

Test Valley Borough Council

**Tree and Woodland Strategy
2025 - 2030**

May 2025

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Glossary of terms

Ancient tree: are those trees which have reached a great age in comparison with others of the same species (*Ancient Tree Forum, 2025*)

Ancient Semi Natural Woodland: is woodland in the UK defined as land that has been continuously wooded since at least 1600

Arboreal habitat: the environment where organisms primarily live in trees, spending most of their time in the tree canopy rather than on the ground or in water

Carbon sequestration: is the practice of removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it

Tree canopy cover: the layer of tree foliage and other parts within a given area that are typically assessed through aerial data

Tree Preservation Order: is a legal mechanism used by local planning authorities in England to protect individual trees, groups of trees, or woodlands in the interests of public amenity

Veteran tree: are trees of any age but exhibits ancient characteristics. (*Ancient Tree Forum, 2025*)

Whip planting: trees which are 1-2 years old and around often 50-100mm in height. These types of trees are used for woodland and hedge planting

Foreword

As the Portfolio Holder responsible for Climate Emergency and Countryside, I am proud to introduce our Tree and Woodland Strategy — a vital document that sets out our shared vision for managing, protecting, enhancing, and expanding our tree and woodland cover over the next five years.

Trees and woodlands are essential to the health of our communities, landscapes, and climate. They provide clean air, support biodiversity, reduce flood risk, and play a vital role in capturing carbon as we work towards our climate goals. Equally, they offer places for quiet reflection, physical activity, and community connection — benefits we must never take for granted.

This strategy is more than a plan for planting trees. It is a long-term commitment to stewarding our natural heritage responsibly. It recognises the need to continue to manage our existing woodlands with care, ensuring they are resilient to climate change, disease, and development pressures. It sets out how we will work with landowners, residents, volunteers, and partners to make our ambitions a reality — not only increasing tree canopy cover over time but engaging with our communities and celebrating the value of these amazing natural assets.

We are living in a time when bold, local leadership is essential to address global environmental challenges. Our success will be measured not just in the positive way we manage our woodlands or the number of trees planted, but in the legacy we leave for future generations.

I invite everyone in our Test Valley to engage with this strategy — to plant, to protect, and to be part of this collective effort. Together, we can grow a greener, healthier future.

Councillor Alison Johnston
Portfolio Holder for Climate Emergency and Countryside

1.Introduction

This is the first stand alone and published tree strategy for Test Valley Borough Council and it represents the next step on a journey to continue with an integrated approach to the management of trees and woodlands. The strategy aims to build on the Council's proven track record for a proactive approach to tree and woodland management across a broad portfolio of public spaces. This work reflects the Council's ambition to reach carbon neutrality as soon as possible, to work with our communities to ensure trees are well managed, and to seek opportunities for new planting supporting habitat connectivity and nature recovery.

The production of this strategy delivers on commitments we made through our Green Space Strategy, 2020 -2030, and Climate Emergency Action Plan, 2024-2027 and Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Statement, 2024 to prepare a document that sets out our management principles for our trees and woodlands, our approach to new and replacement planting, and how we intend to ensure a resilient and sustainable tree stock for the future.

The strategy is structured into the following sections:

- An overview of the value of trees and context on the trees and woodland on council land;
- How national guidance and strategies influence our approach to tree and woodland management;
- Challenges and opportunities, along with how we work in partnership to increase canopy cover;
- Our approach to tree management and risk, including a summary of policies which need to be followed in support of this work; and
- An overview of our resources and how we will monitor delivery of our intended actions.

2.Strategy scope

Our role

The Council has a number of different roles and responsibilities in relation to trees and woodlands, with the main areas being:

- Management of trees and woodland that we own and manage;
- Through our function as a local planning authority in the determination of planning applications that could influence trees and woodland;
- Making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and considering applications for works to TPO trees and those in conservation areas;
- Responding to reports of trees that are in a dead or dangerous state and where they might pose a danger to the public as a consequence.
- Working with partners and taking a collaborative approach to support wider woodland management initiatives and tree planting projects
- Along with other organisations providing advice to those in the borough.

Strategy scope

This strategy focuses on the management of trees and woodland across land owned and managed by the council across our countryside and greenspace network, urban centres, housing developments and business parks.

Where opportunities allow, we will advocate for and support the appropriate expansion of tree canopy cover on land not owned by the Council. We will do this through active engagement with landowners through project and partnerships and continuing to support key charities in their work to use trees and woodlands for education and awareness, as well environment benefits.

This strategy outlines the council's role and responsibilities linked to the planning system, TPOs or trees in conservation areas. Legislation and national policy direct the approach to TPOs, including making, varying and revoking TPOs, and how applications for works to trees and woodland subject to TPOs should be considered. Additionally, planning policy guides the approach to how the Council will consider trees and woodland through planning applications.

The action plan for delivery is set out in appendix 1 and has a focus on the next five years but acknowledging that a much longer-term view must be taken. This approach will help us to realise the impact of this work in terms of *tree time*, this being how long it takes a tree to reach maturity with the resulting benefits to the environment, climate, and communities.

3. Background

The value of trees

Trees play a really important role in our landscapes, and their value goes far beyond just being nice to look at. They are essential for a healthier, more sustainable environment. Trees make our landscapes more liveable, diverse, and resilient. Whether it's through the shade on a hot day, the beauty they provide, or the wildlife they support, trees are a fundamental part of our surroundings.

Here's a simple breakdown of why trees are so valuable:

1. **Environmental benefits:** Trees help clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. They filter pollutants like nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, improving the air quality we breathe. Trees help cool the environment, which can make places more comfortable during hot weather, and reduce the “urban heat island” effect of heat built-up areas in urban areas.
2. **Wildlife habitat:** Trees provide homes and food for a variety of animals, birds, insects, and other wildlife and can be considered ecosystems in their own right. A single tree can host hundreds of species, helping to maintain biodiversity and habitat connectivity.
3. **Flood prevention:** Trees act like sponges. Their roots absorb rainwater and slow down the flow of water, which can help prevent flooding and reduce the risk of erosion in our rivers and streams.
4. **Trees for health:** Trees make our surroundings more beautiful and peaceful. Studies have shown that being around trees or green spaces can reduce stress, improve mood, and even help with recovery from illness. Trees in urban spaces can also make people feel more connected to nature.
5. **Economic value:** Trees can increase property values by improving the look of an area, making neighbourhoods more desirable to live in. Also, they can reduce heating and cooling costs for buildings by providing shade in summer and acting as windbreaks in winter.
6. **Climate change mitigation:** Trees are a natural way to fight climate change. As they grow, they store carbon in their wood, roots, and leaves, which helps reduce the overall amount of carbon in the atmosphere.

About the council's trees and woodlands

The Council manages over 650 hectares of land with much of this area including trees and woodland or influenced by these natural assets. Table 1 summarises key statistics, providing context for data relating to trees and woodland managed by the Council, as well as applications for tree works received.

Table 1 – Key statistics

Data held on individual trees (total does not include woodland/woodland blocks or new whip planting)	30,741 individual asset records
Species mix – top 10 most occurring trees	Acer (spp.), oak, ash, birch, lime, alder willow, prunus (spp.), rowan, hazel
Woodland cover (TVBC land)	72 hectares
Trees planted 2019-2024 (including whips)	39,709
Tree removal (predominantly linked to ash-dieback disease) between 2019 -2024	2,320

Community support and volunteering	1,001 hours per year
No of tree related enquiries per year	450 per year on average
No of community orchards	25
Grant funding secured for planting and maintenance	£298,000
Planning application considered each year	1300 (average)
Number of TPO and conservation area applications made each year	650 (average)
Number of applications to manage application for work on dead and dying trees	100 (average)

4.National and local policy and strategy

This section summarises the key national and local policies, strategies and guidance informing and guiding principles for the management of the borough's trees and woodlands.

At a national level

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA 1990)

The Act provides a framework for protecting trees and woodlands, particularly through Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and by requiring Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to consider trees in development planning. Work to trees, while generally not considered development requiring planning permission, must still comply with any applicable planning conditions and TPOs.

Environment Improvement Plan 2023

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 is the government's delivery plan for reversing environmental and nature decline. Under this plan the Government commitment agreed at the UN Biodiversity Summit 2022 is to protect 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030. The plan is summarised into ten broad goals, with trees and woodlands linking to many of them.

The England Trees Action Plan 2021 - 2024

This sets out the Government's long-term plan for the whole treescape - trees, woodlands and forests. It includes the vision for trees up to 2050 and the economic, environmental, and social benefits that we will realise through new tree planting and woodland creation. The action plan focuses on four key areas:

- Expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands
- Trees and woodland as part of the green economy
- Protecting and improving our trees and woodlands
- Connecting people with trees and woodlands

The National Tree Safety Group – Common Sense Risk Management of Trees - 2024

The Common-Sense Risk Management of Trees guidance integrates issues concerning trees and their management for public safety, and the environmental, social and economic benefits trees set out in five key principles:

- Trees provide a wide variety of benefits to society.
- Trees are living organisms, and they naturally lose branches or fall.
- The overall risk to public safety is extremely low.
- Tree owners have a legal duty of care.
- Tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree risk management.

At a local level

Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire will set priorities and actions to direct nature recovery project across Hampshire. The strategy is expected to be adopted by the end of 2025 with trees and woodlands in both urban and rural

settings being a key priority. The strategy will draw specific actions for Test Valley trees and woodlands ensuring we deliver on the opportunities for nature recovery.

Test Valley Borough Council's Corporate Plan: A Place for Everyone – Supporting our communities to thrive 2023 – 2027

This recognises the Council's community leadership role in supporting our communities to adapt to the challenges presented by climate change and the need to take action to become a carbon neutral organisation as soon as possible through delivery of our Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The plan sets out five strategic priorities formed through extensive community engagement which are:

1. *Sustainability - Delivering lasting benefits for our communities.*
2. *Connection - Building upon the identity, strengths and ambitions of our communities.*
3. Environment - A greener borough for our communities.
4. Inclusion - Working together to create opportunities for our communities.
5. Prosperity - Economic growth that impacts positively on our communities.

This tree strategy will contribute to the delivery all of these priorities with trees and woodland providing key social, environmental and economic benefits.

Climate Emergency Action Plan 2024 - 2027

The Council's second iteration of the Climate Emergency Action Plan continues to highlight ways we will seek to work towards carbon neutrality as soon as possible, playing our part in reducing emissions across the borough, and plan appropriately for the long term including adaptation and resilience to climate change. The action plan recognises the role of carbon sequestration, including through tree management and planting, as part of this. It helps to provide a framework as to how we will do this in relation to our trees and woodland.

Green Space Strategy 2020 - 2030

The Green Space Strategy sets out our approach to the management of a range of spaces that we are responsible for, including parks and nature reserves. It sets out how we need to adapt the approach to the management of our trees, woodlands and green spaces to account for the changes in climate, including changes in the volume and intensity of rainfall and the need for summer cooling. The strategy places significant emphasis on the vital connections and corridors trees and woodland play in connecting habitats and landscape.

Adopted Local Plan 2011-2029

The Local Plan forms part of the Development Plan, which provides the policies that form the starting point for determining planning applications. This includes policies on how trees and woodland will be considered in making decisions on such applications. The Council also needs to take account of other material planning considerations, as well as legal requirements and national planning policy.

The Development Plan includes multiple documents, including the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). NDPs

are in place for a number of parishes within the borough. The council is currently in the process of updating the Local Plan.

5. Challenges and opportunities

There are a number of factors that influence the approach we take to managing trees and woodland. These have informed the development of the objectives of this strategy. The following section summarises some of the key challenges and opportunities which have shaped our approach to management and the protection of trees and enhancing the borough's tree canopy.

The challenges we face

A changing climate

The changing climate is increasingly impacting on the way trees are responding. This poses both a direct and indirect threat to tree populations including:

- Increased storm damage through more frequent extreme weather events leading to uprooting and breakage
- Drought stress through fluctuations in rainfall, particularly in urban settings
- Shifts in species suitability where certain native species may struggle to survive as temperatures rise, while invasive species may flourish.
- Increased difficulty establishing newly planted trees

Increase risk of pest and diseases

The government's Tree Health Resilience Strategy (2018) states that the risk to the UK's trees from pests and diseases has been made worse by climate change altering the type and species of outbreaks, their frequency and severity. Since 2000 there has been over a 300% increase in the number of forest pests and pathogens confirmed in the UK.

In Test Valley we have faced significant risks due to ash dieback (ADB) (*Chalara*). Proactive survey work to mitigate the impact and risk from of ADB has been undertaken across the council's land holdings with trees removed based on the risk to people and property. Replacement tree planting has been completed accepting that any significant tree removed cannot be compensated by new tree planting alone, therefore we make every effort to retain ash trees through a program of proactive annual monitoring.

Our other current pest and disease challenges are from acute oak decline, Asian Longhorn beetle, and horse chestnut leaf minor, along with an increasing risk from oak processionary moth.

Allowing trees the space to grow

Levels of conflict can arise where sufficient space has not been made available for trees and woodland canopy to grow and where tree species selection has not taken into consideration long term establishment impact. Whilst all reasonable efforts are made to provide a service to the community in response to enquiries for work, conflict can arise where works are declined for sound arboricultural reasons. Common issues where requests for work to trees are received are often linked to bird mess, overhanging branches, light and seasonal leaf fall.

Increasingly, conflict between trees and shading of solar panels on private property is being raised. Inappropriate placement of solar panels on private buildings where existing mature trees are not taken into consideration at the survey stage can result

in lower performance of the solar panels. Section 8 covers our approach to the management of enquiries and the policy approach to manage expectation and conflict.

Conservation and protection of ancient and veteran trees

Ancient and veteran trees hold cultural and historical significance, linking us to the past. These trees play a crucial ecological role by supporting biodiversity, providing irreplaceable habitats for rare fungi, animals, and invertebrates, and offering insights into aging processes.

Inappropriate management and impact from development and recreation can lead to the decline of these trees. Our approach for the management of such trees will follow guidance set down by the Ancient Tree Forum, Natural England, the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust.

Available space for new tree planting

Continuing tree planting at scale across the Council's existing land holding, beyond single replacement trees, is challenging without compromising how spaces are used and / or harming existing and important habitat. Planting capacity is influenced by the available resources to ensure the establishment and management of young trees in the landscape which determines the size, numbers and locations for planting.

Resource availability

Ensuring the required resources (capacity and money) are available to manage the current and future tree stock of the borough, meeting the Council's legal duty of care to the community by proactively managing these important assets.

Opportunities for growth

Growing and expanding the tree canopy

Tree canopy cover (TCC) refers to the layer of tree foliage and other parts within a given area, typically assessed through aerial data. This information is crucial for evaluating the environmental benefits provided by the trees in an area. The loss of a large, mature tree can significantly impact canopy cover, resulting in a reduction of key benefits like carbon sequestration. Such losses cannot be easily compensated by newly planted trees, as it takes many years for them to reach the environmental contributions of fully mature trees. In this work we will:

- Explore using tree equity mapping to determine how we move forward with new planting ensuring every opportunity to plant in places with lower canopy cover.
- Work to increase available space for tree planting including securing additional land for planting, ensuring the right tree in the right place approach and prioritising, where appropriate, natural regeneration to aid in climate resilience.
- Explore opportunities for planting at scale on new property and working in partnership with private landowners.

Biodiversity and nature conservation

Delivering a connected landscape through tree planting and appropriate management of our tree stock, including ancient and veteran trees, can have a significant benefit in reducing habitat fragmentation. Through the lifetime of this

strategy, we will work to protect these important assets and look for opportunities across ownership and administrative boundaries to expand the network of ecological corridors linking spaces in line with Lawton principles of *bigger better and more joined up*.

We will continue to work to protect and enhance the natural environment, strengthening the connections between people and nature, through sustainable access to and enjoyment of natural spaces.

We will continue to gain an understanding of protected species distribution in relation to trees and ensure that corridors, foraging routes and viable arboreal habitat are protected and enhanced.

The emerging Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy is expected to place an emphasis on the value of the creation of urban woodland with potential opportunities through Biodiversity Net Gain to expand the urban tree canopy.

Our partnerships

We are committed to working with the broadest range of partners to deliver the objectives of this strategy and to ensure opportunities to support work beyond the council's land holding is achieved. The following case studies highlight two of our most important partnerships:

Andover Trees United

Andover Tree United (ATU) are a registered charity, led by volunteers working in partnership with all Andover and surrounding schools, local businesses and environmental organisations to promote conservation and improve biodiversity, as well as an increasing the understanding for responsible access to the countryside and the climate changes. Since its inauguration the charity have led over 10,000 children from local schools to plant over 15,000 trees creating their own community woodland. The charity has been instrumental in contributing to urban greening projects including planting and managing community orchards, raising awareness for wildflower planting and assisting to plant a further 4,000 trees on council owned land at Bury Hill Meadows, and through the creation of the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Copse. In 2024, ATU were awarded the Kings Award for voluntary Service which recognises the exceptional contributions and impact the charity has made through its various community and environmental initiatives and projects.

Test Valley Dormice Project

This project started in 2016 with a partnership project between Test Valley Borough Council, The Woodland Trust, People's Trust for Endangered Species and the Hampshire Dormouse Group. Its focus was to develop a greater understanding of the distribution of Hazel Dormice and to create relationships with local landowners to help provide land management advice and incentive to plant new woodland and hedgerow connections. Delivered by the Farm Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) Southeast, the project has seen over 15,000 trees planted on agricultural land across northern Test Valley.

6.Strategy aim and objectives

The aim of this strategy is to continue to positively manage trees and woodland on council land to promote a resilient, ecologically rich, diverse and healthy tree population. We will work with our communities to support the work to increase tree canopy cover across the borough in our efforts to reach net zero.

The strategy objectives are:

1. To manage the council's existing tree stock balancing risk in a changing climate and with increasing threats from pests and diseases.
2. To increase tree canopy cover including supporting planting on land not owned by the council to contribute to nature recovery and carbon neutrality.
3. To increase education and awareness of the value of trees.
4. To conserve ancient and veteran trees on borough council land.
5. To proactively manage woodlands owned by the Council and share knowledge and best practice to help develop a borough wide managed and connected network of woodlands.

7. Legal responsibilities

Our legal responsibilities managing trees and woodlands

There are a number of legal requirements that guide our approach to the management of trees and woodlands. Some of the key pieces of legislation are summarised below.

Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & 1984

The tree owner or any person who has control of the management of those trees, has a duty of care to take reasonable steps to avoid foreseeable harm, including uninvited or unwanted trespassers on the land. Warnings must be provided regarding any potential dangers or risks on their premises that are not immediately obvious. This includes if a visitor or trespasser is injured whilst on the land, by a tree or branch failure, the tree owner may be found negligent if reasonable care had not been taken to ensure the visitor or trespasser will be reasonably safe from harm.

Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974

The main purpose of the Act is to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees at work, as well as others who may be affected by those work activities (e.g. members of the public), therefore we must have practical and proportionate precautions in place to reduce the risk posed by trees, including through safe working environments.

Highways Act 1980

The Highways Act 1980 places a statutory obligation on tree owners to prevent trees from causing an obstruction to public footpaths and roads.

The Appropriate Authority (Hampshire County Council) has the ability to require within 14 days, trees growing on land adjacent to the highway that are dead, diseased, damaged or insecurely rooted, to be pruned or removed by the owner or occupier of the land.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended)

This is the primary piece of legislation in the UK regarding the protection of species in the UK. It sets out to inform of the limitations and prohibitions of contact and actions effecting wild animals and include prohibitions of disturbing, taking, injuring or killing wild animals, including nests and eggs as well as to disturb animals' places of shelter. The legislation informs how we approach and schedule the management of trees and woodlands.

Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

This out sets out provisions about undertaking risk assessments, including potential risks to both employees and the public.

Employers must appoint competent personal with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience relevant to the specific task, to ensure all health and safety obligations are met. This includes an assessment of tree stock on all land connected with their work undertaking.

Compensation Act 2006

The Compensation Act 2006 addresses issues related to compensation and the handling of personal injury claims, seeking to promote a fair and balanced approach.

This act indicates that risk abatement measures shouldn't lead to the stopping or infringement of a desirable activity taking place. This reinforces the importance of being able to balance the values of tree (e.g. amenity, biodiversity etc) whilst also the principles that any imposed control measures are not unnecessarily restrictive, and some exposure to risk is acceptable, in particular when there are associated benefits.

8.Planning and development

This section set out the role the Council's Planning and Building team have in respect of trees and woodland and proposed development.

Determining planning applications

The Council's Arboricultural team are routinely consulted where new development appears to either directly or in-directly threaten the future health of, or the ability to retain, existing trees. Technical advice is provided that allows the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to consider whether the impact, or loss of any trees that are of a high public amenity value is justified before deciding whether to grant or refuse planning permission. The Council places great weight in the planning balance to the retention of trees of high public amenity value but accept that in some instances the need for a particular development might necessitate their removal to enable the development to proceed.

Advice is also provided at pre-application stage where the opportunity to work with developers and landowners to accommodate and retain existing trees into a development proposal is taken. Discussions also include identifying opportunities for new tree coverage where that is appropriate for the context. Where new trees are provided as part of a new development details of how and when new trees will be planted are also controlled. Details such as the size, species, location, tree-pit details and timings of when trees will be planted are also assessed and conditioned as part of any grant of planning permission.

The planning system can only look at protecting trees that are considered to be of high public amenity value. In other words, where trees make a positive, appreciable, effect on the character and appearance of the area in which they are located. This includes those trees that might already be located in the public domain, or where a particular scheme might allow for a greater public appreciation of a retained tree following the completion of a particular development. The planning process cannot however protect every tree, and where trees are proposed to be lost there is an assessment of the public amenity value that they have, or not, before a decision is made.

What happens if planning permission is granted

When planning permission is granted for a development that might affect existing trees that are shown for retention permission is often the subject of conditions that require tree protection fencing to be erected prior to undertaken any works at the site. Tree protection measures which might include, for example, temporary fence enclosures that prevent construction activity within a certain distance of retained trees are then required to be retained on site for the duration of the construction work.

Some conditions require the applicant to notify the Local Planning Authority (LPA) once tree protection measures, such as fencing, have been installed, to allow inspection prior to the commencement of construction.

Technical guidance on appropriate tree protection measures is set out in British Standard BS 5837. Further consultation typically takes place with the Council's Arboricultural team when developers seek approval of condition details, to ensure

that the proposed measures are sufficient to facilitate the retention of trees. It is important that where the council continues to grant planning permission for new development that the value of trees – as features that can make a positive contribution to the amenity of an area, continues to be recognised and are successfully assimilated into the development where it is appropriate to do so.

Trees planted via conditions

When granting planning permission for new development the Council often controls both the timing of when trees should be planted, the methods used when an applicant plants new trees, together with details securing their future maintenance and retention. These measures ensure the best possible opportunities are given to protecting existing trees, maximise the scope to accommodate new trees in new development and minimise the risk of introducing future conflict between established trees, the living conditions of the community and nearby infrastructure. All of this can be achieved via the imposition of conditions, or in relation to larger sites where the council or a private management company might take on the longer-term management and maintenance of trees in public areas, through a planning obligation (section 106 Agreement).

When using obligations a commitment to maintain areas of land and trees across a number of years to ensure long term establishment together with a financial contribution towards that objective are secured. Opportunities are also made to replace lost, dead or damaged stock before they become established and/or adopted by the Council.

9.Our approach to managing trees and woodlands

A proactive approach to the inspection and management of Test Valley Borough Council tree stock has been underway since 2002 with records kept digitally on the species, location, condition of trees. This work sits alongside our approach to site management planning covering how trees in woodlands on our nature reserves are managed to ensure these spaces are in positive management providing significant benefits to both wildlife and people.

Proactive tree inspections

The frequency of tree inspections is currently informed by the level and frequency of public use of a site, targets such a proximity to building or roads and specific tree features.

Trees are formally inspected by qualified arboriculturists on a site and tree specific cycle using digital data system to record works and raise tree work instructions to our contractors. The majority of our tree stock are monitored on a 3–5-year rotation with a number of trees monitored on an annual basis. Additional support from external consultants may be commissioned where more detailed investigation is required, including the use of specialist equipment.

Ash trees are monitored annually whilst in full leaf with an assessment measured against stages 1-4 of Ash Dieback disease. This enables any decline to be monitored, and action taken to retain and or complete work to remove.

Informal inspections of trees are happening every day by the wider council staff carrying out their normal routines with issues and concerns reported to the tree team if a formal inspection is required.

Responding to community enquiries

Enquiries are managed through the My Council Services app. Responses to enquiries is on a safety priority ranking making sure trees that may pose a risk of harm are looked at first.

Policy approach to managing trees

The following 11 policies sets out the Council's approach to managing trees.

Policy 1	Tree removal Trees will only be removed where there is a risk to public safety, damage to property or removal is in line with good arboricultural practice.
Policy description	Publicly owned trees are a valuable resource, therefore there is a desire to retain trees wherever possible. However, there are some circumstances where it will be necessary to consider the removal of trees, and these are: • Where it is necessary to reduce a risk of harm to an acceptable level. • To mitigate building subsidence • To abate an actionable nuisance • To reduce the risk of the spread of pests and/or disease • Where removal is in accordance with good arboricultural practice.
Implementation	Where a significant tree is to be removed in one location for any reason, in addition to placing site notices, officers will notify the relevant Ward Councillors and any residents association or stakeholder/partnership groups covering the reasons for removal and replanting proposals. With regards to street trees, to comply with duties under section 115 of the Environment Act 2021, the council will take steps to consult on any proposed tree removal that is not covered by an exemption under the Act. In most cases this will be by placing a notice on the tree at least 10 working days in advance of the felling date.

Policy 2	Criteria for tree pruning The Council will apply criteria to determine when trees will be pruned, with pruning action taken only where: • There is a risk to public safety • It is necessary to abate an actionable nuisance • It is necessary to mitigate the risk of building subsidence • It is in accordance with good arboricultural practice.
Policy description	The Council will only prune trees in accordance with this policy. Where trees are pruned for public safety, this is to ensure statutory clearance over the highway, footway, cycle lanes and public rights of way. As well as, to remediate a structural or physiological condition.

	Where a tree is pruned to abate an actionable nuisance, this is where trees come into conflict with buildings. Trees may be pruned to mitigate the risk of public subsidence; this is where risk trees have been identified on shrinkable clay soil as directed by the Council's Insurers.
Implementation	The Council has a cyclical programme of tree inspections through which remedial works are identified. Remedial works may also be identified as part of the 24-hour emergency response service, or in response to reports received from residents.

Policy 3	Managing expectations The Council will endeavour to manage expectations about where tree removal or pruning will not be undertaken by identifying examples that fall beyond the reach of Policies 1 and 2 and beyond the responsibility of the Council.
Policy description	The Council will not remove or prune trees where requests are based on the following issues: • Branches overhanging properties. Residents / landowners can exercise their right under common law to prune back branches to their property boundary, with all arisings disposed of by the resident. This being subject to specific consent if the tree is covered by a Tree Preservation Order or located within a Conservation Area. • Pruning should be carried out following discussion with one of the Council's Arboricultural Officers and completed to the standard set out in BS3998:2010 Tree Work - Recommendations. • Tree size, where a tree is judged to be overly large. • Interference with satellite, TV or other media reception. There is no legal right to television reception and there are no legal obligations on landowners to remove or prune trees to improve reception. When positioning a new satellite receiver, it is recommended residents carefully consider existing trees and their potential for growth to the avoid issues in the future. • Performance of solar panels where the position of existing trees and growth patterns have not been taken into consideration at the time of installation. • Installation of equipment through trenching to facilitate electric hook-up connections. • Branches or limbs in physical contact with telephone wires. Telephone wires are plastic coated and faults in the line are rarely caused by contact with branches. Residents are encouraged to contact their service provider to report and resolve any faults or interference experienced with their telephone line. • Excessive leaf or fruit fall. Seasonal leaf and/or fruit fall should be expected and is not a reason to require pruning or removal of trees. The council will not clear leaves or fruit from private

	properties but does manage leaf/fruit fall on Council owned footways. • Problems associated with pollen. • Excreta caused by insects or birds. Honeydew (aphid excreta) and bird droppings are not recognised in law as a 'legal nuisance' and therefore does not justify removal or pruning of a tree. • Obstruction of view. There are no rights associated with maintaining trees in accordance with maintaining views in British law. • Lack of light: there is no right to light or shade in British law.
Implementation	The Council will respond to requests for tree removal or pruning where there do not meet the requirements set out under Policies 1 and 2 and explain the reasons why no action will be taken .

