



Urban Forestry Strategy for Walsall 2016 to 2026

*"To increase, enhance and sustain the urban forest for Walsall borough
improving social, economic and environmental benefits for future communities"*
(Vision statement)

December 2016



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Foreword:

Trees, woodlands and urban forest are an essential part of the borough's character and identity and define the neighbourhoods and areas of where we live, work and play. They breathe life into communities, and provide a welcoming backdrop to the stresses and demands to everyday life. They provide us with a reminder of the seasons, acting as nature's clock in defining changes through the year with the coming of spring, leaf colour and fall, and the glistening of frost covered branches.

Walsall is geologically and topographically diverse, comprising leafier suburbs across the eastern side of the borough with denser tree canopies and a more rural landscape within a patchwork of farmland, green spaces and parks to the west, defining the industrial heritage of the town.

Walsall is steeped in heritage with its premier Victorian park (The Arboretum) centrally located within the town providing a rural escape and refuge bringing local communities together as well as attracting regional and national acclaim for its standards, events and attractions.

All local authorities have a duty to protect our natural heritage and value the asset of their trees. Walsall is no exception to this in managing large numbers of trees both directly and indirectly to ensure their preservation for future generations and contribute to tackling wider implications of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Executive Summary:

Introduction:

This Urban Forestry Strategy (UFS) for Walsall sets out the strategic framework for the management of trees in the borough over the next 10 years. It has been prepared with reference to legislative drivers along with local, regional and national policies.

In May 2007 Walsall Council approved its first Urban Forestry Strategy in order to define what is an 'Urban Forest', the importance of trees and develop a framework and focus on the management of the borough's tree assets.

In delivering this strategy, the council intends to:

1. Ensure that the tree population is protected, developed and expanded for the future.
2. Promote a greater sense of community ownership, awareness and education on the importance and management of our trees and the benefits to people's well being.
3. Ensure the health and safety of both people and property are protected through risk management and pro-active maintenance of our tree stock.
4. Ensure that maintenance of our trees is managed in a professional manner undertaking appropriate works giving due consideration to health and requirements of the trees.

5. Consider the wider impact of trees at a regional and national level and how Walsall's approach has an impact on the wider global climate.
6. Review and update the strategy periodically (at least every five years).

Delivering the Strategy:

Walsall Council has embarked on a series of activities designed to deliver improvements in service provision and initiate the implementation of the Urban Forestry strategy. The main actions for the forthcoming year are summarised below.

Under this strategy, the Urban Forestry Team will be responsible for the boroughs trees and woodlands and their management in accordance to meeting the Authorities statutory obligations of a responsible tree owner and ensuring proactive and appropriate legislative guidance is followed to provide a sustainable and healthy tree population for future generations.

Year 2016/17 – short term actions:

Service actions and improvements for 2016/17 are set out in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1.

Ref:	Action	Timescale	Lead
1	Program to achieve full itinerary of tree population for Walsall as part of cyclical program beginning with wards of: Pelsall – Streetly - Brownhills - Blakenall Brownhills - St Matthews - Birchills – Leamore, Pheasey Park Farm - Paddock	2016/17 ongoing	Officer time
2	Secure annual tree planting budget of minimum 10k to support strategic objectives.	2016/17	Head of Service
3	Proactive discussions to incorporate tree management in schools into S.L.A.	2016/17	Officer time
4	G.I.S. tree datasets incorporated into Ezytreev .	2016/17	Officer time/G.I.S.
5	Publish tree management policies after consultation	2016/17	Officer time
6	Publish tree assessment and work schedules in advance for transparency in	2016/17	Officer time

	Council's Tree Maintenance Programme		
7	Instigate new management process with Risk & Insurance in relation to subsidence claims.	2016/17	Officer time/Risk & Insurance team
8	Communications team leading design of website to provide online service to public in all tree related matters	2016/17	Officer time
9	Urban forestry to set out emergency operating procedures in the event of emergency tree work callouts	2016/17	Officer time
10	To create woodland management plans for Merrions wood, Longwood Gap wood, Moorcroft wood.	2016/17	Officer time
11	Bi-monthly meetings with Tree wardens to be arranged	2016/17	Officer time

1. Policy in context:

1.1 Local policy

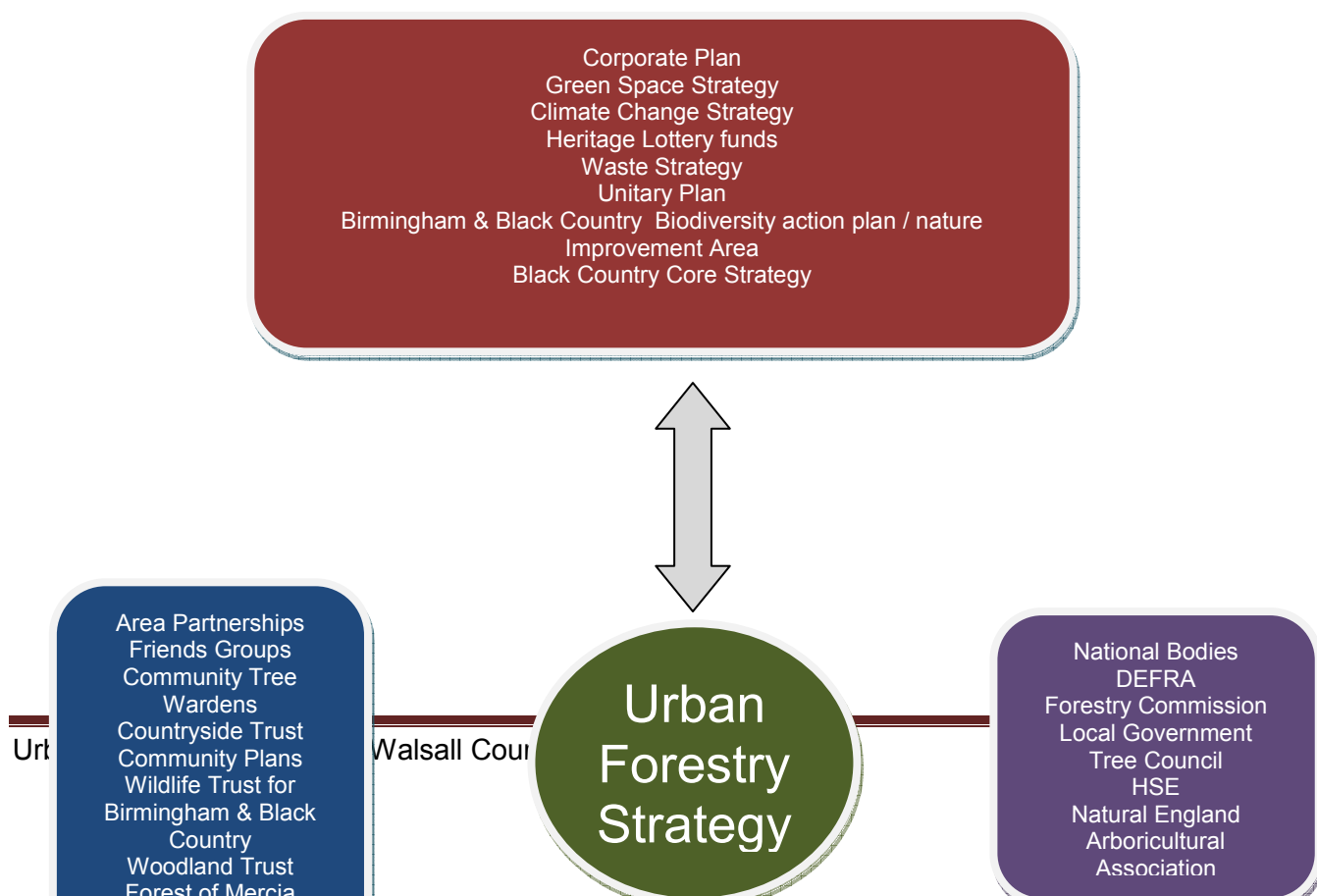
With key drivers contained within a number of National and Regional policies, strategies and legislation, Walsall Council has devised a strategy written with the wider aspirations in mind that focus on the local needs and demands within the borough boundary.

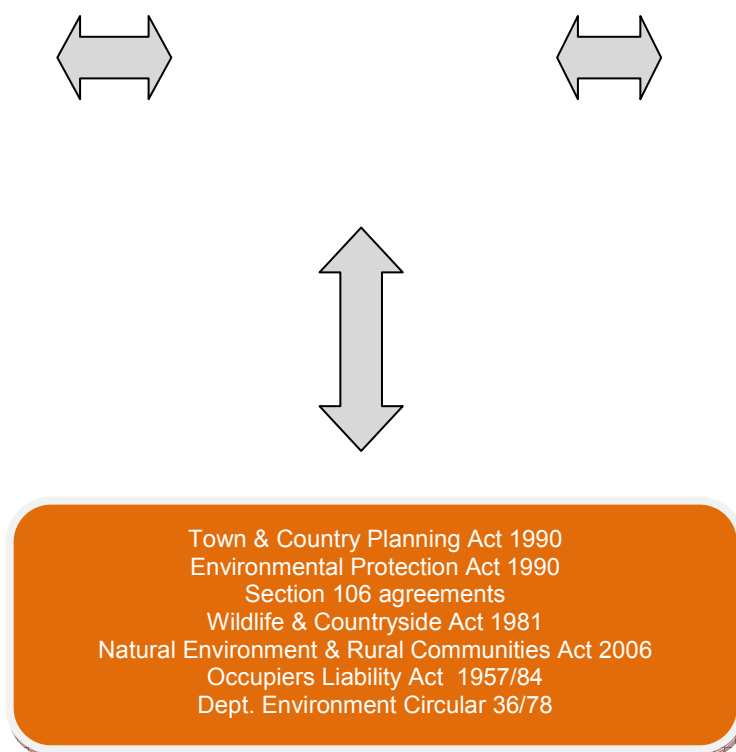
The document has been tailored to serve as a specific strategy that defines Walsall's actions with regard to the management of our tree assets, however it is also a tool to link, inform and compliment various local strategies and agreements that are currently in place such as The Green Space Strategy, Highways Strategy and Waste Strategy to name a few. This will ultimately deliver the wider green agenda and priorities of the council.

To place the Urban Forestry Strategy into a local framework context the diagram (page 7) demonstrates synergies and inter-relations across the wider council along with internal and external bodies:



Walsall Arboretum





1.2 Regional policy

Walsall is made up of six area partnerships including Palfrey & Pleck, St Matthews & Birchills, Leamore, Darlaston, Brownhills & Aldridge North, Aldridge South & Streetly, Pheasey & Paddock, Willenhall, Blakenall & Bloxwich, and Pelsall & Rushall which includes some rich and varied semi rural and rural areas as well as large urban areas.

At a regional level, Walsall Council's Urban Forestry Strategy is designed to reflect actions, targets and plans as set out within the Birmingham and Black Country Bio-diversity Plan. This is primarily due to similes in the demographic make-up of areas within the region taking into consideration population, housing density and growth and development. Walsall is well connected to the wider region with gateways such as the Black Country route providing urban corridors to neighbouring Sandwell, Dudley, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Lichfield and South Staffordshire.



Typical Parks Scene

1.3 National policy

Sustainability is the key national policy driver in respect to the urban forest and woodlands in the UK, this being substantiated by key policy 'Planning Policy Statement 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development*' (CLG 2005) *development of other fundamental policy documents include 'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests (DEFRA, 2007) and 'Trees in Towns II' (Department of Communities and Local Government 2008). DEFRA's strategy which aims to ensure that there is a resource of trees, woods and forests where they can contribute most in terms of environmental, economic and social benefits. 'Trees in Towns II' promotes investment in the urban forest.*

Sustainability is pictured as a balance between social, environmental and economic development. Tree benefits encompass these three pillars of

sustainable development. To work proactively through policy to reduce the vulnerability of the national tree stock and promote a development in the awareness and benefits it brings.

1.4 Planning policy

The Government determines national policies on different aspects of planning and the rules that govern the operation of the system. National planning policies are set out in Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance notes.

Under the Town and Country Planning Acts the Council has powers to make and enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and designate Conservation Areas.

These drivers ensure trees are a material consideration in planning processes and the sustainability cord which runs through all policy locally and nationally in relation to trees achieves its aims and objectives at a local and National level. This will include further guidance also from British Standards BS3998 *Tree works* BS5837 *Trees in relation to design demolition and construction recommendations*.

Additional responsibilities under the planning umbrella include *Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976* giving officers the authority to serve notice on trees in public or private ownership if considered an unacceptable risk.

1.5 Legislative drivers

Trees in urban spaces can be in direct conflict with its surrounding environment. Legislation exists to protect, preserve and enhance the benefits of trees and proactively manage for future generations.

- Planning
- Environmental protection
- Nuisance

- Health and safety

As legislation and judicial commentary are constantly changing, specialists and managers are expected to continually review judgements and apply them appropriately to ensure that the vision, commitments and priorities of the council are delivered in accordance with its legal responsibilities and good practice.

Statute Law

Statutory law is written law set down by Government legislation. Trees are protected by a number of statutes which control felling licences, tree preservation orders and hedgerow regulations.

Common Law

Based on common customs and developed by judges through the decisions they make in court. Trees can sometimes create problems when they overhang boundaries, block light or cause damage to property. Trees can then become the subject of disputes between neighbours, owners, members of the public or public authorities.

Legislation for trees and the duty expected is contained predominantly in the following:

- Occupiers Liability Act 1957/84
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- H.S.W.A. 1974
- Management Safety at Work 1999
- Department of Environment Circular 36/78 Trees and Forestry
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Highways Act 1980
- Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Environmental Act 1990
- Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003



Walsall Arboretum

2. Introduction:

Definition of an Urban forest

“Urban forestry is the management of trees for their contribution to the physiological, sociological, and economic well-being of urban society. Urban forestry deals with woodlands, groups of trees, and individual trees, where people live - it is multifaceted, for urban areas include a great variety of habitats (streets, parks, derelict corners, etc) where trees bestow a great variety of benefits and problems.” (Grey and Deneke, 1986)

The Urban Forests play a vital role in a positive social framework and sustainable environment.

Over recent years substantive research has shown benefits trees bring to social, economic and environmental arenas with improvements of air quality and the storage CO2 emissions. In ever increasing higher density urban areas it is essential trees are utilised to their full potential for future generations.

With the climatic conditions changing and more frequent extremes in climate events, it is imperative that strategic planning incorporates green assets to help combat issues of climate change and in turn aiding in the management of storm water by deflecting urban “run off “. By setting targets of increasing the canopy cover, thus reducing the use of resources and the additional budgetary strain on rectifying the end result of such events.

- Increased summer temperatures
- Increased winter temperatures
- Reduced summer rainfall
- Increased winter rainfall

Unifying green assets will improve the proactive management of infrastructure and help attain aims and objectives linked with strategy framework.

- Climate change adaption and mitigation plans
- Climate change strategy
- Highway asset management and maintenance
- Development planning
- Biodiversity strategy

2.2

Vision

***“To increase, enhance and sustain the urban forest for Walsall borough
improving social, economic and environmental benefits for future
communities”***

(Vision statement)

This strategy shows how the council’s vision will be delivered over the next 10 years by creating a sustainable urban forest for Walsall in a proactive manner through its strategic planning.

