



# Tree Strategy

2021-2031

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# TREE STRATEGY 2021 – 2031

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### Scope of the Strategy

The aim of this tree strategy is to assist and inform residents, Council officers and Councilors of the council's responsibilities and strategy regarding its own tree stock. This strategy is strongly linked to the **Council's Plan, Net Zero 2030 commitment** and the **Council's Local Plan** in promoting a *cleaner, greener, eco-friendly environment*.

### Benefits of having a Tree Strategy

The value of trees cannot be overemphasised. They provide numerous environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits, which need to be strongly considered before any tree works are arranged. These benefits include:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduces the urban heat island effect</li><li>• Improves carbon sequestration</li><li>• Trapping dust and particulate matter producing clearer air</li><li>• Produces oxygen</li><li>• Alleviates flooding</li><li>• Provides vital habitat for huge range of biodiversity</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improves the aesthetics</li><li>• Acts as landmarks</li><li>• Screens unsightly views</li><li>• Provides shade, reducing temperatures and improving comfort levels</li><li>• Reduces stress and illnesses by providing psychological relief</li><li>• Encourages physical recreation</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cultural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides historical continuity</li><li>• Contributes to the local character of an area</li><li>• Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats</li><li>• Contributes to the landscape character of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can improve property values</li><li>• Enhance spaces, which provide attractive environments for investments</li><li>• Reduces costs for heating and cooling systems in buildings</li><li>• Provides business and employment opportunities in the arboriculture and wood fuel industry</li></ul>

The importance of providing open spaces and trees to help improve mental and physical health was highlighted in 2020 with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the introduction of national lockdowns. These sites become increasingly popular as residents explored their local woods and parks. Forestry England, the country's largest land manager, recorded an increase in 77million (or 35%) visits in 2020 compared to the previous year.

### [Queen's Green Canopy](#)

Sevenoaks District Council is calling on everyone in the district, from residents to businesses, town and parish councils, landowners, schools, voluntary and community groups to help support the Queen's Green Canopy unique tree planting initiative to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. This is a great opportunity not only to grow trees, but also to come together as a community and contribute to reduce our impact on climate change and protect the environment in our district for generations to come.

Sevenoaks District Council has developed an action plan, which details the projects we will undertake as a Council and how we can encourage partners and communities to be involved too. At present, the Council has identified and confirmed two Council-owned sites in Sevenoaks and Swanley for tree planting. However, we will be working with partner organisations to ensure from October 2021, they 'pin' their jubilee tree on the interactive map provided at the official website; <https://queensgreencanopy.org/map-education-hub/>

### [Trees in Sevenoaks](#)

There is a strong cultural and historic link to trees within the district; the council's own logo is of the seven Oak trees, linked with the towns name.

There are over 7,000 hectares (ha) of woodland across Sevenoaks District. This equates to over 19% of the district being covered by woodland (11% ancient woodland), which is considerably higher than the overall English average. Of this Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for 487ha of woodland.

Approximately 287ha is common land, and 200ha is council owned, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife sites. In an average mature woodland, you could find between 200-400+ trees per ha. This means that within woodlands that Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for, there could be in excess of **98,000 trees**.

The council also maintain the responsibility of approximately 30ha of residential housing estate grounds, 20ha of open spaces, closed churchyards and parks and 10 ha of car parks across the district.

Our tree management work is important because under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984, the Council has a Duty of Care to ensure it acts as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This requires the Council to ensure they avoid acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk or harm to persons or property.

This is reinforced by Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Section 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which state that employers are responsible for making suitable and sufficient assessment of risks posed to their employees and persons not in their employment.