Policy 4	Tree planting For every tree removed, the council will plant the agreed number of trees to achieve the same canopy cover.
Policy description	Where under Policy 1, it is necessary to remove a tree, replacement planting will be prioritised in the same location if it remains viable in accordance with good arboricultural practice. In the event that the location is no longer viable, an alternative location shall be selected.
Implementation	Subject to the time and availability of resources, the replacement trees will be planted within the following planting season. The Council will encourage suitable tree planting initiatives that increase the tree canopy cover on public land and where possible private land. The Council will provide advice and information to support projects that seek to increase tree cover in the borough on both public and privately owned sites. The Council will continue to offer memorial tree planting which are funded privately (subject to site and species selection). In selecting trees for planting, the Council will ensure that due consideration is given to the relationship between the species and location (right tree, right place). The objective of tree planting is to ensure that it is appropriate, sustainable, considered and permits the long-term survival of those trees planted so that they fulfil their growth potential and make the maximum contribution possible without causing many of the problems traditionally associated with planting trees in urban areas.

Policy 5	Managing trees and subsidence The Council will manage its tree stock to minimise the risk of tree-related subsidence, with due regard to the health and sustainability
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	of the trees. Location and species for new tree planting will be selected to minimise the risk of future tree-related subsidence.
Policy description	The Council will manage and process subsidence related claims in accordance with its insurers advice and recommendations where evidence is conclusive.
Implementation	The Council will retain trees on shrinkable clay subsoil, where sustainable, in order to maintain the value of the amenity. The Council will continue to manage a programme of pruning as a mitigation measure against subsidence damage, with works specific to individual trees and locations The Council will challenge claims made based on poorly investigated and inaccurate evidence.

Policy 6	Encouraging biodiversity The council will seek to maintain a diverse range of species and age structure and will promote planting of native species of local provenance stock where possible. Planting will consider the site's nature and be in accordance with site Management Plan objectives where applicable.
Policy description	The Council recognises that encouraging a varied age structure in its tree stock to benefit biodiversity and tree resilience. Trees considered over-mature and those with dead wood and cavities provide valuable wildlife habitats particularly for bats, birds and invertebrates. The borough's woodlands are particularly important, containing a substantial number of veteran trees which support many insects, many of which are rare. Proactive management of trees including traditional forms of woodland management such as rotational coppicing will be promoted.
Implementation	The Council will achieve this policy aim through: • Appropriate planting • Thinning operations • Rotational coppicing • Retaining over-mature and veteran trees and selecting specimens for succession • Promotion of natural succession and woodland encroachment • Veteran and ancient trees will be retained unless they present an unacceptable level of risk to public safety.

Policy 7	Woodland cover / management The Council will protect and enhance woodland under its management, and as a minimum will maintain the total woodland cover at the existing level.
Policy description	The Council currently manages over 70 hectares of woodland which comprises of small to pocket size woodland blocks and woodland corridors. These woodlands are largely mixed broadleaf with areas of coppice and alder carr. Through continued professional management, stewardship programmes and grant funding the Council will work to ensure its protection and seek to increase woodland cover.
Implementation	All planting in woodlands will be of native species and of local provenance. Any new planting will be consistent with management plans and will support minimisation of the risks associated with imported pests and diseases. The Council will update management plans for each of its woodlands and will encourage the development of Woodland Management Plans for privately owned woodlands and those owned by other public bodies.

Policy 8	Tree inspection programme
Policy description	The Council will continue to proactively inspect trees through a cyclical programme of tree inspections on trees located on council property.
Implementation	Frequency of tree inspections will be informed by a system of zoning and a risk rating determined by: • Target/occupancy • Likelihood of failure • Size of part Further details can be found in the Council's Tree Risk Management Policy.

Policy 9	Programme of tree maintenance The Council will manage a proactive programme of tree maintenance.
Policy description	Following inspection under Policy 8, the Council will ensure that all necessary remedial works for pruning and felling are undertaken in accordance with Policy 1 and Policy 2.
Implementation	The Council will continue with a programme of tree maintenance with works prioritised in accordance with the level of risk. The Council will assign a target date for the completion of works which will also be determined according to the level of risk.

Policy 10	Emergency works The Council will provide a 24 hour call out service to respond to emergencies related to trees on council owned land.
Policy description	Contractors will be retained on standby to manage out of hours enquiries.
Implementation	In the event of extreme weather, the Council will implement the storm protocol procedure and proactively visit sites to ensure where reasonably practicable hazards are identified and mitigated.

Policy 11	Veteran and ancient trees The Council will commence a programme of recording and protecting veteran and ancient trees in the borough and instigate a programme of management and succession planting.
Policy description	Veteran trees require specific management to ensure retention. Efforts will be made to create a bespoke approach based on individual sites and trees.
Implementation	The Council's veteran and ancient trees will be highlighted on the council's asset management system following survey. Specific site-based management plans for veteran and ancient trees will be produced to include changes to management of the surrounding environment, restriction to public access and individual based inspection programmes. Notable trees will receive interpretation. The Council will engage volunteers to support this work as part of its aims to promote the value of trees to residents.

9. Resources and monitoring

Resources

Tree management is funded through the Council's revenue budget and asset management plan. Where applicable and when planting is part of a new project the application of funding is sought.

The Council, where the opportunity arises, will seek external funding including developer contributions to bring about project delivery. It will also be important that, if we are to realise the ambition to continue to make long term sustainable increases in canopy cover, we will need to look at alternative ways of working, innovative partnerships and further external funding opportunities.

