

Public Protection, Planning and Governance

Draft September 2017

Trees and Woodlands Strategy

Securing our trees and woodlands for future generations

2018 - 2022

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As the Executive Member with responsibility for Landscape & Ecology I am pleased to present the Trees and Woodland Strategy.

Alongside other members and officers and in partnership with many volunteers, we have sought to protect the natural environment alongside balancing budgets.

We place great importance on preserving our landscape so that it may continue to be enjoyed by us all.

I am proud of our successes in gaining valuable grant aid for vital woodland management work and for ensuring our systems that make the daily management of our trees and woodlands and the handling of queries as simple as possible.

This Council is committed to the continued positive management of our trees and woodlands and I am pleased that we have a programme for their maintenance, improvement and renewal into the future.”



Councillor Helen Bromley, September 2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this strategy is to set out the Council's approach to managing its trees and woodlands within the borough.
- 1.2. The Council's trees and woodlands are part of a wider multi-functional network of green infrastructure which runs throughout the borough. This includes both public and privately owned trees and in urban or rural locations. Green infrastructure provides a wide range of functions and its presence and quality has a direct impact on quality of life.
- 1.3. The trees and woodland which are managed by the Council include:
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood
 - Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) – Mardley Heath, Danesbury, Singlers Marsh and The Commons
 - Small woods – Examples include Howe Dell, Oxley Wood, Chantry Copse and Skips Grove
 - Community orchards – Examples include Sam's Orchard and Woodhall Orchard
 - Closed church yards – St Lukes, St Etheldredas, St Thomas a Beckett
 - Tree belts
 - Communal garden trees in Council accommodation
 - Approximately 30,000 individual trees or small groups of trees
- 1.4. The Council is not responsible for the trees and woodland within:
 - Schools
 - Town or Parish Council land
 - Sites managed by Finesse Leisure (including Moneyhole Park, King George V playing fields, Stanborough Park, Panshanger Golf course)
 - Private ownership
- 1.5. The Council has a management agreement with Hertfordshire County Council's Highways Department to manage their highway trees, most commonly found in urban grass verges. The management agreement explicitly specifies the types of and reasons for works to be undertaken. Requests for types or qualities of works outside of the management agreement will be referred to Hertfordshire County Council. Further information regarding Hertfordshire County Council's long term vision for their trees can be found at www.hertsdirect.org.
- 1.6. National polices are used to protect private trees and woodlands. This is primarily through the Town and Country Planning Acts 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999. These documents form a legal framework for the designation of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
- 1.7. The Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme is a specific management scheme relating to the original area of the town, the aim of which is to protect the amenities and values of the area. This is another system of protection for most trees and hedges in the older part of Welwyn

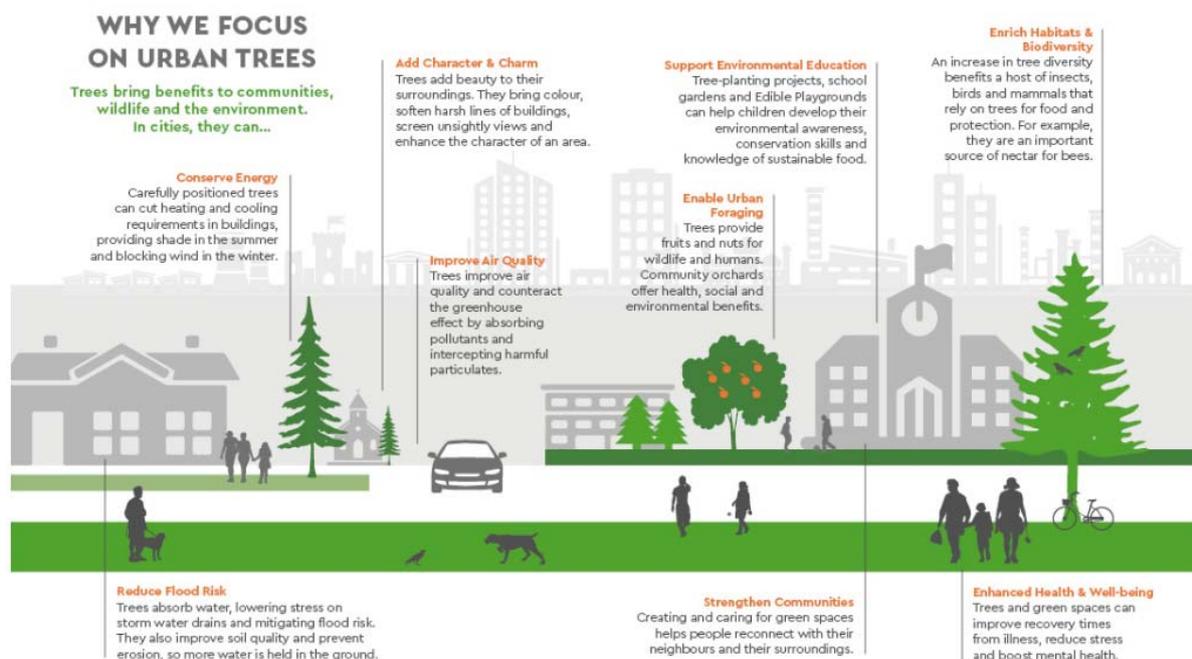
Garden City, enabling the council to protect those trees that it considers significant.