The vision will deliver a healthier tree population which will increase the social and economic and environmental benefits for all in the Walsall borough.

Protect and maintain the existing urban forest

The council will ensure responsible proactive management, maintain and protect its tree and woodland population, and will prioritise the maintenance and protection of existing trees in order to maximise the benefits of these green assets.

Increase canopy cover

The Council objectives will be to increase the canopy cover by 5% or in more deprived tree areas an average 7.1% to national average of 12% by 2024 through targeted tree planting programmes.

Additionally the council will explore all financial options open to them to increase tree planting to meet the target set for canopy cover and will ensure a tree planting programme will be delivered by the council to meet its vision of an ever increasing urban forest.

Mitigation of tree loss dependent on asset value will in all circumstances see a 2 for 1 replacement programme as a bare minimum.

Improve urban forest diversity

The council will proactively manage to attain a diverse tree population to mitigate against climatic change by increasing the age, class, diversity and species of its trees.

Increase community knowledge and engagement

The council will educate the community on the benefits of trees and their management requirements, and assist in community participation in the greening of Walsall.



View in Walsall's Arboretum

2.3 Aims & Objectives

The aims and objectives are laid out in borough wide and ward specific action plans highlighting the specific and achievable goals within a realistic time frame over the 10 year strategic plan.

This will include measurable actions as part of the annual service planning process to ensure the strategy is on track and meeting the targets set to deliver the vision of an overall sustainable urban forest.

2.4 Review of 2007 strategy

Outline review of 2007 Urban Forestry Strategy action points

The 2007 Urban Forestry Strategy was the initial document to provide Walsall with a guiding commentary to define how trees would be proactively managed and protected with action points to achieve the aims and objectives.

General Tree Management

The council has acquired a database system (*Ezytreev*) to proactively manage all the tree population throughout the borough ensuring they are incorporated into cyclical program to meet statutory obligations, resources, and service demands. At present a tree planting budget is still available and will be reviewed annually dependant on resources and to meet strategic planning, ie; canopy cover targets , additionally external funding will continue to be sought through all available avenues.

Parks and open Spaces

The council has acquired a database system (*Ezytreev*) to proactively manage all the tree population throughout the borough ensuring they are incorporated into cyclical program to meet statutory obligations. External funding will continue to be sought through all available avenues.

Street Trees

The council has acquired a database system (*Ezytreev*) to proactively manage all the tree population throughout the Borough ensuring they are incorporated into cyclical program to meet statutory obligations. A continuation of replacement program of unsuitable trees assessed by qualified arboricultarilist on an individual basis in relation to circumstances will continue, and the identification of further planting opportunities in the highway will persist.



Brownhills ward

Housing Trees

The council have acquired a database system (*Ezytreev*) to proactively manage all the tree population throughout the Borough ensuring they are incorporated into cyclical program to meet statutory obligations.

Partnership working to “green” more deprived areas is a priority. This will include working closely with land owners such as WHG (Walsall Housing Group), to promote and develop planting opportunities.

Private and Development Trees

Working with the Planning team in relation to new developments under 106 agreements for retention and protection of Walsall’s tree population. Full itinerary of protected trees is still ongoing and review of high amenity trees in council and private ownership highlighted is still in progress and will continue.

Tree Advice

Development of a website is still under review. This will highlight tree canopy cover and allow engagement from the community.

Woodland Management

The council ensures best practice through its woodland and green space management plans and maintains up-to-date risk assessments for its sites. Woodland is a priority habitat in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan and a delivery theme of the Nature Improvement Area. External funding has been secured towards managing existing woodland and planting new areas.

The council has established timber stations to process wood waste as fire wood and wood chip.

A voluntary tree warden scheme has been established to encourage and enable community involvement in tree and woodland management.

We will continue to liaise with partners and private owners to advise and support the appropriate management of their woodlands.

Plantations

The Council ensures appropriate specification for work to plantations through its woodland and green space management plans and maintains up-to-date risk assessments for its sites.

Woodland, in particular the management and enhancement of recently established woodland, is a delivery theme of the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area.

External funding has been secured to enrich and diversify recently established woodlands by thinning, coppicing and introducing locally native field layer.

The Council will continue to adopt a standard approach for responding to vandalism to and fly tipping in plantations.

Parkland

An inventory of veteran and ancient trees of landscape value and the identification of trees with the potential to be the next generation is still ongoing.



Pelsall common

2.5 Management Plans

Walsall Council has a rolling programme of preparing management plans for its nature reserves, parks, woodlands and other green spaces, providing the rationale for managing and enhancing sites.

Management plans tend to follow a similar format, though the length and detail required vary according to the complexity of the site and scope of work envisaged. An initial survey provides important background information and confirms the current management arrangements. These are evaluated to confirm the significance of the site and associated features, and identify any constraints. Demands and opportunities inform SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) management objectives, from which work prescriptions may be identified and prioritised over the timescale of the plan. Draft management plans should be published for consultation with local communities and other partners in order to gain their input and support.

Management plans may serve a variety of needs such as providing work programmes for site managers, prioritising resources, seeking funding and applying for accreditation e.g. Green Flag.



View of Walsall Arboretum

2.6 Measuring and Reporting

Walsall Council will ensure all goals and objectives are measured and reported regularly to monitor the progress of the strategies aims, these are identified in the following 3 points:

1. Canopy cover
2. Diversity of the tree population
3. Physical condition of the trees and woods

Canopy cover will be measured every 5 years and through subsequent developed strategies to monitor the trend to ensure the aims and objectives of the Action Plan are on track with expectations.

Diversity of the tree population by proactive succession planting with diversity been attained by ensuring no one species makes 10% or more of the overall population borough wide. Additionally age class should be a progression to an annual rise in young tree stock with retentive management of veteran and ancient trees giving a broader spectrum.

Physical condition of the trees and woods will be assessed through Tree Safety Management Plan identifying risk and developing a healthier and more resilient tree population for future generations to enjoy.

All these points will correlate with action plans for borough wide and ward plans alike and develop to prioritise the strategic aims to a positive outcome.

3. Benefits of Trees

Trees are major capital assets in villages, towns and cities across the United Kingdom. Just as public buildings and recreational facilities are part of a community's infrastructure, so are publicly owned trees. Trees in the urban area, more collectively known as the urban forest, are important assets that require care and maintenance the same as other public property. Trees are on the job 24 hours every day working for all of us to improve our environment and quality of life.

Walsall's urban forest provides many environmental benefits to its visitors and residents. Aside from the obvious aesthetic benefits, trees within the urban forest improve our air, protect our water, save energy, improve economic sustainability and enrich biodiversity and landscape.

Like many areas of the UK, the tree canopy cover in Walsall generally decreases along a rural to urban gradient. In other words, as the urban areas have been developed many trees have been lost or replaced with smaller less beneficial species, whereas many of our more rural and "green" areas have been managed and in some cases enhanced by tree planting projects.

Therefore, estimated pollutant uptake rates are lower for residential areas compared to natural or unmanaged lands. Possible management implications of these estimates are that air pollutant uptake benefits from tree planting may be optimized by planting in areas where air pollutant concentrations are elevated and where relatively high planting densities can be achieved thereby enhancing the health of urban dwellers. Bottom line - trees are more important in residential areas for improving residents health and shouldn't be considered a "visitor attraction".

3.1 Trees and climate change

- Reduces and helps regulate localised extremes in temperature
 - Provides shade, making streets, green spaces and built up areas cooler in the summer
 - Helps improve air quality and contributes to the reduction of atmospheric dust and particles
 - Improves environmental performance of buildings
 - Helps reduce traffic noise by absorbing and deflecting sound
 - Helps reduce localised wind speeds
 - Increases biodiversity and provides food, shelter and habitats for sustaining wildlife
 - Assists in land remediation
-
- Helps reduce the impact and effects of flash flooding by rainfall interception



3.2 Neighbourhoods and communities

The council is committed to making sure that its parks and open spaces are not only pleasurable and fun to visit but safe also. The community of Walsall and its many

visitors are essential to this process as it is they who are not only exposed to the risks but are the main recipients of the benefits of the urban forest in its many forms.

The council has committed to funding the development of a tree warden programme across the whole of its administrative area. This will include varied training programmes, administrative support and plenty of events to involve the community in Walsall's many parks, open spaces and countryside areas.

- Organise community events such as tree planting, tree walks, seed gathering, etc.
- Liaise with the local schools to act as advisors on tree matters
- Inspect many of the trees in the council's parks and countryside sites and add them to an inventory of all trees
- Act as the communities first point of contact for most tree matters
- Set up a tree nursery
- Keep an eye on unscrupulous developers

By supporting our neighbourhoods and working with our communities there are a number of social benefits derived from good management of trees:

- Improvement to the quality and public perception of the urban forest where communities live and work.
- Creating community focal points, landmark links and a sense of place and local identity
- Higher public esteem and pride in the area by breaking up building lines and the built environment.
- Positive impact on physical and mental health and well being, providing areas of recreation and aesthetically pleasing environments
- Positive impact on the reduction of crime

3.3 Financial Benefits of trees

Trees can have positive impact on the economy in that:

- Potential increase in residential and commercial property values by as much as 15% by attracting people and businesses to leafier suburbs
- Improvement to the environmental performance of buildings through reducing heat loss in the winter and cooling costs in the summer.
- Improving the health and well being of the urban population and as such reducing associated health care costs
- Provide potential long term renewable energy resources
- Timber as a resource for heating, furniture manufacture & crafts
- Training opportunities through tree planting, maintenance and woodland management

3.4 Biodiversity and Culture

Biodiversity is a term commonly used to describe the variety of life on Earth”

Trees are the largest and longest-lived organisms on Earth. They have been venerated since time in memorial, revered by many cultures and play a role in many of the world's mythologies. Individually and collectively trees can form focal points in the landscape, frame views or screen otherwise unsightly features.

Some trees are able to survive for many hundreds of years. These veteran trees provide a strong link with the past and are among the most precious fragments of our national heritage and need to be celebrated and protected.

Trees and woodland provide valuable resources for other wildlife. In Spring, woodlands may be carpeted by bluebells and resound to the dawn chorus; during Summer, bats and birds breed and butterflies flit through clearings; in Autumn, many plants produce fruit and seeds; and through Winter, birds flock together for safety and to search for food.

Woodland tends to be the most complex of terrestrial habitats, providing opportunities for more species than other e.g. more bird species breed in woodland than in any other major

habitat type. Woodland structure, size and isolation, tree and habitat variety and amount of dead wood are all factors in determining species diversity – each of these can be managed to increase biodiversity.

Ancient woodland (sites that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600) is an irreplaceable habitat. Due to their longevity, they are important for the conservation of genetic material (especially native trees that were growing within the region prior to the Industrial Revolution), preservation of soils and as repositories of local species that can re-colonise other woodland.

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, large-scale planting of new woodland was undertaken in many parts of the conurbation, whilst other sites were allowed to develop into woodland through neglect. However, these new woodlands are

structurally and ecologically poor, and do not support the variety and abundance of flora and fauna found in the older woodlands.

Woodland is a priority habitat in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan and a delivery theme of the Nature Improvement Area. Established woodland and veteran trees will be managed appropriately and recently established woodland will be enriched through the introduction of locally native species.

3.5 Ancient & veteran trees

What are Ancient & Veteran trees?

“A veteran tree can be defined as: ‘a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition’

Veteran trees are living signposts of the historical landscape allowing us to link to not only environmental but social background of the landscape we live.

In 1996, English Nature (now part of Natural England) began a partnership project, called the Veteran Trees Initiative (VTI), with the aim of promoting the conservation of veteran trees wherever they occur. From this an ongoing itinerary of “notable” trees is being gathered to ensure we retain and protect these irreplaceable natural assets for future generations. The result of this was the **Veteran Trees handbook: a guide**

to good management, an invaluable guide to anyone who has an interest in or needs to manage old trees.

From this increased awareness Walsall Council will proactively manage veteran trees to ensure retention and protection with emphasis on biodiversity benefit these green assets bring and promote increased awareness , using where possible and not posing an unacceptable risk more holistic approach in management.

The main characteristics of veteran trees is the girth of the trunk as an indicator to the age others are:

- Major trunk cavities or progressive hollowing
- Naturally forming water pools
- Decay holes
- Physical damage to trunk
- Bark loss
- Large quantity of dead wood in the canopy
- Sap runs
- Crevices in the bark, under branches or on the root plate sheltered from direct rainfall
- Fungal fruiting bodies (e.g. from heart rotting species)
- High number of interdependent wildlife species
- Epiphytic plants
- An 'old' look
- High aesthetic interest

Why do we need to manage ancient trees?

Veteran/Ancient trees are a precious part of our heritage that need care and attention in order to survive into the future.

The reasons for managing ancient trees have changed over the centuries. In the past, prior to the 18th century, all ancient trees would have worked for a living, providing our ancestors with firewood for their homes, fodder and shelter for livestock, timber for buildings and ships.

Later, in the 18th and 19th centuries, trees were managed by wealthy landowners in order to create pleasant places for recreation, walking, picnics and exercise.

While trees are still heavily regarded for recreation areas, the need for small-scale woods for timber has now declined. Therefore, ancient trees today tend to be managed for their cultural and archaeological interest, as well as for the habitat benefits they provide to wildlife.

The main reasons for managing ancient trees today are to -

- protect them from the current threats
- prevent an ancient tree from collapsing prematurely
- provide continuity of habitats for wildlife
- keep individual trees alive for as long as possible, to enable a new generation to replace the older ones
- maintain traditional practises and continuity within landscapes
- perpetuate aesthetic values, such as characteristic landscape features
- secure the future of historic or landmark trees
- fulfil safety requirements

Proactive management may not involve actually doing much. Trees will need to be checked regularly but management should only be carried out where necessary.

On a final note when managing ancient trees it is important to think not just about the tree, but also about the management of the land surrounding it. It is helpful to know as much about the tree and its historical background, the site and its status, to inform the management process.

3.6 Canopy cover

“The council will proactively aim to increase the canopy cover by 5% by 2026 with a focus on low tree covered areas aiming to achieve national average of 12% as a minimum in these wards”

Walsall covers a land area of 1616 hectares the canopy coverage is not land dedicated to the natural environment of trees, but areas which branches and foliage overhang to create the canopy. Many of the trees forming the canopy are not dedicated to parks and woodlands, but are located in the communities where we live

such as residential streets and gardens, housing spaces, district centres and lining the towns streets.

Two national surveys of urban trees have been carried out. Both called “*Trees in Towns*” the first one was published in 1992, the second was carried out in 2004, and published in 2007/8.

This showed West Midlands regional statistics , although not solely Walsall this data gives a picture of the urban forest.

- 11% coverage was from park trees.
- West Midlands had one of the lowest mature tree populations in UK.
- Mean average of canopy cover was 7.1 – 8.2% compared to 12% average nationwide.
- West Midlands equates to lowest proactively tree maintained region in the UK.
- West Midlands North East being the other was judged to have lowest proportion of high asset value tree population in the UK.

Many of these negative findings can be linked to the industrial heritage of the area and historically the lack of proactive tree management for the region.