## Council Managed sites in Sevenoaks

Site	Size	Designations	Type	Description
Farningham Woods, Farningham	78ha	SSSI, LWS, LNR, AW	Countryside Site	Part owned by Farningham Parish Council, but managed in it's entirety by the District Council's Countryside team in accordance with an approved Forestry Commission Woodland Management Plan. Predominately consists of Sweet Chestnut coppice woodland, but with areas of grassland meadow, heathland and a pond.
Shoreham Woods, Shoreham	99ha	LWS, PAWs	Countryside Site	A complex of 5 separate high canopy woodlands. Managed in accordance with an approved Forestry Commission Woodland Management Plan with the primary aim to provide opportunity for visitors to enjoy and benefit from nature, whilst at the same time maintaining, restoring and enhancing the ancient woodland for biodiversity and so the woods are sustainable and resilient for the future.
Oxenhill Woods, Kemsing	24ha	LWS	Countryside Site	Former Agricultural land that is now a mix of early successional woodland and scrub with important grassland habitats. Managed in accordance with a Woodland Management Plan. The large population of Ash ( <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ) trees are being managed due to Ash Dieback.
Riverside/Town Fields, Edenbridge	4ha	LWS	Countryside Site	A flood meadow along the River Eden. The meadow is allowed to grow for biodiversity with a network of footpaths mown throughout. Annual hay cut conducted at the end of the year.
Hollybush Recreation, Sevenoaks	7.4ha		Park/Recreation	Situated near Sevenoaks Town. Consists of 3 main fields used for amenity, a playground, café, tennis courts, all weather hockey pitch and indoor and outdoor bowls. A small woodland and a good population of trees throughout.
Bradbourne Lakes, Sevenoaks	3ha	Locally Listed Asset: Public Garden	Park	Located in North Sevenoaks. Historic gardens with 5 ornamental lakes and waterfalls. A large tree population with notable veteran specimens
Bartholomew Park, Swanley	0.5ha		Park	A small site in the heart of Swanley. A short footpath around an amenity area surrounded by mature trees and shrubs.

Site	Size	Designations	Type	Description
Mill Pond, Sevenoaks	0.1ha	Locally Listed Asset.	Pond	Small pond in the north of Sevenoaks, designated a main river with a small number of individual trees.
Hosey Common, Westerham	61.61ha	Registered Common Land, part SSSI and LWS	Common Land	Owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consist primarily of semi-natural mixed broadleaf woodland with roads dissecting the site into 5 separate woodlands.
Crockhamhill Common, Westerham	85ha	Registered Common Land and LWS	Common Land	Owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mosaic of semi natural woodland habitats dissected in two by the B2026.
Farley Common, Westerham	5ha	Registered Common Land and part LWS	Common Land	Owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a semi natural woodland and area of acidic grassland. Bisected by the Farley Lane.
Seal Chart Common, Seal (Including St Lawrence Sand Pit)	71ha	Registered Common Land and part SSSI and AW	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural broadleaf woodland, with areas of acidic grassland and heathland. Seal Chart is bisected by the A25 Maidstone Road.
Bitchet Common, Seal	20.53ha	Registered Common Land and SSSI	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland, with areas of heathland. It is bisected by a unnamed road.
Fawke Common, Seal	25ha	Registered Common Land and SSSI	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland. It is split into 4 woods by a number of roads.
Godden Green Common, Seal	2.5ha	Registered Common Land	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. Consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland and grassland surrounded by road and residential property.
Sevenoaks Weald Common, Weald	5.24ha	Registered Common Land	Common Land	Owned by the Knole Estate and managed by the Council through the Scheme of Regulations 1925. The village green of the Common

Site	Size	Designations	Type	Description
				is managed by Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council. The remaining common consists of a mixed semi-natural woodland surrounded by rural roads and residential property.
St John's Dunton Green	0.4ha		Closed Churchyard	Churchyards that have been closed by Order in Council and maintenance responsibilities have been passed on to the District Council through section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Church building has been converted into a vets.
St Mary's Riverhead	0.6ha		Closed Churchyard	Churchyards that have been closed by Order in Council and maintenance responsibilities have been passed on to the District Council through section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Surrounded by residential properties and the A25.
St Mary's Woodlands	0.1ha		Closed Churchyard	Churchyards that have been closed by Order in Council and maintenance responsibilities have been passed on to the District Council through section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Situated in a small village between Kemsing and West Kingsdown.