- 1.8. This strategy recognises and incorporates relevant local and national policy and guidance these include:

	National	County & Borough
Legislation	Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Hedgerow Regulations 1997 Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 Burial Act 1853 Climate Change Act 2008 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 Forestry Act 1967 (as amended) Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Security) Regulations 2013 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 Planning Act 2008 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Planning Compensation Act 1991 Town and Country Planning (Trees) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 Town and Country Planning (Trees) (England) Regulations 1999 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Leasehold Reform Act 1967
Policy	Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services Keepers of time: A statement of policy for England's Ancient and Native Woodland National Planning Policy Framework The UK Forestry Standard	Hertfordshire County Council, Highway Tree Strategy and Guidance Document (Jan 2013) Policy EM3 (Estate Management Scheme) Welwyn Hatfield Business Plan 2015-2018 Welwyn Hatfield Community Strategy 2015-2020 Welwyn Hatfield Submission Local Plan
Guidance	BS3998 2010 Tree work – Recommendations BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations BS8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations Common sense risk management of trees Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015 NHBC Standards 2011: 4.2 Building near trees NJUG guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees Volume 4 Planning for a healthy environment – good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity Planning for climate change – guidance for local authorities The natural Choice: Securing the value of nature Play Strategy 2008 Trees in Hard Landscapes A Guide for Delivery Trees in the Townscape A guide for Decision Makers Trees in Towns II UK National Ecosystem Assessment	Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's 5 year plan Roads in Hertfordshire: Highway Design Guide Welwyn Hatfield Green Infrastructure Plan

- 1.9. This document draws upon the Council’s knowledge and experience as well as accepted industry standards to set aims for the planting, promotion and protection of the treed landscape and provide continuity in the long term management of trees and woodlands. It will be used by the Council, local groups, individuals, agencies and any other interested parties as a reference document.

2. The Value and Benefits of Trees



- 2.1 The future will bring many challenges to balance the needs of the borough with the need to maintain and enhance the landscape. These include:

- Population growth
- Local Plan development sites
- Building heights and densities
- Climate change
- Maturing landscapes
- Pests and diseases

3. The Trees and Woodlands in the Borough

- 3.1. Welwyn Hatfield is a satellite borough of London. It contains two towns, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield and a number of villages and hamlets. The borough also contains large areas of open countryside. Each urban, suburban and rural area has its own identity and character.
- 3.2. The population of Welwyn Hatfield was estimated to be 116,000 in mid-2014¹. This is among the fastest growing in the UK at a rate of 1.7% per year. The Office for National Statistics also estimates that the population of the borough will continue to grow rapidly over the next 25 years.
- 3.3. Welwyn Garden City is an early example of the Garden City movement and Hatfield is a post second world war New Town. Both towns were designed around existing features such as woodland, field boundaries, orchards and individual mature trees as they were considered to be visually important for residents. As construction of each neighbourhood was completed it was landscaped and new sets of trees planted. These trees have grown old together and are frequently at the end of their natural lifespans. This treescape now gives both towns a unique character and challenges.
- 3.4. The borough's rural areas perform many strategic functions such as separating towns and villages from each other, providing access to the countryside for recreation and leisure and are also home to some of borough's key natural assets.
- 3.5. The borough has a range of natural resources and environmental assets of local, regional and national importance, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites, trees and woodlands, extensive areas of agricultural land, minerals reserves, rivers, river valleys and floodplains and a comprehensive network of open spaces. The Council is a custodian of some of these environmental assets, for example Northaw Great Wood, which is a medieval woodland pasture and has such high biodiversity importance that it is designated as a site of special scientific interest (SSSI).
- 3.6. It is important to ensure the continuity of tree cover across the borough, through a varied age ranges and a diversity of species. However aged populations with little diversity are more likely to be damaged extensively by pests, diseases and natural life expectancy.
- 3.7. Remnant orchards which were kept through the towns' construction can still be found today. These old trees could hold interesting and unusual varieties which are not commonly available and planted now. Hertfordshire has lost two thirds of its orchards in the past fifty years. To counter this decline, the Council has been planting orchards and fruit trees on suitable open spaces, freely accessible to the public. These are planted and maintained by volunteer tree wardens.

¹ Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2014 annual mid year assessment

- 3.8. It is important to plant species which provide forage for pollinating insects. Insect pollination is important to the reproduction and persistence of many wild plants that, in turn, underpin a wider and more complex network of animal and plant life. Pollination is therefore an important process in maintaining healthy and biodiverse ecosystems.
- 3.9. Woodlands need a range of tree ages, densities and species for the benefit of biodiversity and continuity of crown cover. Areas of young, dynamic growth lock away more carbon than an increasingly aged and dying one. To increase habitat types and create a healthy woodland, woods need to be actively managed. Management can include glade creation, ride widening, thinning and coppicing as well as new planting.
- 3.10. In addition to woodlands, there are smaller groups of trees planted or retained across the borough. These provide a visual and audio barrier to separate housing from commercial developments, busy roads and railways and other residential areas. These are managed in a similar way to individual trees but with consideration to improving and maintaining their function as a barrier. Individual trees may need to be removed to allow regeneration of lower level vegetation.
- 3.11. It is important to note the contribution trees make towards mitigating the impacts of climate change. The localised effects of climate change are greater in built up areas where the 'urban heat island' effect increases temperatures exponentially. However, higher urban temperatures can be moderated by the presence of shade trees.
- 3.12. Trees also play a role in the interception of precipitation through the 'capture' and evaporation of rainwater and slowing down the movement of rainfall into drainage facilities, reducing the likelihood of flash flooding.
- 3.13. Whilst these issues can seem disconnected and not immediately relevant when discussing a tree strategy for present residents, it is vital that decisions taken today are made with a view to improving life for future residents. Trees planted now might take more than a generation to mature, especially within woodlands.
- 3.14. In 2017 Hatfield is considered to have a tree cover of 20% and Welwyn Garden City 27%.² To offset the negative impacts of living in an urban environment and climate change it is suggested that a tree cover of 25% be an aim over the next ten years.