Training and development are integral to the sustainable management of the Council trees and woodland. Continuing professional development will continue to be promoted to ensure the teams are up to date and skilled in current best practice methods.

Next steps and future action

The action plan in appendix 1 details how we will work to achieve the aim and objectives of this strategy. It will be important that the strategy is treated as a live document to ensure we are able to react to new opportunities as they emerge and support projects that have been identified through the council and our partners' wider work. The action plan progress will be monitored through the Council's performance management framework with an annual review to the Climate Emergency Working Group. Key dates and targets in this plan will be used to check and monitor performance.

10. References

GOV.UK (2021) The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60a3ddd1d3bf7f2886e2a05d/england-trees-action-plan.pdf>

National Tree Safety Group (2024) Common Sense Risk Management of Trees

<https://ntsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/NTSG-full-guidance.pdf>

Test Valley Borough Council (2021) Green Space Strategy

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/parksandgreenspaces/green-space-strategy>

Test Valley Borough Council (2024) Biodiversity Duty – First Consideration Statement

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/environmentandsustainability/biodiversity-in-test-valley>

Test Valley Borough Council (2024) Climate Emergency Action Plan

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/environmentandsustainability/climate-emergency-action-plan>

Appendix 1: Action Plan 2025 – 2030

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 1 - To manage the Council's existing tree stock balancing risk in a changing climate and with increasing threats from pests and diseases

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
1a	Manage all tree stock in accordance with approved policies – 1 to 11	To ensure a consistent approach to work and our messages to requests for service so as to manage trees consistently and prescribe works following industry best practice	C&L tree team Customer Services	Policy document agreed	May 2025 then ongoing	Staff time
1b	Implement a Tree Risk Management Policy	To ensure the council has a defensible position to tree management and risk that it can operate in line with.	C&L tree team Health and Safety Officer Councillors	Policy produced	December 2025	Staff time
1c	Continue to incorporate GIS update layers on to asset management system	Data layer is maintained and available for survey/remote work	C&L tree team Contract managers	Log of Audits Databases	December 2025	Staff time
1d	Review structure and reporting line of the team responsible for young tree maintenance	To ensure the resource is supported and is in the correct place	C&L tree team	Review undertaken and outcome implemented	June 2026	Staff time
1e	Continue to audit completed works orders to ensure operations are in line with British Standards and contractor specifications	Consistent standard of works achieved across all contracts	C&L tree team	Audit 10% of works instructions 2 monthly audits per contractor	Ongoing action	Staff time / Contractor time
1f	Identify and log key threats from pest and diseases	To ensure the spread of pests and disease is	C&L tree team	Log created	Ongoing action	Staff time Asset Management

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
	including Ash dieback and Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)	mapped and monitored and information shared Data used to inform decision making on tree works				Plan (AMP) budget
1g	Formulate a tree health and biosecurity plan.	Emergency plan ready for use	C&L tree team	Plan created	Ongoing action	Staff time
1h	Use Tree Alert to report any pests or diseases.	To stay up to date with the best practices. With latest information via training and professional membership	C&L tree team	Mapping use dot inform trapping/survey locations	Ongoing action	TBA
1i	Support the placement of Forestry England OPM management / trapping on TVBC sites	Pheromone traps in place at key locations. Information shared with ward councillors.	C&L tree team	Annual monitoring programme underway. Data used to plan proactive inspections	September each year	£15,000
1j	Increase the use of tools to value the amenity of trees and calculate loss.	To fund woodland enhancement and tree planting and to highlight the impacts of tree losses	Green space team C&L tree team Park and Countryside manager	External funding received CAVAT assessments carried out	2028	£4000

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 2 – To increase tree canopy cover including supporting planting on land not owned by the Council to contribute to nature recovery and carbon neutrality

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
2a	Carry out a tree canopy cover assessment (TCCA)	To develop insight into the location of trees on a ward/ parish level. Create a meaningful target for replanting focussing on the most tree deficient wards	C&L tree team Tree warden networks External consultants	Data produced and assessment available for discussion	2025	£7000
2b	Achieve long term sustainability and establishment of newly planted trees by evaluating success rates to inform future planting	To ensure all newly planted trees are managed to limit failure rate	C&L tree team Tree warden networks Framework contractors	Post 3-year establishment success %	2025 then ongoing	Staff time
2c	Continue to support the Test Valley Dormouse Project	Staff time used to support connections to existing known populations of dormice Contributed to landowner engagement and facilitate planting opportunities on private land	Countryside Team	% increase in planting of trees (small areas) and hedges on private land	2025 and ongoing	Staff time
2d	Support the work of Andover Trees United and their continued ambition for expansion	Look at options for habitat connection to Harmony Woods and alternative planting sites	Countryside Team	Areas identified for planting outside of current land holding	2025 and ongoing	Staff time

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
2e	Agree tree planting targets and canopy cover percentage. Locations mapped.	Targets to focus planting and enable climate benefits to be mapped. Increase in tree canopy cover to begin	Parks and Countryside Team Parish Councils Parish tree wardens	Target agreed with ward members	2026	Staff time
2f	Develop planting species list based on up-to-date data Ensure species selection for planting incorporates a range of genera and species.	Use data and insight to ensure trees planted have the best chance of survival	C&L tree team Countryside team Arboricultural planning officers Local tree nurseries	New planting process followed for all schemes	2026	Staff time
2g	Increase tree canopy cover by encouraging private landowners through sign posting of funding	Grant information shared Community Asset Fund grant options for planting on public land	C&L tree team	Increase in canopy cover	2026 and ongoing	Staff time
2h	Secure funds for permanent young tree maintenance	To ensure all newly planted trees are managed to limit failure rate	Parks and Countryside Manager	Achieve at least a 90% establishment success rate for newly planted trees within in 5 years	2026 then ongoing	£35,000 pa
2i	Acquiring new land for planting.	To increase tree canopy cover and contribute to net-zero objectives	C&L tree team Green space team Countryside team Tree wardens	New land acquired New sites identified	2026 then ongoing for land searches	TBA