#### Playground

The District Council own and manages 9 playgrounds across the district, which vary in size and character. All bar one has trees located close to or in the playground. Informal visual checks on the trees are part of the operational playground inspection. List of locations

Cherry Avenue playground - Cherry Avenue, Swanley

Hilda May playground - Hilda May Avenue, Swanley

Russett Way Slide - Russett Way, Swanley

Oliver Crescent playground - Oliver Crescent, Farningham

Hollybush playground - Hollybush Recreation ground, Sevenoaks

Lower Watercress Drive playground - Watercress, Drive, Sevenoaks

Upper Watercress Drive kick wall - Watercress Drive, Sevenoaks

Park Avenue playground, Park Avenue, Edenbridge

The Pen MUGA - Field Drive, Edenbridge

\* Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Ancient Woodland (AW), Re-Planted Ancient Woodland (PAWs)

#### Objectives

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



## Aims

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

## Review

This strategy will be monitored to gauge its success upon implementation and reviewed every 5 years to ensure it is up to date with current best practice, legislation and still in line with Council objectives.

## Tree Description

The surveying of all trees under the Council's control is being currently undertaken across the district. This is a time consuming exercise as, with the exception of woods and other semi-natural sites, each tree has to be inspected and its details recorded. Woods and semi-natural sites are recorded as an area. Information on these sites relates to trees only and do not consider grass, low scrub or water courses.

## Strategy

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

## General

### Tree Contractors

The Council will employ specialist, qualified arboricultural contractors to undertake tree works. These contractors will operate within the conditions and specifications contained in the Council's Contract Standing Orders. All tree works will be completed under the general direction and supervision of a suitably positioned Council Officer and be in line with current arboriculture best practice (BS3998:2010).

### Prioritising Tree Works

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

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

### Trees and the Law

Statutory laws dictate how the Council must manage trees that are within areas of its responsibility. These laws can be summarised as follows:

- **Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984** place a Duty of Care onto all tree owners to ensure that they act as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This requires the Council to ensure they avoid acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk or harm to persons or property.
- **Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1974 and Section 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**, which state that employers are responsible for ensuring risk assessments are undertaken of its tree stock.
- **The Town and Country Planning Act 1990** places a duty upon the council to assess the impact of tree loss within the district and where tree removal

is likely to have a significant impact upon local and wider landscapes trees are to be protected through Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

- **The Highway Act 1980** empowers the Council under its Agency Agreement with the County Council to require landowners to deal with dangerous trees threatening the safety of users of the public highway.
- **The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976** gives powers to the Council to require landowners to render safe dangerous trees threatening persons or property on adjacent land.
- **High Hedges (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Part 8)** empowers the Council to require landowners to cut and maintain high, evergreen hedges where valid complaints from neighbouring residents are received.
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)** dictates how trees should be managed to protect wildlife and habitat species.

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

#### [Information and Consultation to Residents](#)

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

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

#### [Allegations of tree related damage or injury](#)

Where it is alleged that a Council tree is implicated in damage to property, with or without an accompanying claim for compensation, the Council will investigate the allegation and, if necessary, ask the property owner or their insurer for evidence in support of their claim. Subject to the circumstances and strength of evidence, the Council/its insurers may employ its own/external expertise to assess the extent and cause of the damage and collect evidence.

The Council may decide at this point to take non-prejudicial action to reduce the risk of further damage and/or invite the property owner to substantiate any losses for consideration by the Council/ its insurers. The Council/it's insurers will refute any claim if the evidence produced fails to substantiate the allegation.

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

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

#### [Limited or seasonal nuisance](#)

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

The Council does not consider these nuisances to be sufficiently serious and will only prioritise these in special circumstances. Where special circumstances have been found, work to the tree will be kept to a minimum so to preserve the trees aesthetics and its associated benefits to the surrounding community.