² Forest Research (The Canopy Cover of England's Towns and Cities: baselining and setting targets to improve human health and well-being, 2017).

4. Policy 1 - Active Tree Management

The Council will aim to inspect trees within its management once within a three year rolling period. The inspection will assess the condition of the tree and whether work is required to tackle any of the following issues:

- decay, structural damage or any indication of imminent failure
- physical encroachment, where branches are touching buildings
- there is a risk to vehicular or pedestrian safety
- sightlines are required to be maintained e.g. road signs, street lights, etc
- previous pruning regimes dictate that a continuation of such measures remains appropriate for that specimen e.g. periodic reductions, pollarding, etc
- thinning tree stands to allow remaining trees more room
- a proven claim of subsidence damage
- other works which it is considered will improve the long-term viability of the tree

Work required to tackle any of these issues will be carried out as soon as possible.

Works will be ordered by professionally qualified Tree Officers and carried out by professional contractors in accordance with *BS3998 Recommendations for Tree Work (2010)* and other industry best practice to maintain the highest possible standards of care and management.

A further inspection of the tree outside of the inspection cycle is unlikely to be carried out unless there is sudden change in its condition or in response to issues associated with trees of its species and/or age.

4.1. If members of the public have specific concerns regarding trees or woodland managed by the Council they can make contact via the Council's Contact Centre on 01707 357000.

4.2. This policy will be used when the Council is considering works to trees in its management. When we refer to urban trees we encompass trees growing in all the following situations:

- On grass verges in front of houses
- In the gardens of communal housing schemes
- Beside or behind houses either in garage areas or in tree belts
- On urban open spaces
- In closed church yards and cemeteries

- 4.3. The Council's contact centre is the main point of contact for all enquiries relating to trees on Council land. The Council has no powers or statutory duties to maintain land or trees which it does not own. The Land Registry has details of who owns private land.
- 4.4. The Council is committed to the positive management of trees on land within its ownership. Occasionally works may take place over and above that which is outlined to improve the long term future or viability of a tree.
- 4.5. Within the urban environment, where the relationship between residents and their landscape is so close, there are inevitable conflicts. The Council is positively managing individual trees that might directly impact small numbers of people but widely benefit the community as a whole. There is a difficult balance to achieve.
- 4.6. As an owner of a large number of street and woodland trees, claims are occasionally made against the Council for damage caused to private property as a result of tree related subsidence. This happens when tree roots extract moisture from the soil beneath a property, causing downward movement and associated damage. Rarely, the opposite of subsidence occurs, heave, where the ground re-wets following removal of trees.
- 4.7. It is therefore important for the Council to consider fully any duties it has to address the risk of subsidence occurring, alongside the environmental impact and financial cost that any proactive or responsive approach to this problem may have.
- 4.8. When and where subsidence will occur cannot be predicted as there are so many variable contributory causes, not least of which is the weather. There is also no industry agreed method of tree maintenance that can definitely prevent subsidence from happening and research has suggested that general pruning of trees may increase water demand. The proactive management of trees to minimise subsidence risk is a specialist area and will be considered by the Council as and when appropriate, in response to its duties of care.
- 4.9. Once notified of an incidence of subsidence, the Council will respond and in 2010 adopted an approach to managing claims which involves the assessment of the importance of the implicated tree alongside the level of evidence required to prove its involvement and the likely cost of the claim. While the Council will co-operate and communicate with claimants in the hope of reaching a mutually acceptable solution, claims will be vigorously defended when insufficient evidence is provided.
- 4.10. Individual trees recorded on the Council's database will be assessed once within a three year rolling period. Tree groups and woodland boundaries with private property, car parks, roads and railways will also be inspected once within a three year rolling period in the context of their setting. All other woodland trees will be either subject to an approved management plan or left to grow unhindered.

5. Policy 2 - Urban Tree Management

The Council will not carry out tree work to Borough Council trees or Herts County Council highway trees for any of the following reasons:

- To increase the amount of sunlight reaching a property or where views are obstructed
- To improve reception for mobile phone, satellite and television reception
- To allow light to reach solar panelling
- To alleviate problems caused by natural or seasonal phenomena e.g. sap, pollen, leaves, seeds, bird droppings, flowers, nuts and/or berries
- To alleviate build-up of algae and moss or prevent dampness on paths, structures or gardens
- To alleviate potential insurance and subsidence issues unless supported by evidence such as a relevant engineering report
- To resolve footpath, heave or trip hazards caused by root ingress unless no viable alternative can be found to alleviate the problems
- To facilitate vehicle crossovers unless the tree has a very limited life expectancy or is at an age where it can be relocated elsewhere. In this case, any associated costs will be borne by the crossover applicant
- To remove lower branches from specimen trees. These will be trees chosen to grow in their natural form, where access beneath the crown is not required

- 5.1. The overriding view is that there will be a presumption against the removal or reduction of healthy trees where it is not in the best interest of the trees' future health. The Council has an obligation to ensure the safety of people and property. Works may be carried out to satisfy the Council's duty of care or for good arboricultural and woodland management.
- 5.2. Pruning trees to accommodate unhindered panoramas for new CCTV cameras is very difficult. Cutting sight lines through crowns can unbalance the tree and often stimulates more growth, quickly blocking the view again. Advice will be given on request about the scope for pruning when consulted about new CCTV locations.
- 5.3. In some instances there is difficult balance to be struck between good tree/woodland management and obligations to ensure safety to people and property. The priority is to ensure that trees and woodland are as safe as reasonable practicable.

