

BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

Introduction:

Brentwood Council is committed to maintain and enhance the landscape features that are trees and woodlands. The Borough is rich in biodiversity for which the council is indebted to past generations. However, pressures on these features is increasing and those trees worthy and within public ownership for which the council has a responsibility deserve protection that ensures that commitment is followed by action.

The borough has legal responsibilities which may cover privately owned trees such as conservation areas, Tree Preservation Orders and Anti-social behaviour (high hedges) There is also a duty of care which may require it to act under separate legislation.

Therefore, the Council has brought together a strategy set out in this document which identifies the Council's approach to tree management and is a strategy that lays down the basis of management practices in order to protect our asset and ensure we, the Council, residents and other stakeholders work in a joined-up manner. This will result in an improved standard of tree and woodland care, in turn resulting in improved tree health and resilience to the modern pressures imposed upon them.

Background

The Borough of Brentwood is a metropolitan green belt borough to the North of London. It is bordered with London by the M25 orbital motorway.

Green belt policies have remained successful in maintaining a balanced farming landscape into the 21st century within excess of 85% of the borough remaining unsettled green belt landscape.

This landscape defines the borough with the town surrounding the high ground in the Southwest. Smaller villages are present in the surrounding countryside. Within this landscape trees are present as the dominant features. The presence of so many woodlands and mature trees is testimony to the importance associated with them by past generations. This importance of trees to the local population has become a part of national recognition in part driven by the need to become resilient to climate change. It is therefore important that Brentwood Borough Council has a strategy for managing, maintaining, and influencing tree and woodlands in all instances where it has a legal duty of responsibility.

Strategy Aims

The aim of the strategy is to ensure the safety of the public, Council-owned trees; maintain and encourage biodiversity; maintain and improve landscape quality; and, through these elements, to improve the quality of life within the borough both now and in the future. We will achieve this by:

- Maintaining and improving the tree cover for the future by taking advantage of different funding methods available;
- Encouraging the conservation, positive management and the appropriate planting of trees and woodlands within Brentwood.
- Promoting the importance of trees and woodlands in shaping the distinctive local character.
- Recognising the significant aesthetic, landmark, ecological, cultural, and historic value that trees provide.
- Effectively communicating, educating, and engaging with the local community over trees;
- Continuing to move away from a reactive service towards a proactive cyclical management of council-owned trees using current best practice.
- Managing the tree stock in accordance with good Arboricultural practice and current British and European standards.
- Recognising the value of trees as a tangible asset.

It is intended that the main strategy should be reviewed every year against its objectives to ensure they remain relevant although this is a strategy based on a longer-term five-year vision.

The strategy establishes a point of reference for the public councillors, officers, professionals, and those with general interest in tree and woodland conservation and management in Brentwood.

The Benefits of Trees

Trees are known to be the largest living organisms on earth, they are essential to other life and therefore their value cannot be overstated.

Trees provide and bring to urban areas benefits which are set out below:

Environmental

- Reduce localised temperature extremes (The Urban Heat Island)
- Provide shade, making streets and buildings cooler in Summer
- Help to improve air quality by reducing dust and particulates
- Improve environmental performance of buildings
- Help to reduce traffic noise, absorbing and deflecting sound
- Help to reduce local wind speeds
- Increase biodiversity and provide food and shelter for wildlife
- Assist in land remediation
- Reduce the effects of flash flooding by rainfall interception

Social

- Improve the quality and perception of the urban environment
- Create community focal points and landmark links
- Create sense of place and local identity
- Benefit communities socially by installing higher public esteem and pride for an area
- Positive impact on both physical and mental health and well being
- Positive impact on crime reduction
- Improve health in the urban population

Economic

- Have the potential to increase residential and commercial property values by 7% to 15%
- Improve the environmental performance of buildings and therefore the economic performance through reducing heating and cooling costs
- Can provide mature landscapes that confer a premium for development sites
- Assist the appreciation of property values proportionate to their scale as they grow larger
- Creating a positive perception for prospective purchasers of property
- Enhance the prospects of securing planning permission Improve health in the urban population, thus reducing healthcare costs
- Provide a potential long term renewable energy resource provide valuable timber resources

The public are aware of the benefits listed above and the need for trees. The Council and residents are placing a higher priority on the environment in which they live which is why this strategy is important. In urban areas this invariably means that there should be accessible recreational open spaces, tree-lined streets, and woodlands within Brentwood.

The strategy seeks to establish a point of reference for the public, councillors' officers, professionals, and those with a general interest to enable informed discussion about the structured approach to issues affecting trees and woodlands in Brentwood .

Trees and the effect on the Climate

As the effects of climate change become better understood, it is clear that trees have a major role in global climate change modification. Trees have been identified as a key element of climate change adaptation strategy in the UK. Climate change will bring higher average temperatures and increasing incidents of heavy rainfall, these effects can be mitigated by increased tree canopy which intercepts rainfall and allows re-evaporation, which in turn helps cool the atmosphere and wash out particulate

pollution. Trees in Brentwood store an estimated 50,000 tonnes of sequestered carbon and have an annual rate of sequestration around 2500 tonnes.

