

# Tree and Woodland Strategy for Wolverhampton 2019-2029

January 2020

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*Approved by City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet, 22 January 2020*

## Foreword

Despite being a dense urban area, Wolverhampton is a green city with a plentiful coverage of trees. Issues such as climate change, an ageing stock of street trees, pressure for development and financial constraints on the Council mean, however, that this is under threat. The UK Government, in its 25 Year Environment Plan, made a commitment to green our towns and cities by including a target of planting one million urban trees (HMG, 2018). In July 2019 City of Wolverhampton Council, recognising the threat posed by climate change and the need to respond urgently, declared a Climate Emergency and committed to be net-zero carbon by 2028. Trees, woodland and hedgerows can make a significant contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to the change which cannot be halted.

This Tree and Woodland Strategy for 2019 to 2029 seeks to establish a way in which the City of Wolverhampton Council can help tackle climate change, realise the many benefits of trees and improve the coverage of trees in the City through management of its own stock as well its planning and other powers. One way the Council can achieve this is by taking forward the ten principles in the Charter for Trees, Woods and People (the Tree Charter). Through endorsing the Tree Charter and through this strategy the Council plans to make Wolverhampton a climate-friendly, greener, healthier and more prosperous City.



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# 1

## Vision for Trees and Woodlands in Wolverhampton

1.1 Trees, including hedges, are a key part of green infrastructure, defined by Natural England as:

*“...a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features.”*

*(Natural England, 2009)*

1.2 Trees in the City of Wolverhampton provide a number of social, environmental and economic benefits and are an integral part of the historic environment.

1.3 Wolverhampton’s Vision for Trees and Woodlands is of a City with an increasing stock of trees, hedges and woodlands which:

- Help to mitigate and to adapt to climate change in line with the Council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency
- Help to improve air quality and public health
- Are an integral part of the City’s identity and environment, earning it a reputation

for high quality in its open spaces, highways and other public realm as well as across its centres, residential and business areas

- Help to support regeneration and attract investment
- Support health and wellbeing and social inclusion through their accessibility to all members of the community wherever they live, learn, work, play or shop
- Are well-managed, healthy, widespread and diverse with trees of a range of species and of all ages and sizes
- Promote biodiversity by providing habitat for a range of species and forming an important form of green infrastructure

As part of this Vision, the Council supports and wishes to take forward the ten principles of the Charter for Trees, Woods and People.



# 2

## The Importance of Trees and Woodlands to Wolverhampton

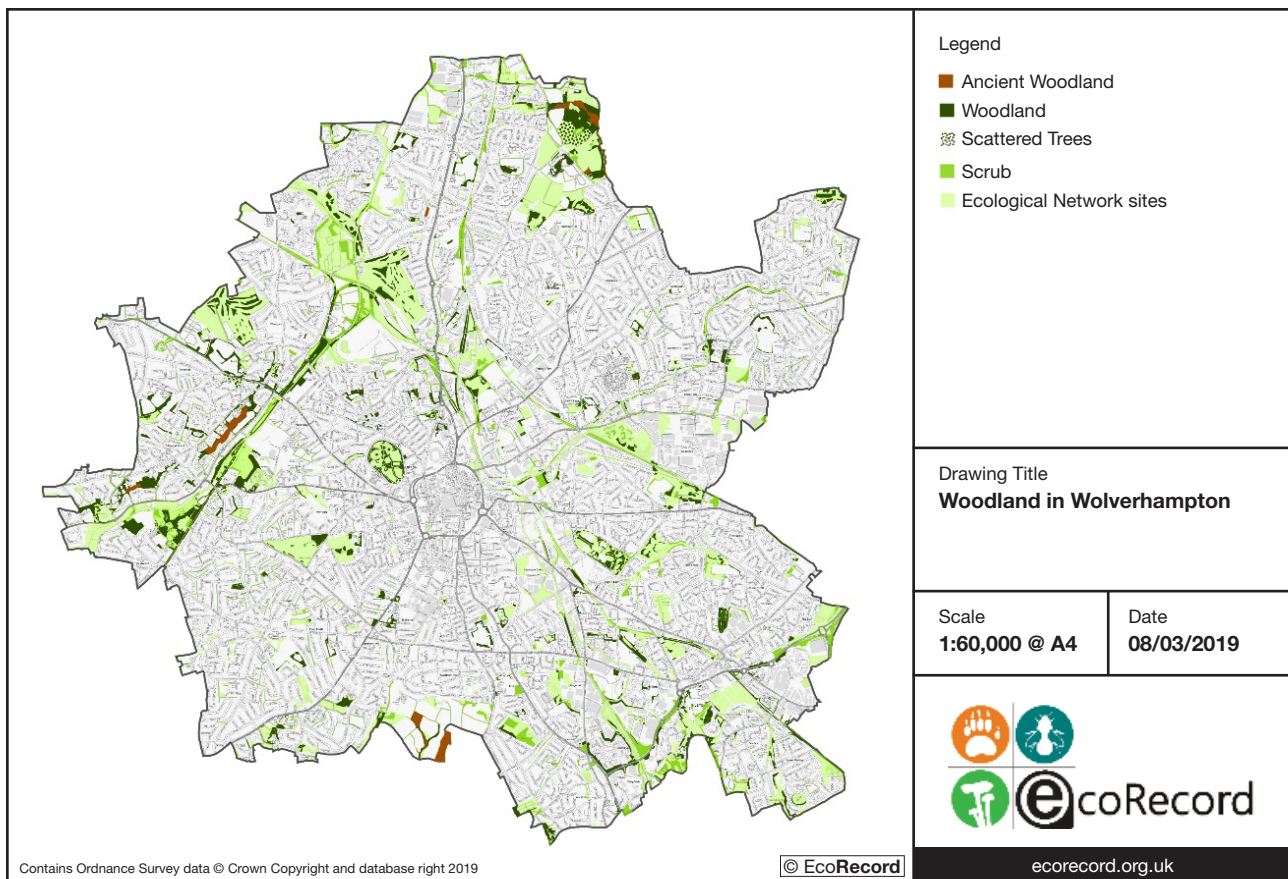


Figure 1: Woodlands in Wolverhampton (EcoRecord)

- 2.1 Wolverhampton is a green city, despite being a predominantly urban area. About 3.9% of the City is covered by woodland (around 274 hectares) and 33% (around 120 hectares) of this is designated as Sites of Interest or Local Interest for Nature Conservation.
- 2.2 Wolverhampton has a number of prominent parks, including West Park, East Park, Hickman Park, Fowlers Park and Bantock Park, which contain a variety of mature trees, hedges and woodland. There are also a range of other open spaces containing significant cover of trees, hedges and woodland, such as

Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve and Northcote Farm Country Park, both managed by the City Council. Other notable areas of trees and woodland include: Moseley Hall and Wightwick Manor Woods, owned by the National Trust; Peascroft Wood Nature Reserve, Bilston, managed by the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust; Bushbury Cemetery; and the recently declared Black Country Wyrley and Essington Canal Local Nature Reserve. Just to the north of the city boundary is Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve, also managed by the City of Wolverhampton Council. There are an



estimated 30,000 street trees in the City, 350,000 to 400,000 trees in parks, cemeteries and open spaces and approximately 11,500 on land managed by Wolverhampton Homes (excluding private gardens). With the addition of trees on land managed by other Council services, it is estimated that the total number of trees managed by or on behalf of the City of Wolverhampton Council is 400,000 to 450,000.