6. Policy 3 - Tree Planting

The Council will undertake tree planting across the borough on publicly owned land.

Planting will take place in the best possible situations to maximise gains for environmental improvement.

New planting positions will respect the view of existing road signs, street lights, CCTV cameras, etc.

Urban planting will seek to respect the original layout of concepts of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield New Town. Avenues of formal planting will be retained until their decline dictates complete renewal is a more appropriate solution. Interim planting to fill any gaps will not take place. Where practical, the original species will be selected again to renew the original layout. Where this is not practical it will be explained why a different species is selected.

- 6.1. The Council's Business Plan has a target to plant 300 urban trees across the borough, on publically owned land, each year.
- 6.2. Felled verge trees will be replaced on a one-for-one basis. This planting may not occur in the following winter due to pressures of the progression of the tree planting programme and budgets. In these instances the location is noted for future years. Sometimes it is not always possible to replant in the exact location of the removed tree due to changes in the highway such as crossovers, cycle tracks, underground services, street lights, signs or parking bays.
- 6.3. Sometimes trees which are felled are not replaced. Common reasons for this are the proximity of surrounding trees, the tree was removed to alleviate a proven subsidence case or it was a self-set or weed tree in an inappropriate location.
- 6.4. In areas monitored by CCTV, care will be taken to not obstruct the view of the cameras, especially where conflict could arise due to the future stature of the tree.
- 6.5. Trees removed from tree belts or groups of trees will only be replaced when the barrier effect has been compromised.
- 6.6. Within woodlands, new tree cover is encouraged by a combination of natural regeneration and replanting as appropriate.

7. Policy 4 - Pests and Diseases

The Council will keep abreast of all regional and national updates and advice on pests and diseases effecting trees and woodlands. Trees will be monitored for signs of pest and disease and assess the practical options, including felling if appropriate.

The Council will disseminate information about locally important pests and disease to the public via the Council's website and other methods such as articles in Life magazine, press release, etc.

The control of muntjac deer and grey squirrels will be undertaken if the impact of damage is considered to have a moderate impact on site biodiversity.

- 7.1. Trees are more susceptible to having infection and disease if they are damaged, in poor health or site conditions or are of a particular species. For much of the trees life it can defend itself or react to arising problems. If a tree has low vitality or is stressed it might not be able to defend itself. Infection can hasten tree decay, decline and death and can pose serious concerns for public health and safety.
- 7.2. Climate change affects both the spread of pests and diseases and the trees ability to react to it. It is important that the council has an understanding of the potential problems so that it can react in a swift and informed way.
- 7.3. Current examples of pests and diseases that Welwyn Hatfield has recently been affected by are: brown-tailed moth, ash die-back, acute and chronic oak decline, horse chestnut bleeding canker and horse chestnut leaf miner. Pests and diseases which are likely to become a problem in the borough in future years are: oak processionary moth, sweet chestnut blight, oriental chestnut gall wasp and massaria disease on plane trees. Examples of pests and diseases which are not currently present in the UK are: Asian longhorn beetle, emerald ash borer and oak wilt.
- 7.4. In most cases there is very little that can be done to prevent these outbreaks from happening on a commercial scale and it becomes a matter of responding to the effects rather than prevention. The best defence is to ensure that the trees we have now and those that are planted in the future, are the best for their situation and are at their peak health and condition. Planting a diverse range of species also builds resilience into the tree population as pests and diseases sometimes target just one species. There are several key pests and diseases that are thought to be the potential high risk factors of the future. The risk is becoming greater with the speed and spread of international pests and diseases.

- 7.5. High populations of squirrels and muntjac deer can cause extensive physical damage to trees and prevent the natural regeneration of woodland flowers. Without vegetation it is difficult to create a diverse structure. Squirrels and deer do not have natural predators so control needs to be by human intervention. This presents challenges in woodlands close to human habitation and is often not undertaken for this reason, to the detriment of the ecology of the woodland.
- 7.6. The control of deer numbers is essential across all of the UK so woodlands can be successfully managed for timber or wood fuel and healthy and diverse wildlife habitats.
- 7.7. Within Welwyn Hatfield, control of muntjac deer has been undertaken at Northaw Great Wood for some years. Trained and experienced stalkers are reducing the numbers of deer until the effects of browsing are considered to be at a sustainable level. Site assessments are made biennially by the Eastern Deer Initiative. Deer control is undertaken in conjunction with adjacent land owners.
- 7.8. The Council is being strongly advised by the Eastern Deer Initiative to reduce the numbers of muntjac within Sherrardspark Wood. The Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society supports control of deer as this will give them greater confidence that young trees, which they have helped to establish, will have a successful future.

8. Policy 5 – Protecting Trees Through the Planning System

The Council will seek to protect and retain existing trees, hedgerows and woodland on development sites through the use of planning conditions. Section 106 agreements and Tree Preservation Orders as appropriate.

