West Northamptonshire Council

Trees and

Woods Strategy

Our vision to 2045

DRAFT

Our Vision:

"To double the canopy cover of West Northamptonshire to 20% with suitable and well managed trees and woods"

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Consultees

We would like to thank the following for their support and contributions to the Tree Strategy: West Northamptonshire Council officers, members; town and parish councils; local partners; and others who helped to develop this draft strategy.

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1.   Foreword

Trees provide vital habitats and are a fundamental part of West Northamptonshire's town, village and rural landscape. Yet, urban and rural forests at a global, national, regional, and local level are facing increasing threats. For too long, trees have been undervalued and overlooked. Trees and woodlands are a vital resource that can help to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time, including connecting people to nature, helping to combat climate change, recovering biodiversity and supporting the economy.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) recognises the need to act with urgency to address the impacts of climate change, such as increases in urban temperatures and increasing risks of flooding. Trees have an important role to play in helping protect our communities and in helping us adapt to the potentially dramatic effects of climate change.

This strategy sets out how WNC will work to manage, protect and expand tree and woodland cover for the next twenty years to 2045. It recognises that well planted, managed and enhanced tree and woodland cover can deliver vital environmental, social and economic benefits now and into the future. This will include strategic guidance on how the Council will manage risks trees may pose.

We start from a low baseline, with woodlands and trees outside woodlands covering just 9% of our land area currently. This compares to an average current canopy cover of 14.5% in England and a national target to increase canopy cover to 16.5% of land area by 2050[1]. We know we have a long way to go. For this reason, we must be bold, but we must also be realistic. Our aims and approach reflect the competing land use demands in West Northamptonshire, with a focus on those areas where we can achieve the greatest impact.

Through the course of this strategy, we will work to increase canopy cover to 20% across West Northamptonshire, prioritising areas where trees can deliver maximum benefits. In this respect, our Tree and Wood Strategy will complement existing and emerging strategies that align with this vision, such as our health and wellbeing strategy and emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

We cannot do this alone and the actions that are needed to achieve our vision will involve multiple partners, businesses and help from residents. As set out in our **corporate plan**, our vision is a collective one, shaped by residents, partners and the wider community.

"We want to be an authority that puts the environment first…and supports others to do the same, help us shape a cleaner and greener West Northants".

Councillor Rebecca Breese
Cabinet Member for Recycling, Waste, and the Environment

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[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2022/9780348242942/pdfs/ukdsiem_9780348242942_en.pdf

2. Introduction

2.1 Our Approach

West Northamptonshire's Corporate Plan 2021-2025 provides the vision for making West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work, visit and thrive. This vision places West Northants 'at the forefront of action on climate change with clean air, sustainable growth and a flourishing natural environment'.

Trees play an intrinsic role in achieving this. The Tree and Woodland Strategy recognises that WNC is a custodians of trees for future generations, both those it owns and where it has a supporting or regulatory role. The Council protects and manages trees and woodlands across West Northamptonshire on behalf of residents and visitors to the area. We also work with a wide range of partners to facilitate this and plant on land that is not in public ownership. Trees are amongst the most versatile natural assets that planners, policy makers, businesses and communities can benefit from to improve the quality of our towns, villages, and surrounding areas.

This strategy considers our vision for the care, management, and provision of trees for the next 20 years to 2045, and the strategy for the first five years. We intend for this strategy to steer future policies and plans which are committed to protecting, expanding, and caring for trees, woodlands and hedgerows across West Northamptonshire.

In preparing this strategy we have been mindful to ensure that it supports other relevant regional and national policy (Appendix A), ensuring that, where possible, the Council will maximise the benefits of trees for people and nature.

2.2 Report Structure and Scope

In order to work towards the longer-term vision, the strategy briefly explores some of the wider context and current local landscape, before setting out our vision and aims for the future. The aims are supported by an action plan (Appendix B) that will direct activity for the next five years, further five-year action plans will be produced, and, if necessary, the strategy will be updated.

The action plans ensure that our vision has achievable outcomes, accountable leads and timeframes against which we will monitor progress, with flexibility to ensure that our strategy can grow, change and develop to meet future challenges and opportunities as they arise. A 5-year action plan is appropriate for the short-medium term planning for a sustainable and healthy tree population, allowing short and medium term financial and organisational planning, whilst maintaining an established overall strategic direction.

We intend to lead by example. The Tree Strategy Officer will oversee delivery of the vision and actions set out in this Strategy. Landholders, landowners, businesses, communities, and volunteers will all have an important part to play. Through our consultation we know that local communities, town and parish councils, partners and residents overwhelmingly support the development and delivery of this strategy. We look forward to working together to achieve our collective vision.

3. Background

3.1 National and Local Context

We have witnessed a deterioration of the natural environment over recent decades due to complex factors, including pollution, pesticide use, emergence of pests and diseases due to increased international travel and trade, and climate change. The health and vitality of trees and woodlands is suffering as a result.

2023 was the hottest year on record for Europe and global temperatures are predicted to continue to rise by at least a degree over the next two decades. The changing climate is resulting in longer, more frequent and more extreme severe weather events, from floods, to droughts, and storms. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report predicts the UK will receive 10% more rainfall on average per year by 2100 compared to 1986-2005[2]. Heavier rainfall events are also predicted to increase in frequency, leading to the increased risks of flooding. Heatwaves and droughts will also become more frequent and intense during summer periods, with temperatures frequently varying by large amounts, causing trees to become stressed and vulnerable to damage and decline. Storms and strong winds are likely to be more frequent and greater in tensity resulting in damage to trees and infrastructure.

In addition, the past two decades have seen a significant number of non-native plant pests and diseases become established in the UK, the milder winters with heavy rainfall and flooding are increasing susceptibility to existing pests and diseases. Currently ash dieback is of particular concern and is predicted to change our landscape in a manner similar to Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s.

New development, in particular the requirement to meet targets for new housing provision and locations to host businesses for employment provide pressures on land use. Within well designed schemes there ought to be opportunities for green space that includes protection for existing trees and the planting of new trees and woods. The most challenging of these schemes in recent times has been the construction of High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) in the south-west of the district.

The need to act has been increasingly recognised in legislation and policy at a national level as well as in a suite of relevant local policy which will inform and guide with this Tree Strategy. A summary of key policies is in Appendix A.

There is a critical need to plan for both the effects of current and future impact of climate change to ensure trees and woodlands are resilient for the future. This will mean some species of trees commonly seen locally may not survive or be appropriate to plant here in the future. Better use of technology will enable the Council to understand their existing tree stock, plan for the future, and plant trees that can cope with climate change, whilst ensuring they do not become invasive.

3.2 Why develop a Tree Strategy?

West Northamptonshire Council was formed in April 2021, bringing together the previous councils of Daventry, Northampton, South Northamptonshire and part of the former County Council. To establish a shared vision, and unite ways of working across multiple policy areas, a Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group was established. In Autumn 2022

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[2] https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf

it made several recommendations, including production of a Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northamptonshire.

The Tree Policy and Strategy Group's report followed consultation with a range of local stakeholders on issues relating to tree protection, management and ambitions for planting more trees across West Northamptonshire. In developing this strategy we've held further consultation with residents, partners and local organisations. This has helped us to understand what issues matter most now and where we'd like to collectively be in future.