**2.3** There are four woodlands currently designated as ancient woodlands in Wolverhampton, locations of which are shown in Figure 1. These are at Park Coppice and Ashen Coppice on the southern edge of the City, and at Vale Head Woodland and Tettenhall Wood on Tettenhall Ridge. A further five woodlands have been identified as either possibly or probably Ancient Woodland; adjacent to

Park Coppice; at Northcote Farm Coppice and the adjacent Waterhead Brook (three sites); and at Rakegate Wood.

**2.4** There is a history of urban forestry planting in Wolverhampton going back to the planting of Peascroft Wood in the early 20th century by the Midland Reafforesting Association. The most recent initiative was the Black Country Millennium Urban Forest which planted around 70 hectares of new woodland in Wolverhampton, funded by the Lottery and Forestry Commission, between 1995 and 2001. These were planted in parks and open spaces, in school grounds and on some areas of highway land. Urban forestry planting has contributed towards enhancing vacant and derelict land as well run-down and neglected green space.

2.5 The Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area was designated in 2012 and looks beyond individual sites to enhance and reconnect nature by looking at the whole landscape rather than focusing on individual sites. Among its projects, the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust has enhanced a number of the plantations mentioned above through thinning and planting. Ecological mapping carried out by the project identifies opportunities for tree planting and management for the benefit of ecological connectivity and biodiversity.

2.6 There are over 750 Tree Preservation Orders in the City, protecting thousands of trees, mainly on private land, from damage or removal. Many cover trees in the Victorian and 20th Century suburbs in the west including the remnants of woodland at Tettenhall Ridge. There are also 31 Conservation Areas in which anyone intending to carry out works to trees are required to give prior notice to the City Council.



2.7 Trees contribute significantly to the sense of place in Wolverhampton, particularly in the south and west of the City where they complement the physical features of the Smestow Valley and Tettenhall Ridge to create a strong feeling of separation and contribute to the continued identity of the suburb of Tettenhall as a 'village'.



2.8 Wolverhampton's trees and hedges are coming under increasing pressure as trees planted in Victorian and Edwardian times mature, modern utility locations restrict the potential to plant and replace street trees and as new higher density developments reduce opportunities for significant planting. Many larger forest trees which reach maturity in these locations are either not being replaced or are replaced by smaller species, which have reduced canopies and less impact, while others are lost to development. Therefore, while trees are planted in new developments, Wolverhampton is faced with the prospect of a reduction in tree cover in the City.

# 3

## The Benefits of Trees



### Climate change adaption and mitigation

**3.1** Hard surfaces such as buildings and roads absorb heat in daytime and release it at night time; the resulting 'urban heat island effect' can result in temperature differences of up to 9oC between urban centres and surrounding areas (Woodland Trust, 2019). Trees help to reduce this effect by both providing shade and the cooling effect of water evaporation from leaves. This reduces the negative effect of heat on people's health (in particular the elderly and vulnerable) and on economic productivity as well as reducing energy demand for cooling buildings. Trees will therefore help adapt to climate change as summers are predicted to become drier and warmer. Trees can also contribute to climate change mitigation as they absorb carbon dioxide and provide a source of carbon-neutral renewable energy.

### Flooding

**3.2** Hard surfaces also increase the speed and volume of water run-off which can cause localised flooding of roads and properties when drains and sewers

cannot cope with the volume of water. Trees leaves intercept rainfall, slowing down run off. Top soil held together by tree roots acts as a sponge for excess rainfall. The tree root systems can absorb large quantities of surface water, and through transpiration and evaporation, return it to the atmosphere. In doing so, trees can reduce the rate of runoff by up to 62% compared to hard surfaces (Woodland Trust, 2019), thereby reducing the risk of flooding. Single trees such as street trees have a much higher water use than trees in a plantation, due to their larger canopy and greater exposure. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), which include trees, can absorb water and release it slowly into the drainage system, contributing to reducing flooding as well as promoting biodiversity. This is likely to become increasingly important as climate change predictions are that winters will become warmer and wetter.

### Air quality

**3.3** There is growing evidence about the ill-effects of poor air quality on people's health, in particular on heart and lung





conditions, including asthma. There is evidence that urban trees can help disperse and, to a limited extent, reduce air pollution, although some species may enhance the formation of pollutants, meaning it is important to select appropriate species to plant (AQEG, 2018). Trees filter gaseous pollutants from the air and trap dust particles which are then washed to the ground by rain, thus improving the air quality. In many urban situations, hedgerows are more effective at improving air quality than street trees (AE, 2017).

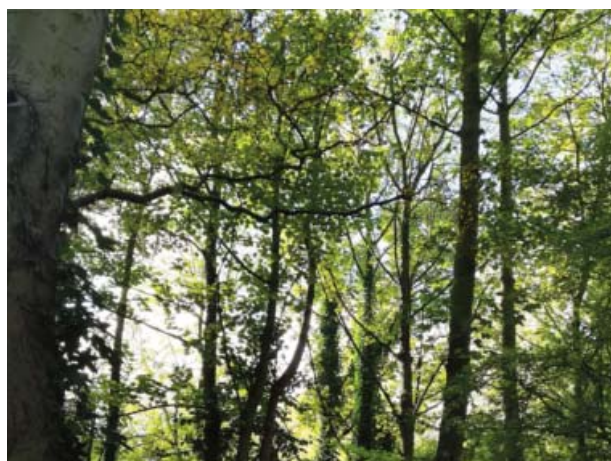
## Noise

3.4 Natural barriers such as trees and hedges can act as an attractive way of reducing noise from roads and other sources through absorbing sound (AAIS, 2000). This is particularly important in a dense urban area such as Wolverhampton, where industrial and residential uses are sometimes closely located and landscaped buffers can help to mitigate noise and visual impacts.

## Biodiversity

3.5 Biodiversity describes the 'variety of life', or the range of plants, animals and habitats that exist in a given area. Defra's biodiversity strategy for England, Biodiversity 2020, published in 2011, describes woodlands as one of our richest habitats and one of the priorities it identified for action is more sustainable management of existing woodlands and expanding the area of woodland in England (Defra, 2011).

3.6 Trees and hedges are important ecosystems, providing sources of food

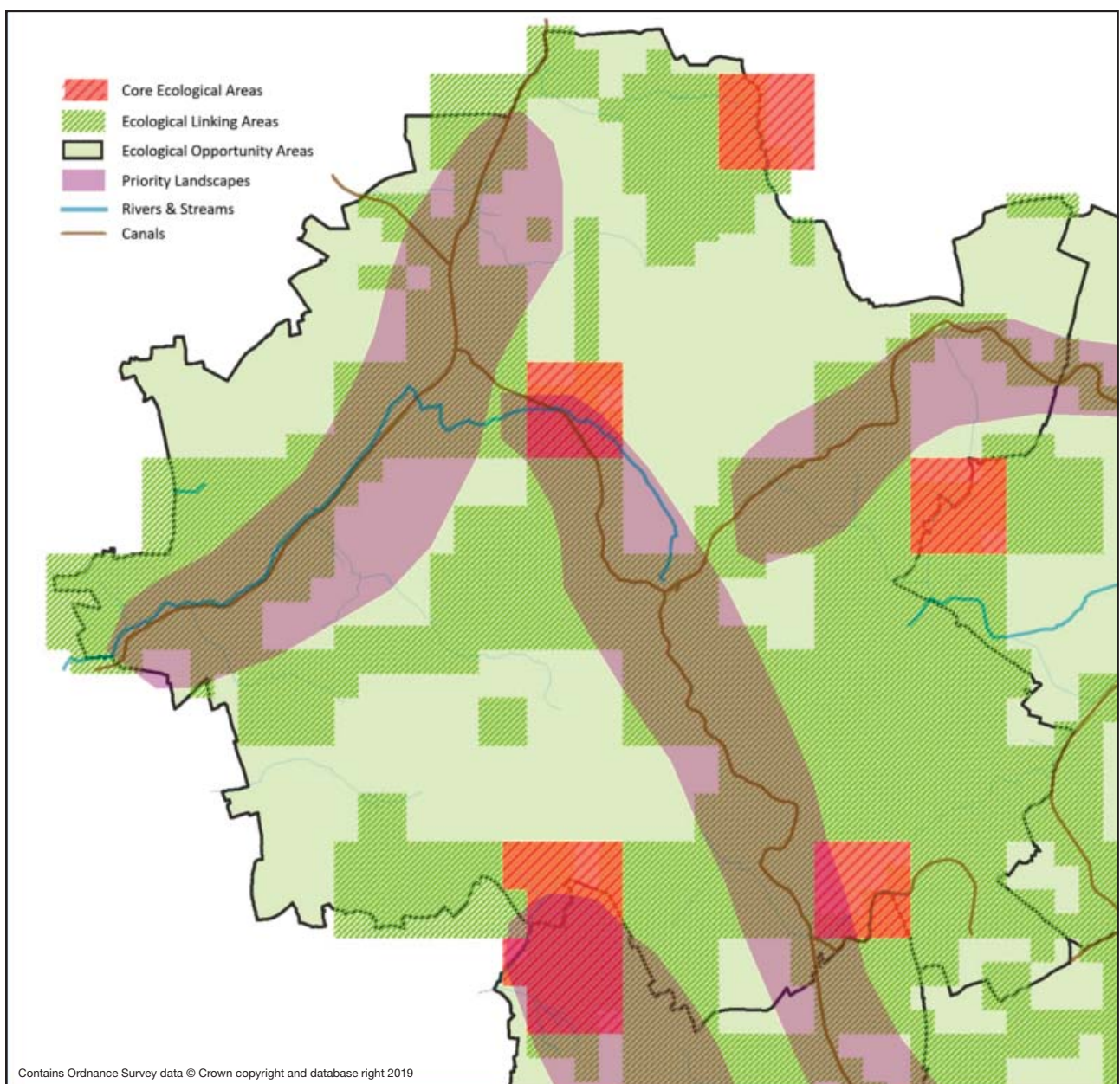


and shelter for a range of wildlife, and therefore contribute to biodiversity, both on their own and as part of gardens, parks, woodlands and other open spaces. Street trees and hedges are also important as they enable wildlife to travel between such sites. Over-mature trees and those with deadwood and cavities are particularly valuable for bats, birds and invertebrates. Native tree species generally provide feeding and nesting opportunities for a significantly higher number of species of wildlife than non-native species. Planting a mix of native species provides flower and fruit at different times of year, increasing the range of food sources available.

3.7 In order for these ecosystems to work effectively the provision, protection and maintenance of a viable network of green infrastructure is required of which trees, hedgerows and woodland form a vital element. Through Birmingham and the Black Country's Biodiversity Action Plan, 2010 and subsequent Local Nature Partnership and Nature Improvement Area creation, the importance of trees and woodland are recognised and are

reflected in ongoing work in Wolverhampton on biodiversity. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (HMG, 2018), includes a commitment to embed an 'environmental net gain'

principle for development and to develop a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife. Figure 2 below shows the ecological network mapping for Wolverhampton carried out for the Nature



*Figure 2: Nature Improvement Area ecological mapping for Wolverhampton (Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust/ EcoRecord)*

Improvement Area which illustrates where trees could be planted to enhance ecological connectivity and biodiversity and will inform the emerging Nature Recovery Network.

## Green and blue infrastructure

**3.8** Trees and hedges are an important element of green and blue networks, exploiting natural corridors such as streams and rivers as well as man-made features such as roads, canals and (often redundant) railway tracks. These provide transport and recreational routes, providing multiple benefits including climate change adaptation and mitigation, improved air quality, flood prevention and improved public health. They make a significant impact on the landscape, and many taller trees form skyline features in their own right. Smaller trees and hedges contribute by softening the urban landscape and often provide valuable screening and privacy. Trees also provide an important link to the past and complement the character of conservation areas and historic buildings.

## Health and wellbeing

**3.9** Trees, both on their own and as part of green spaces, make a positive contribution to people's mental and physical wellbeing. Attractive open spaces provide places to exercise and to unwind, assisting with physical fitness and in reducing stress and anxiety. Access to trees and open space therefore has major health benefits and can assist in increasing physical activity, reducing obesity and improving mental health with consequent benefits for individuals' wellbeing and quality of life as well as

financial benefits to the NHS and the wider economy (Woodland Trust, 2019 & nhsforest.org).

## Community benefits

**3.10** Trees make a major contribution to creating attractive public spaces, creating local distinctiveness and encouraging people to walk and cycle, take exercise and engage in social interaction in their community. This can also assist in crime reduction by increasing public use and informal surveillance of open space. Connecting with trees and nature as part of outdoor learning can also benefit children's concentration and improve results (Woodland Trust, 2019). Numerous studies on green space and particularly woodland have shown that they are highly valued by communities (ipsos.com). Trees are also important in improving the image of a city or area, as evidenced by the higher quality environment and image of the west of Wolverhampton, an area with a high level of tree cover.

## Economic benefit to developments

**3.11** Trees as part of good quality green space can improve people's perceptions of a development and increase property values and green space itself has been shown to have economic value (Woodland Trust, 2019). Trees indirectly promote the use of retail areas by creating an attractive environment for people to shop.

# 4

## Management of Trees on Council Land

4.1 Trees in Wolverhampton are managed in a variety of ways, dependent upon the land on which they stand and the risk they present. Table 1 below summarises the management regime for trees on Council-controlled land:

4.2 Environmental Services are responsible for maintaining the tree stock on the adopted highway and in parks and open spaces. Budgetary constraints mean they primarily focus upon emergencies and trees that are deemed a danger to people or

**Table 1: Management of trees on Council-controlled land**

Location	Responsibility	Management Regime	Comments
Highways Land	Environmental Services	Trees close to the adopted highway (approx. 12,000, one third of highways trees) are subject to a four-yearly inspection and maintenance regime (inspection, pruning, reduction etc.). Other trees are dealt with on a reactive basis when they have been reported as potentially in a dangerous condition	Regime has been in place since 1986. Trees close to the highway are assessed as higher risk and inspection/maintenance works undertaken.
Parks, Open Spaces & Cemeteries	Environmental Services	Reactive works only on trees considered a danger to public or property (out of total number of trees in parks, open spaces & cemeteries of 350,000 to 400,000)	Trees in these areas represent a lower risk except where they are close to the highway/high footfall areas
Schools	Individual schools	Schools are responsible for their own tree maintenance regimes which vary and may be reactive or include an annual tree inspection	
Council property	City Assets (aka Corporate Landlord)	Reactive maintenance works	
Communal land on housing estates	Wolverhampton Homes	Subject to a five-yearly inspection and maintenance regime	



property because of damage and disease. This includes disturbance by tree roots and trees on private land which fall onto the highway. Reported issues with trees are categorised as emergency, priority and routine and dealt with accordingly; not every request for works is met. Further details are provided on the Council's website. Case law established by the *Witley Parish Council v Cavanagh (2018)* Court of Appeal judgement means that inspection of trees in Council ownership is now deemed necessary at a minimum of every two years; this is addressed in the Action Plan below.

- 4.3 Recent budget constraints have disrupted tree planting operations. User groups are committed to planting trees at no cost to the Council at East Park, Bantock Park, West Park, Penk Rise, Bradmore Recreation Ground and Coppice Wood through external funding from the Woodland Trust. Trees are also planted in parks to mark important events and anniversaries. The Birmingham and Black

Country Wildlife Trust have enhanced several woodlands on Council land through thinning and planting through the Nature Improvement Area initiative.

- 4.4 In line with national policy, the Council has an Open Space Strategy and Action Plan which provides a basis for investment in the open spaces which it manages.
- 4.5 Wolverhampton Homes have a rolling Tree Management Programme, to undertake tree inspections and complete identified works on communal land which they manage. This is undertaken by a commercial partner and includes an emergency response service. They also provide an inspection service for trees located in tenants' gardens that are reported to be dead, diseased or dangerous. The Tree Management Programme survey has potential locations for replanting or replacement programmes although there is currently a limited budget for such works.

# 5

## Trees on Private Land

5.1 Table 2 below summarises the management regime for trees on private land and other sites outside Council control:

Table 2: Management of trees on private land

Location	Responsibility	Management Regime	Comments
Canal towpaths and railway lines	Canal & River Trust and Network Rail	Risk based safety maintenance regime; maintained by Canal & and River Trust and Network Rail	Trees and vegetation only managed for safety concerns – does not cover light/ TV reception issues
Private Land	Landowner	All maintenance and safety issues are the responsibility of the owner	Issues of complaints / safety / pests etc. are dealt with by the Council's Regulatory Services



### Statutory protection of trees

5.2 Trees may be legally protected by either inclusion within a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or due to their location within a Conservation Area. Where such protection exists, it becomes an offence in law to undertake works to the tree(s) that has not been previously authorised by the Local Planning Authority or is not covered by

one of the exemptions set out within the statutory regulations.

5.3 Trees on private land which are deemed to be of public value are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). TPOs are created either on individual or groups of trees which are visible from the highway or publicly accessible sites and are deemed to be of amenity. Wolverhampton contains over 750 TPOs covering thousands of trees. Anyone who wishes to carry out works to a tree protected by a TPO must apply for permission to the Council's Planning Service. Where necessary, the Council will review existing TPOs to ensure that the trees covered are still worthy of protection.

5.4 The Council encourages owners of protected trees to undertake appropriate arboricultural management. When considering applications to undertake



works to trees, the Council will consider the potential impact of the proposed works on the amenity of the area and whether this is justified by the reasons given in the application. Where the proposal would result in an unjustified detrimental impact on the public amenity of an area, an application will be refused. Circumstances sometimes require the felling of trees; on these occasions the Council will seek to obtain replacement planting as close as possible to the original tree(s).

- 5.5 Anyone who wishes to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area must notify the Planning Service giving six weeks' notice of their intention to enable the trees to be inspected and an assessment of the proposed works. This gives the Council the opportunity to place a Tree Preservation Order on the tree if it is considered to be of value to public amenity.

- 5.6 Undertaking unauthorised works to trees that are protected, either by a Tree Preservation Order or by virtue of their location in Conservation Area, is an offence in law and may be punishable, upon conviction in a Magistrate's Court, by a fine of up to £20,000 (per offence). Where the case is deemed serious enough to warrant prosecution in the Crown Court, the level of potential fine is unlimited.

- 5.7 The Council will investigate all reports of unauthorised works to protected trees and will seek to bring prosecutions against all cases where it is in the public interest.

# 6

## Trees in New Developments



### National policy

6.1 The Government's commitment to embed an 'environmental net gain' principle for development in its 25 Year Environment Plan (HMG, 2018) and to 'biodiversity net gain' in proposals for the new Environment Bill (Defra, 2019) will increase opportunities to provide tree, woodland and hedgerow planting in new development.

### National Planning Policy Framework

6.2 The government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England along with a framework for preparing local development plans and for making planning decisions. One of the three overarching objectives of the planning system is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment and development plans should contain strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and to address climate change (Paragraph 20c).

6.3 The NPPF states that planning policies should aim to enable and support healthy lifestyles, for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure (paragraph 91), plan green infrastructure to mitigate and adapt to climate change (paragraphs 149 and 150) and reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, including the use of sustainable drainage systems (paragraphs 157 and 165).

6.4 NPPF also advises that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment (paragraph 170) by protecting valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity and recognising the economic and other benefits of trees and woodland. In particular, developments resulting in the loss or deterioration of vulnerable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists (paragraph 175). Further, more detailed, guidance on planning for trees and woods is included in Planning Practice Guidance on implementing the NPPF (MHCLG, 2016).

### Black Country Core Strategy

6.5 The Black Country Core Strategy, adopted in 2011, contains a number of policies which relate to the value of trees and woodlands. Strategic Policy CSP3 protects a strategic network of environmental infrastructure while policies address nature conservation (ENV1), flood risk, the urban heat island effect and sustainable urban drainage systems (ENV5) and protection for the open space and recreation network (ENV6). A review



of the Black Country Core Strategy, to be known as the Black Country Plan, is under way with a revised plan currently due to be published in 2020.



## Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan

6.6 The Council's Unitary Development Plan, adopted in 2006, contains policies on nature conservation (N1 and N4), protection of hedgerows (N6) and protection of Tettenhall Ridge Ancient Woodland (N8).

6.7 Policy N7: The Urban Forest states the following:

The Council will, in partnership with others, seek to preserve, enhance and extend the urban forest within Wolverhampton by:

- Ensuring trees and areas of woodland are properly managed and maintained, and taking opportunities to plant new trees and areas of woodland on land in council ownership, where appropriate;
- Encouraging short term forestry techniques on temporarily vacant sites;

- Discouraging the removal of mature, healthy trees, including the placing of tree preservation orders on trees worthy of and in need of protection;
- Requiring, where appropriate, the replacement of trees removed with council consent, with trees of a size and species specified by the council;
- Maintaining and re-establishing trees within the street scene;
- Protecting and enhancing existing hedgerows and ancient and semi-natural woodlands.

The Council will ensure that species native to the local area are used in planting and landscaping, where possible.



## Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan

6.8 In support of Policies ENV6 of the Black Country Core Strategy and R3 of the Unitary Development Plan, the City Council has produced an Open Space Strategy and Action Plan, the latest revision of which was approved by the Council in July 2018. It does not identify any major city-wide shortfalls in the

provision and quality of open space across the City, although it does identify opportunities for the provision of woodland areas as wildlife habitats. It also does not include specific standards for trees, either on open spaces or at a wider level, such as street trees.

## Supplementary Planning Document on Residential Development

6.9 The Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Residential Development was adopted in 1996 and complemented the policies contained in the first Unitary Development Plan, adopted in 1993. It includes reference to the measures to be taken to retain, protect and integrate existing trees in new development and to providing new trees and shrub planting in both open areas and private gardens.

## Area Action Plans

6.10 The City Council adopted, between 2014 and 2016, three Area Action Plans (AAPs) for key areas of the City. All contain policies on Environmental Infrastructure (Bilston Corridor AAP Policy BC8, Stafford Road Corridor Policy SRC9 and City Centre Policy CC10) which support the provision of open space to enhance biodiversity, reduce the urban heat island effect and provide for sustainable water management, plus the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS). Those for the City Centre and Bilston Road Corridors also include the incorporation of street trees and areas of woodland in new development, and those for Bilston and Stafford Road Corridors support proposals for biomass on vacant sites.



## Neighbourhood Plans

6.11 Wolverhampton also has two neighbourhood plans, both adopted in September 2014. Heathfield Park Neighbourhood Plan contains several policies (numbers 2, 13 and 22) which reference protecting and enhancing trees and woodland. The Tettenhall Neighbourhood Plan covers an area in the west of the City for which trees and woodlands form a significant part of their local character and quality. A site-specific proposal (TNP6) protects the site of the Wolverhampton Environment Centre, now incorporated into the Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve. There are also a number of general policies (numbers TNP12, TNP15 and TNP16) which protect and enhance tree cover.

# 7

## City of Wolverhampton Council Developments



7.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council plays a key role in highway, transportation, housing and other development schemes, either as developer or as a development partner, including schemes such as the Wolverhampton Interchange, Westside and the City Learning Quarter.

7.2 The Council has a Connected Places Strategy, published in 2017, which provides guidance on the Council's vision for a better-connected city centre. One of the seven key objectives for the strategy includes enhancing the city centre with more trees and shrubs on streets and open spaces.

7.3 In support of the Connected Places Strategy, the council has its own Public Realm Design Guide. In Section 2.7 it recognises the role of trees in creating shade and shelter and providing colour and contrast. It also notes that trees can define routes and enclosed spaces as well as, adjacent to streets, creating a pleasant boulevard feel that psychologically

encourages slower vehicle speeds. The Strategy acknowledges the contribution trees make to absorbing pollution, dampening noise levels, reducing the urban heat island effect, preventing flash flooding and improving biodiversity. Further detailed guidance for new street trees is provided.





7.4 Where highway and other schemes require the removal of mature trees, including street trees, it can be difficult to find room for replacements, either in the original or alternative locations, particularly where mature forest trees are removed. This has produced challenges in maintaining the tree cover in parts of the City.

7.5 WV Living is the Council's housing arm which is building new houses for sale and for rent, the latter to be managed by Wolverhampton Homes. The City Council has committed to replacing all trees removed as part of the Heath Town regeneration scheme and to seek to meet the Black Country Garden City standards for all of its schemes, where possible.





## Council Activity to Promote Trees and Woodlands

- 8.1 The Council's Parks and Countryside Service employs Park Rangers who work across the City's parks and nature reserves and organise a range of events to celebrate and educate the public about their trees and wider biodiversity. The Council also works with 'Friends of Parks' and other voluntary groups which take part in planting, maintenance and other activities in parks. These activities are advertised on the Council's website and via social media as well as on site, along with a wide range of other events in the City's parks and nature reserves.
- 8.2 The Council also works at a Black Country and West Midlands level with partners such as the West Midlands Combined Authority, Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, other councils and bodies such as the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust and Natural England. With such partners the Council is exploring further opportunities for developing and funding tree planting programmes in support of this Tree and Woodland Strategy and of its Climate Emergency declaration.

### Natural Capital

- 8.3 Natural Capital is a concept established in 2012 by the UK Government's White Paper The Natural Choice which contained the ambition "to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than it inherited" (HMG, 2011). A 25 Year Natural Capital Vision has been produced for the West Midlands Combined Authority which is seeking to develop a Natural Capital Investment Strategy and Programme for the West Midlands.



Delivering the Vision would involve developing greenspaces and green corridors and therefore improving the cover and quality of trees and woodland in the West Midlands. A Natural Capital Planning Toolkit, to integrate assessment of Natural Capital in new development proposals, has been trialled in Birmingham.

### Black Country Garden City

- 8.4 The Black Country Garden City concept is being promoted by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, Black Country councils and Homes England to create high quality housing developments which embody garden city principles. The Black Country Garden City principles include green streets and easy access to green spaces. City of Wolverhampton Council's housing arm, WV Living, has committed to seeking accreditation for the Garden City principles in its housing developments and has already received Garden City accreditation for the site at Sweetbriary, Ettingshall.

# 9

## Wider Strategic Links



### Council Plan

9.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council Plan 2019-2024 seeks to achieve six strategic outcomes. One outcome is strong, resilient and healthy communities a key element of which is enabling residents to live an active, healthy life including enjoying the City's beautiful parks and open spaces. Another outcome is a vibrant, green city which we can all be proud of; this outcome also recognises the importance of our natural open spaces.

### Health and Wellbeing

9.2 The City's Vision for Public Health 2030, Public Health Annual Report 2018/19 and Joint Public Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021 recognise between them the importance of wider influences on health and wellbeing and the need to work across the public sector to improve health outcomes, including levels of physical activity and access to greenspace.

### Procurement Strategy

9.3 The Council's Procurement Strategy 2015-2018 contains a number of objectives relating to Sustainability. These includes specifying products, such as sustainable timber, that do not have a harmful impact. They also include specifying products that minimise the use of energy, water and raw materials and the creation of pollution, carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases in their production, transportation and operation. Another objective is to use renewable energy or recycled materials. All of these objectives support the use of sustainable timber and timber products, including recycled timber, paper and cardboard, by the Council.



# 10

## Financial Implications

**10.1** The financial implications of the Actions contained in this Strategy, in particular those arising from case law established by the Witley Parish Council v Cavanagh (2018) Court of Appeal judgement referenced in paragraph 4.2, will be dealt with separately as individual actions are brought forward for any relevant approvals.

# 11

## Monitoring and Evaluation

**11.1** The Tree and Woodland Strategy is a 10-year strategy for the decade 2019-2029. A majority of the actions are for commencement or implementation in the first three years. It is therefore proposed to monitor and evaluate progress after three years.



# 12

## Tree and Woodland Strategy Objectives

1. Protect existing stock of trees and woodland and length of hedgerows across the City, replacing trees and hedges when they are removed with planting of equal or greater value in as close a location as possible
2. Increase coverage of trees, woodland and hedgerows by additional planting in line with targets to be established alongside the Council's Climate Emergency declaration
3. Ensure coverage of trees and woodland and length of hedgerows across the City is in a breadth of locations including: street trees; new and existing residential areas; the city centre, town and district centres; commercial areas; and open spaces; with a focus on areas with low overall coverage and areas with high levels of deprivation and ill health, where residents have limited access to green infrastructure
4. Preserve Ancient Woodland, ancient and veteran trees and other trees, woodland and hedges of ecological, cultural, historical, recreational and amenity value to the City
5. Improve the amenity value of new and existing trees, woodland and hedges through species selection, location and management
6. Contribute to climate change mitigation by increasing carbon capture by trees and woodland in the City
7. Help the City adapt to climate change and reduce both the urban heat island effect and effects of surface water flooding by tree, woodland and hedgerow planting, particularly in areas of low tree coverage
8. Improve biodiversity through planting and improved management of the City's trees, woodland and hedges, using a diverse range of UK sourced and grown species, including native species and those adapted to climate change
9. Support regeneration and improve the image of the City, in both the public realm and private developments, to residents, visitors and investors
10. Tackle social exclusion and improve public health by providing access to trees and woodland, along with other open space, for all sectors of the community
11. Recognise the cultural and historical importance of trees and educate the public about their benefits including developing skills in wood working and woodland management
12. Support sustainable procurement of timber and timber products, including recycled products
13. Improve partnership working within and outside the Council to achieve these objectives
14. Contribute to the development and delivery of wider initiatives at a Black Country and West Midlands level including the Nature Improvement Area, emerging Nature Recovery Network, Natural Capital Vision and Investment Strategy and Black Country Garden City



# 13

## References

1. **A Green Future:** Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HM Government (HMG), 2018
2. **Green Infrastructure Guidance**, Natural England, 2009
3. **Residential Development & Trees**, Woodland Trust, 2019
4. **Impacts of Vegetation on Urban Air Pollution**, Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG), 2018
5. **Air pollution abatement performances of green infrastructure in open road and built-up street canyon environments** – a review, Atmospheric Environment (AE), 2017
6. **Trees & Shrubs for Noise Control**, Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service (AAIS), 2000
7. **Biodiversity 2020:** A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, Defra, 2011
8. [https://nhsforest.org/evidence-benefits#Reduced costs through healthcare prevention](https://nhsforest.org/evidence-benefits#Reduced%20costs%20through%20healthcare%20prevention)
9. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/environment-who-cares>
10. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-environment-principles-and-governance-bill-2018/environment-bill-summer-policy-statement-july-2019> Defra, 2019
11. **National Planning Policy Framework**, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), 2019
12. **Planning practice guidance**, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), 2016 (updated 2019)
13. **The Natural Choice:** securing the value of nature, HM Government (HMG), 2011

# 14

## Achieving the Objectives: Tree and Woodland Action Plan 2019-2029

### 1. Policy

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
1.1	Endorse principles of Woodlands Trust's Tree Charter See: <a href="https://treecharter.uk/">https://treecharter.uk/</a>	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	November 2019	To be approved with Strategy by Cabinet. Set of principles which we endorse, number of areas we already cover
1.2	Include support for Tree & Woodland Strategy & tree planting programme in Council's Future Generations: Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Projects & Programmes / Project Manager for Climate Change	January 2020	To be approved by Full Council
1.3	Carry out survey of tree cover & develop targets to increase coverage across the City	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	June 2020	Likely to be joint initiative with Black Country LEP & other Black Country councils as well as West Midlands Combined Authority. Use doubling of tree cover in City as a benchmark
1.4	Provide Ecosia to staff & councillors as an option to use as internet search engine on Council IT equipment	ICT/ Solution Development Manager	September 2019	Ecosia is an ethical not for profit search engine which is carbon neutral & invests its profits in planting trees.

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Service /Employee</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1.5	Include reference to role of trees & woodland in promoting physical activity & mental health & wellbeing in Public Health Annual Reports	Public Health/ Consultant in Public Health + City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	Annually from November 2019	
1.6	Review reference to role of trees & woodland in promoting physical activity & mental health & wellbeing in Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy & Joint Public Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy	Public Health/ Consultant in Public Health + City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	September 2023 (Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy) and September 2021 (Joint Public Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy)	
1.7	Review reference to role of trees & woodland in promoting physical activity & mental health & wellbeing in revised Active City Strategy	Public Health/ Consultant in Public Health + City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	March 2021	
1.8	Review reference to sustainable purchasing, including timber & timber products, when Procurement Strategy is reviewed	Procurement/ Head of Procurement	To be advised	
1.9	Review of strategic policies on trees & woodlands in Black Country Plan	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	2022/23 (plan adoption)	As part of Black Country Plan process

## 1. Policy (Continued)

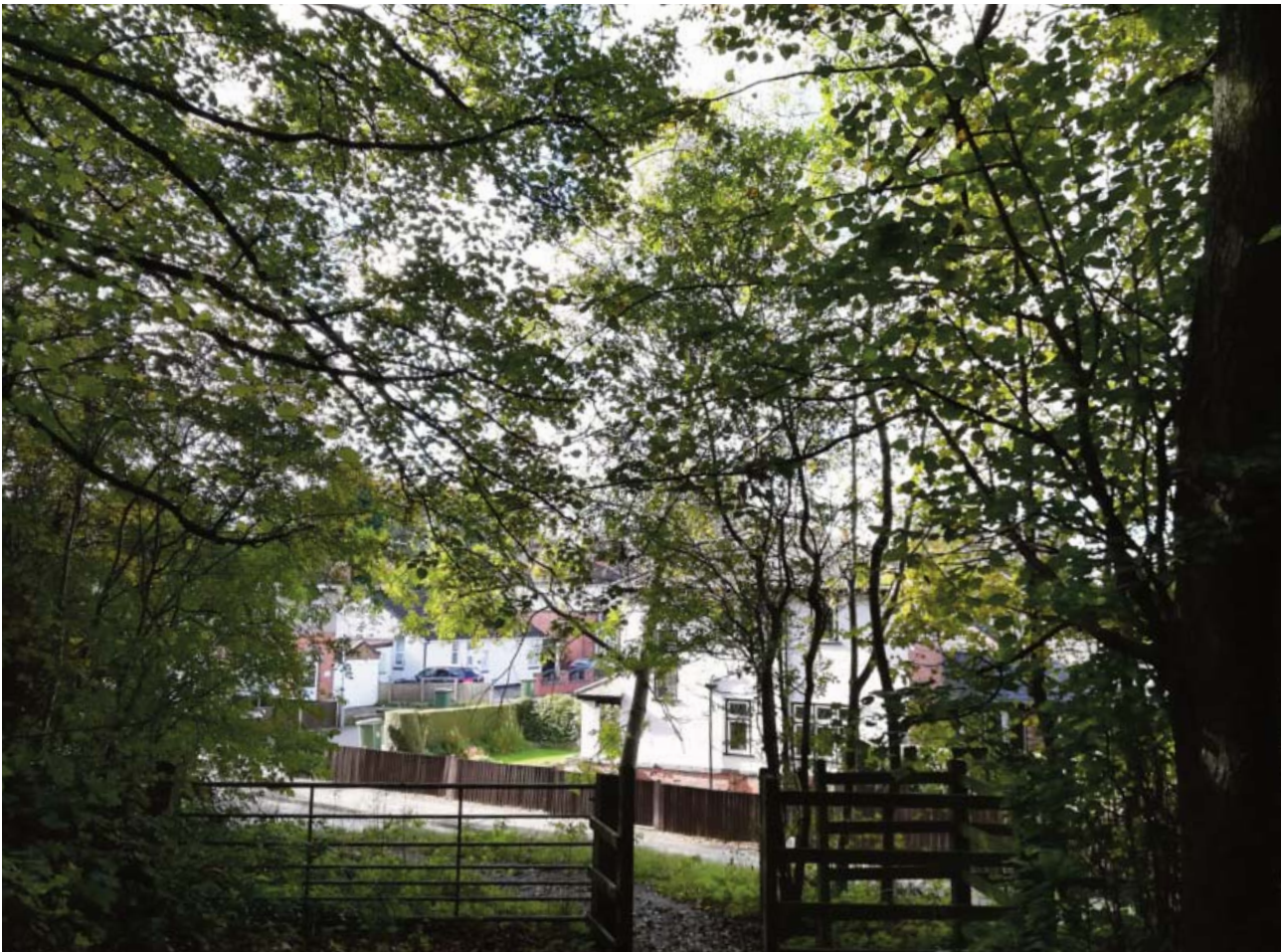
Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
1.10	Support West Midlands Combined Authority in development of Natural Capital Investment Strategy & Programme	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	April 2021	Seek inclusion of sites in Wolverhampton to improve tree cover in City
1.11	Use Natural Capital tool to inform assessment & selection of larger housing sites in Black Country Plan	City Planning/ Lead Planning Manager (Sub-Regional Strategy)	June 2020	
1.12	Embed principles of Black Country Garden City in Black Country Plan	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Lead Planning Manager (Sub-Regional Strategy)	2023 (plan adoption)	
1.13	Produce guidance note for trees & hedges in new developments, including street trees (both residential + commercial)	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	November 2020	To supersede guidance in Supplementary Planning Document on Residential Development; would involve public consultation, including with relevant organisations
1.14	Review guidance on Tree Preservation Orders/ trees in Conservation Areas	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Section Leader	November 2020	

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Service /Employee</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1.15	Consult Woodland Trust on Open Space Strategy & Action Plan	City Planning/ Lead Planning Manager (Sub-Regional Strategy)	Completed summer 2018	
1.16	Greater consideration of trees, hedgerows & woodlands in Open Space Strategy & Action Plan review 2020	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	July 2021	Action Plan due to be updated 2020/21. Consider adoption of Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard in review
1.17	WV Living to seek to apply Black Country Garden City principles in its schemes where possible	Housing/ Service Manager – Housing Development	Ongoing	Already achieved for Sweetbriary, Ettingshall but not possible for all developments because of site constraints
1.18	Review provision for trees in Public Realm Design Guide & Connected Places Strategy	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Landscape Architect (City Centre)	March 2020	Seek to strengthen guidance on trees & achieve increase in trees in public realm, including references to climate change adaptation & use of native species where possible
1.19	Aim to ensure, through local regeneration schemes in the City, no net loss in trees through individual schemes & for overall net increase in tree cover, using native species where possible	City Development/ Head of City Development	Ongoing	

## 1. Policy (Continued)

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
1.20	Ensure new & existing planting & maintenance programmes take account of climate change & disease & plant UK sourced & grown trees wherever possible	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing	UK sourced & grown trees minimise the danger of introducing disease
1.21	Continue to implement current policy on maintenance of trees on highway, parks & open spaces as outlined above in section 4	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing	
1.22	Seek to replace existing street & park trees when removed, where possible supplemented by additional planting, using native species where possible	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing	Aim for 2-for-1 replacement of trees as near as possible to site of original tree(s), subject to availability of resources & sites
1.23	Ensure new & existing planting & maintenance programmes take account of climate change & disease	Wolverhampton Homes/ Neighbourhood Services Manager	Ongoing	
1.24	Continue to implement current policy on maintenance of trees on Wolverhampton Homes land as outlined Section 4 of the Strategy	Wolverhampton Homes/ Neighbourhood Services Manager	Ongoing	

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
1.25	Seek to replace existing trees on Wolverhampton Homes land when removed, where possible supplemented by additional planting, using native species where possible	Wolverhampton Homes/ Neighbourhood Services Manager	Ongoing	Aim for 2-for-1 replacement of trees as near as possible to site original tree(s) as possible, subject to availability of resources & sites



## 2. Engagement & Promotion

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
2.1	Engage in promotion of Tree & Woodland Strategy, of tree planting & wider actions as part of promotion & publicity associated with the Future Generations: Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Projects & Programmes/ Project Manager for Climate Change	From November 2019	
2.2	Further develop existing communications strategy for consulting with & informing residents and businesses of programmed planting & maintenance work on trees & woodland	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	March 2020	
2.3	City of Wolverhampton Council to consider a scheme, working with management organisations, to encourage tenants to plant native species	Housing Service/ Service Manager – Housing Strategy & Policy + Management Agents	Ongoing from November 2019	To include Tenant Management Organisations & Housing Associations
2.4	Consider organising & participating in cultural events to celebrate the City's trees	Local Economy/ Head of Local Economy	Ongoing from November 2019	Possible events include Tree Week & Tree Charter Day