The felling of trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order will require a replacement tree to be planted.

New developments such as housing and commercial areas will be required to incorporate tree planting appropriate to the site and its function.

- 8.1. Whilst the Council is responsible for its own trees and woodlands, a great deal of what combines to create a shared landscape is privately owned. Although the Council does not have direct responsibility for these trees, it is actively engaged in protection of those considered worthy through the planning system.
- 8.2. The Council's Submission Local Plan has key policies within it on Environmental Assets. Policy SP11 sets out the strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of the borough's critical and environmental

assets within the planning process. Policy SP12 states the Council will work with partners to actively support the creation and enhancement of strategic green infrastructure across the borough. The opportunity to implement these policies can be achieved through the use of planning conditions, Section 106 Agreements, Hedgerow Retention Notices and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

- 8.3. TPOs are used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant detrimental impact on the amenity of the area. An Order can apply to one or many trees, including woodlands. Priority for TPOs is usually, though not exclusively, given to trees considered to be under threat; for example where imminent development is proposed. Welwyn Hatfield currently has over 550 TPOs in effect.
- 8.4. Conservation Areas can be defined as special areas of architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are eight such areas within Welwyn Hatfield where all trees have protection. Anyone proposing works to trees must give the Council six weeks' notice of their intention to do so. This enables the Council to examine the proposal and decide whether or not to place a TPO on the tree(s) in question.
- 8.5. The Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme relates to specific neighbourhoods within the town. Its aim is to protect the amenities and values of the area. This designation protects most trees and hedges and enables the Council to protect the trees which are considered important.
- 8.6. It is recognised there is a need for development often at high densities in order to facilitate the demand for housing in the borough. It is anticipated that landscape proposals for developments will need to incorporate aspects of vertical and roof top greening and initiative tree planting as space becomes a premium.

9. Policy 6 - Woodland Management

The Council will maintain and enhance Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in accordance with their adopted management plans.

The Council will maintain and enhance other woodlands such as Mardley Heath and The Commons as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in accordance with their adopted management plans.

The Council will seek to provide good access to Council-owned woodlands on public and permissive footpaths and bridleways for a wide range of abilities. Paths will be managed and upgraded where necessary on an annual basis, with support from Friends Groups.

Public access will be discouraged in some parts of Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood to reduce disturbance to more sensitive wildlife, especially during breeding seasons.

- 9.1. Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood have management plans agreed by Natural England. This allows the Council to apply for and receive grants to ensure that they are maintained in a 'favourable conservation condition'.
- 9.2. Access is an important aspect of our land management programme. Interpretation boards at principle entrances to sites show visitors the best routes to walk and some general information. Sherrardspark Wood and Northaw Great Wood have extensive directional signage to inform people of permissive routes and Rights of Way that connect into the wider landscape. Notice boards give updates on forthcoming habitat management work and events.

10. Policy 7 - Community Engagement

The Council will support, insure and equip Friends Groups who come together to execute works to trees, woodlands, footpaths, bridleways, etc which have been agreed in advance with Tree and/or Landscape Officers.

The Council will promote the health and wellbeing benefits of trees and woodlands and of volunteering and will invite local residents who are eager to get involved or learn more to join a Friends Group and the Tree Wardens Scheme.

An annual programme of events will be arranged and support given to initiatives taken by these groups.

- 10.1. The Council is fortunate to have a large group of people who are organised into friends groups and volunteer to work on a site of their choice. There are friends groups at three of the nine woodland sites and the largest group, with over 100 members, is the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens society which has been running for 50 years.
- 10.2. In 2016 local volunteers gave over 1,715 days of work, in financial terms, this fantastic contribution was worth over £120,000. Common tasks include coppicing, tree planting, scrub and grassland management, hedge laying and fencing. Some volunteers lead guided walks and help survey important wildlife species.
- 10.3. A Tree Warden group was launched in 2006 for those interested in street trees. These volunteers are the 'eyes and ears' for the trees in their neighbourhood. A series of informative meetings are held each year to increase knowledge, allowing individuals to discuss issues within their community. There are currently around 60 members and the focus in recent years has been on the planting and maintenance of community orchards across the borough.
- 10.4. The members of community who freely give their time to help protect and preserve the amenity, ecology and biodiversity of the borough are invaluable and the council recognises the need to match enthusiasm with support if their involvement is to be maintained.

11. Policy 8 - Green Infrastructure

The Council will seek to deliver its Green Infrastructure Strategy in collaboration with statutory bodies, landowners, developers, the public and others. This will include the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funding and Section 106 Agreements.

- 11.1. Green infrastructure is the network of multi-functional green space that can be proposed, newly designed or existing. These spaces can be rural or urban and include areas such as woodlands, farmland, river valleys, open spaces and country parks. This matrix of open land is made up of both privately owned land and council open space.
- 11.2. The Council's Submission Local Plan has key policies within it on Environmental Assets. Policy SP12 state the Council will work with partners to actively support the creation and enhancement of strategic green infrastructure across the borough. The opportunity to implement these policies can be achieved through the use of planning conditions, Section 106 Agreements, Hedgerow Retention Notices and Tree Preservation Orders.
- 11.3. Both Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield have a wonderful legacy of publically owned open spaces, woodlands, ponds, amenity green urban open spaces

with shrubs and flowers, old hedgerows and individual mature trees. All these green features support a varied wildlife of great ecological significance and they are integral to the health and quality of life in the borough.