This strategy is aligned with the Carbon Neutral Strategy for Brentwood and its aim to be carbon neutral borough wide by 2050

The Council's Approach to Tree Management

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to the management of trees and woodlands for which it has direct responsibility. The Council will be proactive in its management of trees to fulfil the duty of care as well as to ensure a healthy and viable tree and woodland resource. The Strategy will take account of the long-term wellbeing of the tree resource, providing for the future as well as the present.

Council owned stock

The majority of Council owned trees are in open space and include our woodland.

The council is responsible for 280 hectares of woodland country parks and urban greens. Such provision of green space is vital to the community contributing to the health and wellbeing of residents. Trees are a high value resource within the open space which will be managed according to the general principal policies. In addition the council will seek to maintain a characteristic, varied and sustainable tree population. The council will aim to establish and encourage new planting where it offers multiple benefits to residents, wildlife and the landscape. The council will ensure that where appropriate they will consult with and work with stakeholders and other authorities to prepare management plans to comply with its statutory duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity.

Housing trees

The Council has responsibility for trees within its HRA and as such has a duty of care. These trees will be monitored and managed in the best method possible to ensure their safety and the safety of residents.

The Council will work with the Housing Service to ensure the best method to manage these trees are achieved.

Complaints

As a borough with a high proportion of trees and woodland the Council is subject to requests for tree work or complaints for failure to deal with what are perceived to be problem trees.

The Council can and will only work on trees that are within its responsibility or where an emergency may dictate that immediate remedial action is required.

Complaints and requests relating to trees or for tree work will be assessed against the council priorities for works at appendix 1 In addition, the remedial works will be considered on a risk/benefit basis to the tree. Where the work is deemed a long-term risk to the tree health or structural stability, they will be considered suitable for only priority 1 or 2.

The Council however will not take action where the issue raised relates to trees being too tall, trees bending in the wind, branches overhang, trees creating shade, wildlife use the tree, leaf, fruit, or twig litter, the tree blocks view, tree affects tv signal. Such issues are not a cause necessarily to take action and are sometimes seasonal and may be detrimental to the health of the tree or not be cause to take action

Tree Database and Survey

The council will undertake a tree survey based on risk to public life, buildings, and infrastructure. This survey will create a data base of the most vulnerable trees that may have some affect to residents, stakeholders, or the boroughs infrastructure

Data will be captured in a dedicated system which will help to build an overview of tree population and health within the borough.

The survey will identify the frequency of future reviews of the tree stock based on a risk-based analysis which will also inform the requirement of tree work over a period of time.

New Planting

The council will identify land within its control suitable for new planting and plan for new woodlands, community orchards, landscape features and significant individual trees. The council will engage with industry, community groups and funding organisations in order for this to be achieved.

Private trees.

The council has certain functions which impact trees in private ownership. These include but are not limited to town and country planning. Brentwood has a statutory duty to protect trees that are considered worthy of such protection on sites for which planning applications are submitted, or where a request is received from a member of the public. Trees on development sites are considered in a loss/benefit manner to protect these most suited to the proposal. Trees may be protected by tree Preservation order which is made under S198 of the Town and country planning act 1990. A broad range of reasons may be considered appropriate for preservation. S210 of the same act makes it a criminal offence to undertake works without authorisation,

Conservation areas

These trees located within conservation areas and have diameter at breast height of 75mm and above are protected by the conservation area status, proposals for work should be submitted with 6 weeks' notice to allow for council planning authority reaction.

Tree Preservation orders should be reviewed as time and weather can affect the state of any tree. Generally areview, re affirmation or revoking is considered to be required every 10 years. The Council aim to meet this. The review also allows consideration of factors, such as permitted development. landscaping, non-conforming works,

Applications for works.

These are submitted to the planning department and are considered by a specialist officer. Works which are arboriculturally acceptable and meet the standards encompassed within the relevant industry documents may be granted permission.

The council encourages tree owners to seek professional guidance on the best practice. Advice can be obtained from organisations listed in appendix 2.

High Hedges

The council has a role, where disputes exist to be the deciding authority where a 'high hedge complaint is received. The council has a fair, clear, reasonable and impartial procedure which is published on the website.

Dangerous trees

The council may be requested to use powers for the removal of trees which are imminently dangerous, where the owner is not apparent or where the owner is unable to do so, requests for the use of special powers are made which is dealt with by specialist officers on a received basis.

Strategy Deliverables

The strategy will:

1. resource a tree method to support the work identified in this strategy and ensure the work undertaken is done so in an effective and efficient manner
2. a sustainable high quality tree population with a mixture of species, form, landscape value and climate mitigation ability
3. will encourage better understanding of the management of trees and woodlands.
4. identify reasonable measures to fulfil the duty of care in respect of tree safety
5. Seek to maintain the highest possible standard of tree care, it will resist the removal of or damaging works to trees.
6. ensure works to trees will be carried out to best practice

Corporate Strategy

The Tree Management Strategy supports the Councils Corporate Strategy 2021 – 2025 in particular

Protecting the Environment

Appendix 1

Priorities,

- P.1. Imminent threat to life
- P.2. Possible threat to life imminent threat to structure
- P.3. Future threat to structure/urgent maintenance
- p.4. Maintenance issue to safeguard structure
- P.5. Maintenance to provide social comfort/benefit

Appendix 2

- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Arboricultural Association