We are pleased to bring this Tree Strategy forward with a view to resolving the immediate and pressing challenges of the present, as much as establishing our longer-term ambitions for the future. The Strategy will steer our approach across West Northamptonshire's town, village and rural areas, but with a focus on where WNC can have greatest influence.

With this in mind, this Strategy:

a) Sets a canopy cover target, ensuring that activity to increase and enhance tree and woodland cover supports wider landscape-scale partnership projects.

b) Establishes our approach to tree management, maintenance and replacement, with a focus on where we can achieve the greatest direct impact, in our urban centres, and in light of the increasing risks posed by tree pests and diseases, such as ash dieback, and extreme weather events associated with climate change.

c) Sets out our approach to working with partners and the wider community of West Northants to deliver the ambitions set out in this strategy.

d) Sets out how WNC will work more effectively to ensure trees, woodlands and hedgerows are higher on our agenda across all departments.

e) Outlines how we will resource, monitor, and oversee delivery of this strategy.

3.3   The Benefits of Trees

Trees play a fundamental part in all our lives, they are the longest living species on earth, they provide a connection to the past, present, and future. There is a mounting body of research and evidence documenting the social, environmental and economic benefits trees provide, from mitigating the impacts of climate change to providing food, carbon storage, clean air, physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Trees make West Northamptonshire a healthy, green and aspiring place to be, providing a sense of place, and local distinctiveness that we can all be proud of, whilst providing critical green infrastructure that will help us to respond to the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

In developing this Strategy, we aim to achieve a fundamental shift in attitude and perspective from one that views trees as liabilities, to one that considers trees to be public assets.

Trees play a role in offsetting some of the effects of climate change, pollution (the closer they are the greater their benefits), peoples' health and well-being as well as being good for wildlife, and capture carbon. Further information on the benefits of trees can be found in Appendix C.

## 3.4 Trees and Woodlands in West Northamptonshire

To establish a clear vision for the future, it is important to first understand the current baseline, continuing and expanding this work will be an important element of the first few years of the Action Plan. This will mean that future interventions and the limited resources available can be targeted, and progress measured over time[3]. Therefore, in setting out to develop this Strategy, we began by commissioning a baseline canopy cover survey of West Northamptonshire.

A tree canopy assessment is a top-down approach that uses satellite imagery to map out coverage of tree canopies over a defined area[4] (PlanIT Geo, 2024)

Canopy cover mapping is a valuable tool for identifying areas with low canopy cover, as well as opportunities for planting new trees and expanding woodland cover so they can be prioritised for tree planting. This approach allows us to identify where the areas of greatest need are located, and to plot planting opportunities for maximum impact according to local priorities that natural capital (planting trees) can help to address, such as flood reduction, carbon sequestration, biodiversity enhancement and pollution capture, while minimising the potential conflicts with other land uses. Details of the methodology are in Appendix G. The canopy application is open source and can be explored further here: TreePlotter - UK Canopy (pg-cloud.com)

The canopy map shows that canopy cover varies significantly across West Northamptonshire, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows the distribution of canopy cover across the Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs).

Figure 1: Tree Canopy Percent by Ward[5]
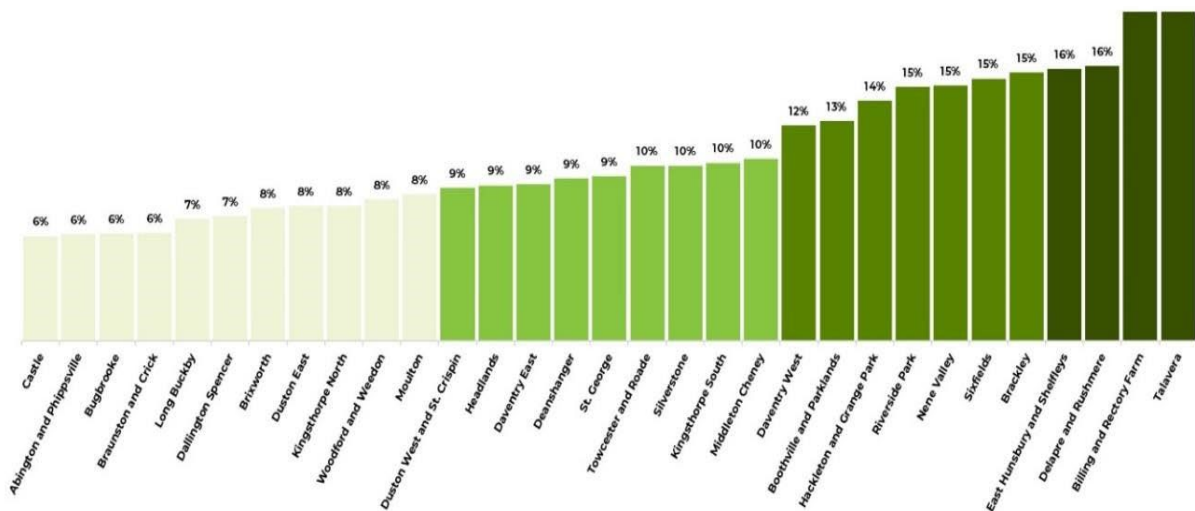
Whilst this initial survey has given us data on the extent and locations of the current tree cover, to make informed decisions particularly on building resilience we will also need other data which can be captured during routine tree and woodland health inspections:

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[3] https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/fr_fc_treecanopydata_leaflet.pdf
[4] PlanIT Geo Software Solutions - TreePlotter Software

- Health and condition
- Species mix and suitability
- Age ranges and anticipated longevity.

Figure 2: Tree Canopy Cover % by LSOA[5]
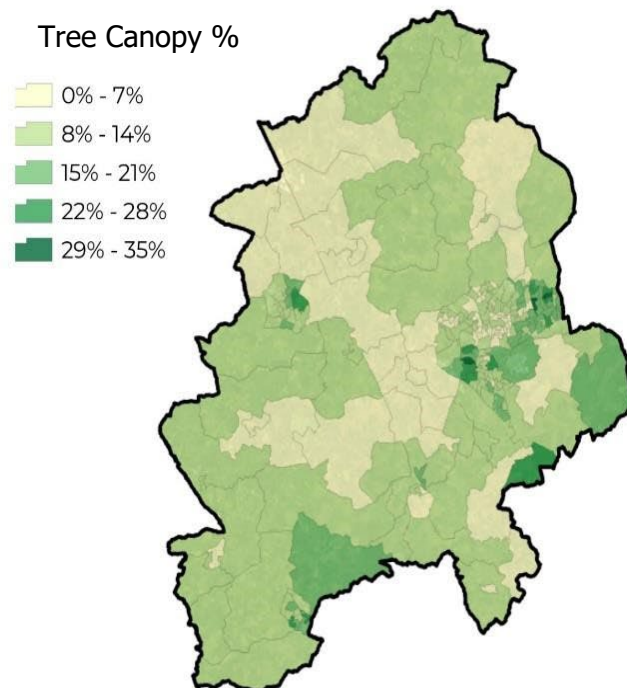
Overall, West Northamptonshire has an average of 9% per cent tree cover. This is under the national average of 15.8% canopy cover across England's towns and cities[5] and markedly below the 20 per cent recommended by the Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Network[8]. The Nature Based Solutions Institute 3-30-300 rule recommends a 30% tree canopy target, as there are additional health benefits which are known at this level[6], including a 2015 study which suggests that doubling tree cover to 30% could have reduced the death toll during extreme heatwaves by 40%[7].

