

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Tree Strategy 2008 - 2018



Tree Strategy approved by Executive 11 March 2008 – temporary copy for website

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Introduction

Trees are a significant feature of Kingston, a unique component of the urban landscape and as living organisms are vulnerable to pest and disease, vandalism, accidents and development. Many trees are long lived, offering enjoyment and diversity of benefits to residents today and for future generations. To ensure their continuing contribution to the urban landscape it is essential that their needs and requirements are understood and planned for.

In June 1992 the world's largest gathering of world leaders was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. That meeting signalled the fact that environmental concerns have moved up the international political agenda. The central message of the summit is summed up in Article Four of the Rio declaration:

“In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.”

This means that international, national and local policy makers are to start re-appraising their policies and practices to ensure that they are sustainable.

Natural resource strategies rarely stand in isolation. For this reason, Kingston Council is meeting this challenge by developing a suite of strategies and policies around how natural resource assets on council owned land such as trees, open spaces and allotments are managed in the long term.

This Tree Strategy will provide a framework for the maintenance and enhancement of the trees in the Borough and define the management approach for the safe and useful life expectancy for Council owned tree stock. It presents the public with a clear strategic aim and reasons why decisions and actions are taken through the 25 policies as laid down in this strategy. Furthermore, it provides a vision for the enhancement of the tree stock that ensures the Borough will maintain a healthy tree cover within the considerations of Council's medium term financial planning in Changing Kingston – Choosing our Future 2007-2011.

1. The amenity and environmental value of trees in the urban context.

1. The value of tree in the urban context falls into two categories, biological and non-biological.

1.2 Biological

2. All plants 'fix' carbon in producing carbohydrates. Trees create shade from the leaves which cools the heat absorbing highway surfaces. The leaves can filter some airborne pollution and particulates. Trees provide important habitat for urban wildlife such as birds, invertebrates and some mammals.
3. A tree lined street signifies the changing seasons in an often otherwise season-less environment.

1.3 Non-biological

4. The presence of trees makes the harsh "concrete jungle" of the urban environment more acceptable. They create green corridors along the highway and provide a more aesthetically pleasing environment.
5. Trees are an integral and historic component of the urban landscape. They contribute to the local character and define a sense of place.

The sum of all these benefits define the amenity value of trees.

2. Need for a Strategy

6. The Council owns an estimated 12,000 street trees and many more within parks, open spaces, school grounds and council housing estates. Setting out how the Council will manage its tree stock is both a practical and helpful guide to residents as well as an aid to good service management by the Council. It is some years since the Council had a published Tree Strategy. This strategy is also a response to guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government, Trees in Towns (II) 2007, which promotes good practice for local government.
7. There are responsibilities associated with ownership of trees. Some of these are legal duties as in the case of Tree Preservation Orders which are generally for trees within private ownership, others are in the interests of good husbandry and Health and Safety.
8. The Council has a duty of care on the trees that it owns and hence seeks to be a responsible manager and maintain trees reasonably within the wide range of pressures and demands it faces.
9. A tree strategy will ensure that the management of trees within Kingston Borough will be dealt with in a co-ordinated, accountable manner. The overall standard of tree care will improve resulting in a healthier, more sustainable tree stock. The plans and policies laid down in the strategy will increase environmental, economic and social benefits and encourage community involvement in tree management.

3. Strategic Aim

10. To preserve, improve and secure no 'net loss' of the Council's trees for the current and future generations.

3.1 Objectives

11. To manage the tree stock in accordance with good arboriculture practice.
12. To maintain the street trees on a regular cyclical basis using current best practice to reduce the amount of responsive works required.
13. To increase the stock of trees in aesthetically necessary and sustainable locations by taking advantage of different funding methods to include, specifically, private sponsorship.
14. To reduce the number of inappropriately planted trees by their phased replacement.
15. To maintain a general presumption against the removal of trees, allowing felling only in accordance with good arboriculture and streetscape practice.
16. To inform and educate residents and businesses about the value of trees, and explore ways for greater involvement, consultation and protection from residents and businesses.
17. To promote and secure high quality tree planting and landscaping within new developments in order to maintain and enhance the Borough's local landscapes.