#### [Privately owned trees](#)

The Council will not generally supply detailed advice or guidance on the maintenance or management of private trees. Officers may give some general verbal guidance or supply written guidance through the planning system where trees are protected or of some public value. The Council will not undertake works to privately owned trees. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. where there is an immediate or obvious risk of danger and the tree's owner cannot be traced or is not in a position to organise tree works, the Council may use its tree contractor to rectify the situation and recover any costs from the tree owner subsequently. Alternatively, contact Kent County Council to progress should the situation involve issues to the public highway.

#### [Sponsored tree works](#)

Third parties will be allowed to sponsor the costs of tree works in appropriate circumstances. Offers of sponsorship usually relate to tree planting. In relation to sponsoring a tree to be planted, the provision of plaques etc. will only be permitted at the Councils discretion on certain sites.

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

### [Closed circuit television \(CCTV\)](#)

The increased use of CCTV for surveillance purposes has led to annual requests for pruning where tree foliage obstructs the view of cameras. It is hoped that those responsible for siting such cameras will take account of the presence of trees and their effect on camera vision to minimise problems. However, some conflict is inevitable. The Council will carry out the pruning of trees to maintain and improve the vision of CCTV cameras in liaison with the CCTV operatives. This pruning will generally aim to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the trees. Excessive pruning or tree removal shall only be considered where serious circumstances justify such action.

### [Criminal damage](#)

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

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

- The cost of all corrective, repair and reinstatement works.
- The cost of any replacement planting.
- The estimated loss of any amenity value.

### [Fly-posting](#)

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

### [Age class and monocultures](#)

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

The council will manage its trees to ensure that there is an uneven age structure, i.e. A mixture of young, semi-mature, mature and over-mature trees relevant to the nature of the site and safety considerations. Similarly, a range of tree species shall be present in any given area and monocultures avoided. This strategy above must not conflict with features such as tree avenues where uniform rows of trees of a similar age and the same species are needed for the desired effect. Different

avenues can, however, be at different ages and species to provide the required diversity.

### [Wildlife](#)

All proposed arboricultural works will take account of their effect on the local flora and fauna. Wildlife and their habitats are protected statutorily by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000. This means that many tree work operations, especially where the works are undertaken at semi-natural sites and to hedgerows, would need to be undertaken during the appropriate season. There are exemptions, however, where for instance the works have health and safety implications.

All Council appointed contractors are aware of their legal responsibilities when it comes to protecting wildlife and ensure all precautions are taken to avoid harm. This is particularly important for ensuring no active bird nests are disturbed and all potential bat habitats are inspected before work commences.

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

### [Tree pests and Diseases including Ash Dieback](#)

Over the last few decades the UK has experienced increasing threats to tree health 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 tree disease and pathogen outbreaks, most notably Ash Die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Horse Chestnut bacterial canker (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *aesculi*), Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*), with its associated threat to human health; and Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*), which impacts the growth and health of Sweet Chestnut trees and was first recorded at Farningham Woods. 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-long-term, but new pests, diseases and pathogens are appearing. It is therefore vital that the Council remains abreast of developments and is able to adapt strategically to new challenges.

Ash Die-back poses one of the biggest threats to one of our commonest trees and poses a health and safety risk when heavily infected close to human occupation. The Council will follow advice and work in partnership with the Forestry Commission and Forest Research to take the following actions:

Continuing to monitor the condition of its Ash stock in both woodlands and on housing estate lands.

Due to how the disease affects the structural integrity of the wood, action to make areas safe are accelerated and trees which might look healthy will be removed due to the underlying weakened wood.

Where Ash trees are situated away from property and human occupation, these will be left to allow for natural genetic resistance to establish and for habitat value.

Trees in woodlands - These trees are more likely to become infected as there is a higher concentration of fungal spores. Mature trees next to paths, roads and property will be prioritised for surveys and remedial action.