- 11.4. The key to accessing a large percentage of this green infrastructure is the network of Rights of Way across the borough that links both Council and private land, a valued asset that is managed by Hertfordshire County Council.
- 11.5. All guidance given on planning consents will endeavour to protect suitable existing trees on development sites. However, the retention of valuable habitats or the creation of new opportunities for wildlife will be sought in larger applications and the potential for linking open spaces through new developments will be promoted.
- 11.6. All new developments over a certain size threshold are required to make a contribution to local green infrastructure through planning legislation, Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. All contributions offered for existing green infrastructure sites are invested in council owned open spaces.

12. Monitoring and Review

- 12.1. The policies set out in this strategy reflect the current circumstances, issues and trends anticipated to be relevant to tree management to 2022. An early review may be considered if there are any changes to legislation or Council business which have implications for this strategy.
- 12.2. In response to a Tree Scrutiny Sub-committee held on the topic of tree management in 2016-2017, a number of action points were resolved by Cabinet on 6 June 2017. These points will all be covered in a new Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on the Council's website.
- 12.3. With regard to disseminating information more widely, as well as these new FAQs, we intend to add the following information to the website:
 - Monthly felling lists which give the location, species and removal reason.
 - We will continue to fix felling notices on landmark or prominent trees and where a set is to be removed and replaced during the following winter. These tree removals may also be subject to press releases or letters to immediately surrounding residents.
 - We are committed to planting at least 300 street trees across the borough every year. The planting season is from November to March and at the conclusion of every planting season in May we will post a list of all the trees planted, their location and species.
 - An annual summary of the tree removal (outside of woodlands and dense tree groups) and planting. In most years this will show that more trees have been felled than planted due to the removal of self-sets and thinned groups.

Appendix 1 - Street Tree Audit

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council currently manages 19,457 urban trees on an individual basis. These are individually managed trees in open spaces, road side verges and highly frequented areas such as shopping parades and church yards.

Urban Tree Population (as at Sept 2012)

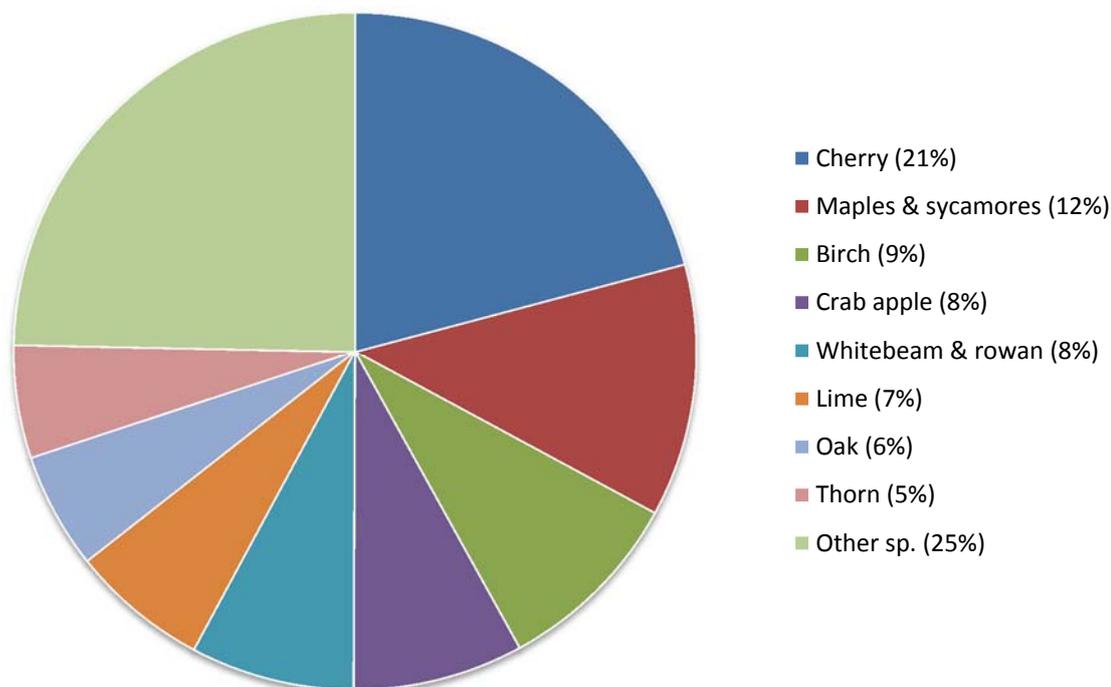


Figure 1

The most frequently found eight species of tree are shown in figure 1. Cherry trees are the most commonly found urban tree. Eight tree types make up 75% of the urban tree population.

In managing a tree population it is important to know what species make up a population and by how much. Occasionally, a tree disease or pest will spread wildly and kill or maim a particular tree population. This was last seen in the elm population which was infected and killed by Dutch elm disease during the late 1970's to mid 1980's. It is therefore good practice to ensure a range of tree types make up the majority of the tree population.

No one tree type makes up the majority of the tree population. Therefore the Council do not need to avoid planting any one particular tree type but to continue to plant a diverse range of tree species.

As well as knowing the types of tree it is important to know the age ranges of the trees. A living population needs to have a range of ages to ensure a continuity of tree cover. As old trees die or need to be removed, semi-mature and young trees need to be already growing to replace them. Figure 2 shows the age ranges for the current urban tree population.