4. Street Trees

18. The Council is considered in law to be the owner of street trees that grow within the adopted highway and in consequence is responsible for them. It is empowered by the Highways Act 1980 to plant and maintain street trees.
 19. Trees that are planted along the highways are an integral and historic component of the urban landscape and its architecture. They contribute to the local character and define a sense of place. They add aesthetic value by improving the overall appearance of the street scene trees, help filter traffic pollution, provide shade for car parking and habitat for urban wildlife.
 20. The character of the street tree population varies considerably across the Borough primarily due to changing tastes and fashion. The older
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parts of the Borough were planted in the early 1900's and tend to be dominated by large London Plane and Lime. Roads such as Maple Road, Balaclava Road, Palace Road, Albany Park Road and Langley Avenue are examples of this period. Newer areas such as New Malden, and Chessington have smaller properties and a less imposing street scene tend to be populated by more smaller ornamental species such as Pear and Cherry.

5. Street Trees and Highway Management

21. There can be a very real conflict between the need to manage the Council's highway infrastructure and the need to manage the Council's trees. From time to time maintenance works undertaken by statutory undertakers (gas, electricity, water etc) or pavement repair by one of the Council's partner contractors is necessary. This construction work is symptomatic of progress, both economical and social and therefore accepted.
22. When works are planned the Tree Officer will provide advice and information on the best way to minimise damage to street trees and to work in co-operation with those involved in construction. Where the needs of the street trees are patently disregarded the council will undertake to take appropriate action to ensure their protection.

6. Cyclical Maintenance Programme

23. The existing tree population is a valuable and desirable resource. Tree management encompasses the co-ordination of all maintenance operations to existing trees as well as new tree planting. The Council must balance the need to take a, long term view of the future management of the tree stock, as well as addressing short term issues.
24. Street trees are inspected and pruned on a three year cyclical programme. All inspections are carried out by a qualified Tree Officer employed by the Council. During inspections information such as species, size, condition and suitable works are programmed into a tree inventory data base (Arbortrak). The information contained in the database is used to keep management and topic records for each individual tree. This information can be used to plot the history of the tree for ongoing management, complaint, insurance queries Asset Management and Whole Life Costing exercises.
25. Tree pruning will be undertaken by qualified tree surgeons on a programmed ward-by-ward basis (Schedule Annex 1). Proactive, rotational management gives a fair and equitable approach as well as enabling ward members and residents advanced information of tree maintenance works.
26. Trees will not be pruned outside of the three-year cyclical pruning programme unless there is a real risk of a health and safety issues or threat of legal action. This ensures a sound approach to management both financially and contractually.
27. In the case of newly planted trees, the maintenance and management of the tree continues for 2 years after planting. This includes regular watering during the summer months and regular inspection of the stakes and ties. These inspections are undertaken outside of the cyclical maintenance survey. Once two years has passed the tree is passed to the 3 year inspection regime.

Policy 1

To ensure street trees are inspected by a suitably qualified person on a three-yearly basis and maintenance works commissioned as necessary.

7. Contract Management

28. The Council maintains its trees through the use of a contracted firm of arboriculturalists. The tree management contract was let to Advanced Tree Services Ltd (ATS) in 2006 for 5 years with an option to extend for a further 5 years. ATS is the sole contractor for all tree work on council-owned land except schools. Schools have devolved budgets and so can choose their own contractor.
29. This strategy will underpin the Tree Service with our partners Advanced Tree Services Ltd (ATS). The RBK Tree Officer will be responsible for the day to day running of the contract and will ensure current best practice is being followed in partnership with ATS.

