

**Eastleigh Borough Council
Draft Tree Strategy 2022-2030**

Introduction

Eastleigh Borough Council (the Council) recognises that climate change is having a significant impact on nature and the environment and that trees, in addition to other green infrastructure, can have multiple benefits for our borough. These benefits include:

Benefits to Climate

- Helping to mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) and some pollutants from the atmosphere
- Helping to create shade and shelter, keeping our urban areas cool
- Increasing our resilience to flooding by absorbing and slowing the flow of water

Benefits to Nature

- Stabilising and aerating our soil
- Providing wildlife habitats and corridors and enhancing biodiversity

Benefits to People

- Improving physical and mental well-being by creating a pleasant environment and positive perception of place

The Council's role

The Council owns and manages two country parks, several open spaces and numerous other 'pocket' parks and open land across the borough and is therefore well placed to add further value to and enhance its existing, and any potential new tree stock.

The Council has a community leadership and place-shaping role across the borough, including towns and local centres where trees play an important part in creating a sense of place and greening the places we live, work and visit the most.

The Council, through several of its Local Areas is also already very active in developing detailed woodland management plans and planting schemes, in partnership with others such as Parish Councils. For example, see the Bishopstoke, Fair Oak and Horton Heath Bee and Tree Corridor Scheme [here](#).

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to provide an over-arching framework to support the Council's detailed operational policy and technical documents relating to trees, outline the Council's target to plant 160,000 more trees in the borough by 2030 and provide a basis to develop further actions.

Current policy and technical documents include:

[Tree Preservation Orders](#) (TPOs)

[Tree Risk Management Plan](#) (TRMP)

[Trees and Development Supplementary Planning Document](#) (Trees SPD)

[Policy for Trees on Public Land](#)

The Climate and Environmental Emergency

The Council declared a Climate and Environmental Emergency in July 2019 and set two key ambitious targets to:

- a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; and

- b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030

Furthermore, the Council also recognised the declines in nature witnessed since the 1970s and committed to take this into account.

Over their lifetime, trees can absorb and sequester carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2e}), however planting alone will not provide the solution to reaching carbon neutrality. The amount of CO_{2e} a tree will sequester depends on many factors, such as the type of tree, where it is planted and the amount of room it has to grow. Following the Woodland Trust Guide, it is estimated that 160,000 trees will absorb approximately 440 tonnes of CO_{2e} each year.

More information on our Climate and Environment Emergency can be found [here](#).

Our Vision

Our vision is to manage the borough's trees to maximise the benefits they offer, ensure that the trees we leave for future generations, and the character they bring to our borough, are better than those we have inherited, and plant 160,000 new trees by 2030.

Our Strategy

Our strategy is based upon two key principles to ensure that all existing and future trees and woodlands are considered across their whole lifecycle, as part of an 'urban forest' and with woodland and habitat creation in mind.

The two key principles are:

- Preserve
- Increase

The Council will strive to apply these principles to all trees within the borough. This includes trees on its private estate, on its public land holdings and, in certain circumstances, on behalf of other Local Authorities, such as Town and Parish Councils on their public land.

Trees on private land, including for domestic and business uses, unless subject to a Tree Preservation Order are not in the Council's direct control, although the Council may be able to influence their management and preservation through the Trees and Development Supplementary Planning Document.

Other Local Authority private estate and publicly owned land holdings, for example that which is owned and managed by Hampshire County Council, is also not within the Council's control.

Although this strategy seeks to enhance trees, there are occasions where tree felling is unavoidable, for example, for the Council to protect health and safety or as an important part of countryside management.

As detailed within the Tree SPD, the Council expects development applicants to demonstrate that tree retention has been fully considered as part of the planning process and only where there is exceptional justification, as evidenced by applicants, will tree removals be considered. Where tree removals are unavoidable and considered justified, to mitigate the impacts, the Council will expect applicants to submit proposals for the addition of new trees, as per the Tree Replacement Policy (as part of the SPD).

Preserve

We recognise the need to preserve existing trees to gain from all the benefits listed above and have adopted the following documents to help us achieve this:

- The Tree SPD enables the protection of existing tree stock and recognises that existing tree retention (in addition to new tree planting) is fundamental to ensuring that development protects and promotes the multiple benefits of trees.
- TPOs protect trees that bring significant amenity benefit to the local area and protection is particularly important where trees are under threat.
- The Council also has a statutory duty of care to ensure that the trees on its own land are safe and not a danger to the public so far as reasonably practical. This is achieved by the adoption of a Tree Risk Management Plan (TRMP) which outlines how we will inspect, record and manage our tree stock. The TRMP sets out the circumstances, and mitigation measures, where a tree may need to be removed due to health, wellbeing and safety issues, amongst other potential problems.
- The Council has also adopted a policy for trees on public land. This policy outlines how the Council will manage, and is committed to its tree stock through protecting, improving and developing the borough's tree stock in public places.