Urban Tree Age Population Graph (as at Sept 2012)

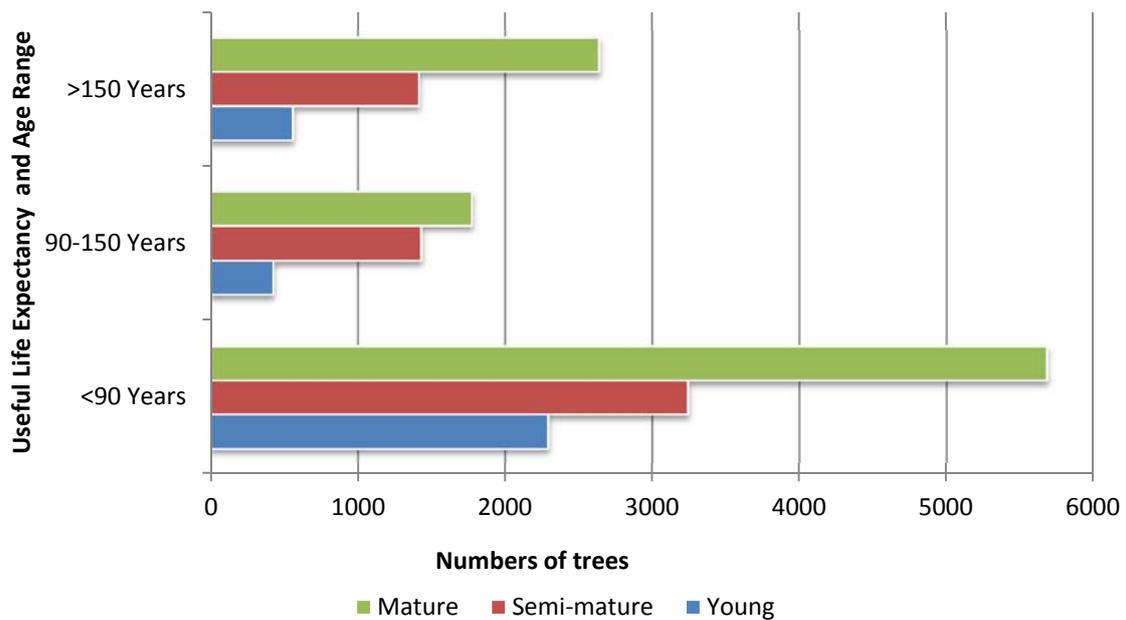


Figure 2

The tree types have been split into three different categories to indicate their average life expectancy. For example, oaks can live for a few hundred years and pears live for 50 years. Within each age range the trees have been categorized as young (established young tree to a decade old), semi-mature (from a decade old to final third of its projected life span), and mature (final third of its projected life span).

Most commonly the Borough has trees which have a useful life expectancy of less than 90 years (58%). These tend to be the small ornamentals such as cherries, crab apples, pears and thorns. They are most numerous as they can fit into small spaces and offer seasonal interest with flowers and fruits.

The remaining 42% of the tree population is made up of trees which have a longer life span, greater than 90 years. These tend to be larger crowned trees with fewer ornamental features.

Within each age range, the proportion of mature and semi-mature trees should be reasonably similar or with only slightly more of one category than another. The proportion of new trees to the other categories should be no less than 10% of the semi-mature and mature trees.

Sadly, trees have to be felled for a number of reasons, most commonly because they are in poor health or condition. In recent years there have been observations that some tree species are more frequently felled and that this may affect the tree population as a whole.

Table 1 shows the reasons for tree felling between October 2010 and September 2012:

Reason	Number of Trees
Dead or in fatal decline	235
Poor structure due to decay or growth habit	212
Replanting scheme	29
Windthrow	9
Insurance or subsidence related reason	7
Thinning a group to allow remaining trees more room	5
Inappropriate location	4
Grand Total	501

Table 3

Most trees were felled due to poor health or structural condition (89%). Very few trees (5%) were removed for reasons other than the health or condition of the tree. Small proportions (6%) were removed to facilitate planting schemes. This only occurs where the trees retention is not considered viable.