The **3-30-300** rule provides clear criteria for the minimum provision of trees in our communities. It aims to provide equitable access to trees and green spaces and their benefits by setting the thresholds of having at least **3** well-established trees in view from every home, school, and place of work, no less than a **30%** tree canopy in every neighbourhood; and no more than **300m** to the nearest public green space from every residence.

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[5] https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/i-tree-eco/uk-urban-canopycover/#:~:text=Using%20the%20i%2DTree%20Canopy,cover%20of%2015.8%25%20was%20estimated. [8] https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/fr_fc_treecanopydata_leaflet.pdf

[6] https://nbsi.eu/the-3-30-300-rule/

[7] The little-known physical and mental health benefits of urban trees » Yale Climate Connections

In West Northamptonshire, just one ward contains greater than 30% canopy cover. This large canopy cover can likely be attributed to the Lings Wood Nature Reserve being within the ward. Generally, the areas with the lowest canopy (<5%) exist in urban areas along the A5123 and A4500 corridors. There are also rural areas with low levels of tree cover, reflecting agricultural practices in those areas.

Whilst research and evidence is valuable in highlighting the benefits of increased canopy cover, targets are best developed for specific communities or geographical areas and should consider constraints to creating canopy[8]. The maps and data from our canopy assessment will help to concentrate efforts in areas where we know there is the greatest need. Using the data from the canopy survey and ranking the LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas) needs for environmental, socio-demographic, and public health improvements, we can prioritise resources to those that areas which would benefit most. The mapping will show where there are tree and wood planting opportunities.

Figure 3 shows tree planting prioritisation by LSOA, ranked from highest priority (dark blue) to lowest (light yellow) and were calculated for 12 indicators as well as overall to show where multiple needs overlap. As can be expected the areas of greatest need for more trees and woods are our main urban centres. The range of indicators for the UTC calculation are in Appendix G.

In West Northamptonshire, removing the land use areas noted in Appendix G, due to competing land use opportunities, such as agriculture, would suggest that there is the potential to increase canopy cover to 19%. In reality, further opportunity for tree and woodland creation is possible on farmland alongside farming. Grants and funding such as the England woodland creation offer[9], a push for more environmentally friendly farming[10]. These incentives mean we would expect some additional increase in woodland, and trees within hedgerows over the course of the strategy period, potentially raising canopy cover beyond 19%. A figure of 20% is therefore used at the target.

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[8] https://www.americanforests.org/cities/why-we-no-longer-recommend-a-40-percent-urban-tree-canopygoal/)
[9] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/england-woodland-creation-offer
[10] https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/03/08/the-science-behind-the-sustainable-farming-incentive/

Figure 3: Tree planting prioritisation by LSOA[5]
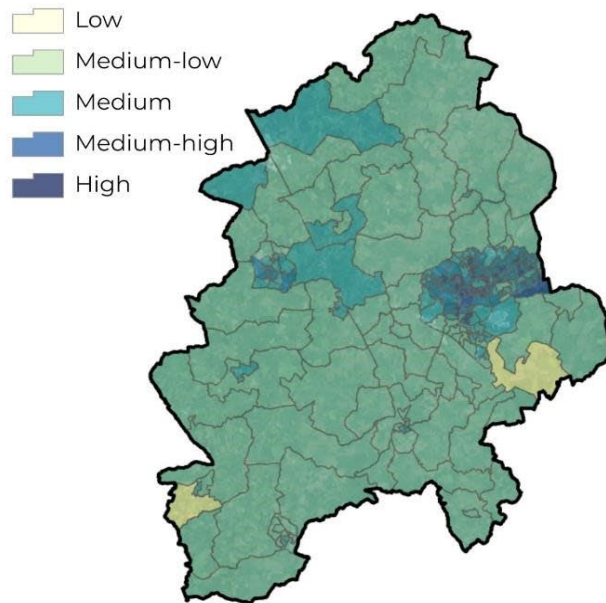
Our strategy recognises that we start from a low baseline. Sustained pressures to our urban and peri-urban trees and woods must also be considered. However, the mounting evidence and growing concern about the impacts of climate change, nature decline, and the health and wellbeing of people, we know we need to act now to ensure that West Northamptonshire's communities and businesses can enjoy the many benefits trees provide for generations to come. Armed with this knowledge, as much as where the opportunities lie to increase canopy cover, and protect existing trees and woods, we can set meaningful and realistic targets, priorities, and actions for the future.

Given the particular value of trees near people, and with the continued expansion of our urban centres, a core focus of this strategy will be to protect and increase our urban trees and woods. By working with partners, including town and parish councils, to improve tree cover in a well-designed way on publicly accessible land we help people to understand trees broader benefits. See Appendix D for a case study from Wootton Parish Council that follows these principles.

We will also, however, look to establish more rural planting, especially the 'West Wood' productive woodland proposed in the Council's Estate Climate Strategy and Construction & Maintenance Climate Strategy. This would aim to secure multiple benefits, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity enhancement, public enjoyment, and, if practical, flood risk reduction.

4. Our vision and themes and priorities

4.1 Vision Statement

"To double the canopy cover of West Northamptonshire to 20% with suitable and well managed trees and woods"

4.2 The Vision

Our Vision to 2045 is intended to meet the key priorities informed by current evidence, best practice, and from feedback gathered through extensive consultation. The vision will allow enough time for the benefits of the strategy and work we and our partners carry out to become apparent:

- Plant new trees and woods.
- Effectively maintain and protect existing trees and woods.
- Develop productive partnerships, and support them.
- Inform and influence communities and decision makers.
- Work in cost effective manner; demonstrating this with meaningful data to inform and update our benchmarks.

We will have the knowledge, expertise and resources we need to deliver and plan for the future, and the passion to get us there. People, wildlife and our local economy will be thriving. This is a strategy for everyone in West Northamptonshire. It is about creating the safe, wildlife rich and resilient town, village and rural surroundings of our future.

4.3 The Strategy

To achieve the Vision, we have series of strategies, of which this will be the first, from 2025 to 2030. It is intended then that a new strategy will be introduced every five years to continue the progression towards 2045, updating the priorities and adding new aims and objectives as we progress. Each strategy will be accompanied by a comprehensive action plan (Appendix B).

The current themes and priorities are:

1. **Plant and Protect:** To increase the canopy cover we need to plant new trees and woods.
2. **Restore and Protect**: Existing trees and woods are a key component of our vision and will need to be managed to maximise their benefits.
3. **Collaborate and Co-ordinate**: Alone we cannot achieve this, so we will work closely with our partners and communities.
4. **Delivery and Funding**: How we will achieve the strategy, and some of the current funding opportunities.
5. **Record and Report**: We will monitor our achievements and report our progress on a regular basis.

5. Tree and Wood Strategy Delivery

West Northamptonshire Council has a vision to achieve 20% tree canopy cover by 2045. This strategy forms the first steps towards reaching this target. This is for the whole district and will benefit the communities and businesses which form it. We can only achieve this by working together. Our key actions and guiding Principles are set out in our five Themes below:

1. Plant and Protect
2. Restore and Protect
3. Collaborate and Co-ordinate
4. Delivery and Funding
5. Record and Report

Having developed from a function often perceived as a niche, tree and woodland is becoming increasingly recognised for its importance as part of the solution for more pressing problems. Trees and Woods should no longer be an afterthought, but recognised for the role supporting the Council's wider strategic priorities and focus on achieving broader benefits. For example:

- **Draft Parks Development Strategy** identifies noticeable gaps in park coverage in West Northamptonshire, as well as varied access to good quality parks within Northampton specifically. It makes the case for new or renewed parks where provision is currently lacking, including in the north-east of West Northamptonshire (Battle of Naseby Country Park); the south-west of West Northamptonshire (Brackley Country (Linear) Park) and in the substantial growth area planned for south-east Northampton (Houghton Linear Park).
- **Estate and Construction & Maintenance Climate Strategies** identify the potential for a new woodland to capture residual carbon emission from its operations. This woodland may, in time, provide additional benefits, such as carbon capture, public access, biodiversity gains, and in the longer-term future, potentially timber and other wood products for use in construction.
- **Local Plan** is currently in development. This will set out policies to secure the protection and planting of trees in new development.
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** will also closely support the Tree Strategy's aim to increase canopy cover.

From recent tree removal and planting records for just one part of the Council's tree contracts we are currently replacing only 17% of the trees we are removing. This suggests we have a diminishing asset. The first step needs to be to reverse this.

Decision making will be based upon assessment of local need, available resources and whole landscape consideration. The Action Plan will focus and co-ordinate our efforts, prioritising them within available resources. The measures of success will enable delivery to be assessed and focussed as necessary. It is not possible to anticipate every situation; therefore we need to remain flexible to enable us to maximise new opportunities and respond to challenges.

5.1   Theme 1: Plant and Protect

5.1.1   Purpose

To achieve the Vision of increasing canopy coverage to 20% we will plant new trees an encourage and assist our partners to do the same. When trees are removed a greater number of replacements will be needed.

It is recognised that resources are limited so care must be taken to ensure that the trees that are planted are where they can provide benefit and will not be expensive to maintain. The Council has drawn up a framework to enable the selection of the Right Tree for the Right Place; this will be expanded into a protocol to assist anyone wishing to plant trees and woods.

5.1.2   Expanding the canopy cover

We aim to increase canopy cover to 20% across West Northamptonshire during the lifetime of this Strategy. This target might be a moving one; we anticipate that damage, disease, development and deterioration will result in loss, yet equally, we will remain agile to respond to planting opportunities that arise, for example as space is identified for extending local tree cover.

In their 'Emergency Tree Plan for the UK'[11], the Woodland Trust states '*To increase tree cover the UK needs to pursue a mix of approaches, at a variety of scales appropriate to the landscape. This must include expanding native woodland, sustainable commercial plantations, agroforestry, urban trees, hedges and individual countryside trees. This strategic approach will maximise the multiple benefits of more trees and woods and mitigate the risk of any single approach failing*.' It is vital that we commit to replacement and new planting now to provide the canopy cover of the future.

WNC will explore all opportunities available to expand canopy cover based on in-depth analysis of planting opportunities and priorities, with adequate '*ground truthing*' (on site analysis to ensure accuracy of digital data), and in partnership with communities, landowners and partners. We will ensure that activity to increase and enhance tree and woodland cover supports wider landscape-scale partnership projects. This is a key consideration in our work to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with local partners and developers, through which we will identify and map areas of notable potential for biodiversity enhancement and environmental benefits.

Canopy cover will be reviewed every five years by carrying out further canopy assessments to track change over time. This will support us to set revised targets to achieve maximum benefits, including around increasing the equitable distribution of canopy cover.

Planting initiatives that include woodland, parks, roadsides and green spaces in our communities will be prioritised using our canopy map priority indicator assessment to identify those places where need is greatest, for example in areas with poor access or low canopy cover.

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[11] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2020/01/emergency-treeplan/#:~:text=Our%20Emergency%20Tree%20Plan%20sets,trees%20and%20increase%20canopy%20cove r.

5.1.3   Creating Diversity and Resilience

A resilient treescape is one that is able to readily adapt to environmental change and remain healthy into the future. Building resilience is key to ensuring that our trees cope with the predicted increasingly frequent and intense stressors, such as average temperature changes, increased frequency and intensity of storms, floods, and droughts.

Understanding the age and species diversity of the trees across our towns, villages and wider landscape will facilitate a proactive and more flexible approach to tree planting and management plans which enhance diversity.

Working with partners we will work towards achieving age and species diversity across our tree population. Maturing trees will be protected and managed to ensure they thrive and survive to become veteran trees, whilst a continual programme of replacement planting will be established to replace older, dying trees, and trees removed for safety reasons.

Increasing the diversity of our tree stock will limit the risks and impact that future pests and diseases may pose. The avoidance of tree diseases and pests is a national issue and guidance is provided by government[12].

WNC will commit to:

- Selecting species best adapted to climate change.
- Sourcing planting stock that is UK and Ireland sourced and grown (UKISG)[13] where possible, and/or through nurseries or suppliers that adhere to national standards such as the Plant Health Management Standard, or that have a strong biosecurity policy.
- Adherence to the 10-20-30 principle, which promotes that urban tree planting schemes should include no more than 10% of any one species, 20% of any one genus, or 30% of any family of tree[14].

5.1.4   Tree Replacement Standard

The council will adopt a tree replacement standard for WNC owned trees. The Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees system (CAVAT) is a method developed in the UK for managing trees as public assets rather than liabilities. It is a strategic tool and aid for decision-making in relation to assessing tree stock as a whole, as well as individual trees, for example, where the value of a single tree needs to be expressed in monetary terms in order to demonstrate its relative contribution to public amenity. CAVAT will be especially useful in cases where third parties seek to remove council owned trees and in securing compensation following wilful or negligent damage to local authority trees[23].

Money secured as a result of CAVAT will be ring-fenced directly into a planting budget to replace trees that are unavoidably lost on our land, with a key focus being trees on highways. The Council will seek to use this money to plant into streets with empty tree pits, as these locations typically provide the most public benefit. We will also look to see if these funds could be used to plant trees with partners, such as town and parish councils, on their

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[12] Tree pests and diseases - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[13] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-plant-trees/uk-sourced-and-grown-scheme
[14] Where did the 10-20-30 rule come from? Is it adequate? – The Garden Professors™ [38]
https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UKsummary.pdf.pagespeed.ce.Ae3DUIDGOv.pdf

landholdings, as we recognise the public benefits planting on these sites can bring for residents and businesses. Further information on CAVAT is available in Appendix E.

5.1.5 Trees and Development

The National Planning Policy Framework[15] gives the Council the ability to put more pressure on new developments for the planting of trees, as well as encourage use of the most appropriate species and planting technique, to avoid loss of new trees. It also points out the importance of funding the future maintenance of trees to ensure these trees reach maturity.

Paragraph 136 of the NPPF states:

> *Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.*

The Council encourages pre-application discussions in all cases of development which may impact trees so that issues of tree protection and planting can be addressed at the earliest possible stage of the planning process.

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) became mandatory from 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)[16]. BNG is an approach to development which makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development. Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. BNG will offer valuable opportunities for planting new trees and woodlands, as well as protecting those that we have and encouraging their management for nature recovery[17].

The Council will seek to introduce a tree replacement standard like the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard[18], which will ensure that lost trees are replaced on-site and where this is not possible any developer contributions will be ring-fenced into a planting budget to plant trees on publicly accessible land.

5.1.6 Biosecurity

Following good biosecurity practices (the prevention of the introduction and spread of harmful organisms) is crucial for preventing the introduction of pests and diseases. For example, the importation of trees played a part in the rapid spread of Ash dieback in the UK. Ash dieback is a destructive fungal disease which has been spreading since 2012.

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[15] [National Planning Policy Framework (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/)

[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain

[17] https://forestrycommission.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/19/biodiversity-net-gain-what-can-we-expect-for-treesand-woodlands/

[18] https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-regulations/planning-policy-andguidance/supplementary-planning-documents-practice-notes-and-other-planning-guidance

Considering biosecurity early in the planning cycle and as part of the Council's procurement policy will be crucial in future tree planting schemes. This will help prevent the transmission of pests and diseases and specifically transportation, with an effective audit trail attributing ownership and a chain of custody from seed to planted tree at its final destination.

At a more local level, we will also seek to actively promote and engage with volunteer-assisted tree nurseries that can collect local seed and grow up until large enough to plant out. Not only can local nurseries play a valuable role in providing a variety of local genotypes and trees that are well adapted to local conditions and support good biosecurity practices, but they can also provide a valuable opportunity to involve the wider community. A case study from Brackley Town Council in Appendix D demonstrates this.

5.1.7   Biodiversity

The UK has one of the lowest woodland covers in Europe. In West Northamptonshire, woodland cover is considerably lower than the UK average of 13%[19] at 5.1% currently. The State of Nature Report 2019 report demonstrates that the abundance and distribution of the UK's species has, on average, declined since 1970, with no let-up in the net loss of nature in the UK[38]. Woodlands across the UK are declining in ecological condition and quality and there has been a decline in woodland wildlife[20].

Biodiversity and the resilience of our treescape and wider ecosystems are heavily linked. We will seek to increase the species diversity of our trees. Bringing woodland into management means pests and diseases can be identified quickly, whilst newly planted woodlands can be protected, enabling them to grow and flourish. We will also review the management of existing woodlands on our estate and work with partners to understand management practise more widely.

Working with partners and in undertaking Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) spatial mapping, we will promote the expansion and connection of woodlands to ensure West Northamptonshire's trees and woodlands are resilient to increasing temperatures, disease and pests, and to competing land use demand. Ancient woodlands such as Everdon Stubbs, Badby Woods, Salcey, Whittlewood, and Yardley Chase provide the opportunity for woodland enhancement and creation, linking and extending existing blocks of woodland and other habitats of high biodiversity value. The creation of new woodland should be sympathetic to local character, history, and not be at the expense of existing areas of high biodiversity value and should not compromise the creation of geographically related habitats such as acid grassland and heath land.

Ancient trees, standing deadwood and fallen timber provide one of our most important habitats for biodiversity. An estimated 13% of all species of plants and animals known in the UK are directly dependent on dead and decaying wood habitats[21]. Wherever possible, standing dead trees will be retained. In public areas, these trees can be made safe by creating 'monoliths' which have been reduced in height and spread and then left to decay in a standing position. These trees can support many species dependent on decaying wood and bridge the age gap whilst younger trees reach veteran status. Where appropriate,

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[19] Woodland Statistics - Forest Research
[20] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/51705/state-of-the-uks-woods-and-trees-2021thewoodlandtrust.pdf
[21] https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2022/01/BFTB-Advice-Sheet-Managing-Dead-and-Decaying-Wood.FINAL_.pdf

fallen timber will be left intact or in large pieces close to the parent tree to support that diverse range of species that thrive on it.

5.1.8 Adopt "the right tree for the right place"

Access to trees and woodlands is currently unequal across West Northamptonshire. We know that access to nature can have significant improvements to health, reducing mortality rates and improving mental wellbeing.[22] Tree planting in areas where access to nature is low has the potential to address health inequalities and improve access to nature for all.

Accessibility will be a key consideration in planning for tree and woodland planting, so far as constraints on location and funding allow. Personal safety considerations have been highlighted during our consultation, which is important in the planning and design of new locations for tree planting. Any new planting will also consider how best to address this at an early stage in the design process and during consultation.

We will seek to move towards tree equity across our towns and villages, ensuring every resident of, and visitor to, West Northants has access to the benefits trees provide.

To achieve this, we will address how increasing access to woods and trees aligns with the Council's efforts to achieve wider policy and strategy targets linked to social, health and biodiversity benefits.

We will adopt the principle of "the right tree for the right place" to secure the long-term benefits of the trees we plant and maintain. Careful choice of tree planting locations will be a fundamental consideration at the outset of planting projects, both in urban environments, and more widely, to prevent any conflict with other priority land use types, archaeological or other features, and to ensure that newly planted trees survive and thrive. Prior to tree planting schemes being agreed, site suitability will be assessed with consideration of:

- Site – geology, soils, local weather conditions, soil water content.
- Tree species – climate resilient.
- Nursery supplier – to prevent transmission of disease.
- Size of tree to plant – to ensure successful establishment.
- Aesthetic or environmental concerns.
- Care and maintenance plans, including for 3 years after planting
- Pests and diseases.
- Where natural regeneration may be more suitable than planting.

Trees will not normally be planted where alternative priority habitat types are identified, for example, species-rich grassland. These habitats are valuable and must be protected in their own right.

When trees have to be removed and the position is suitable for replacements the stump shall be retained at approximately 1.3m (to avoid a trip hazard) until we are ready to carry out the new planting.

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[22] https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/urgp_benefits_of_green_infrastructure_main_report.pdf

WNC encourages and welcomes action by local communities to plant and maintain young trees. It is essential that professional advice and the permission of the owner of the land is obtained.

The successful work of Northampton-based community group Save Our Street Trees[22] saw 21 street trees planted on Penryhn Road in Northampton between 2019 and 2020. A case study is available in Appendix D. It is an example of what is possible, but we know the process must be simplified to enable this to be replicated across our towns and parishes. The Council will implement a simplified process for members of the public, parishes, and local businesses to help replace trees lost from within the highway, learning from schemes elsewhere in the country where this is working well. Our current highways maintenance contract seeks to replace all trees removed by our operations and increase tree coverage by 5% in the district by the end of the contract.

5.1.9   Create new Woodland

New woodland will provide the greatest addition to canopy. There are challenges in the urban areas to find sufficient space to create many new woods, but rurally we will explore opportunities to establish new woods, including creating 'West Wood', a new productive woodland park, providing renewable materials such as coppice poles and fence posts.

Woods have a multitude of uses and benefits, we will encourage woods to have multiple uses, including:

- Protect and enhance existing woods.
- Conserve, maintain and enhance cultural and heritage assets.
- Contribute to the local character and distinctiveness.
- Provide habitats for other plants and wildlife.
- Provide recreational facilities.
- Provide sustainable and marketable woodland products.

Wherever possible planting will use locally sourced planting stock, and on appropriate sites natural regeneration, to create the woodlands.

5.1.10   Create new orchards

Orchards provide food for people and habitat for wildlife. The inclusion of orchards in planting schemes and on their own in appropriate locations is encouraged, as it supports wider health and wellbeing and biodiversity ambitions. WNC will consider locations for orchards proposed by communities on Council owned land where practical and work with town and parish councils to offer advice on locations and species for new orchards.

5.1.11   Plant, restore and maintain hedgerows

Hedgerows connect and bring beauty to the patchwork quilt of West Northamptonshire's countryside. They provide essential homes and corridors for wildlife and help tackle the climate crisis by capturing carbon. In our towns, hedgerows provide useful water drainage, clean the air and shelter wildlife.

The UK Government's five-year Environmental Improvement Plan published in 2023 includes a target to support farmers in England to create or restore 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037 and 45,000 miles by 2050. In their 2023-2024 report for CPRE, the Organic Research Centre set out recommendations for local level action to achieve these hedgerow targets[42]. The Council will seek, including through our emerging Local Nature

Recovery Strategy, to work with local stakeholders on local ambition for hedgerows. This will include seeking grant funding, advising partners, communities and Town and Parish Council's, and working to raise awareness of the many values of hedgerows in urban and rural areas. Where possible we will address systemic threats to hedgerows through policy support and knowledge exchange.

5.1.12   Young tree establishment

To ensure successful establishment, young tree maintenance is essential. This will be costed into the planning of any scheme and include:

- Regular watering.
- Removal of weeds.
- Check stake, tie and guards.
- Check health of the tree.
- Check and repair of any damage.
- Top-up mulch.

When trees are established and ready for stakes and guards to be removed, they will be formatively pruned. It is a particularly beneficial and cost effective exercise as it can identify and remedy growth defects before they affect the trees' health, and become more expensive to correct. This is the initial pruning of the tree to remove:

- Weak and diseased growth.
- Crossing branches and competing leaders, except where these are a feature of the species.
- Balance the trees' shape.

5.2   Theme 2: Restore and Protect

5.2.1   Purpose

The Council commits to protecting our existing tree stock first and foremost, as the most fundamental step towards increasing canopy cover. It is our mature and maturing trees that provide substantial canopy cover benefits now and will continue to do so into the future providing they are well maintained.

The Council's behaviour in managing its trees and woods will be in accordance with good practice. When providing advice and guidance, whether this is colleagues, citizens or businesses and developers, it needs to be clear and consistent, giving confidence that the Council is doing this for the benefit of its communities. The Council is the guiding authority in the district; if it expects improvements then it needs to lead by example.

Clear management plans will assist the Council in meeting its obligations and help with budget profiling and planning. Legal obligations require that the Council manage its trees and woods. Over the years legislation, and legal precedents have established quite clear expectations and duties. Where short comings are identified, specific and timely action plans will need to be implemented and good practice information shared. This will be a key element of the benchmarking, incorporated into a Tree Management Protocol. The protocol is a high priority. It will include a process to manage risk from all Council trees, along with appropriate inspection cycles.

5.2.2   Trees around buildings

Trees in close proximity to people's homes and workplace provide greatest environmental, social and climate benefits, but also lead to requests to maintain and even to remove them. Each case will be reviewed on its own merits, but the Council is not always able to fully resolve these. Appendix F sets out the approach the Council will take to many of the more common concerns to ensure that it responds as a good neighbour, whilst maintaining the important role of the urban trees and woods to the wider community. This will be kept under frequent review and amended if necessary. On shrinkable clay soils, occasionally subsidence occurs, this can be very stressful to the homeowner therefore the Council will adopt a risk limitation approach to ensure these are dealt with in as clear and prompt a manner as possible.

First published in 1992 the London Tree Officer Association "A Risk Limitation Strategy for Tree Root Claims" was developed to provide a consistent and efficient response to claims. This was developed in collaboration with a broad range of partners, including arboricultural consultants, and representative of the insurance and structural engineering industries. This has been used by local authorities across England, and is proposed to be the basis of the Council's approach.

Managing the health of trees also includes ensuring their protection during work in their vicinity. We will continue to promote consistent best practice through the application of relevant legislative duties, national guidance, and business sector advice.

The Council will develop and deliver a minimum intervention approach to tree management, as far as practical maintaining their natural size and form. Tree pruning will be in accordance with good practice and kept to the minimum needed to meet WNCs obligations and duties as a good and considerate neighbour. Hard pruning practices, such as pollarding, will be resisted unless there are sound arboricultural reasons, and no viable alternative.

The Tree Management Protocol will:
- Be applied to all Council owned trees.
- Establish a high quality, diverse and resilient tree stock.
- Be accordance with WNC's obligations.
- Introduce a program of inspection and management works.
- Establish clear set of criteria for tree pruning and removal.
- Apply resources in a manner to ensure greatest community benefits.
- Be reviewed as part of the strategy review process.

5.2.3   Implement proactive tree management

An inventory system for all publicly owned trees will enable WNC to establish a clear picture of the existing tree stock, including location, species, condition, age, and inspection regime, and an estimation of the benefits these trees are providing, enabling CAVAT to be applied. This will rapidly build a detailed knowledge of the trees and woods, and the data will facilitate proactive maintenance and risk management, as well as better planning for the future. We will determine an inspection and recording regime with relevant control measures, in compliance with its obligations, current industry standards and best practice. By implementing an inventory system, the Council will be able to collect and use the large volumes of information necessary for the proactive management of trees, including to:

a) Refocus the resources devoted to tree maintenance to facilitate longer term and more proactive management.
b) Allocate resources in accordance with a system of priorities.

WNC will take into account the value of existing mature trees and recognise the increased biodiversity benefits associated with mature trees. Where safety concerns arise, we will explore options to retain them safely.

All planned work on trees or woodland on Council land will take account of biodiversity issues, for example, bird nesting or bats roosting, through an initial assessment prior to works taking place.

5.2.4   Trees on Highways

WNC is responsible for the management of around 23,000 trees on the local highway network. Highway trees provide multiple benefits; their presence improves air quality[15], reduces noise, helps conserve energy and calms traffic[16]. Studies have shown that trees increase pedestrian safety[17] as well as creating a more pleasant environment that promotes active travel[18]. In densely built urban areas street trees may be people's only link to the natural environment, and forming stepping stones of greenery for wildlife to move about.

To ensure that our highways tree assets continue to deliver multiple benefits into the future, WNC will implement regular inspections of trees on the highways network in accordance with guidance produced by the National Tree Safety Group[19] and case law[20]. Managing our existing trees and woodlands better will allow the WNC canopy to grow over time, supporting our objectives.

Through consultation local communities and residents across West Northamptonshire have expressed their care about roadside trees, or 'street trees', particularly in areas where trees have been lost and not replaced in the past.

The Environment Act 2021 introduced the duty for the local highway authority to consult on felling street trees (the "duty to consult")[23] to ensure local people can express their views. This came into force in 2023, requiring the Council to follow a procedure to notify residents, giving them the opportunity to comment and to provide a response. WNC will adhere to the duty to consult wherever street tree removal is proposed.

5.2.5   Woodland management

The Council owns several small woods. These have been managed for community benefit, and as wildlife havens. To ensure they continue to provide these benefits, and to broaden them, woodland management plans need to be developed. These will meet the criteria and policies of good woodland management. This will include matching the benefits set out in "creating new woods" above.

5.2.6   Protect ancient trees, woodlands and hedgerows

Ancient and veteran trees and woodlands are recognised as irreplaceable habitat, and recently given equal protection in the National Planning Policy Framework[24]. Ancient woodlands are defined as those continuously wooded since 1600[24]. They are home to more threatened species than any other habitat in the UK. They are the closest we have to natural woodland in the UK and are an irreplaceable part of our heritage. In West

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[23] https://www.theihe.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Duty-to-Consult-Guidance-for-Local-AuthoritiesFINAL.pdf

Northamptonshire, Everdon Stubbs, Badby Woods, Salcey, Whittlewood, and Yardley Chase are well known local ancient woodlands. Ancient and veteran trees can be individual trees or groups of trees within wood pastures, historic parkland, hedgerows, orchards, parks or other areas.[24]

Traditional orchards have been recognised as a Priority Habitat by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006[24] and designated as a unique biodiversity habitat under the UK biodiversity action plan[25]. Traditional orchards are defined as groups of fruit and nut trees planted on vigorous rootstocks at low densities in permanent grassland, and managed in a low intensity way[26]. As far as possible, WNC will not allow the loss of traditional orchards to development. WNC will seek to protect them where possible.

The Council recognises the benefits of hedgerows, especially ancient hedgerows[27]. We will look to manage, maintain and enhance hedgerows on our estate and where suitable look to plant new hedgerows.

WNC will endeavour at all times to appropriately care for and manage our woodland holdings, ancient and veteran trees, and hedgerows working with local communities and partners where possible, acting on the most up to date best practise guidance, and maximising the use of available resources, such as those produced by The Woodland Trust.

5.2.7 Protect our most valuable trees

To ensure West Northamptonshire's trees are protected, we will continue to apply the legislation available to us, making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) when necessary and aim to carry out a comprehensive review of existing TPO's to reassess historical orders and consider implementing additional orders and more extensive enforcement where appropriate.

As part of our collaboration, with communities we will also raise awareness around issues of tree protection through engagement and educational awareness activity. A case study from Brackley Town Council is available in Appendix D.

5.2.8 Protect during development

WNC will continue to ensure that new development takes into account trees and woods in the planning and construction process, applying best practice and national guidance to minimise damage. Through the emerging Local Plan, the Council will explain how it intends to continue to do this.

5.3 Theme 3: Collaborate and Co-ordinate
5.3.1 Purpose

With competing demands on limited resources, trees have not always been at the forefront of decision-making. To deliver the ambitions in this Strategy we will promote the benefits of

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[24] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents

[25] https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2829ce47-1ca5-41e7-bc1a-871c1cc0b3ae/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-56https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2829ce47-1ca5-41e7-bc1a-871c1cc0b3ae/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-56-TraditionalOrchards.pdfTraditionalOrchards.pdf

[26] https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/management-of-traditional-orchards-be4

[27] https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/habitat-management/ancient-and-species-richhedgerows/#:~:text=Ancient%20hedgerows%2C%20which%20tend%20to,1720%20and%201840%20in%20Britain.

trees within and across WNC services working towards a unified approach to decision making and operational delivery. This will realise higher standards, quicker and consistent decision making, and better value for money.

5.3.2   FAQs

We will publish updated Tree FAQs (Appendix F) and ensure that any planned maintenance or forthcoming planting schemes are communicated in a timely, and accessible way. Engagement activity will seek to raise awareness of the many health, economic, and environmental benefits of trees and woodlands. A range of communication channels will be used, including social media, stakeholder work, press releases, through our digital newsletters and marketing. WNC will develop a communications and engagement strategy to support the delivery of this strategy.

5.3.3   Adoption of Tree and Woods Strategy

Adopting the strategy will give clear mandate and guidance to all relevant departments, as well as Councillors, partners and local communities, on our approach to planting and protection, tree maintenance, management, and ensuring a joined-up approach across all relevant service functions on issues influencing tree retention and protection, management and planting.

The Tree Strategy will be referenced in allied strategy and policy documents and with overarching policy targets – for example, net zero and carbon reduction targets as recommended in our Estates Net Zero Strategy. A summary of relevant policies can be found in Appendix A.

5.3.4   Expertise and resource in the right place

A sustainable treescape requires expertise in the right place, adequately resourced and expertly trained. The management of trees owned by West Northamptonshire Council is currently split between several departments and contracts. It is not always clear who owns or is responsible for which trees. Some trees and woods do not have clear maintenance arrangements. In some cases, the responsibility for tree management sits within a team whose technical expertise is not a good fit for achieving our strategic aims, the trees are a distraction, managed with little comprehension of their benefits or needs. A single point of contact provides greatest efficiency. The Tree Strategy Officer as part of the benchmarking exercise will explore how and where tree management should sit at an organisational level, as well as future resourcing requirements.

Delivering the ambitions set out in this Strategy will require collaboration across multiple teams and departments, with appropriate processes and systems for communication. These teams must equally have the right resource, training, and expertise in place to collectively achieve the vision.

Information about trees will be readily available. To manage its trees and direct resources to places of greatest need and benefit, records for all Council trees need to be managed on a single database. Access to data and information on West Northamptonshire's tree stock should be accessible to all relevant teams and departments. We will explore the procurement of an inventory system for all publicly owned trees. This will enable us to document trees by their location, species, condition, age, and inspection regime, to facilitate proactive maintenance, risk management and a prompt response to public enquiries, as well as assisting marking our achievements in reaching the canopy cover vision. This system should allow multiple teams and users to access and share information

and better facilitate collaborative working. It would also be beneficial if this system has an external interface so that, where relevant, information can be shared with Town and Parish Councils and the public.

5.3.5 Working with our communities

To realise the ambitions in this strategy, we cannot work alone, the canopy cover would be sparse if we relied solely on public land. Ultimately the success of maintaining and developing canopy cover depends upon continued support of homeowners, businesses, and volunteers. There is a huge breadth of knowledge and expertise on trees, hedgerows and woodlands across West Northamptonshire's local communities, individuals and private and third sector organisations. The breadth of response to our consultation for this strategy highlighted the passion and support for and woods and trees across residents, communities and local organisations.

Equally, WNC recognises that we need to communicate, inform, engage and collaborate more widely to educate and celebrate the benefits of West Northamptonshire's trees, woodlands and hedgerows. Landholders, businesses, organisations, communities, and schools will all have an important part to play.

The trees, woodlands and hedgerows of West Northamptonshire are not isolated, they link into the wider regional woodlands of Leicestershire, Rutland and Lincolnshire to the north, North Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire to the east, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire to the south and Warwickshire to the west. Our continued work and collaboration with partners will be key to ensuring that our actions support wider landscape scale change.

West Northamptonshire has 166 town and parishes, varying significantly in size and scope, with the smallest holding an electorate of seven and the largest an electorate of 90,000. Town and parish councils are at the heart of local communities and have a complex knowledge of their area, local electorate, and ambitions for the future and are responsible for a range of civic duties, which will often involve managing land on which trees are growing, or managing land with planting potential, for example open spaces and commons.

5.3.6 Supporting town and parish councils

Consultation with town and parish councils has helped to shape this strategy and showed where there are opportunities to learn from, develop, support and work more closely together to deliver the vision.

There are currently varying degrees of knowledge on tree management and planning issues in parishes. There is lots of opportunity for closer working to ensure parishes are better supported to undertake tree management and maintenance responsibilities. Consultation with parishes highlighted the need for access to clear and consistent advice and support, and better and earlier engagement from WNC, including in the following areas:

- Negotiation of commuted sums with development companies.
- Costs and responsibilities associated with adopting land with trees.
- Consulting at outline planning stage when forming Section 106 agreements.
- Information on tree ownership.

They will provide a focal point of liaison, advice and support for parish and town councils within WNC. This will empower parishes and could significantly amplify action to meet the aims of this and future strategies. This function could also work with parishes to identify

sites for tree planting, make applications for grant funding and provide knowledge, expertise and training.

5.3.7   Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration

In 2022 the Council introduced a parish liaison function to build better working relationships between parish councils and WNC services. This function is facilitating collaboration between parishes, WNC and Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (NCALC), including via the Larger Parishes Forum, which meets monthly.

Consultation with Parishes in developing this Strategy revealed some exemplary local policy and initiatives that merit celebrating, sharing, and where feasible, replicating. See Appendix D. Many parishes expressed ambitions to deliver more for trees but would benefit from guidance and support to drive their plans forward. Opportunities to facilitate collaboration and learning between parishes will be explored.

West Northamptonshire's towns and parishes have distinct local area character, as well as challenges and opportunities that a local Tree and Wood Strategy can help to address. We will work with towns and parishes to facilitate the development of local area tree strategies, that will emphasise local interpretation and prioritisation; that will support this overarching strategy. We will work in partnership with them to develop a framework. An example from Epping is available here: LOUGHTON CTS WEB5.pdf (loughton-tc.gov.uk)

5.3.8   Engaging landowners and farmers

WNC will seek to work with Forestry Commission and other partners to signpost landowners to relevant government grants and information to increase the knowledge base around the benefits of trees, woodlands, hedgerows and agroforestry.

5.3.9   Engaging young people

Many responders to the consultation for the strategy proposed that the Council do more to engage young people in activity involving woods and trees. We will work with schools and colleges to promote tree planting and WNC recognise and encourage the benefits of forest school activities and the use of educational resources, such as the Woodland Trust's Green Trees Schools Award.

5.3.10   Engaging with local businesses

The Council has developed links with local businesses through its wider work, including existing services provided by Parks and Countryside. These will be coordinated, and further links made through partnerships and engagement opportunities. We will seek to engage with local businesses to gain a further understanding of their corporate giving strategies (Corporate Social Responsibility), including the provision of both labour and resources, and how we can help them achieve their carbon zero aspirations.

5.3.9   Identify Training and volunteering Opportunities

We will explore training and volunteering opportunities with local educational facilities, such as Moulton College and Northampton University, e.g. via geography, environmental science and other suitable courses.

Working closely with colleagues in aligned service areas, including parks and countryside, sustainability and public health, and with partner organisations we will engage the wider community in celebrating, caring for, and planting new trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

Much of the damage that occurs to trees in the urban areas occurs out of ignorance. The experience and response to the consultation process demonstrates that citizens are supportive but lack the knowledge and understanding to make a positive contribution. The Council is the guiding authority and if we expect improvements in the communities then we need to lead by example.

A 'Tree Toolkit' and training package that covers aspects of tree management and maintenance; communicating and consulting with residents and private land managers; the planning and development process; highways; and wider strategic links will be produced.

5.4   Theme 4: Delivery and Funding

5.4.1   Purpose

The Tree Strategy Officer will oversee delivery of this Strategy and accompanying action plan, and emerging Tree Management Protocol.

We will also explore the merits of establishing a corporate delivery group to ensure actions and opportunities are maximised and fulfilled where these intersect with functions in other departments.

In delivering this strategy WNC will:

- Deliver its own commitments to tree and woodland management.
- Support communities, businesses and a wider group of stakeholders to plant and protect trees on their own land, encourage participation, and signpost to funding sources.
- Agree a metric for recording results. For example, we will consider reinstating a corporate scorecard for trees planted each year, as well as monitoring canopy cover change and changes to the structure and composition of our treescape.

5.4.2   Funding sources

There is no statutory funding for tree strategy implementation. However, WNC will seek opportunities to supplement its own investments in tree management. This will include applications to government funding schemes available now and which may become available in future, wherever these will help to us to achieve the aims of this strategy.

5.4.3   Carbon trading

This is a scheme to encourage landowners to invest in woodland creation and sign up to woodland carbon credits. As these schemes become more commonplace, we will assess how they can help us deliver increased canopy cover. Tree planting has an important role in carbon capture, and in particular the West Wood, will enable a form of internal carbon trading (offsetting), as outlined in the Estate and Construction & Maintenance Climate Strategies.

5.4.4   Other funding opportunities

WNC will explore strengthening opportunities for people to donate funds to tree and woodland planting, including, for example, tree planting in wills.

We will also review procurement for tree management services to ensure the Council is securing best value and making additional savings where possible that can support additional tree planting.

5.4.5   Environmental Land Management scheme

The Agriculture Act 2020 provides the legal framework for the establishment of a new system of agricultural assistance for farmers and land managers who will be expected to deliver on a variety of environmental matters including enhanced landscapes and measures to minimise the effects of climate change. The Act established a new system called the Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) based on paying public money for "public goods" which are defined as environmental benefits. There is the potential for this scheme to deliver new tree, hedgerow and woodland planting on agricultural land. WNC will signpost landowners to such schemes.

5.5   Theme 5: Recording and Reporting

The Vision focuses our efforts to manage, protect and expand the tree cover of West Northamptonshire. The strategy guides our actions through the priorities to help us achieve the Vision

The strategy retains flexibility to enable us to adapt to any material changes including:

- Legislation.
- National and local policy.
- Best practice.
- New research findings.
- Maximising new opportunities (e.g. new funding).
- Respond to new and arising challenges and pressures (e.g. pest or disease outbreaks).

We will be able to measure our success, and performance review with key stakeholders to take stock of progress.

The WNC Tree Policy Board, which has overseen development of the strategy, will continue to meet to monitor implementation. Our Members' Sustainability Working Group is well placed to monitor delivery of the strategy. Where relevant monitoring would involve other working groups as necessary.

An annual progress report will be published, setting out what has been accomplished in the year, and signposting amendments to the strategy. If necessary, an updated strategy will also be published.

Abbreviations

WNC	West Northamptonshire Council
APP	Appendix
BNG	Biodiversity net gain
CAVAT	Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees
ELMS	Environmental Land Management System
HS2	High Speed Rail 2
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LSOA	Lower Layer Super Output Areas
NCALC	Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
UKISG	UK and Ireland sourced and grown
UTC	Urban Tree Canopy