In addition, the Council is also developing a Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity SPD. This will include protection of the natural environment and enhancement of biodiversity, including tree cover, across the borough.

Actions:

- Require developers to work with and around existing tree stock where possible
- Enforce all TPOs
- Monitor development to ensure adherence to planning conditions
- Pro-actively put in place TPO area orders to stop pre-emptive felling where trees which are deemed to be under significant threat
- Continue to review, re-asses and update the TRMP
- Undertake a tree canopy assessment, with interactive map to establish current tree cover and baseline
- Adopt and continue to develop the Biodiversity Strategy

More information on our Biodiversity Strategy can be found [here](#) (see p107).

Increase

The Council has also set a target to plant 160,000 more trees in the borough by 2030. This is designed to maximise the benefits of trees across the borough as part of the Council's Climate and Environment Emergency.

To meet this increased demand for trees and reduce the distance our trees travel before they are planted, the Council has invested in a 2.8-hectare in-house tree nursery, located at One Horton Heath. The aim of the nursery is to grow a sustainable supply of locally grown, predominantly native trees. The tree nursery represents the main part of the 'Increase' strategy, and an investment of approximately £1.6m over 10yrs.

The Council expects to see a return on this investment over the same period through sale of trees for planting to residents, businesses and others. The anticipated trajectory to achieve the target is shown below:

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
Number of trees	1,500	4,000	7,000	10,000	12,000	18,000	19,000	22,000	23,000	25,000	25,000
Total number	1,500	5,500	12,500	22,500	34,500	52,500	71,500	93,500	116,500	141,500	166,500

Our priority will be to plant single and grouped trees (from 'whips' (young trees, generally with a centre leader with few or no side branches) to 'standards' (larger trees, usually greater than 2m in height)) on Council owned land and our focus will be on connectivity, restoration, re-wilding and good management.

Planting on Council owned land will include our country parks, countryside sites, pocket woodlands and public open spaces. Future sites may also be considered, as part of a strategic land review.

When planting new trees, our key planting principles are:

- Ensuring that new trees are well planted and nurtured to secure successful establishment
- New trees must be located within the borough on ecologically appropriate land
- The correct tree type must be planted in the correct location (right place, right tree). This includes consideration of biodiversity, size and shape, species, visual amenity, relation with surrounding built and natural features (including the health of surrounding trees and woodland), accessibility and the desired benefits of the tree(s) in each location
- Different tree species will be required for different habitats to support a range of wildlife species and encourage resilience
- Trees counting towards the 160,000 target must be planted in addition to any developer requirements
- Numbers planted will include 'hedging trees' (defined as a tree) and understory planting (usually smaller trees below canopy)
- Replacements for non-established new trees, dangerous and diseased trees and trees planted on private land will not be included in the target

Actions:

- Develop a detailed Tree Planting Action Plan to include;
 - Identify and map current and potential new areas for tree planting including quantities, distribution and species. This will also consider introducing trees to town and local centres to enhance the quality of place, aligned to Town Centre Principles
 - Manage natural decline through succession planning
 - Identify the potential costs and challenges of a larger tree stock and how to mitigate problems such as vandalism, poor establishment and additional maintenance
 - Consider how and when to issue new TPOs, and monitoring, when planting new trees
 - Develop nursery operations (including volunteers) and marketing
 - Consider the monitoring, mapping and recording of planted trees
 - Develop the tree nursery commercial plan, including budget and service planning
 - Assess the need to employ a potential Tree Planting and Woodland Development Officer, to assist with all the actions identified above, facilitate joint working (see below) and best position the Council to attract potential additional funding for trees

More information on our Tree Nursery can be found in the Cabinet report from July 2020 [here](#) (see agenda item 122).

Working with others

We will seek to develop funding and partnership opportunities to increase the number of trees and encourage tree ownership and nurturing by the community.

This will include working with other Hampshire Local Authorities (where there may be opportunities across the County for collaborative work), Parish Councils, Hampshire County Council, residents, community groups, schools and businesses.

Actions:

- Continue to develop opportunities for people to plant trees, as part of [Plant Eastleigh](#)
- Develop joint working opportunities with partnership groups

- Consider bids for external funding for trees

Future

This strategy is a living document and will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant.

Annual progress against the actions, including any subsequently defined Performance Indicators, will be monitored through the Climate and Environment Emergency Action Plan and Nursery Action Plan reporting process.

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