Parks and Open Spaces - Leaves from parks and open spaces that are collected are composted at a facility in Kent. This reduces the amount of spores available to infect the tree and can help its survival against the disease. We will inspect any trees that are suspected of being infected and review this arrangement depending on the situation on a case by case basis.

### Common Ivy

Common Ivy is an indigenous evergreen climbing plant which, in its natural environment, uses trees as a means of support to gain increased exposure to light and air. Ivy provides cover and food for wildlife and often contributes to the character of woodlands and similar habitats. It is not a parasite and healthy trees will usually tolerate and control its spread. It is generally only when an ageing tree starts to decline, i.e. its vigour decreases and its canopy thins, that Ivy may take advantage of the situation by growing into its crown and in some circumstances, engulf the whole tree and hasten its demise. This is a natural process but it is often perceived that the Ivy is responsible for strangling and killing healthy trees. General observations over the past few years support the perception of some that the presence and growth of Ivy is on the increase but as far as is known, no scientific research has been carried out to support this perception. The control of Ivy in woodlands and commons by cutting and killing would prove an expensive and probably ill-founded conservation exercise.

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

### Trees and Development

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

- All trees identified for retention on development sites shall be properly surveyed and protected in accordance with British Standard BS5837:2012:
  - Building in Relation to Construction - Recommendations.
- The Council, through its Planning Services, shall seek agreement with the developers under Section 106 Agreements to secure, where appropriate, provision for new tree planting or works to maintain or conserve important trees and other arboricultural features.

- Where there is no alternative but to remove trees on land managed by the Council, the developer will be required to replace two trees for each one lost.
- This strategy encourages all developers to plant the right type of trees, in the right location to ensure trees have the best opportunity to thrive and survive in that habitat.

Trees are legally protected in three ways:

- Through part 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended in the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation)(England) Regulations 2012 by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). These TPO's are administered by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and prohibit tree owners from felling, topping, lopping, uprooting, willful damage, willful destruction without written consent from the LPA. Enquiries about existing TPOs or if you wish to submit a request for a new TPO, please contact [trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk)
- Where a tree is situated within a designated Conservation Area. Under section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 any tree works within a Conservation Area require 6 weeks' written notice to be given to the LPA. If you need to enquire about trees within a Conservation Area please contact [trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:trees@sevenoaks.gov.uk)
- Through a Forestry Felling Licence. Under the Forestry Act 1967 any felling of living trees will require a Felling Licence, unless an exemption applies. These licences are administered and enforced by the Forestry Commission. For a full list of exemptions and for help understanding about felling licences, please visit the Forestry Commission website.

### [Site Specific](#)

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

#### [Recreation Grounds](#)

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

Where space permits, trees will generally be allowed to grow naturally with minimum maintenance but some features will require periodic maintenance. Additional inspections and maintenance will be needed for trees near play areas. Provision will be made for the gradual replacement of older trees to ensure the presence of mature trees in the future.



### Housing Estates

Most trees in modern housing estates are planted informally on grass amenity areas. Older estates may have both large and small trees on highway verges with only a few trees on amenity land. The trees will generally be managed as for trees in parks including additional maintenance where they are near buildings or play areas.

### Highway Trees

The management of highway trees is the responsibility of Kent County Council. We believe that these should be maintained on safety and the provision of amenity grounds. Trees may also perform other secondary functions of varying importance including the reduction of noise and air pollution, traffic calming, physical barriers, screening, shade and shelter.

The need for highway trees to be maintained in a safe condition is very important.

### Semi-Natural Sites

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

### Miscellaneous Sites

These include trees in car parks, around public buildings and at allotment sites. Trees in car parks and around public buildings need to be in a safe and healthy condition and maintained similarly to trees alongside highways or near play areas.