8. Tree Removal

30. The Council receives a great many requests to remove trees. For example: installation of vehicle cross-overs, road traffic improvements, subsidence claims and specific removal of some species which are considered a nuisance. However, often it is only once a tree is removed that its value becomes apparent. Even after replanting the amenity lost can rarely be replaced.
31. The highway environment is a finite space for which there is intense competition from other services gas, water, electric etc. Planting opportunities after a tree is removed are becoming increasingly difficult as a new tree pit not only has to contend with the underground pipes and cables but also has to the aerial competition from street lamps, traffic signs, vehicle sightlines etc.
32. There will be a resistance to the removal of trees unless there is sound arboriculture or risk related reason to do so. This may be dead, dying, diseased or structural damage. Or when a tree is deemed inappropriate for the location and there are resources available to replant with a more suitable species (paragraph 12.1 for further discussion). Trees in a hazardous condition will be considered as an emergency and removed without notification to safeguard the public and property.

Policy 2

Requests for tree removal will be refused unless the tree is deemed to be in a hazardous condition subject to inspection by a qualified Tree Officer.

9. Vehicle Crossovers

33. It is now usual for households to have one or more cars, and with this an expectation for the cars to be parked near to the house. For this reason, requests for a vehicle cross-over are commonplace. In some instances installation of the cross-over is impossible given the presence of a street tree therefore the Council is requested to remove the tree.
34. In line with Policy 2 trees will not normally be removed to accommodate new vehicular access unless there is good arboriculture reason to do so. In any case where cross over works are approved by the Council and which approve removal and replacement of street trees, the full cost of all such tree works will be borne by the applicant.
35. The size of the tree removed will dictate the number of new trees required. i.e. Young (1-3 years old) = 1 tree, Small = 2 trees, medium = 3 trees, large = 4 trees. The current (2007) replacement and 2 year maintenance cost is £360.00 per tree (this figure will be subject to an annual inflation increase).
36. The construction of the crossover will be carried out as per NJUG10 Guidelines. No roots above 25mm to be cut, any roots below 25mm that require cutting must done so with an appropriate sharp saw leaving a smooth clean end and back-filled with sharp sand before Type 2 aggregate is applied.

Policy 3

On application for a vehicle cross-over the Tree Officer will be consulted for their view on amenity. If the tree is of high amenity value the application will normally be refused. Applicants have the right of appeal to their Neighbourhood Committee.

10. Phased replacement of inappropriate street trees

37. In some situations maintenance and associated problems of a tree are so great that removal and replacement can not only improve the environment for residents, but avoid substantial financial liabilities for the Council.
38. Thoughtful planned removal of trees reaching the end of their safe useful life expectancy and replanting with appropriate replacements will promote a tree population age structure that is sustainable. This long term approach to street tree management will produce long term

improvements to the environment, reduce maintenance costs and release resources to improve the street tree resource as a whole.

39. Short and long term benefits to the local community and the Council can be gained through phased removal. Sometimes it will be appropriate to replace over mature street trees requiring frequent expensive maintenance and replace with either younger trees of the same species or more suitable species.
40. Identification of trees for phased removal and replacement will be carried out with due consideration to all factors, including proximity to buildings, species choice for replanting and the amenity value trees provide. The phased removal and replanting process will be evaluated objectively.

11. Tree planting, Species Selection and Sponsorship

41. There are cases where a tree has been planted which is out of keeping with the main species on the rest of the street. If the opportunity arises the tree may be removed and replaced with the principle species. Replacement of forest type trees with small ornamental species reduces future maintenance costs and nuisance complaints, but there must be a consideration to the contribution that large trees make to the character of the environment.
42. Nurseries are developing specialised trees for planting with the street scene. As a result the list of species available for planting in urban areas is growing. The variety of foliage, colour, form and flower is far more extensive than it has ever been. Kingston Council is committed to increasing the number of street trees implementing imaginative species and planting projects.
43. There is a general presumption by the public is that when the Council removes a tree it will replant with a new tree soon afterwards. But, the Council has not had a dedicated planting budget for many years. Consequently it has been unusual for a new tree to be planted following the removal of a tree in recent years. Any planting that is carried out in the street is paid for by one of four methods: Private sponsorship, Neighbourhood Committee discretionary budget fixed annually, traffic schemes or Section 106 payments through the planning system. Given the medium term financial plans of the Council as outlined in Changing Kingston – Choosing our future, this situation is unlikely to change in the next four years. However, long-term future planning should consider this budgetary implication to ensure the percentage of tree cover within Kingston is not only maintained but increased.