<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Service /Employee</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2.5	Continue organising & participating in cultural & environmental events to celebrate the City's parks, open spaces, nature reserves & trees	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	Existing tree walks, nature & other events. Possible additional events include Tree Week & Tree Charter Day
2.6	Seek to establish new 'Friends of Parks' groups & continue to work with both new and existing 'Friends' groups & other community groups in promoting cultural events, tree protection, tree planting & other activities	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	Build on existing model of 'Friends of Parks' groups for parks & open spaces using resources such as Woodland Trust Community Tree Packs
2.7	Promote to schools their participation in cultural events, tree protection, tree planting & other activities	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Education/ PHSE Advisory Teacher	From November 2019	Including tree planting in school grounds, using resources such as Woodland Trust Community Tree Packs. Possibly linked to Eco-Schools initiative

## 2. Engagement & Promotion (Continued)

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
2.8	Seek to involve people with a wide range of ages, abilities & social background in tree-related activities in the community to maximise participation, promote health & wellbeing and social inclusion & to reflect the diversity of the local population	Local Economy/ Head of Local Economy + Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	Include consideration of perceptions & experience of access (including transport) & community safety issues as barriers to access tree-related activity in parks & open spaces
2.9	Continue to work in partnership with other organisations, including the Woodland Trust & Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, in promoting cultural events, tree protection, tree planting & other activities to 'Friends of Parks' groups, other community groups & schools	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	Examples of current Woodland Trust initiatives include Street Trees project and community tree packs, providing free trees for planting by community groups plus the Tree Council's Tree Wardens scheme

### 3. Delivery of New Trees & Woodland

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
3.1	Working in partnership, develop programmes of tree & woodland planting across the City in line with agreed targets & in support of Future Generations: Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Projects & Programmes/ Project Manager for Climate Change + Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing from September 2019	With support of Open Space Steering Group, Wolverhampton Homes & external partners such as Black Country LEP & other Councils. To include public & private land, including gardens
3.2	Working in partnership, seek grants & other funding to deliver tree & woodland planting programmes	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning) + Projects & Programmes/ Project Manager for Climate Change + Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing from April 2019	To include national funds such as Urban Tree Challenge & consideration of sponsorship scheme for local residents & businesses including individual trees as memorials in parks, cemeteries etc.
3.3	Include standards for protection of existing & provision of new trees & hedges in guidance note for trees in new developments, including street trees, using native species where possible	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	November 2020	To follow approval of Tree & Woodland Strategy

### 3. Delivery of New Trees & Woodland (Continued)

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
3.4	Review Highways & Transportation Technical Guidance Note & Appendices regarding protection & provision of trees & landscaping in new development, road construction & road maintenance work	Strategic Transport/ Service Lead – Transport Strategy + City Transport/ Head of City Transport	March 2021	
3.5	Achieve net increase in tree cover in city centre through new public realm schemes in line with aims of Connected Places Strategy	City Transport/ Senior Regeneration Officer	Ongoing	Aiming to include new street trees in Westside Link and Cleveland Boulevard schemes
3.6	New trees to be planted as part of new council housing and housing built by WV Living	Housing/ Service Manager – Housing Development	Ongoing	
3.7	Work with landlords within the City to encourage prioritising of native species in new planting schemes	Housing Service/ Service Manager – Housing Strategy & Policy + Management Agents	Ongoing from November 2019	To include Tenant Management Organisations & Housing Associations
3.8	Plant 100 trees to mark the centenary of the Housing Act, 1919	Wolverhampton Homes/ Neighbourhood Services Manager	October/ November 2019	The Housing Act, 1919, also known as the Addison Act, was a key step in the development of council housing

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Service /Employee</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Comments</b>
3.9	Working in partnership with City Council, Wolverhampton Homes will seek to implement tree planting & replacement programme where opportunities and funding allow, using native species where possible	Wolverhampton Homes/ Neighbourhood Services Manager	Ongoing from November 2019	
3.10	Seek to continue to work with 'Friends of Parks' groups, volunteers, other community groups & schools to help plant new trees & woodland in partnership, where possible, with other organisations	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	Already some schemes; seek to develop further with other organisations such as the Woodland Trust & Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust
3.11	Negotiate funding of highway trees through Section 106 contributions	City Planning/ Strategic Health Lead (City Planning)	Ongoing from April 2019	In consultation with Open Space Steering Group

## 4. Maintenance & Future Development of Existing Trees & Woodlands

Ref	Action	Lead Service /Employee	Timescale	Comments
4.1	Seek to continue to work with 'Friends of Parks' groups, volunteers, other community groups and schools to help maintain and replant existing trees and woodland in partnership, where possible, with other organisations	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	Already some schemes; seek to develop further with other organisations such as the Woodland Trust & Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust
4.2	Street tree replacement/ delivery programme including increasing tree stock where possible, using native species where possible	Environmental Services/ Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing	Tree stock we have is of varying age. Many street trees are in decline & in imminent need of removal &, if possible, replacement
4.3	Parks & open space management & planting programme aimed at improving biodiversity & increasing tree stock where possible, using native species where possible	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	Ongoing	
4.4	Look to encourage community involvement in care of trees in streets & open spaces in areas such as observations of general health & basic care & maintenance	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	From November 2019	Look to establish new groups, building on existing model of 'Friends of Parks' groups for parks & open spaces. Include consideration of 'Adopt a Tree' scheme where residents are encouraged to care for local street trees

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Service /Employee</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.5	Address implications of case law established by Witley Parish Council v Cavanagh (2018) for the current four-year tree inspection programme for highway trees	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	To be advised	Financial implications of need to consider two-year inspection programme, including trees not concurrently covered by existing programme, being addressed separately
4.6	Address implications of case law established by Witley Parish Council v Cavanagh (2018) for the current maintenance programme for trees on highway land & in parks & open spaces	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	To be advised	Financial implications of need to consider enhanced maintenance programme, including trees not concurrently covered by existing programme, being addressed separately
4.7	Seek grants & other funding for tree, hedgerow & woodland inspection & maintenance	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager + Direct Works/ Arboriculture Manager	Ongoing from April 2019	With support of Open Space Steering Group
4.8	Work with landlords within the City to encourage prioritising of native species in replacement planting schemes	Housing Service/ Service Manager – Housing Strategy & Policy + Management Agents	Ongoing from November 2019	To include Tenant Management Organisations & Housing Associations
4.9	Explore the involvement of the Land Trust in managing trees & woodland using experience of Bilston Urban Village	Environmental Services/ Parks, Landscapes & Countryside Manager	April 2021	Need to await Land Trust involvement in Bilston Urban Village before we can commence assessment

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