**Felled Tree Species
(October 2010 - September 2012)**

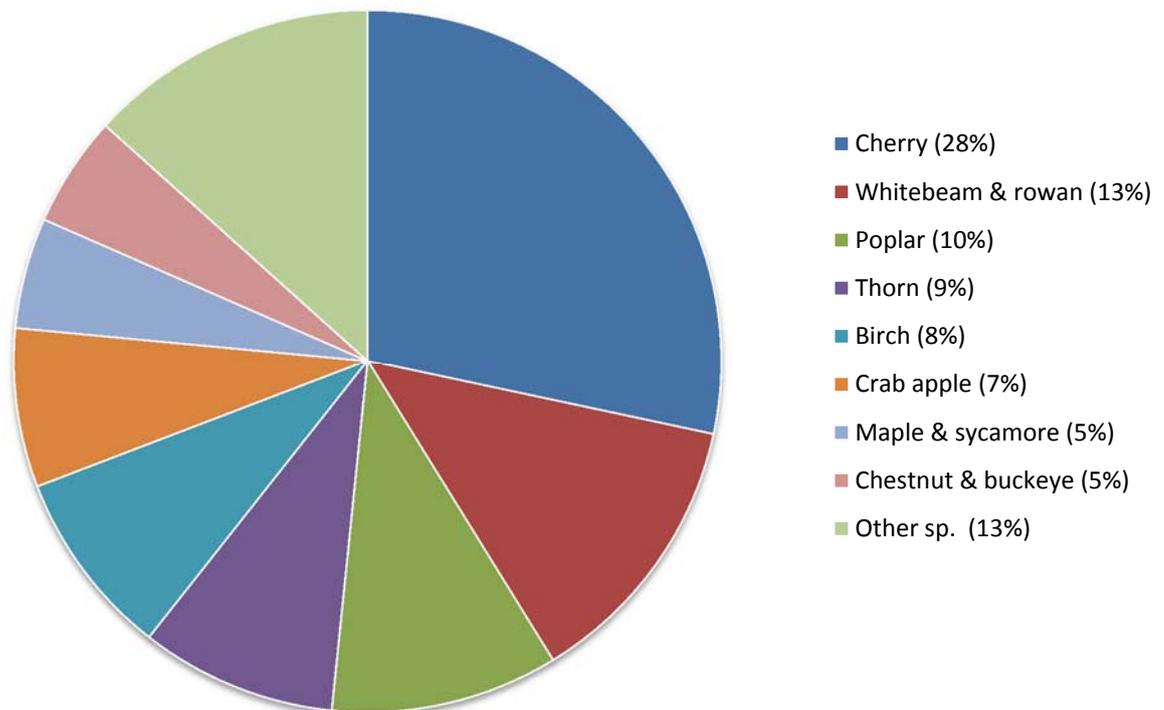


Figure 4

Of the most commonly felled types of tree (Figure 3), poplars and chestnuts and buckeyes are not found in the top eight most common tree types in the Borough (Figure 1). In recent year's horse chestnut have been greatly affected by bleeding canker, which can lead to structural weakness. Since 2009 a detailed survey of all Lombardy Poplars has been undertaken. It became apparent that normal techniques of tree inspection, such as Visual Tree Assessment, did not always highlight internal decay.

The most commonly felled tree types support the anecdotal observations of which species appear to be commonly failing in health. Some tree species which are known to prefer moist soils, such as birch, thorn and rowan are showing signs of stress. Stressed trees are more susceptible to pathogens and infections.

Appendix 2 - Subsidence Policy

Amenity Tree Valuation

Historically Tree Officers have made a judgment about the quality of a tree subject to any insurance claim. In recent times it has been that judgment, coupled often with the view of the structural engineer and the Insurance Officer which has decided whether or not to retain the tree pending further investigation.

It has become clear that whilst the overall judgment may not change, a clearer, more quantifiable method of reaching that decision needs to be agreed and adopted. There are many methods available of assessing a tree, and most of these are combined with a way of transferring the score into a financial amount that the tree is 'worth'. It was considered that this would not necessarily be helpful when dealing with our subsidence cases as, more often than not, the costs were not known at the outset, or would far outweigh the supposed value of the tree. It was felt that it would be more appropriate to assess the trees and use the score to categorise them into trees which we could remove early on in a claim, trees which would require a level of technical evidence to support the claim before we would remove them and trees which were felt to be valuable enough that the decision would be made by a higher body.

For a number of years, the Tree Officers have been using TEMPO (Tree Evaluation Method for Preservation Orders) which is a system for evaluating whether trees are suitable for placing tree preservation orders on them. The basis of which is looking at the condition of the tree, the safe life expectancy, the public visibility and any other factors such as historical importance.

It is a relatively transparent, simple system that seemed suitable for our subsidence purposes. It was also felt to be a consistent approach to use the same system for both our potential Tree Preservation Orders and our subsidence cases. The importance of the trees and their place in the landscape needs to be similarly appraised in both instances.

The TEMPO system was simplified in its points appraisal which meant that scoring anything less than 9 points would indicate a low quality tree and this could be removed, relatively early on in the claim, as long as the claim wasn't spurious. Trees which scored between 10 & 14 would require evidence to back up the claim, the detail of which would be agreed between the Tree Officers and the Insurance Officer. Trees scoring over 15 points would be trees that were deemed to be highly valuable and worthy of retention. Each case would have to be assessed on its own merits, but it is hoped that the decisions on these trees would be taken by a higher authority. This would take into account the financial implications of their retention and the amenity and landscape loss by their removal.

The system was trialed with ten trees and it was felt that the results did match the judgment that would have been made by the Tree Officer. Four of the ten trees would be those which were considered to be worthy of retention. This is an unusually high figure as the cases used were simply the more high profile ones that had been around for a few years. It is more likely that many more of our cases would involve trees that were not of such a high quality.

Appendix 3 – Useful Contacts

Hertfordshire County Council
Highway Tree Strategy and Guidance Document
www.hertsdirect.org.
Highway Fault reporting service

Arboricultural Association
The Malthouse, Stroud Green, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 3DL, UK
Tel 01242 522152 Email: admin@trees.org.uk
www.trees.org.uk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
Defra, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR
Tel 08459 33 55 77 Email defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

Forestry Commission GB
www.forestry.gov.uk

Royal Horticultural Society
80 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2PE
Tel 0845 062 1111 Email gardeningadvice@rhs.org.uk
www.rhs.org.uk

The Tree Council
71 Newcomen Street, London, SE1 1YT
Tel 020 7407 9992 Email info@treecouncil.org.uk
www.treecouncil.org.uk

Tree Advice Trust
Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH
Tel 09065 161147
www.treehelp.info

The Woodland Trust
Kempton Way, Grantham, NG31 6LL
Tel 01476 581111 Email enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk