair will determine how this will be managed.</p>
Disqualification	If any member is prevented from participating on an agenda item by reason (e.g.) of a conflict of interests, that member shall not count towards the quorum for that item.
Quorum	<p>The quorum for a meeting is one third of the voting membership (eight), including all of the Founding Voting Members.</p> <p>If a meeting is (or becomes) inquorate the Chair may: (a) adjourn or postpone the meeting, or (b) agree that the members present may (continue to) discuss matters on an informal basis if they so choose (but no decisions may be taken).</p>

6.3 Voting, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Transparency:

	Description
Voting	<p>Only voting members of the Committee may vote, each having a single vote. The results of any vote will be recorded in the minutes.</p> <p>Decisions will be guided by national policy and best practice and will be taken by consensus wherever possible, but the Chair may always call a vote.</p> <p>Any decision will require a majority of the Founding Voting Members, and a majority overall of the voting members, in favour.</p> <p>If there is a majority of the voting members in favour, but not a majority of the Founding Voting Members in favour, a proposal will be reviewed so as to seek to address the concerns of those Founding Voting Members against it.</p>
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Members must demonstrably consider the equality, diversity and inclusion implications of decisions they make.
Meeting transparency	All meetings will be held in public, and papers made available online unless an exemption provision applies to any item of business (in which case the determination of 'exempt information' will be guided by the definitions contained in the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A, for example personal data and the financial or business affairs of any person).

7. Secretariat and Administration

The ICP will be provided with a secretariat by **TBD**, which will undertake administrative functions including:

- clerking meetings.
- the preparation of agendas and meeting papers.
- maintaining the Register of Members' Interests.
- the preparation of minutes.
- maintaining a record of attendance; and
- monitoring relevant legislation and national guidance keeping members updated on pertinent issues/ areas of interest/ policy developments.

DRAFT

Version Control

Version	Date	Changes
V1	dd/mm/yy	Initial version agreed by Members

DRAFT

Named Members and substitutes

Understanding of proposed named membership as of 21 October 2022. Where we have not commenced process of identifying member actions to take this forward are suggested (*in red italic*).

Member category	Named member	Named substitutes
Founding Voting Member – Buckinghamshire Council	Cllr Martin Tett/Cllr Angela Macpherson	
Founding Voting Member- Oxfordshire County Council	Cllr Liz Leffman	
Founding Voting Member – Reading Borough Council	Cllr Jason Brock	
Founding Voting Member – West Berkshire Council	Cllr Graham Bridgman	All other Executive members
Founding Voting Member – Wokingham Borough Council	Cllr David Hare	Cllr Clive Jones
Founding Voting Member - ICB	Javed Khan OBE, Chair	
Two other elected members – Buckinghamshire Council	Cllr Martin Tett/Cllr Angela Macpherson +1	
Two other elected members – Oxfordshire Councils	Cllr Tim Bearder Cllr David Rouane	
Representative from an acute NHS provider	<i>Chair of either Oxford University Hospitals or Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust tbd</i>	
Representative from a mental health NHS foundation trust	Martin Earwicker, Chair Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	
Representative from the South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust	Professor Sir Keith Willett CBE (Chair)	
Two representatives from primary care; one to be a GP	<i>ICB to source a GP from Bucks or Oxfordshire depending on acute trust member ICB discussing second member with leads for Pharmacy, Optometry, Dental</i>	
Directors of Public Health for each place	Dr Jane O’Grady (Buckinghamshire)	

	Ansaf Azhar (Oxfordshire) Tracy Daszkiewicz (Berkshire West)	
Representative from Healthwatch	Peter Miller, Cahir Buckinghamshire Healthwatch	
Representative from the BOB VCSE Alliance	William Butler, Chair	
Representative from the Oxford Academic Health Sciences Network (AHSN)	Gary Ford, Chief Executive	
Representative from care sector providers (with no direct financial interest)	<i>LAs to agree approach to identify, suggestions to date</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>From a not-for-profit provider eg Order of St Johns</i> - <i>Go via Care Associations to nominate a member</i> 	
Representative of child and adolescent mental health	<i>ICP to determine what perspectives required (eg clinical, provider, user, carer, voluntary sector etc) which will then determine approach</i>	

In attendance non-voting

Member category	Named member	Named substitutes
ICB Chief Executive Officer	Steve McManus	
One Director of Adult Social Services (DASS)	<i>LAs to agree on DASS/DCS members and substitutes</i>	
One Director of Children's Services (DCS)	<i>LAs to agree on DASS/DCS members and substitutes</i>	