## Tree Specific

### Tree Inspections

The Council will undertake periodic inspections of all trees and woodlands under its control. These inspections shall be carried out between one and five year intervals subject to available resources, location, age and condition of the trees but may be shorter or longer in some circumstances. Inspection intervals will, however, inevitably depend on available resources. A record of each inspection will be kept on the Council's GIS system and Action Manager (TAM) management database including details of any action required and its works priority rating. (Also see Tree Site Zoning)

Tree inspections will consist of 3 levels:

- Level 1 - an informal, visual, walk-over survey. This is to be carried out by a member of staff or contractor with a basic understanding of trees. Due to their site knowledge and experience they will be able to notice common

defects and abnormal growth in trees and will report their concerns to more experienced personnel.

- Level 2 - Formal inspections. A competent officer or contractor for the sole purpose of performing an inspection. These inspections will be recorded and be aided by the use of probes, nylon-faced mallet and binoculars. Resulting recommendations may include the use of a Detailed Inspection to assess the extent of decay.
- Level 3 - Detailed Inspection. Required to provide assessment of decay or tree stability by using specialised equipment e.g. Resistograph or PiCUS. This level of inspection will be reserved for high value trees within high risk areas. Due to the financial costs of instructing qualified contractors to undertake these detailed inspections, it would be disproportionate to apply these inspections to all trees due the lack of benefit in overall risk reduction.

Qualifications and training of the surveyors for the different levels are:

- Level 1 - Informal Inspections: LANTRA Basic Tree Inspection certificate.
- Level 2 - Formal Inspections: Minimum of a Level 3 in Arboriculture qualification and/or a LANTRA Basic Tree Inspection certificate.
- Level 3 - Detailed Inspection: Minimum of a Level 6/BSc/Professional Diploma in Arboriculture and a LANTRA Professional Tree Inspection (PTI) certificate. Any external contractor or consultant that makes recommendations must hold a valid Professional Indemnity Insurance

It is important that appropriately qualified individuals undertake these inspections so to reduce the risk of misidentifying a potential hazard and compromising Health and Safety and also unnecessarily condemning a tree.

### [Tree Felling & Removal](#)

Trees will only be felled where a qualified arborist has concluded one or more of the following circumstances:

- The tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous, and its removal is the safest or the most prudent course of action.
- The tree is causing, or there is a significant risk of it causing, unacceptable damage to the surrounding area or an adjacent structure. Substantial evidence should be supplied to support any proposed removal.
- In some circumstances trees may be felled in conjunction with a tree replacement scheme.
- As part of good woodland management, for example of a thinning exercise to improve the growth of other adjacent trees or coppicing.
- Where the tree occupies the space required for an approved structure or construction and there is no satisfactory alternative to felling.
- There may occasionally be special or exceptional circumstances that warrant the removal of a tree.

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

### [Tree Pruning](#)

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

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

### [Tree Replacement – Plant 2 tree for every one removed](#)

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

Tree planting will be the prime form of replacing trees in both formal and informal tree-scapes including parks and playing fields, highway verges, churchyards, and housing estates. New tree planting may be necessary on sites which are being improved, developed or adopted by the Council. Where tree planting is being considered, factors such as the aims and purpose of the planting, timescale and scope, tree species, size and siting, and need for protection, aftercare and long-term maintenance implications must all be considered. To maintain a healthy, resilient tree stock, Sevenoaks District Council will aspire to plant 2 trees for every tree removed.

Where the nature of the planting site allows, indigenous plant species and their varieties will generally take preference over exotic species. Great Britain does, however, have a rich and diverse population of exotic species and these will often prove more suitable for specific sites especially where size, habitat and ornamental value are prime considerations.

All tree planting will conform to BS8545:2014 and be in line with 'The Right Tree for the Right Place'.

Sites where natural regeneration is deemed appropriate, such as Council owned woodland sites, will be managed to encourage such regeneration by selective felling, thinning and protection as required.

