

West Suffolk Council Tree Management Policy

Appendix 6: Strategic links

National context

The Government encourages local authorities to develop long-term strategies for the management and care of trees in their ownership. These strategies should plan for the eventual replacement of old trees, enable authorities to take advantage of new opportunities for tree planting provided by other urban improvement measures, and integrate awareness of the contribution which trees make to the quality of life in urban areas into the full range of local authorities' activities.

There are many national policies and strategies that affect trees and woodlands in the West Suffolk area, which have been taken into account in this West Suffolk Tree Management Policy. Some of these are specific to trees or woodland, and many more deal with wider issues in which trees and woodlands play an important part. The following is a brief summary:

Strategy for England's trees, woods and forests. Produced by DEFRA in 2007, the strategy highlights the contribution that trees make to social, environmental and economic objectives today and sets out a vision for their future role. The goal is that by 2020 more woods will be brought into sustainable woodland management supplying raw materials for use in construction and for wood fuel, and we will have a healthier landscape for wildlife and an increase in people visiting woodlands:

- The Strategy covers the full spectrum - from extensive forests to street trees and hedgerows. Within the West Suffolk context this is of note as the area has a mixture of extensive woodlands, street trees and urban woodland.
- An important overarching aim is to provide 'the right tree in the right place' where they can contribute most in terms of social, economic and environmental benefits now and for future generations. This fits in well with the principle of arboriculture as a means to balance interests.

Sustainable Communities Plan. The Sustainable Communities Plan outlines plans for growth and regeneration in England. It includes significant additional housing development in the south-east. The plan includes the following objectives:

- Encouragement of the role of community forests at the urban fringe, citing their benefits as providing access to green spaces and woodlands on the urban doorstep, protecting and improving the countryside.
- Greater emphasis on the role of green networks and corridors.

Working with the Grain of Nature - England Biodiversity Strategy. The England Biodiversity Strategy identifies woodland as a key theme and habitat. The strategy's vision is to ensure 'woodlands and forests are managed and created to enhance both woodland and non-woodland species and habitats, that

at the same time provide sustainable goods, environmental services and recreational benefits enhancing people's quality of life'. The England Biodiversity Strategy actions for achieving this vision include:

- Protect native woodland from further damage.
- Enhance, extend and restore the existing native woodland resource.
- Manage non-native woodland to improve biodiversity in the wide landscape.
- Realise the broader quality of life benefits of woodland biodiversity.
- Address biodiversity within urban settlements. One of the key aims is to 'ensure that biodiversity conservation is integral to sustainable communities, both in the built environment, and in parks and green spaces'.

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.

This strategy builds on the previous England Biodiversity Strategy and notable developments include the recognition that biodiversity is vital to ecosystem services such as combating the effects of climate change, water quality management, drought prevention and flood management. The strategy also highlights the importance of people in biodiversity and aims to involve more people and raise a greater understanding of the importance of biodiversity. In addition it places a priority on 'taking better account of the values of biodiversity in public and private sector decision-making'.

National Planning Policy. Several national planning policy statements and guidance notes relate to the protection, management and enhancement of woodlands and trees. This strategy focuses on the local authority's role as tree owners and managers, rather than its function as a planning authority, which is dealt with by other strategies and policies currently in place. However, it is important to have regard to the National Planning Policy particularly in relation to the planning of new green space and woodland areas under the control of the council to ensure that improvements are kept in line with national policies.

Tackling Health Inequalities – A Programme for Action. The programme for action sets out priorities for reducing health inequalities and addressing the underlying determinants of health. It identifies the importance of co-ordinated national, regional and local action on a range of issues. These include:

- The need to increase levels of physical activity especially among disadvantaged groups, older people and women.
- The need to improve green spaces so that they can be used for exercise and provide children's play areas.
- The need for better and safer local environments so people are more able to engage in social and physical activities in public spaces close to where they live and work.

Common Sense Risk Management of Trees. Produced by the National Tree Safety Group in 2011, this guidance sets out key mechanisms for effectively managing risk from trees, including measuring the risk and appropriate inspection regimes. It introduces the concept of risk zoning to identify highest risk areas which in turn allows efficient allocation of resources.

Regional Context

There are various policies and strategies across the East of England which should inform a successful tree management policy. The most relevant are listed as follows:

The East of England Regional Spatial Strategy sets out policies which address the needs of the region and key sub-regions. These policies provide a development framework for the next 15 to 20 years that will influence the quality of life, the character of places and how they function, and inform other strategies and plans. A major feature of the plan is that it identifies the significant investment that will be needed in social, environmental, economic and transport facilities ('infrastructure') if it is to achieve its desired results. Of particular note are policies covering biodiversity, woodlands and green infrastructure.

Transforming Suffolk is the Suffolk Community Strategy for 2008 to 2028. It sets out the long term ambition and priorities for the county over the next 20 years. It looks ahead to the issues and challenges facing the area over the coming years and articulates a vision that all partners are committed to achieving. Aims and objectives include:

- Promoting healthy lifestyles.
- Protecting and improving the natural environment.
- Creating green infrastructure.
- Promoting stronger communities.

Woodland for Life 2003. The Regional Woodland Strategy for the East of England provides a number of strategies for the enhancement, over a 20 year period, of the benefits that trees and woodlands bring to the people who live and work in the region. The strategy focuses on the following benefits of trees and woodlands:

- The social benefits relate to improved physical and mental health, enhanced living environments, increased community pride, recreation, education and community engagement.
- Economic benefits, in addition to employment and the value of timber, include positive influences on inward investment, increased property values, reduced energy costs, regeneration of derelict and damaged land, and tourism.
- The environmental benefits chiefly comprise biodiversity, pollution abatement, soil conservation and protection of water resources.

Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The Suffolk BAP consist of a number of species and habitat action plans and reflects those habitats and species listed in the United Kingdom BAP and section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. It applies a specific regional context to action plans with locally identified targets and actions. Of particular note to informing tree management within the district are the following action plans:

- Wood Pasture and Parkland.
- Acid Grassland.

- Lowland Heathland.
- Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland.
- Traditional Orchards.
- Urban.
- Wet Woodland.