The strategy for Walsall is to identify the entire tree population through use of geospatial technology (aerial photography) and physical inspection to create a complete picture of the tree stock. This will allow us to interrogate the data and use this to constantly improve the way Walsall Council manages its tree stock.

As discussed earlier in the strategy we now understand the benefits an urban forest can bring to not only social groups but also economic and environmental.

To meet the target of increased canopy cover and ensure the full benefits are achieved the following aims should be met:

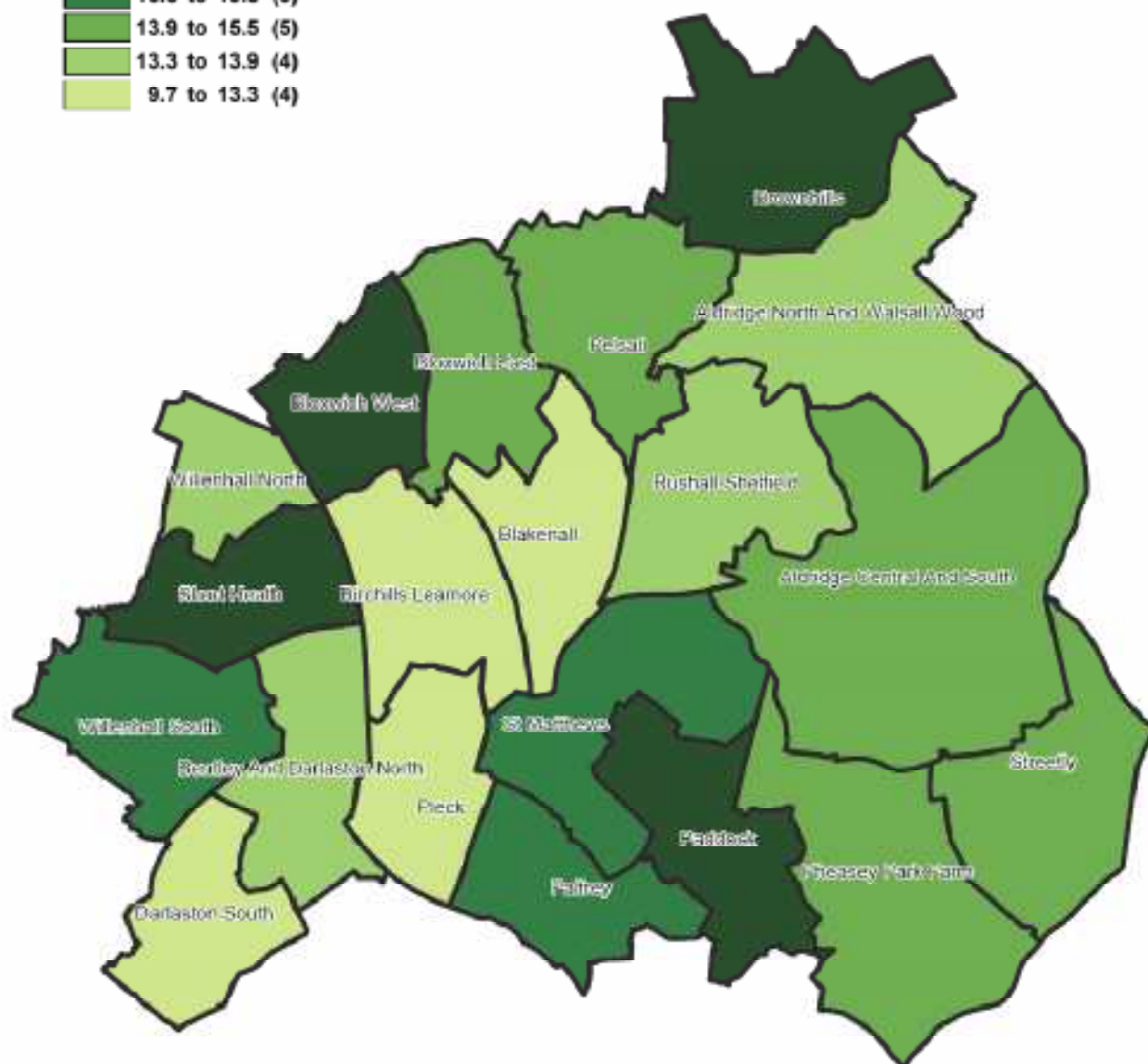
- Tree maintenance standards
- Tree protection
- Tree retention
- Species diversity
- Age diversity
- Health tree selection
- Target low canopy covered wards
- Awareness, educate ,communication

The thematic mapping below shows with one glance the areas of the Walsall borough of canopy of tree cover and its percentages.

This illustrates perfectly the correlation between tree canopy cover and the more deprived areas socially, environmentally , economically and how increasing the tree cover can aid in these urban areas.



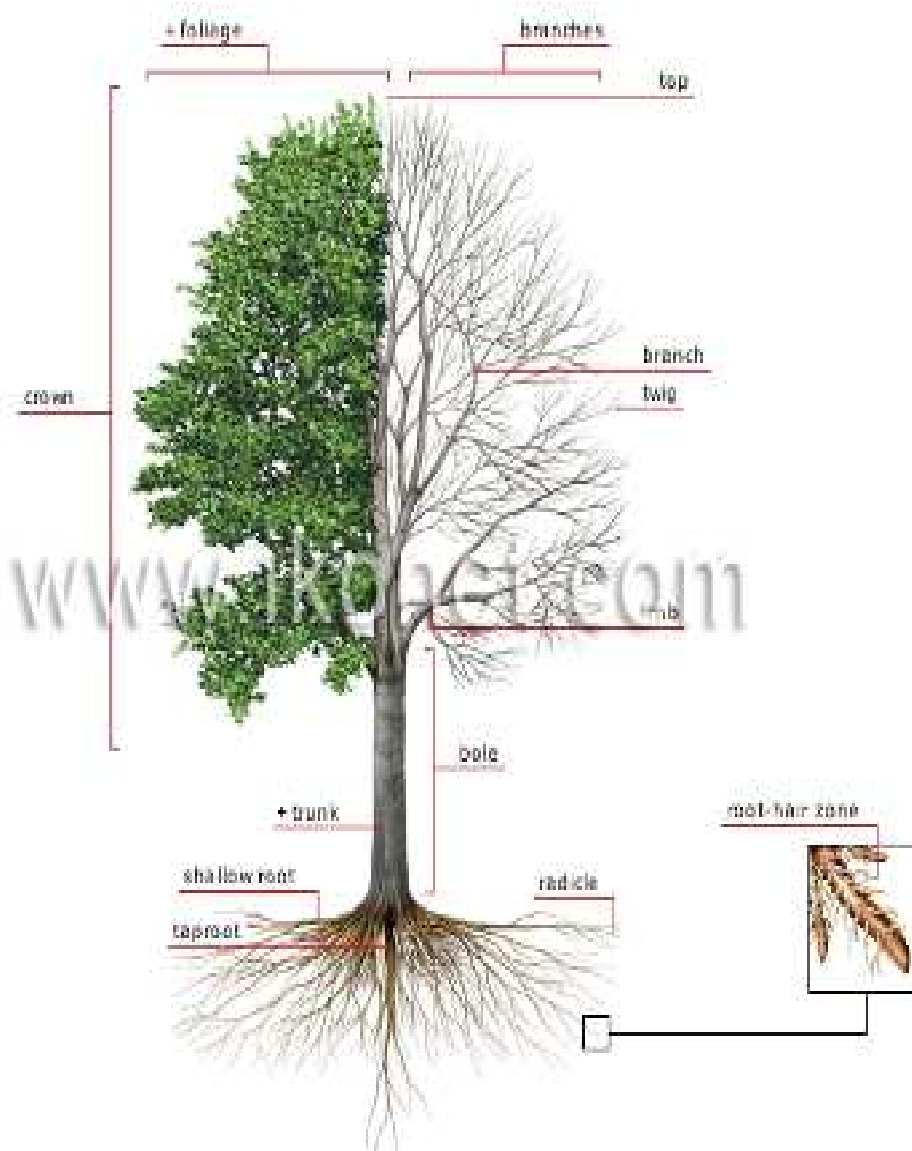
19.5 to 22.9	(4)
15.5 to 19.5	(3)
13.9 to 15.5	(5)
13.3 to 13.9	(4)
9.7 to 13.3	(4)

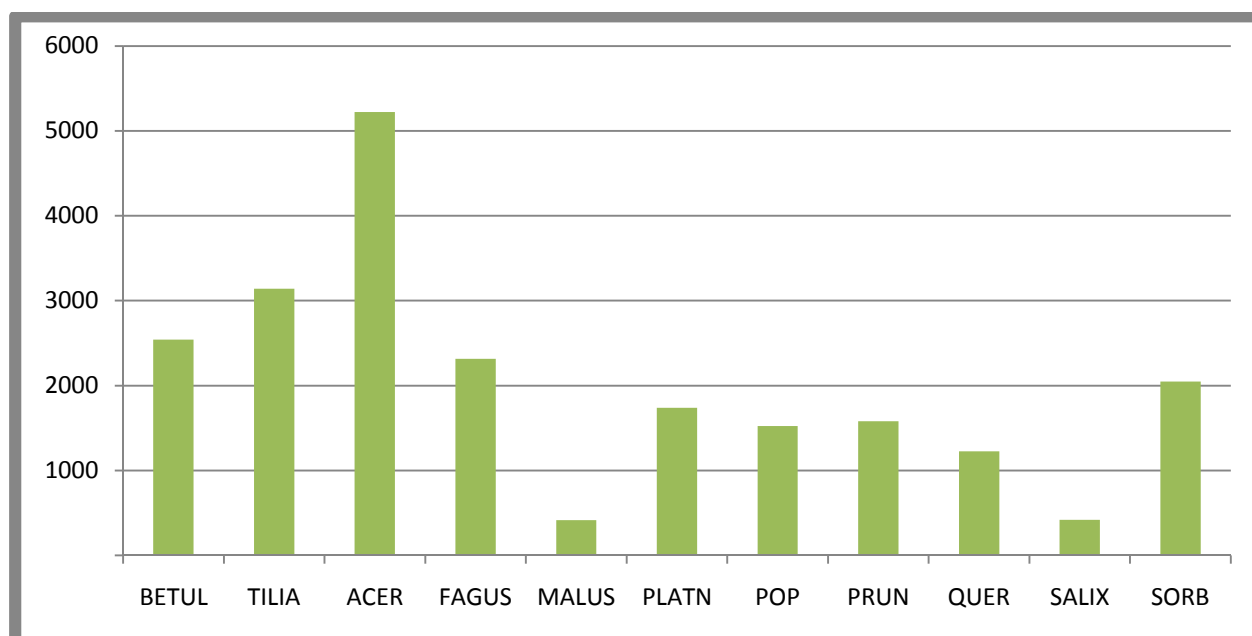


Research Center for the Environment, 4-1-8 Honcho, Utsunomiya City, 320-8580, Japan
E-mail: tsunoda@cc.utsunomiya-u.ac.jp

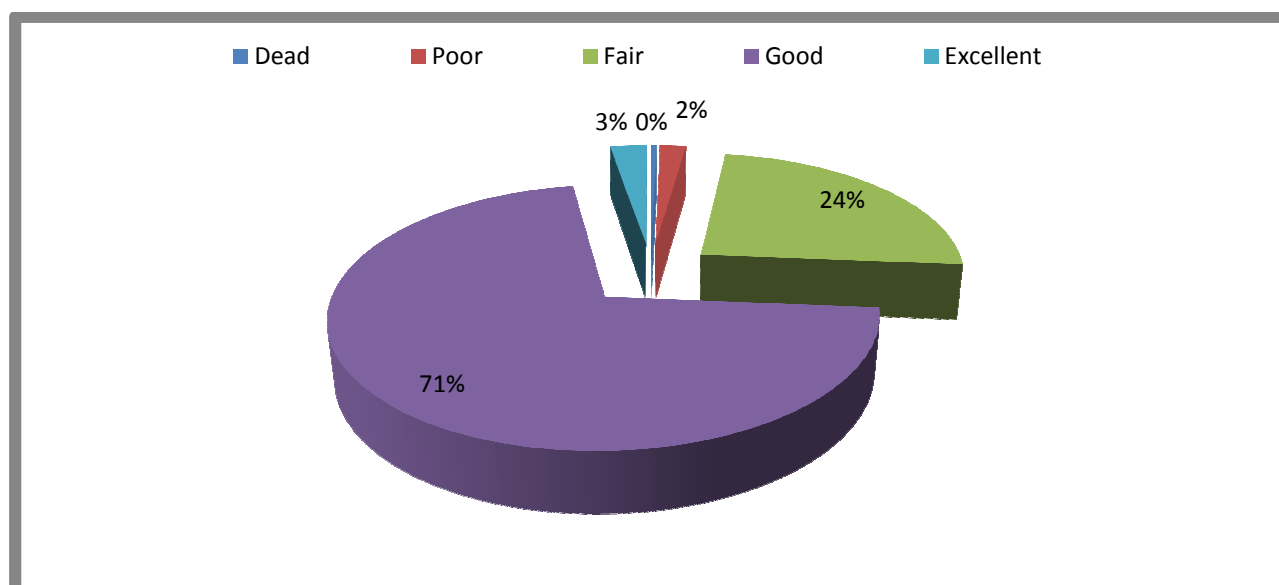
A Tree:

Trees are described as a 'dynamic, self optimising structure', in that their size, form and shape continually changes and adapts to the environment in which they grow. Often large in stature a mature tree consist of trunk, branches, twigs, foliage, fruits and flowers in which it stores solar energy and gases from the atmosphere. Below ground, trees have a network system of roots equally efficient and environmentally friendly by absorbing water, minerals etc. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen providing a fuel for life.



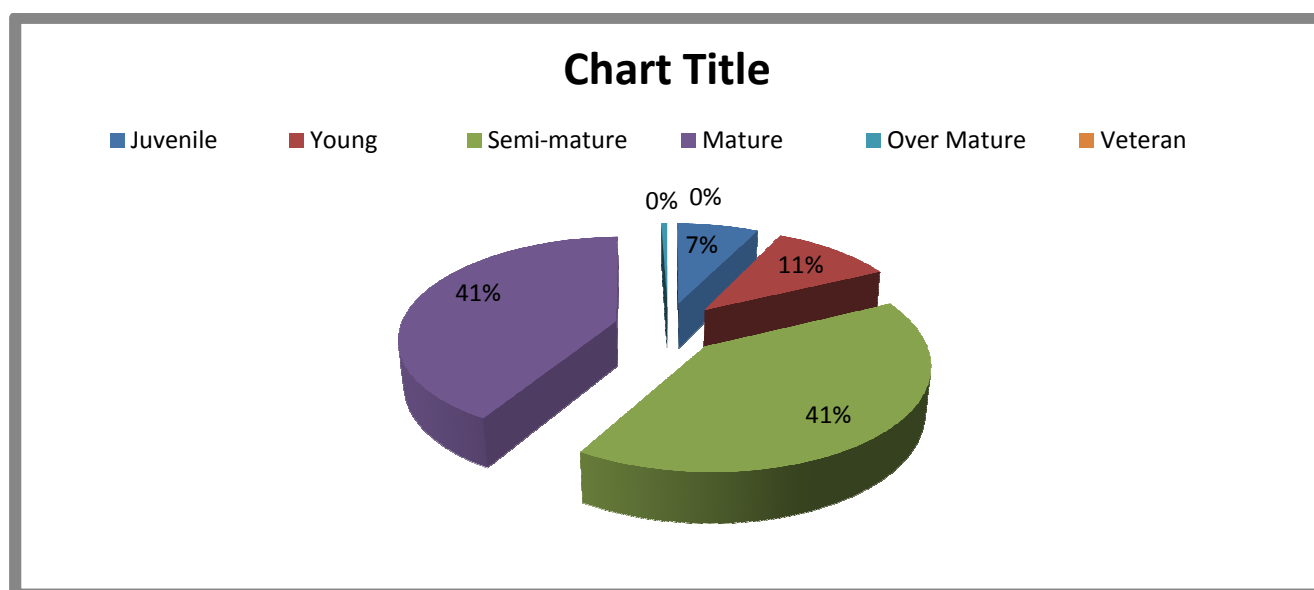
Tree population numbers of predominant species throughout Walsall

The figures show dominant species of acer species trees of mainly Norway maple and sycamore

Tree population condition of predominant tree species Boroughwide

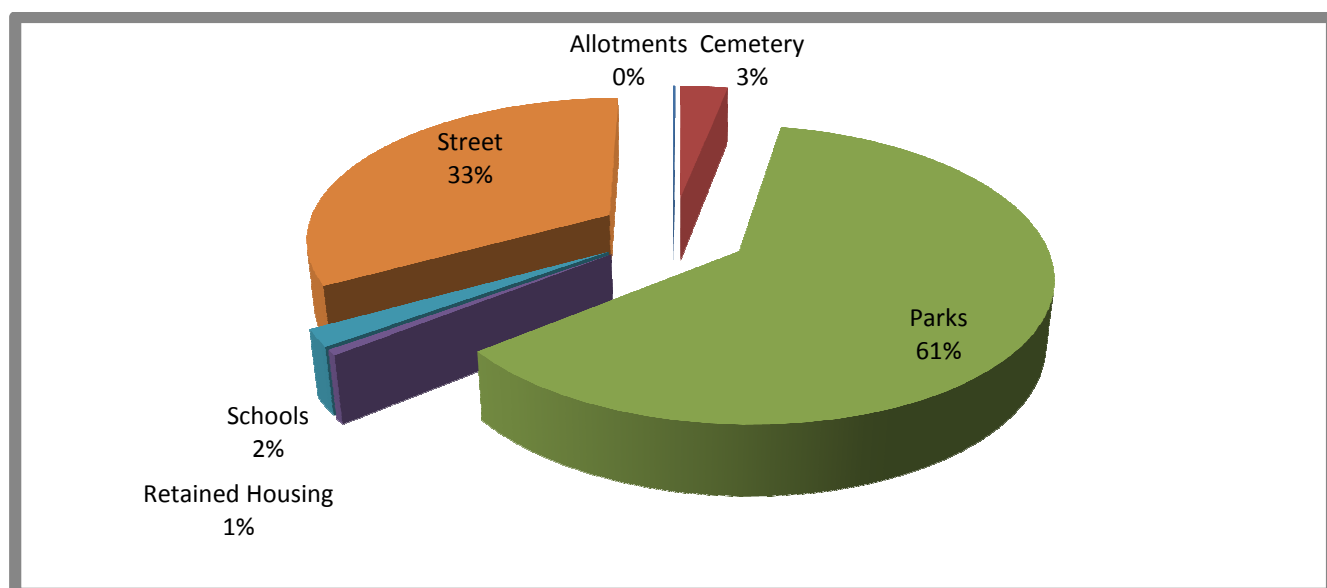
Figures show overall the boroughs trees at this time are predominantly in good health and the potential if managed proactively give a spring board for an improved and more diverse urban forest.

Age classification of predominant tree species Boroughwide



The figures reveal a typical overview of age classification and highlights the need at either end of the spectrum to manage our veteran population for heritage and environmental benefits and a proactive tree planting regime to ensure succession

Location of Tree populations



As shown in Trees in Towns the majority of Walsall's tree population reside in Parks , and emphasis of wider distribution particularly in Highway settings would be a target for successional planting.

3.7 Pollarding policy

Pollarding is a pruning technique carried out initially on a juvenile (*maiden*) tree in which the upper branches are removed, promoting a dense head of foliage and branches. Trees traditionally were treated in this way for 2 reasons :

- Food source for livestock which would be cut in a cycle to the needs of the owner.
- Woodfuel and materials eg: fences, baskets.

Historically this technique has been used to manage urban tree stocks but with further advancement of the understanding of trees in their natural state and the benefits they can offer to society, we have seen a significant direction of change in recent years in modern arboriculture to sustainably and proactively manage trees and woodlands for future generations.

The council's policy on pollarding **will not be** considered as a suitable tree management option and carried out only in exceptional circumstances which the supervising officer would deem necessary.

3.8 Timber management

Walsall Council actively manages the timber that is produced from its various tree management operations. Sources of timber come from the removal of street trees and park trees (as part of the tree risk management works), forestry operations

(Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grant works and woodland management plans), heath land restoration / management works (Natural England Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) works).

The timber that is harvested is treated in different ways dependent upon size, whether it is hardwood or softwood and timber quality. The timber is used/processed into the following:

Firewood

Walsall Council has been selling firewood since Autumn 2012. Hardwoods are processed - cut to size (8" – 10" lengths), split and air dried down to 20-25% moisture content (seasoned) and sold to the general public. The current volume of hardwood processed for firewood is 135m³ per year.

Softwood timber is used to heat the Environmental Depot. The timber is mainly supplied from timber recovered from the felling of trees as part of the tree risk management work programme with additional softwood entering the supply stream from thinning of conifer plantations and removal of poplar from amenity plantations (management plan works). The timber tends to be in the form of large tree butts and larger diameter branch wood.

The timber is 'cracked' (split) and stored undercover to air dry down to 30 – 35% moisture content. The timber is then chipped and fed into the Environmental Depot biomass woodchip heating system.

Woodchip

Woodchip is derived as a waste product from the various tree management works, this is generally small diameter (<7") branchwood from tree surgery works or small trees/shrubs harvested from woodland thinning and heath land scrub management work. Some woodchip is chipped and spread on the work site.

Estimated woodchip volumes generated from all tree work operations that are returned to the depot is > 2500m³. The woodchip is used variously for mulching shrub beds, in cemeteries and on local nature reserve paths; some is turned into compost.

Other timber uses

4ha of coppice are grown by Walsall Council – this is done for biodiversity benefits as well as for harvesting traditional country craft products. Currently the hazel is harvested and turned into hedging stakes, and binders that are used for hedgelaying work carried out by Walsall council as part of its HLS agreement with Natural England.

Some small scale, onsite milling of timber is carried out, using a chainsaw mill for making rustic benches on local nature reserves.

Future developments

Timber management inevitably means the felling of trees for the utilisation of the trees timber – this is not currently the main focus of the felling operations that take place across the borough, these are done mainly for risk management purposes or as part of nature conservation work.

Undertaking moderate forestry operations in our woodlands, based on management for timber should not be viewed as anathema to the goals of nature conservation and public access. Indeed managing woodlands for timber production can have beneficial effects on public good outputs / ecosystem services. Moderate levels of woodland management can enhance the recreational value of woodland in urban and peri-urban areas (Willis et al., 2003) and managing woodlands by undertaking little or no management can lead to a decline in semi-natural woodland biodiversity (Kirby et al., 2005). With this in mind, future development of the boroughs timber resource could focus on:

Timber production/marketing

There is a need to carry an inventory and assessment of woodlands to estimate volumes of marketable, good quality hardwood sawlogs. Identified standing timber could potentially be sold standing (as long as volumes permit – minimum volume of timber for transport from road side is 18m³). This would feed into the management plan frame work for woodland management.

Biomass production

A possible rationalisation of the use of 'waste' woodchip could generate an income - biomass woodchip is currently valued at £4 – £10/m³ dependent upon the quality of the woodchip.

We could further add to this resource by undertaking an inventory and assessment of woodlands and plantations in the borough, identify sites that would benefit from the removal of trees (in particular softwoods) so that they could be restructured to be more natural / semi-natural woodland. The harvested timber could be sold into the biomass supply chain.

Non-council owned woodland

The council would act as a forestry agent/consultant and actively seek out private woodland owners and encourage them to manage their woodlands for timber production (firewood or marketable sawlogs). The council could make Forestry Commission grant applications, advise on writing management plans and act as contractor / engage contractor to carry out forestry works.

3.9 C.A.V.A.T. (*Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees*)

Walsall Council ensures that the full intrinsic value of trees is made as part of its proactive tree management strategy to ensure it evaluates and protects its trees appropriately in all cases.

In the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 198, trees have value as a public amenity and therefore local planning authorities are given a duty to protect trees in the public interest.

CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) provides a basis for managing trees in the UK as public assets rather than liabilities. It is designed not only to be a strategic tool and aid to decision-making in relation to the tree stock as a whole, but also to be applicable to individual cases, where the value of a single tree needs to be expressed in monetary terms.

4. Trees on Council land

4.1 Council owned trees and their management

Walsall Council tree stock amounts to approximately 50,000 trees Borough wide and the law requires the local authority to have a defensible system in place to manage the risk of falling trees.

As part of this process we ensure the trees are inspected on a regular basis and a proactive management to deal with residents issues in relation to trees.

Majority of trees are located on highway, parks or open spaces in and around housing areas giving green spaces for all areas and communities in the Borough.

Further information is detailed in the *Appendix 3 Tree risk management strategy*.



Tree planting

4.2 Managing risk

**“We must be aware risk can never be nullified completely,
and everyday life opens us up to risk”.**

The council has a statutory duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the occupiers Liability Act 1957/84 to ensure that members of the public and staff are not to be put at risk because of any failure by the council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety.

A Risk Assessment is required under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999. There is a need to inspect trees in or near public places, or

adjacent to buildings or working areas to assess whether they represent a risk to life or property, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

“Risk - is the level of likelihood that a hazardous tree will cause actual damage”

Each year on average five to six people in the UK are killed by falling tree branches. Thus the risk is low; the risk of being struck and killed in a public space is even lower. Up to three people are killed each year by trees in public spaces, as almost the entire population of the UK is exposed, the risk is about one in 20 million. However the low level of risk may not be perceived in this way by the public and courts, particularly when the cost of maintenance of individual trees is so low.

The awareness of risk of trees has developed into the consciousness of the insurance sector mirroring the sections of the society regarding trees more of a nuisance than a benefit and putting further pressures on urban tree stocks.

However low the risk, if there is a tree failure, the Council must be able to demonstrate it has a system in place, from a legal and moral perspective, that shows risk is controlled as far as reasonably practicable.

Guidance by legislation will assist and allow the Council to proactively manage in the remit of a defensible system for risk as part of its statutory obligations set out in law ***Management of the risk from falling trees*** (SIM 01/2007/05).

Hazard and Risk.

In order to arrive at a reasoned Risk Assessment for Walsall's Urban Forest the two separate factors of Hazard and Risk must be addressed.

“Hazard - is the potential to cause harm”

Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline, senescence and collapse and they can be damaged physically or invaded by pathogenic organisms. As trees deteriorate so they are increasingly likely to shed limbs or fail in strong winds and the potential to cause harm increases.

Ancient and decaying trees are often beautiful and uniquely valuable as habitat for wildlife and, however poor the physical condition of a tree, remedial action is only necessary where there is a clearly quantifiable risk to life or property. This might mean removing part of the tree, the whole tree, or reducing the level of public access in the vicinity.

Risk is related to the location of the tree. It reflects the intensity of use of the immediate surroundings of the tree and the proximity of the tree to people, buildings or other structures (targets).

The Tree Maintenance Programme.

It is the responsibility of the council to ensure that tree inspection procedures are in place and that they are undertaken only by staff or others who meet the requirements of competence.

“It is prudent to predict future hazards rather than continually responding to problems.”

The tree assessment programme has four stages;

- Assessment of risk;
- Assessment of hazard;
- Prescription for remedial action.
- A plan for the recording and re-inspection process

As part of council's statutory obligations it is expected in the eyes of the law to have a proactive program of inspection. Walsall Council has put in place a plan that ensures each individual tree in the Borough is inspected every 5 years, where remediation has been identified works will be prioritised dependant on the level of risk.

- Relevant Legislation and Guidelines:
- D.O.E *Circular ROADS NO 52/75 - 90/73 - 36/78*
- *Occupiers liability act 1957/1984*
- *SIM 01/2007/05 & 5 STEPS (management risk of falling trees H.S.E)*

Delivery

It is imperative for safe delivery that competent arboriculture professionals are integral to the plan and the carrying out of duties in relation to this. This would ensure accurate, efficient and informed decisions ensuring duty of care is met in all circumstances where possible.

"A competent person is defined as being any person with specific practical and theoretical knowledge as well as experience of a particular task or job. A competent

person must know what the limits of their knowledge are and when to seek help or advice.”

The first step of the delivery is to identify all assets within the Borough through a methodical and quantifiable method of inspection and assessment. This is still a process that is ongoing and dependant on resources and budgetary constraints which the service has to shoulder in the present climate, we envisage a full itinerary completed in 2017.

This will be achieved by the use of GIS technology and methodical physical inspection of the identified tree stock.

The application of the quantified approach means the individual risk rating of a tree can be ranked, and remediation prioritised, again, ensuring resources are utilised in accordance with greatest need and benefit.

Whilst it is not practical to completely eliminate risk , there is a requirement that the owner takes all reasonable care to identify possible sources of foreseeable danger and to remove them ***as far as reasonably practicable***.

Due to the nature of a densely populated and constantly changing dynamic urban environment and the relation this has with the tree stock with this fluid situation ,the risk zones will be applied to ensure if remedial action is necessary then it can be prioritised to locations where there is greatest risk and benefit.

This will assist in ensuring most effective application of limited resources and meeting statutory obligations. This will be standardised in the program ensuring all trees are inspected in a 3 yearly cycle *Refer to Appendix 3 – Tree risk management strategy*.

4.3 Retained Housing & Street Trees

Retained Housing trees

Walsall Council's responsibility for housing was reduced in 2003 to specific retained pockets with the remainder of Walsall Housing Group (W.H.G) transferring management to a private contractor.

The retained housing sites are scattered borough wide and account for the lowest percentage of managed trees, although the potential exists to accommodate further planting schemes to assist in the increase of canopy cover throughout the Borough. These trees being varied in species and age are considered an important element in such urbanised areas and proactive management is essential to retain the stock Walsall currently have.

The benefits to the community of green spaces and the socio-economic benefits providing positive environments for residents to live and have ownership of where they live.

This is not the limit in which trees give positive outcomes helping reduce storm water events in the evident decline of greens spaces in urban areas helping to deflect up to 1000 litres of water in any one event. Giving areas of shade in increasing warmer urban climate and sense of seasons are all justifications to ensure we manage trees in Walsall for future generations.

Street trees

Street trees make a major contribution to the character and quality of the boroughs landscape, creating a green and leafy environment for many areas and providing visual amenity, wildlife habitat and shade for residents. The street trees vary considerably in age, size and species, influenced mainly by the differing age and character of different parts of the borough.

Due to the location of trees on the Highway, management is essential to meet the demands of the Boroughs infrastructure and yet still provide "green corridors" to ensure targets set in the urban forestry strategy for canopy cover throughout the borough are met and a suitable environment is maintained for trees to thrive in a particularly harsh environment.

Every opportunity to plant trees in street locations will be sought to further increase Walsall tree stocks in cooperation from internal and external bodies.

4.4 Parks and green spaces

Trees in parks and green spaces play an important part in the character and quality of the wards they reside giving opportunity for the local community to have access to

open spaces which provide a breathing space in a busy urban environment. They also relate to cultural and historical ties helping to strengthen community links.

Trees in parks and green spaces hold the majority of mature high asset value trees and provide habitats which increase biodiversity levels in the borough as a whole. In light of this and the numerous other benefits trees provide the council is committed to the high quality management of this important asset and understand proactive management can provide all levels and ages of the visitors to and residents of Walsall enjoyment and pleasure now and in the future.

4.5 Schools and cemetery sites

Schools

Walsall Council works under service level agreements as part of the grounds maintenance for education sites for the majority but not all school and academy sites in the borough.

Trees historically have been dealt with on a reactive basis and discussions are progressing to incorporate education sites into the cyclical program to ensure statutory obligations in regard to trees are met. This process will continue through with the aim to incorporate trees into grounds maintenance program from the 2014/15 financial year.

From this we will have a full itinerary of the tree stock on education sites and a proactive defensible system in place.

Cemeteries

All cemeteries that are municipal or closed to burials and have been handed over to the council from Church diocese will be managed in accordance to the council's policy and to meet its statutory obligations.

Historically cemeteries were managed on a reactive basis in regard to tree issues and the true asset value and condition of these trees was unknown. As part of the council's objectives in identifying all of its assets, trees in cemeteries have been incorporated into the cyclical tree maintenance program and will be inspected for condition and if necessary remediation carried out in the interests and safety of the residents of Walsall.

4.6 Woodlands and Conservation sites

Walsall Council has over 1616 hectares of canopy cover throughout the borough providing a myriad of habitats for many species.

These woods are predominately ancient semi-natural woodland, the aim as part of the strategy is to identify woodland categories in the borough and develop management plans throughout to ensure appropriate management is defined specifically to develop the characteristics of each in an appropriate manner.

The remaining areas of woodland are secondary woods generally having been planted since the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps in 1876. These woodlands can have high landscape value and provide new habitat and useful links between existing sites. Most of these woods are in private ownership and not accessible to the general public.

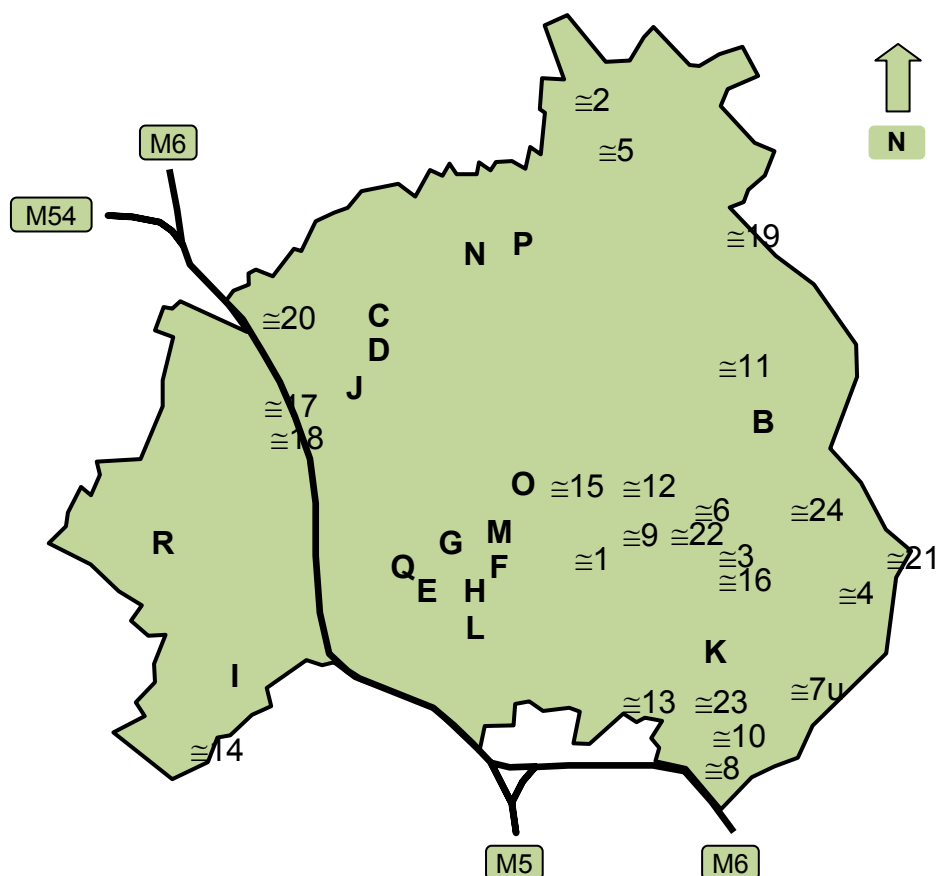
The aims and objectives are to increase and sustain all woodlands in a proactive management plan to ensure we utilise them to their full potential that being either in a recreational, environmental, commercial or educational capacity to benefit all within the Walsall Borough.

"Protecting, improving and expanding England's woodlands to increase their value to society, the environment and the economy."

(forestry commission vision statement)

Below are the list of woodlands in which Walsall Council have responsibility or input into the future management of:

Walsall's Woodlands and Conservation Areas



Woodlands		Conservation Areas	
1	Arboretum Extension, Walsall	A	Aldridge
2	Birch Coppice East, Brownhills	B	Arboretum
3	Birch Wood, Aldridge	C	Bloxwich High Street
4	Blackwood Park, Streetly	D	Bloxwich Park
5	Clayhanger Community Woodland, Clayhanger	E	Bradford Street
6	Cuckoos' Nook, Aldridge	F	Bridge Street
7	Doe Bank Wood, Streetly	G	Caldmore Green
8	Gilberts Wood, Great Barr	H	Church Hill
9	Hay Head Wood, Aldridge	I	Darlaston
10	High Wood, Great Barr	J	Elmore Green
11	Leigh's Wood, Aldridge	K	Great Barr
12	Lodge Wood, Aldridge	L	Highgate
13	Merrions Wood, Great Barr	M	Lichfield Street
14	Moorcroft Wood, Moxley	N	Old Pelsall
15	Park Lime Pits, Rushall	O	Old Rushall
16	Potters Wood, Aldridge	P	Pelsall Common
17	Rough Wood, Short Heath	Q	Walsall Locks
18	Rough Wood South, Short Heath	R	Willenhall
19	Shire Oak Park, Walsall Wood		
20	Sneyd Reservoir Woodland, Bloxwich		
21	Streetly Wood, Streetly		
22	The Dingle, Aldridge		
23	The Duckery, Great Barr		

24	Towers Covert, Aldridge	
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As part of the progression of the urban forestry strategy woodland management plans will develop in line with it and define how woodlands will be shaped for medium and long term.

These vital green assets are important to the area as a whole to meet climate adaption for urban environment helping reduce CO2 emissions, reduction in storm water events and increase biodiversity. This is a difficult task with only 2% land area being covered by ancient woodland (*woodland trust*) and further pressures from residential and commercial development it is imperative the profile of the benefits of woodlands are broadened to all groups and levels to ensure their survival in the landscape.

A total of 1,043 UK woods have been under threat from development over the last ten years.

(Woodland trust)



Leighs Wood in Spring

4.7 Cyclical and re-active management plans

Tree Assessments

Assessments of trees is to primarily identify defects that may result in a risk or serious inconvenience to the general public, this should be carried out by a competent person as explained previously in this strategy and are broken down in the following format.

Cyclical Tree maintenance program

Page 49 shows the program highlighting where and when trees throughout the borough are inspected and works carried out. The council will endeavour to stay within the parameters but this may be affected by service demands, seasonality, and weather conditions including emergency tree works.

Reactive tree management

Outside of its cyclical tree management programme, the council will undertake works, where appropriate, in response to requests, complaints and other enquiries. The council deals with these via its Mayrise CRM system. The council has a set of reactive response times that are based upon a combination of risk evaluation and available resources.

Responses to emergency works

Example being a tree that is in a condition thought to be an imminent danger to public safety (note: If a tree requires urgent attention following storm damage, for example, there is an emergency 24 hour call out service in place)

- During normal working hours (Monday to Friday 0730hrs to 1530hrs), the council will respond to an emergency within an hour of being notified.
- Outside of normal working hours, the council will respond to an emergency within two hours of being notified.

Responses to other actionable complaints/requests

- The council will respond within 28 days (this may include an inspection of the tree where this is considered necessary)
- The council will undertake any necessary works within 7 days if deemed urgent .
- The council will undertake any necessary works within 6 months through quantification of the risk posed.

5 yearly Tree Maintenance Program

Year	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
WARD	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
St Matthews				
Birchalls Leamore				
Pheasey Park Farm				
Paddock				
Darlaston North				
Willenhall South				
Willenhall North				
Pleck				
Palfrey				
Bloxwich West				
Bloxwich East				
Blakenhall				
Brownhills				
Pelsall				
Streetly				
Aldridge North				
Aldridge South				
Rushall Shelfield				
Short Heath				
Darlaston South				
Epicormic Program				
Tree count	8132	5458	6976	8856

In all cases, the council's appointed arboriculture officers will consider and prioritise reactive tree works on a case by case basis. Works will be in line with policy and prioritised accordingly.

In exceptional circumstances trees can conflict with infrastructure, property and everyday life of individuals residents to a degree that further action may need consideration, the council response as a good neighbour will be to weigh the pros and cons of each particular issue and determine the best course of action if, any to benefit all parties.

The decision should be made by an arboriculture officer and if needed liaise with other colleagues and professionals to determine the best course of action, taking into consideration the asset value of the tree.

All actions will be reasonable in relation to the issue and no one decision will be seen as a precedent.

4.8 Sustainability, planting (right trees, right place)

Planting trees is a hefty investment of both time and resources but invaluable in the succession of tree population, and the benefits that brings, so definitive factors that will determine the highest success and long term benefit for the tree and the infrastructure it relates to is imperative.

These 6 factors will determine the council choice of right tree right place :

Function

Determine the desired benefits from the tree in the space e.g.: increased stormwater management, fruit trees in orchard project.

Character

Consideration of the historic and landscape character of the area eg: Arboretum

Diversity

Consideration of the wider tree population, e.g.: mitigation to climatic change.

Design

Overall impact of the tree e.g.: scale, impact, colour etc..

Site constraints

Soil type, utilities, the potential for nuisance and damage to property and people e.g.: reduction in tree nuisance issues.

Support capacity

Aligned with community aspirations with consideration of long term management and capacity to do so.

e.g.; tree watering programs.

Planting specifications will adhere with relevant and prescribed industry standards to ensure the potential for establishment and good health for all newly planted trees is met.

A British Standard Draft is currently in consultation BS 8545 (*from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations*) and if taken onboard by arboricultural industry this will act as a standard prescribed document for tree planting for Walsall Council.

Alternatively best industry practice will be followed in all cases.

4.9 Biosecurity

As part of the council's proactive measures in tree management we are vigilant in the fight to address pests and diseases which are currently affecting trees throughout Britain.

The threat to our forest and woodland health from pests has never been greater. Trees and plants can be susceptible to a range of pests and only a small proportion of these are controlled under plant health legislation.

Pest outbreaks can have serious implications for sustainable forest management and the provision of ecosystem services. They can have a severe financial impact on forestry and related industries and can cause economic loss and disruption to other sectors such as wood processing and tourism. The spread of endemic or naturalised pests may be less newsworthy but these can have an equally detrimental impact.

Chalara disease (*ash dieback*)

The most prominent at present is the recent outbreak of chalara disease which is affecting ash trees.

In our control measure we as part of our surveying program will identify and collate data on all ash trees in the borough spot checking to monitor any outbreaks of the disease.

If in the unfortunate event (*as yet Walsall has had no record of chlara*) we will follow government guidance on how to deal with the issue from the forestry commission literature in an expedient manner, this will help protect the health of our trees and woodlands.



(chalara disease – ash dieback)

The UK Government introduced legislation on Monday 29 October 2012 to implement requirements to protect Great Britain's ash trees against the threat from the *Chalara fraxinea* (*C. fraxinea*) fungus. The legislation restricts imports of ash plants and seeds to those originating in pest-free areas. Because no country has declared a pest-free area for *C. fraxinea*, this effectively means a total ban on imports and movement of ash trees and seed for planting within Britain until a pest-free area is declared.

The generic bio security procedures within the guidance must be followed whenever an official regulatory/advisory visit is made to any land or premises on behalf of the Forestry Commission. Contractors who carry out official visits for the Forestry Commission are required to follow the same bio security procedures as employees and this guidance therefore needs to be specified in relevant contracts.

The guidance is primarily aimed at regulatory/advisory staff but is also recommended as best practice for use by all those engaged in the forestry and arboricultural sectors.

The guidance given is generic and will be used in conjunction with specific recommendations that will be tailored to each individual circumstance. The procedures follow a structured approach similar to the way we determine other control measures by assessing the level of risk involved. This is standard in forestry and arboricultural sectors to manage the health and safety and protect the environment.

5. Trees on Private land and development sites

The primary role of Walsall tree management in conjunction with Planning and Development will be to deliver dynamic and strategy based solutions to address the importance of trees as a material consideration in all planning matters. This will be with the support of many different departments and agencies that have an interest in the benefits of this strategy and can affect its delivery. The Plan will indicate where major contributions are sought from others and where benefits are likely to assist them in their own priorities.

The Urban Forest Strategy will assist the council in making strategic and sustainable decision on development and growth, economic planning, developing sustainable communities and direct asset management.

Increasing involvement of local communities in addressing these issues will be important, both for decision making, but also for active participation in achieving the vision. Private owners and managers should be encouraged and advised of the wider importance of their trees and woods and be involved in partnerships. Partnerships will greatly assist the council to identify and secure external funding and sponsorship, and contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of the strategy.

Works in the vicinity of trees

When works are to be carried out in the vicinity of retained council owned trees on development sites and as part of general works of Highway, statutory undertakers, there should be a material consideration as would any other infrastructure on site.

Guidance from the following documents should be followed and not restricted to :

- **NJUG 4** - *Guidelines for planning and installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees*
- **BS 5837** - *trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*
- **BS3998** - Tree works
- **BS 8545** - *From nursery to independence in the landscape(currently in draft Nov. 13)*

The council's Arboricultural officer should be informed of all potential works which may effect council owned trees within the borough.

5.1 Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (The Act in relation to trees)

Modern planning system were established under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, local authorities retained powers to protect tree and woodlands in the interests of the amenity by making tree preservation orders . The act was updated in 1990 with additional outlines in 1999 giving guidance on how to run this system within a good administrative process.

5.2 Trees in a Conservation Area

All trees with a trunk diameter of 75mm or more are protected in a Conservation Area. You must give six weeks notice before carrying out work to trees in a Conservation Area that are not protected by a TPO. If there is no objection to the work being carried out, then we will let you know, but if we have concerns that the work may be damaging or that the tree should be retained, we will consider giving the tree full protection by issuing a TPO. Unauthorised work to a tree in a Conservation Area is a criminal offence.

5.3 Tree Preservation Order

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) can be placed on single trees, groups of trees and even whole woodlands. If a TPO is in force you must apply for consent from us before carrying out any work to the trees covered. Unauthorised work to a protected tree is a criminal offence.

What type of trees can be covered by a TPO

Anything that would normally be called a "tree" may be covered by a TPO. There is no minimum size, but bushes or shrubs of any size cannot be protected. TPO's protect trees that make their local surroundings more attractive. Protected trees should normally be visible from a public place, but in some cases other trees may be protected.

How do I find out if a tree has a TPO or is in a Conservation Area?

Contact the council's planning department giving the address, postcode, location and type of tree. They will be able to tell you if the tree is protected or in a conservation area. When you are buying a property the presence of a TPO should be shown by the search of the local land charges register.

Appendix 1 - Glossary of terms:

Arboriculture	The science and art of managing trees for amenity purposes.
Canopy cover	The percent of a fixed area covered by the crown of a tree
C.A.V.A.T	Capital Asset Value of Amenity Trees is a recognised formula for placing an asset value to individual trees.
Conservation Area	Areas designated for special protection due to architectural or historic interest, including trees.
Duty of Care	Requires the owner of a tree to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which cause a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury to persons or property.
Ezy-Treev	Software system, used by the Council to catalogue its tree stock.
Hazard	Something with the potential to cause harm.
Picus	Sonic Tomography, The use of sound or shock waves to create cross sectional illustrations of the internal integrity of tree stems.
Pollarding	The initial removal of the top of a young tree at a prescribed height to encourage multi-stem branching from that point.
Risk	The level of likelihood that a hazardous tree will cause actual damage.
Tree	Wood forming plants - A dynamic, self optimising structure.
T.P.O	Tree Preservation Order , a tree, tree group, woodland or area of land on which tree work is normally unlawful, without consent from the local planning authority.
Urban Forest	Public and private trees located in and around a urban area.
Urban Forestry	A planned, systematic approach to the trees and woodlands in and around towns and cities, resulting in social, environmental and economical benefits for local communities.

Appendix 2 – Frequently asked questions:

1. The tree outside my house looks dangerous and moves in the wind.....

Walsall council's inspectors are qualified tree experts who will inspect a tree following an enquiry or in line with Tree Risk Management Strategy following routine inspections. It is recognised that the movement of the trees in the wind does not automatically signify that the trees is dangerous; our inspection will determine its condition and safety. Trees have a natural movement in windy conditions with flexing of the trunk and movement of branches.

2. The tree outside my house has not been pruned for a long time. It is too tall and needs to be lopped back.....

Trees in Walsall are regularly assessed and any safety or maintenance related works are reported at this time. Walsall Council does not reduce the height of the trees as a matter of course, as this can stimulate rapid re-growth and/or cause significant defects in the tree's structure, which are later hard to detect.

The council will routinely prune highways trees to ensure that branches shall be reduced back where they are obstructing roads and footpaths, masking streetlights, road signs and other street furniture, so as to maintain vehicular and pedestrian safety on the highway.

3. Tree branches are growing across my boundary...

There is no requirement in law to prevent trees spreading over a boundary. However, whilst there is no obligation to prune trees, if branches or roots encroach on to neighbouring land they are legally regarded as a nuisance. Under the terms of law the tree owner is not obliged to cut back the branches overhanging their neighbours' garden. The owner of the adjacent land has the legal right and 'abate the nuisance' by cutting the branches or roots encroaching on other property. Where requests are made to prune trees that overhang a boundary each instance will be assessed on its merits. As a general policy, the council will only undertake work where a tree's branches touch or are very close to a building. Where overhang of the boundary is relatively minor or at considerable height, works may not be undertaken by the council.

4. A council owned tree is shading my property and/or blocking my view...

Householders have no right to light from across a neighbour's land. Likewise there is no right to a view, and a view obstructed by the growth of trees cannot legally be regarded as a nuisance. Where requests are made to prune trees to increase light levels, each instance will be assessed on its merits. As a general policy the council will not undertake the topping, thinning, or felling of trees simply to allow more light to a property, where the trees in question would not otherwise require any surgery.

One of the most common complaints received in respect of trees, is that they block light from properties and shade gardens. The council will not fell or prune council-owned trees solely for the reason that they are allegedly reducing light levels into properties or are casting shade over gardens.

A person's tolerance of shade or their need for light is a subjective and personal matter whilst some people prefer shade there are those that have desire for sunlight. Many people are

aware of the ancient and prescriptive right to light, but this only relates to loss of light over a considerable period of time in certain specific circumstances. Where trees are concerned there is no 'right to light'. The tree owner is under no legal obligation to prune a tree for the benefit of a neighbour or complainant.

There are a variety of other potential nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor or seasonal and considered to be social problems associated with living near trees.

5. Trees are blocking light to my solar panels...

As the number of residential solar panel installations increase there is going to be a greater problem from over shadowing and shading from trees and other obstacles. Trees in particular may cause a problem as even partial shading on some solar arrays can potentially reduce their ability to generate electricity.

The Council will not fell or prune council-owned trees solely for the reason that they are casting shadows over solar panels.

6. The tree is affecting my television and satellite reception....

There is no legal right to television reception. Existing trees on neighbouring land which interfere with television reception, especially with satellite transmissions, are unlikely to be regarded as a nuisance in law. As a policy the council will not undertake the topping, thinning or felling of trees simply to improve television or satellite reception, where the trees in question would not otherwise require any surgery.

In the vast majority of cases, interference can be reduced by an engineering solution ie: the relocation of the aerial or by the use of "booster boxes", which often improve the reception significantly.

7. I have a problem with pollen and allergies...

All vegetation produces pollen as part of its life cycle. Everything from grass to trees can have an effect on allergy sufferers. As this is a natural process, it is not classed as a 'legal nuisance' and there is nothing the council can do to alleviate the symptoms and effects on residents.

8. I have a problem with leaves, seeds and fruit from a nearby tree...

Leaves and seeds are carried freely on the wind and are largely outside the control of Walsall Council. Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways and weeding of set seeds are considered to be normal routine seasonal maintenance which is undertaken periodically during the period of leaf fall by the council's Clean & Green Services. Leaf fall on the occupiers property, then owners are expected to carry out clearance themselves.

Pruning will not normally be undertaken to attempt to reduce the fall of leaves, seeds or fruit.

9. The tree is making a sticky mess on my car or garden...

The problem is caused by aphid infestation and is known as honeydew. This is a particular problem with tree species such as lime and sycamore. Unfortunately this is a problem that cannot be solved by pruning or spraying with insecticides. Walsall Council prune trees where the work complies with best practice but will not fell or disfigure trees to deal with this issue. Honeydew is a mild sugar solution and should not affect paintwork on cars, if they are washed regularly.

10. Birds roosting in the trees outside my house are creating a mess on my car and drive...

This inconvenience is not sufficient justification to remove or disfigure the tree. Unfortunately pruning the tree is not the solution either, as the birds will simply roost on the remaining branches.

Even when trees are pruned they are still inhabited by wildlife. Healthy and attractive trees are an asset to the environment and bird fouling is not sufficient justification for the tree to be pruned. This is not recognised as a legal nuisance and the inconvenience it may cause is not sufficient justification to remove or disfigure the tree. Nesting birds are protected by law in *wildlife countryside act 1981*.

11. The tree is causing damage to my utility services...

Instances of underground pipes being broken by the growth of tree roots are very rare, but penetration and blockage of damaged pipes is not uncommon. Repair of the defect in the pipe is the only certain remedy that will prevent future problems. Modern materials and joints will significantly reduce pipe damage and subsequent root encroachment in the future.

12. The tree is covered in ivy and is killing it...

Ivy is a climbing, scrambling plant abundant as a groundcover shrub in many rural types of woodland. It has a variety of conservation benefits and forms an integral part of woodland's habitat. In the urban environment there is a need to balance three main considerations for its retention: tree safety, conservation and aesthetics. In some situations it may be considered unsightly and more importantly can create problems for efficient management by obscuring structural defects and fungal fruiting bodies. It also increases the weight of a tree's crown and the 'sail' effect during the wet, windier, winter months, when deciduous trees have shed their leaves. As a general policy the council undertakes the removal of ivy from trees only where it is considered necessary to aid visual tree health assessment.

13. I have a big tree near my property. I am worried about the damage the roots may be doing to my house. What should I do?

Tree roots may potentially cause damage to built structures in two ways:

- Direct damage – this is caused when the physical expansion of tree roots or stem lifts paving stones or cracks walls etc. Due to the weight of a house no amount of physical expansion will affect it, but garden walls and small structures such as garages or outbuildings might be at risk.
- Indirect damage – this can be caused to larger structures such as houses when tree roots grow underneath the foundations, extract the water there causing clay soils to shrink and the structure to subside. If a building has been built on clay soil near an existing tree, and that tree is then removed, the soil may expand which can cause heave (the opposite of subsidence).

Modern building standards mean that the risk to newer buildings tends to be isolated and the council will expect new buildings to be built to industry guidance and therefore they should not subside due to trees that were in existence at the time they were built. It must be noted that tree related subsidence is fairly rare in Walsall because there are few areas of the highly shrinkable clay needed to cause significant structural problems to houses. Should you believe that trees are the cause of cracking to a property, you should consult with your insurers to determine the probable cause.

14. The trees are in the wrong place and a general nuisance...

Although trees may be considered an inconvenience to those living adjacent to them, by law they must be shown to be a substantial interference to a neighbour's comfort and convenience to be considered a nuisance. As a general policy the council will not undertake the topping, thinning or felling of trees simply to prevent the accumulation of leaves, seeds or minor debris on adjacent property, where the trees in question are healthy and would not otherwise require any surgery.

15. I have a tree outside my property with prolific basal growth (epicormic growth) and want it removed.

Epicormic growth is the term used to describe the growth from the base and/or stem of a tree in the Spring and Summer. This growth occurs on a range of tree species, and it is usually most pronounced on lime trees.

As this problem is growth related, it often means that all trees will develop the problem at the same time. This is often in late May/early June although it depends on weather conditions. Due to this type of growth we look to prioritise our resources into the worst affected roads first, attending to all lime trees on annual cyclical basis predominately June – August.

If your ward is shown as being completed and the tree outside a property has been missed (rather than just re-grown), please contact the call centre.

16. Can I have new trees planted outside my house/in my street?

There is a general presumption by the public that when the council removes a tree, it will replant with a new tree soon afterwards.

Tree planting will be incorporated into the cyclical program to ensure newly planted trees are distributed fairly and transparently across the borough. As part of the main goal for the urban forestry strategy it is essential we increase the canopy cover in less tree covered wards. This will on occasion determine how the budget the council holds will be spent to ensure maximum benefits for communities in the entire borough as a whole.

Walsall Council will therefore aim to maintain the number of street trees at a consistent and sustainable level. The planting season for new street trees is normally from October to the beginning of March each year.

17. A tree is lifting paving slabs/affecting my drive. Can I cut the roots of a protected tree?

Cutting the roots of any tree is generally ill-advised as it may affect the tree's health and stability. If a tree is covered by a Tree Preservation Order, or if it stands within a Conservation Area, an application will be required before root pruning can take place.

18. How can I tell if my tree is safe?

Advice should be sought by a professional qualified arboriculturalist. The council unfortunately will not get involved in private matters, but will offer general advice in the best way to resolve the issue residents may be experiencing.

19. I live in a private property; will the council prune my tree or me?

Walsall Council will not prune private trees but are happy to advise on alternative arrangements to resolve property owners issues.

If the tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) further advice should be sought – see Protected Trees FAQs.

20. My tree has a fungus growing on it. Does this make the tree unsafe?

There are many types of fungi that affect wood. They are often indicative of a wider problem and are a valuable tool in diagnosing what if at all may be wrong with a tree. They are also an invaluable habitat for rare insects and beetles and should not be removed from the tree. Removing fungal fruiting bodies from trees will not get rid of the fungus as it is usually by this stage well established within the tree. Walsall Council are happy to advise on this issue.

21. What do I do if I think someone is carrying out work on a protected tree or intends to do so?

Contact Clean & Green immediately and we can check to see if the work is authorised and take appropriate action, if necessary. All queries regarding potentially unauthorised works will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

22. My neighbours have a high hedge. What can I do about it?

The High Hedges Legislation was introduced on 1st June 2005 under Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and applies to evergreen and semi-evergreen hedges of over two metres in height. The legislation provides for those who feel that a neighbour's hedge is hindering the reasonable enjoyment of their property to submit a formal complaint to the council. The council will then investigate the matter and may, if considered appropriate, serve a notice on the hedge owner requiring them to reduce the hedges height. In most cases, it is possible for neighbours to agree on a course of action without formal complaint being necessary. This is certainly the preferable approach for all concerned. If you are unable to reach agreement with your neighbour, try contacting a local mediation service, the mediation process is essential before making a formal complaint to the council.



Tree Risk Management Strategy Appendix 3

Trees and the risk

“We must be aware risk can never be nullified completely and everyday life opens us up to risk ”

Each year between five and six people in the UK are killed when trees fall on them. Thus the risk is low; the risk of being struck and killed in a public space is even lower. Up to three people are killed each year by trees in public spaces, as almost the entire population of the UK is exposed, the risk is about one in 20 million. However the low level of risk may not be perceived in this way by the public and courts, particularly when the cost of maintenance of individual trees is so low.

The awareness of risk of trees has developed into the conscious of the insurance sector mirroring the sections of the society regarding trees more of a nuisance than a benefit and putting further pressures on urban tree stocks.

However low the risk, if there is a tree failure, the council must be able to demonstrate it has a system in place, from a legal and moral perspective, that shows risk is controlled as far as reasonably practicable. This plan will deliver this in a “one council” approach.

Guidance by legislation will assist and allow the council to proactively manage in the remit of a defensible system for risk as part of its statutory obligations set out in law, ***Management of the risk from falling trees*** (SIM 01/2007/05).

Control Measures

The plan will show how Walsall Council will ensure it meets its duty of care and to take reasonable steps to deal with foreseeable dangers which pose an unacceptable risk to the citizens of Walsall.

The minimum requirements are:

- Assess risk
- Record of all assessments
- Program of remediation
- Program of regular assessments

Walsall Council has put in place a plan that ensures each individual tree in the Borough is inspected every 5 years. And where remediation has been identified works will be prioritised dependant on the level of risk.

- Relevant Legislation and Guidelines:
- D.O.E *Circular ROADS NO 52/75 - 90/73 - 36/78*
- *Occupiers liability act 1957/1984*
- *SIM 01/2007/05 & 5 STEPS (management risk of falling trees H.S.E)*
- *Department for transport well maintained Highways – code of practice for highway maintenance management 2005*

RISK

“The probability of harm will actually be caused to persons or property by the tree with a defect”

The program will incorporate **4 wards per year** with a systematic physical assessment to identify any hazards and update records onto the council's database with a program of remediation being carried out on completion .The council will endeavour to meet the objectives set but this will be dependent on service demands and external factors which may set a delay in the process.

Benefits of trees

Trees are major capital assets in villages, towns and cities across the United Kingdom. Just as public buildings and recreational facilities are part of a community's infrastructure, so are publicly owned trees. Trees in the urban area, more collectively known as the urban forest, are important assets that require care and maintenance the same as other public property. Trees are on the job 24 hours every day working for all of us to improve our environment and quality of life.

Walsall's urban forest provides many environmental benefits to its visitors and residents. Aside from the obvious aesthetic benefits, trees within the urban forest improve our air, protect our water, save energy, improve economic sustainability and enrich biodiversity and landscape.

Like many areas of the UK, the tree canopy cover in Walsall generally decreases along a rural to urban gradient. In other words, as the urban areas have been developed many trees have been lost or replaced with smaller less beneficial species, whereas many of our more rural and "green" areas have been managed and in some cases enhanced by tree planting projects.

Therefore, estimated pollutant uptake rates are lower for residential areas compared to natural or unmanaged lands. Possible management implications of these estimates are that air pollutant uptake benefits from tree planting may be optimized by planting in areas where air pollutant concentrations are elevated and where relatively high planting densities can be achieved thereby enhancing the health of urban dwellers. Bottom line - trees are more important in residential areas for improving residents health and shouldn't be considered a "visitor attraction".

HAZARD

“Something with the potential to cause harm”

Trees and climate change

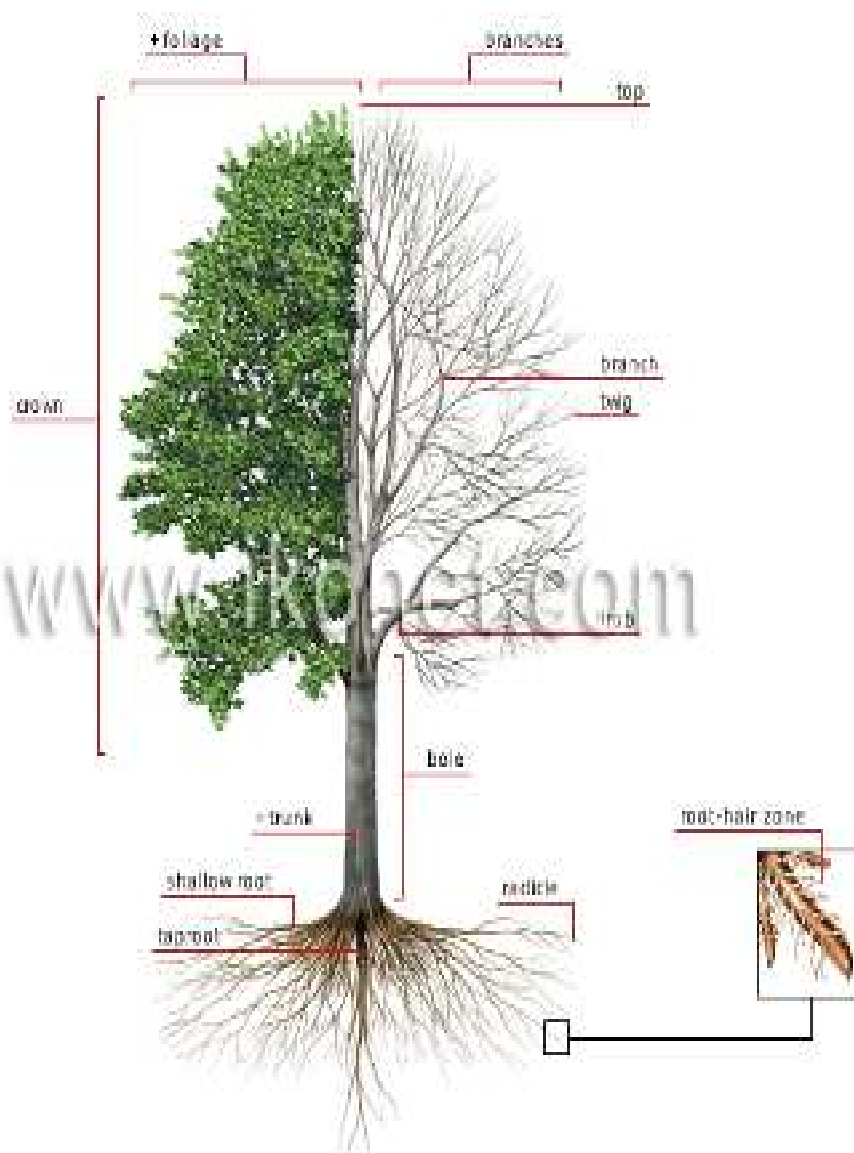
- Reduces and helps regulate localised extremes in temperature
- Provides shade, making streets, green spaces and built up areas cooler in the summer
- Helps improve air quality and contributes to the reduction of atmospheric dust and particles
- Improves environmental performance of buildings
- Helps reduce traffic noise by absorbing and deflecting sound
- Helps reduce localised wind speeds
- Increases biodiversity and provides food, shelter and habitats for sustaining wildlife
- Assists in land remediation
- Helps reduce the impact and effects of flash flooding by rainfall interception



Wood decay fungi – polypore squamosos

A Tree

Trees are described as a 'dynamic, self optimising structure', in that their size, form and shape continually changes and adapts to the environment in which they grow. Often large in stature a mature tree consist of trunk, branches, twigs, foliage, fruits and flowers in which it stores solar energy and gases from the atmosphere. Below ground, trees have a network system of roots equally efficient and environmentally friendly by absorbing water, minerals etc. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen providing a fuel for life.



DELIVERY

It is imperative for safe delivery that competent arboriculture professionals are integral to the plan and the carrying out of duties in relation to this. This would ensure accurate, efficient and informed decisions relevant to duty of care are met in all circumstances where possible.

“A competent person is defined as being any person with specific practical and theoretical knowledge as well as experience of a particular task or job. A competent person must know what the limits of their knowledge are and when to seek help or advise.”

The first step of the delivery is to identify all assets within the borough through a methodical and quantifiable method of inspection and assessment. This is still a process that is ongoing and dependant on resources and budgetary constraints which the service has to shoulder in the present climate, we envisage a full itinerary completed by 2017.

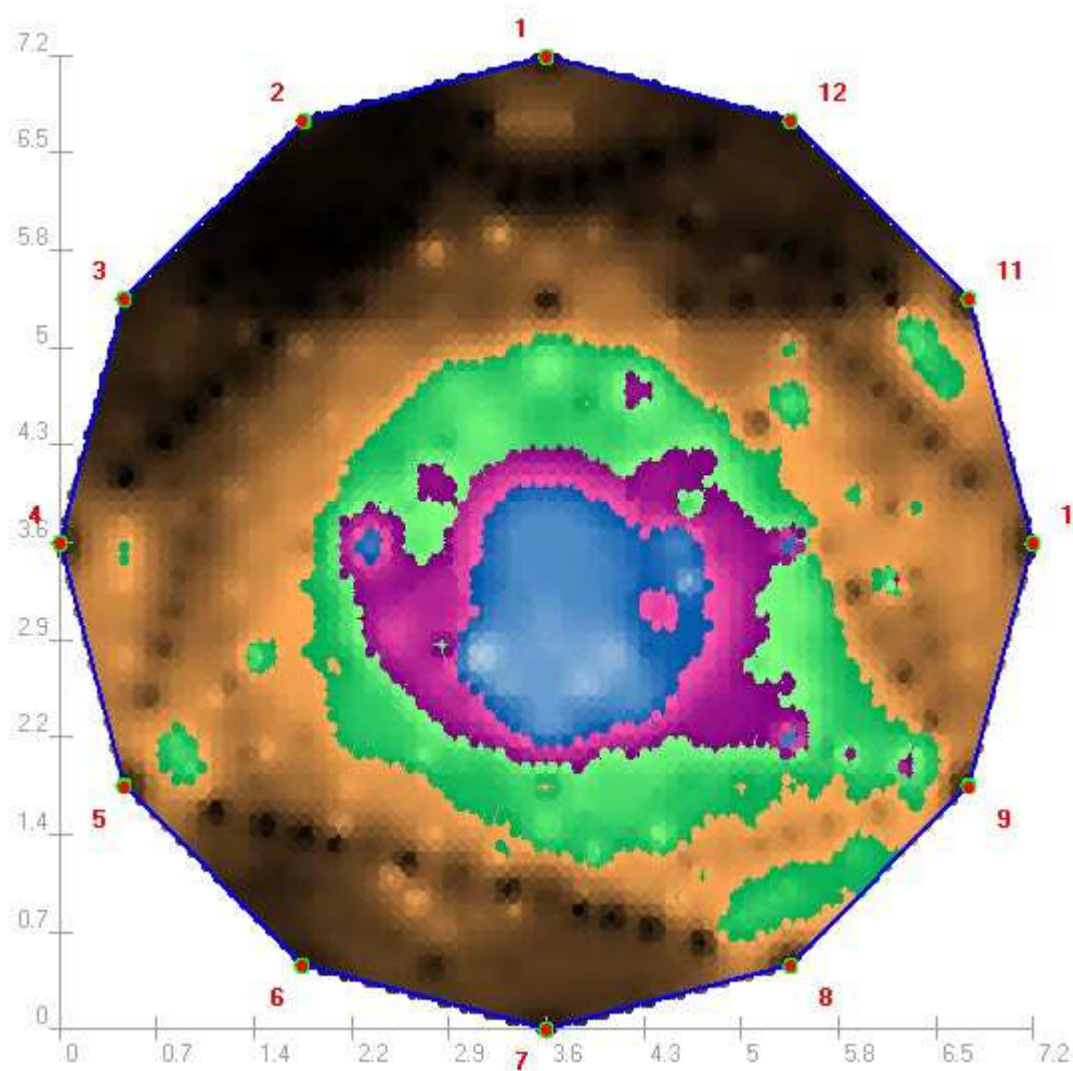
This will be achieved by the use of GIS technology and methodical physical inspection of the identified tree stock.

The application of the quantified approach means the individual risk rating of a tree can be ranked, and remediation prioritised, again, ensuring resources are utilised in accordance with greatest need and benefit.

Whilst it is not practical to completely eliminate risk, there is a requirement that the owner takes all reasonable care to identify possible sources of foreseeable danger and to remove them ***as far as reasonably practicable***.

Due to the nature of a densely populated and constantly changing dynamic urban environment and the relation this has with the tree stock, the risk zones will be applied to ensure if remedial action is necessary then it can be prioritised to locations where there is greatest risk and benefit.

This will assist in ensuring most effective application of limited resources and meeting statutory obligations. This will be standardised in the program ensuring all trees are inspected in a 5 yearly cycle.



Tomograph (PICUS decay detection equipment used as part of technical assessments)

TREE ASSESSMENTS

Assessments of trees is to primarily identify defects that may result in a risk or serious inconvenience to the general public, this should be carried out by a competent person as explained previously in this strategy and are broken down in the following format.

Conditional Assessments C.A.

This should include a full reassessment of the tree and all information held updated accordingly. This should also be the Assessment used for all newly plotted trees and involve the following:

- Ground level Assessments
- 360 degree assessment
- All parts of the tree assessed to give a full overview of the trees condition and **Suitable Useful Life Expectancy**.
- Additional information ie: photos, reports to give a full picture of the trees history.

Site Specific Assessments S.S.A.

These inspections are a flag for the Council Arboriculturalists to assess trees on specific sites with information given by site operatives, managers who should be conversant in risk assessment and council policy in relation to their general duty of care. The information given could be in the form of a photograph, email so the arboriculturalist can make an informed decision whether to pursue further the issue raised.

Technical Assessments T.A.

If deemed necessary for a more detailed assessment due to the trees characteristics, defects, target or asset value then a technical assessment can be carried out, this can involve and not limited to any of the following:

- Aerial Assessments - (*climbing, MEWP*)
- Decay detection equipment - (*PICUS tomography*)
- External consultancy - (*second opinion*)



Operations being carried out by Urban Forestry team as part of tree Maintenance Program staff.

Cyclical tree maintenance program

Below shows the program highlighting where and when trees throughout the borough are inspected and works carried out. The council will endeavour to stay within the parameters but this may be affected by service demands including emergency tree works.

Methodology of Quantification of risk

Likelihood	Score
High	3
Medium	2
Low	1
Negligible	0

+

Target	Score
High	3
Medium	2
Low	1
Negligible	0

+

Defect Size (<i>diameter cm</i>)	Score
Very Large 61cm+	4
Large 41-60cm	3
Medium 26-40cm	2
Small 25cm v below	1

=

Score	Work response
9-10	A. Prioritised in 48 hrs - Maximum response time of 7 days.
4-8	B. Works carried out within 6 months of assessment
1-3	C. Works or re-inspection incorporated into next period of cyclical program

Target zones

High

1. All emergency access routes
2. Medical and emergency facilities and shelters, limited ability access areas
3. Overhead utility lines, especially Electricity (LV or HV) and alarm systems
4. School playgrounds
5. In High-use parks/public areas: Permanent structures with a constant target.
6. Permanent structures with a value in excess of £50,000 or are habitable.
7. Seating areas.
8. Campsites
9. Known informal recreation “hotspots” used for impromptu “gatherings” of school age children
10. Car park areas adjacent to high use public areas.
11. Footpaths/access ways with greater than 36 pedestrians per hour.
12. Individual trees or neighbourhoods with very high-risk tree characteristics such as:
 - a. standing dead trees or those with very poor condition class ratings severely storm damaged trees
 - b. trees that visually obstruct traffic signs, traffic lights, or street lamps
 - c. tree roots causing severe footpath buckling
13. Railway lines.
14. Trunk roads (all areas) & above.
15. Arterial roads in built up areas.

Guide: Pedestrian rates over 36 per hour, Structures over £50,000.

Moderate

1. Main Roads: Congested junctions and visually obstructed traffic lights/signs
2. In High use Parks/Public areas: informal play areas, minor paths, grass recreation areas.
3. Golf Courses (excluding areas in red zone)
4. Car parks adjacent to moderate/low use areas.
5. Bus stops in high use thoroughfares
6. Individual trees of neighbourhoods with high risk tree characteristics, such as:
 - a. Old and veteran trees
 - b. High density of large, mature or “problem” tree species
 - c. Areas of recent root disturbance such as footway reconstruction, trenching, drainage etc.
 - d. Storm damaged trees

Guide: Pedestrian rates between 1 – 36 per hour, Structures £2,000 – £50,000.

Low

1. Secondary and low use roads: congested junctions and visually obstructed traffic lights/signs.
2. Neighbourhoods with moderate to low canopy densities of large diameter, mature or “problem” species trees.
3. Moderate to low use parks, playgrounds and picnic areas.
4. Public areas with dispersed recreation eg. Fishing pegs
5. Open areas, woods, riparian and peripheral areas with limited use or access

Guide: Pedestrian rates lower than 1 per hour and structures up to £2,000.

Trees Buildings & Structures APPENDIX 4



Tree Buildings and structures

The potential of indirect (*subsidence*) and direct root damage to property within urban settings with trees in close proximity to buildings and structures can on occasion escalate to potential claims, although dependant on varied factors trees can co exist with a structure or building without any detrimental effects. Trees are self optimising and will take advantage of its conditions to ensure its survival.