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
2j	Improve accessibility/access to sites for the enjoyment/health benefits for all. Identify sites with trees that may have access constraints	Ensure equity of access to sites with trees	Community Team C&L tree team Green spaces team Countryside Disabled Ramblers Association	Ensure compliance with the Equalities Act where reasonably practical	2026	£1000 for site audit
2k	Assess the current tree stock value in carbon terms	To develop carbon offset and credit value	P&C team	To evaluate options for	2027	TBA
2m	Deliver site interpretation material at key sites across Test Valley having regard for plain English	Information is available to the community on trees/notable trees and their value	C&L Tree Team	2 sites per year	2027	£3000 per year
2n	Ward councillor engagement Add tree data to ward profiles Ensure members are aware of opportunities for additional tree planting	To ensure all members receive up to date information on their wards	C&L tree team Strategy & Innovation Service	Ward level tree data added to profiles	2026 with ongoing update	Staff time
2o	Set up an audit process for monitoring new trees planted under condition		Planning tree team C&L tree team		2026 then ongoing	Staff time

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 3 – To increase education and awareness of the value of trees

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
3a	Organise four tree planting sessions per year across the borough	Sessions organised and publicised to the community including schools as a means to engage with people on the value of trees.	Countryside team & C&L tree team	Number of sessions held per year	2025 and then annual programme	£2000
3b	Support the work of ATU with the planting at Bury Hill and other sites	Final years planting undertaken and any beating up of failed trees completed	Countryside Team	Final area planted and scheme completed	2025/26 and ongoing	£4000 pa
3c	Support National Tree week	Tree packs offered to local schools for planting	TBA	10 packs provided via third party supplier	2026/27	£500
3d	Support Andover Vision Environment Group in managing town centre events	Opportunity to promote the value of trees at events held	Countryside Team/ tree team	Number of events attended per year	2026	£1000
3e	Offer a tree per household scheme targeting wards with the lowest tree canopy	To increase canopy cover and promoting the understanding of tree care	C&L tree team	Trees provided per year	2028	£10,000
3f	Use interpretation to raise awareness of the value of trees and veteran trees	To provide onsite information to raise awareness of trees in the landscape	Tree team	10 boards installed across the borough	2028	£10,000

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 4 - To conserve ancient and veteran trees on borough council land

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
4a	Produce ancient and veteran tree inventory across the borough Council land holdings	To help to manage in accordance with best practice and national guidance.	Community and leisure tree team Countryside team Planning team Ancient Yew Group Woodland Trust Ancient tree inventory	Tree inventory recorded To update records with each cyclical survey.	2026	Staff time.
4b	Update Ezytreev with a veteran flag and colour identification.	To highlight and ensure notable trees are treated in accordance with best practice	Community and leisure tree team Countryside team Planning team	Records updated	2026 then ongoing	Staff time
4c	Agree management principles for the environment around ancient trees to ensure a holistic approach	Air spading, mulching urban and unmown/urban meadows beneath trees to help support the retention of ancient trees.	Tree team Green Space team	Key changes made to ancient and veteran trees	2026 and then ongoing	£3000
4d	Encourage other stakeholders to update the council on works affecting ancient trees	Support wider management of notable trees through information sharing and sign posting	Woodland Trust ancient tree inventory	Database created	2026/27	Staff time
4e	Support Planning Tree Team in the review and	Meetings monthly	Community and Leisure tree team	Review underway	Ongoing	Staff time

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
	implementation of new Tree Preservation Orders	Cross department sharing and collaboration when needed.				

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 5 - To proactively manage woodlands owned by the Council and share knowledge and best practice to help develop a borough wide managed and connected network of woodlands

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
5a	All woodland will have an in date and annually reviewed management plan	To ensure woodland are managed in accordance with best practice and reviewed to ensure they are meeting objectives	Countryside Team	Management plan in place and available on the TVBC website	Dec 2025 then ongoing	Staff time
5b	Update all survey records for key woodland sites and share with Hampshire Biodiversity Records Centre (HBIC)	To ensure all data is up to date to inform management practices and available to third parties for local data searches	Countryside Team	Survey data up to date and shared	2026 then ongoing	TBA
5c	Consider risk level of woodland fires and seek mitigation advice from Hampshire Fire and Rescue	To ensure where practicable the community are made aware of the risk of fires to wildlife/people and property	Countryside team	Advice sought and action taken	April 2026	Staff time
5d	Deliver management advice to private landowners through the Test Valley Dormouse project	Continue to develop relationships with private landowners and connections between woodland and hedges which are positive management	Countryside Team TV Dormouse Project ATU	2 events held per yea	2026 then ongoing	Staff time. Project grant
5e	Update all survey records for key woodland sites and share with Hampshire Biodiversity Records Centre (HBIC)	To ensure all data is up to date to inform management practices and available to third parties for local data searches	Countryside Team	Survey data up to date and shared	2026 then ongoing	TBA

No	Action	Justification	Who might support this	Indicators	Target date	Associated costs
5f	Deliver woodland opportunities actions set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	To ensure TVBC managed woodlands are delivering LNRS objectives	Countryside Team	Objectives agreed and added to action plan for delivery	Jan 2026 then ongoing	TBA
5g	Support the delivery of the LNRS across privately managed woodlands	working with landowners to protect and enhance woodland and hedgerows	Countryside Team Farm Wildlife Advisory Group	LNRS promoted t private land managers	Jan 2026 then ongoing	TBA
5h	Support the CPRE hedge project	To ensure opportunities to ink woodland and hedgerows are realised	Countryside Team	500 ne hedge planted or laid per year	Jan 2027	TBA