

Appendix C:

Comments received from the public consultation and officer's response to the comments

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 1 - Active Tree Management?

Respondent comments:

Firstly, I must commend WHBC on producing a very well produced Strategy document. Well written with impressive detail for all readers. Concerns are the recurring problem on what defines a woodland or urban tree. When I was xxxxx on the WGC Society we used to have many conversations with xxxxxxxx on this issue. The concern was and still is how to treat the parkland trees within WGC. There currently does not seem to be a policy on these trees: trees are regarded as urban or woodland. A parkland tree is one similar to those found in Bushey Park, Richmond Park and the grounds of Hampton Court. The trees have had their crowns lifted and suckers removed either by deer or by the park maintenance. The result is a more open vista, enabling more easy mowing, the prevention of build up of rubbish under trees, and the possibility of bulb planting around tree bases. The approaches to the Garden City need to be treated in this way on a consistent basis. Valley Road is fine, but Stanborough Road and Stanborough Green are a mess. The trees looked after by Better are fine, those by WHBC are completely inconsistent with no sign of any strategy at all. First impressions of entering the town are spoilt by inconsistent policy Parkway is treated well but sometimes spoilt by late sucker removal.

Officer's response:

- 1) The trees across the Borough are managed primarily for health and safety reasons. In some case historic management such as pollarding will be undertaken to ensure trees are in good structural condition. Where trees are in good health and condition and there are no issues with sight lines they are allowed to grow to their natural form. The type of management requested is beyond health and safety works and would be an additional cost in resources. Currently there is no plan to manage trees in Welwyn Garden City differently from other trees in the Borough.***

Respondent comments:

Tree classifications - Urban trees include Plantations Valley Road Plantation is given as an example. It is an important evergreen noise barrier shielding homes on Handside from the A1(M). There is no evidence of it being inspected/ mitigation works implemented as it is progressively collapsing. It is noted in 5:10 of the Tree Strategy: 'All other woodland trees will be either subject to an approved management plan or left to grow unhindered. We rely on natural regeneration in all woodlands when felling is undertaken. If the expected regeneration is not adequate within ten years, we are obliged within the terms of the Woodland Improvement Grant to supplement with planting'. Sadly natural regeneration appears not to be occurring of the evergreen trees. There needs to be some form of planned replacement before the evergreen element completely collapses.

Officer's response:

- 2) ***This is a specific request for a specific site. The Tree Officers have been looking at work at Valley Road with a view to managing the existing trees and re-planting if necessary. The comment does not require an amendment to the Strategy.***

Respondent comments:

This seems to work well. If we have any problems with our trees, there is always a response.

Makes good sense

The policy fails to adequately cover the traditional practice of pollarding, which means active tree management is adversely changing some of the historic views, landscapes and vistas across the Borough.

Officer's response:

- 3) ***Where historic management such as pollarding has occurred the past, this will be continued. However, additional works over and above health safety works are not undertaken.***

Respondent comments:

The quarry plan on the BAe site should be fiercely opposed

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 2 - Urban Tree Management?

Respondent comments:

It is noted in paragraph 6.1 of the Tree Strategy: 'The council will not carry out tree works to council trees or Hertfordshire Highway trees for the following reasons: 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'. However some trees benefit from having lower branches removed. Examples include: • The lime tree in The Links - it needs trimming for vehicular sightline safety. It also needs trimming to encourage the previous bulb planting that was undertaken by local schoolchildren. The overgrown canopy has been used by rough sleepers/ for parties judging by the spirits bottles dumped within it. This is a form of wildlife which is not appreciated by residents. • The policy for 'Parkland Trees' trees would benefit from better definition e.g. along the south-western entrance to Welwyn Garden City at Stanborough Road and Stanborough Green. These have become straggly at their bases and do not present a good image for that significant entrance to the town. [Society Member xxxxx has responded more fully on 'Parkland Trees' and we support his detailed comments]. These are two examples. If the Council will not undertake the works then it should allow volunteer working parties to do them for the good of the town.

Officer's response:

4) See response 1

Respondent comments:

See question 5 answers on Policy 1. The urban trees that are not parkland trees are well maintained and the policy for their management clearly explained. I would like to see a separate Policy on Parkland Tree Management. This would need to have a clear definition of what that entails and those areas of WGC to which the policy applies. Such a policy would make it clear to the contractors that carry out the maintenance as to how the various areas of the town are to be treated.

Officer's response:

5) See response 1

Respondent comments:

It seems to be a fair system.

Makes good sense

The management of particularly mature trees seems less than ideal, many species require cutting back to remain in good health and this needs to be done before signs of disease and decay appear. A more 'pro-active' management strategy for some of the mature trees in the council's care would be better for residents and the trees.

Officer's response:

6) *It is difficult with most trees to pre-empt any disease or decay if they look in good health and condition. If works are required it is for health and safety reasons. It should be noted that some decayed wood, if safe to do so, can be left as it provides additional habitat.*

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 3 - Tree Planting?

Respondent comments:

It is noted in paragraph 7.1 of the Tree Strategy: 'Felled verge trees will be replaced on a one-for-one basis. The replacement may not occur in the following tree planting season if the schedule is already full. In these instances, the location is noted for the following year'. It would appear that this is not the case, As an example there are trees along Elmwood that have not been replaced. It is noted in paragraph 7:10 of the Tree Strategy: 'Trees removed from tree belts or groups of trees will only be replaced when the barrier effect has been compromised'. -----

----- It is noted in paragraph 7.4 of the Tree Strategy: 'Urban planting will seek

to respect the original layout of concerts of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield New Town'. It is not clear what a 'concert' is within this context?