Policy 4
Promote public awareness of how trees are managed

Policy 5
Aim to plant new street trees in appropriate locations; vacant tree pits will take priority

Policy 6
Priority will be placed on the replacement of over mature tree stock, planting large growing species where appropriate.

Policy 7
Identify a dedicated tree planting budget when the opportunity arises.

Policy 8
Encourage sponsored planting through the Neighbourhood Committee Policy Statements.

12. Tree Problems

44. People often live in close proximity to trees, particularly in urban areas. Trees can cause inconvenience to residents when they grow near dwellings. A dilemma often occurs when the tree makes an important contribution to the local environment but also causes inconvenience to those living nearby.

45. With any population of trees there are a number of common sources of complaint including overhanging branches, shade, leaf/fruit fall, obstruction and physical damage etc. Many of these problems can be dealt with through the Council's cyclical pruning programme.

46. Tree roots disrupting the footway to a small degree is a common problem associated within the urban environment. Many trees are removed each year for various reasons including drought and pollution stress. It is for this reason that the Council is reluctant to remove healthy trees due to footway disturbance. Street Scene inspectors who inspect the footway can action repair of damage as necessary and may wish to resurface disturbed areas.

Policy 9
There will be a presumption against the removal or pruning of trees which are healthy but subject to complaint (e.g. branch and root trespass, loss of TV/satellite signals, alleviation of bird mess, honey dew, leaf or fruit fall, loss of light etc) unless the basis of the complaint is an overriding justification and no alternative management practice can be implemented.

13. Trees and Subsidence

47. A common concern for homeowners is potential foundation damage by tree roots. This type of damage only occurs in areas where the soil type is heavy, shrinkable clay, which is prone to fluctuations in volume caused by changing soil moisture levels. There has been a lot of concern about tree roots and foundations in recent years. Much of this is unsubstantiated and the incidence of proven tree root related claims against the Council remains low despite the level of tree cover and much of the area having clay soils.
48. Nevertheless, subsidence is a concern to householders and will remain at the forefront in the light of unpredictable and erratic weather patterns as a result of climate change. It presents a potential liability to the Council with high financial consequences.
49. In order to reduce this risk the cyclical pruning schedule will take into consideration the management regime which may result in selective removal of street tree stock, in areas predisposed to building movement, where appropriate.
50. Alleged cases and claims of tree root damage are dealt and co-ordinated by the Council's insurance department. The insurance department will seek advice from the Council's Tree Officer. This will usually involve a site inspection by the Tree Officer taking note of supporting documentation. A short report is passed back to the insurance department who will deal with any further communication between the agents. Any structural reports which are outside the expertise of the Tree Officer will be scrutinised by a Council Structural Engineer for comment to the Council's insurance department who will co-ordinate the Council's response on these matters.
51. Unwarranted claims based on poorly investigated or inaccurate evidence will be challenged.
52. Vegetation control is usually the first practical step that can be taken to alleviate homeowners concerns and there is increasing pressure to do so. The demands from insurance claims come from closing the gap between retaining the tree, denying liability and having to remove the tree to reduce the Council's liability and costs. For this reason there is an argument for a dedicated budget for vegetation control outside of the regular pruning schedule in subsidence generated claims.
53. The Council will refer to the London Tree Officer's 'A Risk Limitation Strategy for Tree Root Claims' – 3rd Edition May 2007 (and subsequent versions when produced) for authoritative advice when dealing with claims.