Walsall Council are responsible for over 50,000 trees borough wide in which any individual tree has been highlighted regarding direct or indirect damage, this has the potential to absorb valuable resources and this is why the council have set in place a policy to deal with all enquiries and claims to deal effectively and efficiently for all parties concerned in the process.

“Subsidence is defined as a Vertical downward movement of a building foundation caused by changing volume on a shrinkable clay soil which is affected by an external factor “

How the Council respond to tree related claims

The Council will challenge non substantiated claims or enquiries that do not meet the criteria set in policy and documents therein

In response to claims the council has adopted the guidance documents below which ensure responses in dealing with claims in relation to trees and damage to property in an efficient and cost effective process. This will provide a consistent response dealing proactively with claims and enquiries in relation to trees and vegetation.

“It is the enquirers and claimant’s responsibility to substantiate with evidence of any damage to property, the council will consult with appropriate colleagues and professionals in consideration of the enquiry and claims to evaluate and conclude ”

Residents who have concerns in regard to damage to property in relation to trees and vegetation would be advised to discuss with their insurance providers on such matters, additionally Walsall Council are more than happy to discuss concerns raised.

Joint Mitigation Protocol

A method agreed with multi industry partners and L.T.O.A. (*London Tree Officers Association*) for the process and investigation of root tree induced building damage with benchmarked timescales for responses and standards of evidence.

This will be Walsall Council procedural guidance in dealing with all enquiries and claims regarding direct and indirect damage to property.

LONDON TREE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION – A Risk Limitation Strategy for tree Root Claims

The Risk Limitation Strategy recommends that:

- Local authorities instigate a regime of cyclical pruning of council tree stock in areas predisposed to building movement where this is appropriate.
- Local authorities provide dedicated resources for dealing with subsidence generated claims directed at council owned trees.
- Local authorities instigate a regime of selective removal and replacement of street tree stock in areas predisposed to building movement where this is appropriate.
- Local authorities challenge unwarranted claims based on poorly investigated or inaccurate evidence.

All claims regarding trees in the council's ownership are handled by the council's claims Section:

Risk and Insurance Team

Room 12
Council House
Lichfield Street
Walsall
WS1 1TW

riskandinsurance@walsall.gov.uk

Tree Management Policy Appendix 5



King George V Park Oak tree

Introduction

Trees are integral to Walsall as a whole and provide many benefits for communities throughout the entire borough. Under this strategy Urban Forestry Team will be responsible for all trees and woodlands in accordance to meeting the Authorities statutory obligations of a responsible tree owner.

Below explains the council's response to many issues raised in relation to trees as part of the council's overriding Urban Forestry Strategy in which outlines how trees will be managed, protected and sustained for future generations of Walsall.

These policies are intended as guidelines for determining whether or not requests for pruning or felling of Walsall Council managed trees should lead to action.

It is not possible to anticipate every situation and it is therefore important that whilst these policies guide decisions they should not be considered absolutely prescriptive. Furthermore, no one policy should be considered in isolation, but all relevant policies should be taken into account when reaching a decision.

As trees are individual living biological structures each case will be taken on its own merit and these policies should further be considered in the context of wider strategic aims relating to individual areas, local management plans and the council's emerging Urban Forest Strategy.

Safety

Where there is a clear and foreseeable threat to the personal safety of residents or visitors, or to property, that is directly related to the condition of a tree, action will be taken to control that risk.

The councils Tree Risk Management Strategy and all decisions will be taken in accordance with the policies and priorities laid out therein.

Risk that is an indirect consequence of a tree (e.g. slippery leaves on the pavement in Autumn) will be dealt with through pruning only in unusual circumstances where other options are not available.

Unfounded or perceived fear of a tree or trees will not normally result in action to prune the tree.

Benefits of Trees

Trees are major capital assets in villages, towns and cities across the United Kingdom. Just as public buildings and recreational facilities are part of a community's infrastructure, so are publicly owned trees. Trees in the urban area, more collectively known as the urban forest, are important assets that require care and maintenance the same as other public property. Trees are on the job 24 hours every day working for all of us to improve our environment and quality of life.

Walsall's urban forest provides many environmental benefits to its visitors and residents. Aside from the obvious aesthetic benefits, trees within the urban forest improve our air, protect our water, save energy, improve economic sustainability and enrich biodiversity and landscape.

Like many areas of the UK, the tree canopy cover in Walsall generally decreases along a rural to urban gradient. In other words, as the urban areas have been developed many trees have been lost or replaced with smaller less beneficial species, whereas many of our more rural and "green" areas have been managed and in some cases enhanced by tree planting projects.

Therefore, estimated pollutant uptake rates are lower for residential areas compared to natural or unmanaged lands. Possible management implications of these estimates are that air pollutant uptake benefits from tree planting may be optimized by planting in areas where air pollutant concentrations are elevated and where relatively high planting densities can be achieved thereby enhancing the health of urban dwellers. Bottom line - trees are more important in residential areas for improving residents health and shouldn't be considered a "visitor attraction".

Common tree enquiries

Trees overhanging property

Property owners have the common law right to abate an actionable nuisance, this means a resident can undertake pruning of a tree but **only** to boundary line, with reasonable care taken. This also applies to encroaching roots. The Council would strongly recommend professional advice in these circumstances.

The Council's stance is we will not undertake works for overhang on tree canopies. Before any work is carried out, residents would be advised to determine if the trees are protected and relevant applications forwarded to planning department.

Overgrown Trees

This is a common enquiry in regard to trees in urban settings, overgrown can be a subjective term and opinions differ for each individual's point of view. All trees as part of cyclical program will be inspected and if deemed necessary remediated accordingly to meet safety and policy standards.

Light loss

Reduction of Light in an urban setting can be related to many factors and not solely from trees, this may be orientation of the property, close proximity to other buildings and geography of the surrounding areas.

Consideration for remediation in relation to light loss the following criteria would need to be met:

- Trunk of the tree is less than 6 metres from a habitable room

(definition of a habitable room includes living, dining rooms, kitchen, study and bedroom. It excludes bathrooms, utility rooms, landings, hallways, WC's).

The Council will ensure as part of cyclical program that tree canopies are a minimum of 2 metres from a property as long as the works will retain the trees form and shape and by selective reduction of branches.

Seasonal Issues

Trees as all living things have natural processes which allow it to optimise its chances to continue to flourish. Conflict can occur when these processes affect people and property and a balance on alleviating these issues and retaining a healthy tree stock for future generations.

Leaffall , and other natural detritus from trees

The council **will not prune** or remove trees for leaf fall or other detritus such as pollen or fruit as this is a seasonal occurrence and the movement of the above is outside the council's control. General maintenance of property gutters, pathways are considered a routine of seasonal maintenance for property owners.

A program of street cleansing to meet the demand of this seasonal issue is in place to ensure Highway and footpaths are kept to a standard to not increase risk to public.

Wildlife

Trees are a habitat for many species of flora and fauna which rely on trees to provide food and shelter.

Walsall Council is committed to the increase in biodiversity and the green environment and **would not** prune or remove trees for issues relating to wildlife such as bird droppings .

Nesting birds are protected in law under the *wildlife and countryside act 1984*.

Squirrels

Squirrels are opportunistic and will adapt to most environments where the conditions allow them to thrive. Urban spaces are ideal as they provide food and shelter with many people leaving food in suburban gardens throughout the winter.

The flipside is the potential for squirrels to cause damage to property by accessing lofts ,the misconception being that squirrels use trees to access property and on occasion this may be the case but they are more than capable of accessing via overhanging cables, brick structures and boundary fences.

In light of this and as part of the council's cyclical program, pruning will be carried out to clear property by 2-3 metres to alleviate the issue in conjunction with the responsibility of property owners to safeguard against squirrels accessing properties.

Telecommunications Equipment

A TV Licence is a permit to operate a receiver and does not guarantee a reception , there is no legal right to a reception.

In general the council **will not** prune or remove trees to improve reception and it is expected if any works are considered the service provider must show they have exhausted all engineering solutions available to them.

Any remediation will be to best practice and not affect the amenity or health of the tree and under current budget constraints.

Telephone Wires

It is recommended that all enquiries in relation to telephone wires are directed to the Service Provider who as a statutory undertaker holds a telecommunications licence under the *telecommunications act 1984* to carry out works to trees which affect a service they provide.

The council as part of its proactive tree management (cyclical program) will assess and remediate according to best practice to alleviate issues in regard to telephone wires ensuring health and asset value of the tree is not compromised.

If an issue is deemed as a unacceptable risk to the public then as part of the council's duty of care prioritise and resolve according to policy.

Solar Panels

Solar power is considered a green energy source which reduces the environmental impact from fossil fuels and in turn help reduce climatic change .The attractiveness of such a system with individual property owners with tariff incentives and lower individual energy bills has seen a rise in solar installation with recent grant schemes introduced.

Prior to installation the providers survey will have noted vegetation which may reduce the efficiency of the system to be installed. The assumption from the council would be that the provider would of taken into account trees in the vicinity and the impact those trees would have in the future to the functioning of the solar panels.

Therefore if the survey prior to installation was thorough it would highlight the implications trees may have and any obstruction would not arise.

The council **will not** under normal circumstances remediate to improve solar panel efficiency although if a request is received an officer will visit the site and advise if any remediation is appropriate. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and no one action will be considered a precedent.

All costs will be charged to the property owner.

The council understands the need for green energy and the burden additional costs can make to an individual's household bills. However to remove a green asset (the tree) which in its own right has many environmental benefits for not only individuals but communities as a whole would be contrary to many policies the council is obliged to meet for society as a whole.

Trees Size

Trees are “self optimising structures” and will exploit its conditions to survive in any environment sometimes as all living things it may succeed or fail.

If the tree succeeds in an urban setting it can add immense amenity value to urban spaces but due to its size it may raise concerns in the eyes of the public to its safety due to its size.

Comments such as the “tree is too big ” or it has “never been pruned” are common enquiries received , the assurance is the council under its cyclical program inspect all trees in the borough to meet its duty of care and any remediation necessary carried out.

Unnecessary remediation can accelerate issues and safety concerns with the tree developing weak unions and increasing stress upon the tree which may leave it susceptible to pathogens .Also from aesthetic view the grace and form of a mature tree can be a beautiful sight and if disfigured be a loss in asset value to the Council and amenity to the landscape.

The council **will not** carry out works because of the trees size.

Trees Obstructing a view

Legally there is no right to a view and on occasion vegetation is planted to provide screens to increase privacy and noise alleviation from highways but also to develop a greener environment.

The council **will not** carry out works to maintain a view.

Drains and tree roots

Suspected damage to property must be submitted with sustentative evidence in writing to the council (*refer to Trees & Structures appendix 4*).

Tree roots will not enter a drain that has no fault and does not have the ability to create a fault to gain access into an existing drain . Where roots are found in a drain system roots may be removed by the service provider but it is fundamental the drain is repaired expediently to avoid a repeat of the issue. Advice can be given by Council officer to help resolve the issue if council owned trees are identified as the offending vegetation.

Trees and vehicle crossover requests

Trees will be a material consideration due to the benefits they bring and asset value they have for the council in all vehicle crossover highway works and all relevant highway maintenance.

In most cases practical solutions can be found to ensure the tree is retained and no adverse detrimental health issues occur to the tree and the crossover constructed.

Council officers will consider all requests and if deemed appropriate that the request for a crossover is agreed with the following points considered;

- Asset value of the tree.
- Remediation appropriate.
- Consideration of removal of tree if considered of poor amenity value.
- Refusal due to adverse impact on tree within vicinity of proposed crossover.
- Mitigation to lost trees with proactive replacement program.
- All works must be agreed with Council Urban forestry officer with cooperation with internal and external colleagues , professionals.

Any financial cost will be the responsibility of the applicants and if trees are removed to accommodate the crossover then a cost for replacement trees on a minimum basis of 2 for 1 chosen by the officer shall be added to the overall costings for the works involved to mitigate against loss.

Guidance notes from NJUG 4 (*for planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to tree vol 4 issue 2*) should be adhered to whilst maintenance works are carried out with further recommendations followed from BS 5837 (*trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*).

Trees and its roots are susceptible to irreversible damage if they are directly damaged in some way i.e. root damage or compaction from spoil or heavy vehicles which can lead to surprisingly swift deterioration and in some cases stability issues potentially causing the tree to fail.

Additionally trees hold an intrinsic value and the depreciation or loss of this would be detrimental to Walsall as a whole with increased maintenance costs to rectify issues which could be easily be avoided. However trees are living things and in so are to a point unpredictable in nature, this on occasion will lead to loss of trees even if all measures have been put in place to limit the effects.

This is the principal of succession tree planting and retention of green assets for future generations to enjoy.

ACTION PLAN

APPENDIX 6



Outline review of 2007 Urban Forestry Strategy action points

General Tree Management

The council have acquired a database system (*Ezytreev*) to proactively manage all the tree population throughout the Borough ensuring they are incorporated into cyclical program to meet statutory obligations, resources and service demands. At present a tree planting budget is still available and will be reviewed annually dependant on resources and to meet strategic planning, i.e. canopy cover targets, additionally external funding will continue to be sought through all available avenues.

Parks and open Spaces

External funding will continue to be sought through all available avenues.

Street Trees

A continuation of replacement program of unsuitable trees assessed by qualified arboricultarlist on a individual basis in relation to circumstances will continue and the identification of further planting opportunities in the highway will persist. Statutory undertakers and in relation to tree works will need further development to ensure protection of tree population this will be set out in the reviewed U.F.S.

Housing Trees

A continuation of replacement program of unsuitable trees assessed by qualified arboricultarlist on a individual basis in relation to circumstances will continue and the identification of further planting opportunities will persist ensuring strategic targets for increase canopy cover.

Further partnership working to “green” more deprived areas as a priority.

Private and Development Trees

Continuation of Planning team in relation to development under 106 agreements.

Full itinerary of protected trees is still ongoing and review of high amenity trees in council and private ownership highlighted is still in progress.

Tree Advice

Development of website is underway with expectations of completion for 2014; this will provide an essential resource for the residents of Walsall to access details and events as well as an informative guide in all tree related matters.

Woodland Management

The Council ensures best practice through its woodland and green space management plans and maintains up-to-date risk assessments for its sites. Woodland is a priority habitat in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan and a delivery theme of the Nature Improvement Area. External funding has been secured towards managing existing woodland and planting new areas.

The council has established timber stations to process wood waste as fire wood and wood chip.

A voluntary tree warden scheme has been established to encourage and enable community involvement in tree and woodland management. The council promotes its countryside and urban forestry activities at the annual Walsall Show.

We will continue to liaise with partners and private owners to advise and support the appropriate management of their woodlands.

Plantations

The council ensures appropriate specification for work to plantations through its woodland and green space management plans and maintains up-to-date risk assessments for its sites.

Woodland, in particular the management and enhancement of recently established woodland, is a delivery theme of the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area.

External funding has been secured to enrich and diversify recently established woodlands by thinning, coppicing and introducing locally native field layer.

The council will continue to adopt a standard approach for responding to vandalism to and fly tipping in plantations

Parkland and Pollards

An inventory of veteran and ancient trees of landscape value and the identification of trees with the potential to be the next generation are still ongoing.

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