Officer's response:

7) *Spelling mistake noted and changed. The issue relates to a specific road. Tree planting is undertaken where possible although in some instance is not possible to plant where trees have been removed. Location noted and passed to Tree Officers.*

Respondent comments:

Planting very commendable but could find no mention of commitment to watering newly planted trees and I know the council does water them. Should be part of policy.

Officer's response:

8) *Noted and will amend the Strategy to reflect the watering that is undertaken.*

Respondent comments:

Good to have new trees planted but sometimes they are planted where there are many trees already, and it is not appropriate.

Officer's response:

9) *The comment is general so difficult to respond.*

Respondent comments:

The trees near the town centre are gorgeous when in bloom. Adding more decorative trees would be encouraged

Makes good sense.

Yes - in wetter areas and along river valleys can you think about planting the rare Black Poplar (Populus nigra) and in woods the rare Wild Service Tree (Sorbus torminalis).

Officer's response:

10) *Noted.*

Respondent comments:

I would prefer more of a focus on native trees, especially those with the characteristics of supporting more diverse ecosystems. A further push to plant community orchards should be included.

Officer's response:

11) Native trees are planted where appropriate. We have planted some community orchards across the Borough and will continue to look for areas that could support more trees/orchards.

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 4 - Pets and Diseases?

Respondent comments:

It was a surprise to read in 8.11 that: 'The council is being strongly advised by the Forestry Commission to reduce the numbers of muntjac within Sherrardspark Wood'. The deer are appreciated by residents so this should be consulted. It is assumed that the reference in the reply document should be to 'Pests' and not Pets.

Officer's response:

12) Spelling mistake noted and changed. Muntjac deer cause significant damage in the wood, and we are being encouraged by the Forestry Commission and Natural England to control them.

Respondent comments:

Sounds sensible.

Makes sense

Surprised little apparent attention is given to OPM, this might be a significant health hazard in coming years and yet its management is not covered in the summary document.

Officer's response:

13) The management of OPM is covered in the strategy. It is an evolving issue in which the Tree Officers are monitoring and keeping up to date with the guidance from the Forestry Commission.

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 5 - Protecting Tree through the Planning System?

Respondent comments:

Evergreens – as previously discussed Welwyn Garden City was blessed with many evergreen trees in private residences. These give structure to the town over the bleak winter months. Sadly many have felled and not replaced. The Council would benefit from including reference to a mitigation plan in their Tree Strategy.

Officer's response:

14) Where appropriate the use of evergreen trees will be recommended within proposed development. An additional policy on this would not be appropriate.

Respondent comments:

Good, developers should not be allowed to cut down trees needlessly.

Makes sense.

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 6 - Woodland Management?

Respondent comments:

No comment.

Where this policy applies needs to be clarified. See answers to questions 5 and 6.

It is good to see the management of the woods, and well done to all the volunteer woodwardens who help.

Makes sense but more needs to be done to ensure people follow the rules i.e. anti social behaviour by cyclists in our woods

I remain unconvinced sufficient resource is available to adequately manage all the WHBC controlled woodlands. Constraints on resource need addressing.

Officer's response:

15) There is a finite amount of resources within all council services. However, officers have been proactive in procuring grants for woodland management and Tree Planting.

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 7 - Community Engagement?

Respondent comments:

It is noted in paragraph 11.3 of the proposed Tree Strategy: 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. On a personal note, I am a Tree Warden but I do not feel considered as 'eyes and ears'. As noted in previous correspondence I feel that the Council could make more effective use of this volunteer resource.

Officer's response:

16) The Tree Officers manage the Tree Wardens. They organise regular meetings and training for Tree Wardens. Comment is noted.

Respondent comments:

Great!

Makes sense

I would like to see wider use of the Borough's woodland for nature-based teaching and learning.

Do you have any comments regarding Policy 8 - Green Infrastructure?

Respondent comments:

It is noted in paragraph 13.2 of the proposed Tree Strategy: 'We are committed to planting at least 250 street trees across the Borough every year'. 250 trees sounds a very low figure across the Borough – is this benchmarkable with other Boroughs that have a Garden City? It is assumed that the reference in the reply document should be to Infrastructure and not 'Infrasture'.

Officer's response:

17) This has been amended to 300 trees. Spelling mistake noted and changed.

Respondent comments:

Any sustainability is good

Great!

Makes sense

I don't see much evidence of the conservation and promotion of green infrastructure across the Borough, there appears to have been a fall in interest after the 2000's and I am unclear how the borough is working to enhance this

A lot of Green infrastructure is dealt with via planning.

Do you have any general comments about the Strategy?

Respondent comments:

General comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the tree strategy. It is a comprehensive document which is double the size of the one from the comparable London Borough of Richmond. 17 | APPENDIX 4: TYPES OF PRUNING - It is positive to note that the Council will not be stripping the leaves off healthy trees during the growing season in future. It would be nice to have a response to the comments. Alternatively the Council could write an article for the Welwyn Garden City Society magazine outlining the conflicting pressures required to maintain a Garden City.

Delighted to see it. Just hope there will be enough staff and money to carry it through

I am not an expert but it sounds very thorough and well-thought out.

Why are beautiful healthy trees removed without any reason that is communicated to locals (*specific location provided*)? could there be a notice shared with locals on the stumps if they are removed for a good reason?

Officer's response:

18) Noted. A tree felling list is put on our website. When large scale felling occurs it notices are put up and Ward councillors notified.

Respondent comments:

It's good to see this activity happening but much more needs to be done to protect our woodlands and open spaces from misuse

Given the resource constraints the strategy is probably as far as it is possible to go, but given the ambitious climate change targets the council has in place it seems a missed opportunity to leverage additional resource to be able to help deliver that through a more ambitious strategy.

Officer's response:

Noted