All opportunities to plant the Right Tree for the Right Location will be taken to help the Council reach its Carbon Net Zero goal of 2030 in line the Council's

‘Making the Best Use of Green Space’ objective. Preserving the Council’s trees and planting where appropriate make an important contribution in absorbing Carbon, providing cleaner air to our residents, essential habitats for wildlife and reducing the risk of flooding.

## Risk Management

### Tree Risk

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has described the general level of risk as “broadly acceptable” within the Tolerability of Risk Framework. Risks falling in this region are generally regarded as insignificant and adequately controlled. The HSE would not usually require further action to reduce risks unless reasonably practicable measures are available. The levels of risk characterising this region are comparable to those that people regard as insignificant or trivial in their daily lives.

The risk of death caused by a falling tree or part of the tree is 1 in 10million per annum and the average number of Accidents and Emergency admissions per year due to tree related incidents is 55<sup>1</sup>. To put this into contexts, there are 2.9million leisure related A&E cases per year; even wheelie bins are reported to cause more admissions (2200) to A&E.

Despite the low levels of risk, tree failures resulting in death or serious injury often make headline news. As such the public perception of risk from trees is high. The cost of defending against claims can be high and there are pressures to carry out unnecessary tree work. It is important to ensure that work is not unnecessarily undertaken which will reduce the tree related benefits and put pressure on the council’s limited budgets.

Sevenoaks District Council recognise that the risk from falling trees is low, however as a large public landowner, it has a legal and moral responsibility to visitors, residents and the general public in general to ensure that risks are ‘as low as reasonably practicable’.

### Risk Management – Scope and Objectives

This strategy covers the management of the risk from trees only on land owned by, or under the responsibility of Sevenoaks District Council. It does not provide guidance on the management of private trees or trees under responsibility of another authority.

The objectives of a tree risk strategy must strike a balance between the level of risk, the benefits and the resources available. This tree risk strategy has the following objectives:

- To identify and control risks
- To comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements

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<sup>1</sup> National Tree Safety Group (2011) Common Sense Risk Management for trees

- To assure the public that the trees on public land are appropriately managed

In order to ensure objectives are being met, the risk strategy should be reviewed annually. Any weaknesses should be highlighted to inform where additional resources are necessary.

Tree Site Zoning

Due to the very large tree population (circa 100,000) under the council’s responsibility and the resources available, it is unrealistic to inspect all trees on an annual basis. Therefore, Sevenoaks District Council will prioritise its resources to trees located in high risk areas.

In order to establish which trees are to be prioritised, Sevenoaks District Council landholdings will be divided into three risk zones, which reflects how the area is used and how frequently it is occupied.

The frequency of inspections is shown in the summary below. The ideal situation would be to inspect the trees with leaves on and then the leaves off in alternate surveys. This would enable the inspector to note physiological issues with the tree e.g. chlorosis or die back in the summer while allow a clear view of the structural branches and fungal fruiting bodies in the autumn/winter. Undertaking inspections every 18 months or 30 months would enable this strategy. Special attention will be paid to mature/over mature trees as these present a larger risk than younger trees. Young trees will still be looked at for opportunities to undertake formative pruning, which will the tree to grow with less potential issues.

Risk Zone	Site Characteristics	Frequency of Inspections	Level of Inspections
<b>High</b>	Frequently occupied. Within falling distance of buildings, major roads, railways, playgrounds, and car parks.	Every 18months and reactively after extreme weather events (F9 or above)	Routine Level 2 inspection.
<b>Medium</b>	Adjacent to footpaths in parks, cemeteries and woodlands. Where trees are in falling distance of gardens. Where occupation is influenced by weather (amenity open spaces away from footpaths).	Every 30 months (2.5years)	Level 1 – Informal inspection.  Level 2 – Formal inspection once every 5 years.

Risk Zone	Site Characteristics	Frequency of Inspections	Level of Inspections
Low	Areas with restricted public access and no property of value.	Every 5 years	Level 1 – Informal inspections

These inspections will need to be recorded and retained as evidence as it is the tree owner’s responsibility to provide proof should an incident accident occur. Records will be digitalised and mapped.

It is not practical to undertake a full report on all trees within a level 1 & 2 inspection. Only when there are significant defects will a full report be conducted. Groups of trees that do not have any significant defects can be grouped together with general characteristics and labelled ‘G’(1).

Where remedial work is recommended, this will be recorded and given a priority setting, stating time scales to undertake the work.

### Remedial Work

Trees that have been identified with significant defects and the level of risk is not ‘As Low As Reasonably Practical’, it will be necessary to undertake remedial work to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level. These works will be prioritised by the level of risk; higher risk trees (storm damaged tree overhanging a playground) will be prioritised over lower risk trees (small deadwood over a garden shed).

Remedial works can include:

- Tree surgery (dead-wooding, felling, crown reductions etc.),
- Soil improvements (mulching, aeration) or by
- Restricting and moving public features away from the risk (exclusion zones, re-routing footpaths and benches etc.)

### Enquiries & Timescales

Sevenoaks District Council has finite resources for managing its trees and the legal and moral responsibility to reduce risk. It is therefore accepted that this should be the focus of budgets and officer time. In order to advise what work will be carried out and when and Traffic Light system is proposed:

Traffic Light Colour	Priority	Timescale Targets	Type of work likely to fall within this category
Red	EMERGENCY AND URGENT WORKS &	Within 24hrs – 2 week	Immediate safety concerns, e.g. windblown/storm damaged trees by a target in a high or medium risk zone. Or dying/ hazardous trees where there is a

Traffic Light Colour	Priority	Timescale Targets	Type of work likely to fall within this category
	PRIORITY ONE WORKS		<b>significant risk of danger to person or property. Major obstructions to highways.</b>
Amber	PRIORITY TWO WORKS & PRIORITY THREE WORKS	3 - 6 Months	Essential safety works such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing standing dead trees from public areas.</li> <li>• Removing fallen trees where they present a slight obstruction.</li> <li>• Removing significant deadwood overhanging a high usage area.</li> <li>• Remedial action to mitigate fungal decay.</li> <li>• Cutting back trees/branches that are physically touching buildings, but are not a significant risk of causing damage.</li> </ul>
Green	PRIORITY FOUR WORKS	6 -12 Months (where budget allows)	Where resources allow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing less significant deadwood.</li> <li>• Cutting back branches which are slightly touching buildings but not causing damage.</li> <li>• Formative pruning</li> </ul>
Black		N/A	Unless there are special circumstances, the Council <b>will not</b> fell or prune trees solely for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branches are overhanging a boundary property</li> <li>• Blocking of Light</li> <li>• Interference with television/satellite signals</li> <li>• Blocking a view</li> <li>• To alleviate problems caused by seasonal/natural phenomena (Leaves, seeds, nuts falling/pollen levels/attracting wildlife)</li> <li>• It's too big</li> </ul>

All relevant tree enquires and action taken will be recorded on The Action Manager (TAM). This will conform to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The council uses external contractors who have their own workload and priorities to schedule. It is the aim to complete the priorities within the parameters set but a degree of flexibility is required.

#### [Failure Log](#)

A record will be kept of all tree failures, regardless of whether it resulted in damage or harm. This will help inform officers of patterns or areas that require increased expenditure/resources. It will also help establish the real risk posed by trees.

#### [Emergencies and out of hours' incidents](#)

Should an emergency occur out of hours/over the weekend, please call the Council on 01732 227000 where our 'out of hours' team will log the report.

An on-call member of staff from Direct Services will be called to assess the situation and fence/tape off the immediate area to warn the public of the danger. A relevant officer will then attend site on the next working day to arrange any works.

In the very rare event that the emergency requires urgent action to avoid immediate damage to private property or threat to public safety, the Senior Countryside Ranger or Clean and Green Team Manager will be contacted to try and arrange emergency contractors to undertake any required works to remove the risk or make as safe as possible until further works can be arranged on the next working day.