Policy 10

Respond to investigations for insurance claims within 4 working weeks.

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Policy 11

To take appropriate action to remove the risk posed by a street tree as a result of subsidence.

14. Trees in Parks and Open Spaces

54. Trees are fundamental to the structure of parks and green spaces, not only important to regular visitors, but also important contributors to the overall environment of the area. Trees are a high value resource in parks that require proactive management to prosper and benefit the borough.
55. Populations of trees within different parks and green spaces are as variable as the character of the sites themselves. Management of park trees has to be planned on a site by site basis, promoting balance and character for each.
56. The inspection and maintenance of trees within parks and open spaces are the responsibility of Quadron Services Ltd (hereafter referred to as Quadron). They are the Council's partner contractors for the overall maintenance of all parks and open spaces. This includes trees in parks. The council will work in partnership to ensure that the trees in parks are managed using best practice. In addition to Health and Safety inspections and works that are generated as a result of such inspections other issues often arise. For example crown overhang onto garden boundaries result in loss of light. These issues will be dealt with on a case by case basis, but as in the case with street trees will not necessarily result in any works being undertaken unless there is a valid health and safety reason for doing so.
57. Consultation and notification of significant work to trees in parks will be by the use of notice boards, enabling residents advanced information.
58. Given the existing trees stock in most parks there are limited opportunities for memorial planting within the Borough's parks. The structure and use of parks is important, management will ensure minimal encroachment with planting beds on to open space. The Council will seek to find a suitable site for tree sponsorship in the form of informal nature conservation woodland.

Policy 12

Seek to establish new areas of urban woodland that offer multiple benefits to residents, wildlife and the landscape.

Policy 13

Seek to create a varied and sustainable tree population in parks.

Policy 14

Seek to develop management plans for parks and open spaces to prevent tree population decline.

Policy 15

There will be a presumption against works being undertaken as a result of complaint unless there is an overriding health and safety reason for doing so.

Policy 16

Continue where appropriate to plant trees within parks depending on sufficient budget.

15. Trees on Housing Land

59. The RBK Housing Department employs Housing Officers who in the course of their routine inspections identify issues with trees. At present any vegetation management is responsive with the issues normally arising from complaints from residents. The sites are inspected by the Tree Officer and work ordered in the form of a request from the area housing officers. Any work required is funded by the Housing Department. Complaints will lessen if the trees on the housing land are subject to the cyclical maintenance programme that mirrors that of street trees.

60. Housing Officers will endeavour to consult residents with advanced information on tree management issues where appropriate. The Council will ensure the safety of people and property and will seek introduction of risk management to ensure high risk trees are removed. This includes those trees that are undermining property which would be subject to inspection in the first instance by the Tree Officer and a Structural Engineer.

Policy 17

The Council will endeavour to fulfil its obligation to ensure the safety of people and property.

Policy 18

The Tree Department will work with the Housing Department towards developing a cyclical maintenance programme for all trees on Housing Land.

16. Trees on Education and Social Services Sites

61. Schools owned by the Royal Borough of Kingston are managed locally and operate with devolved budgets. Management responsibility for trees rests at a local school level. Managers may use the services of the Borough's Tree Officer, under a Service Level Agreement, should they so wish.
62. Any annual Health and Safety inspections of school grounds are undertaken during the summer commissioned by the individual schools. Inspections cover trees posing a threat to children and other users of the site. Schools are to be encouraged to use this service.
63. The Council has responsibility for trees on land associated with Social Service establishments and those surrounding homes managed by Tenant Management Organisation. The Tree Officer inspects the trees and advises on works required. The works will be supervised on behalf of Social Services. Social Services pay for any works from their budgets.

17. Woodlands, Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

64. Many of the woods in the Kingston area are now managed with nature conservation as a priority. Future management of woodlands must address the problems of neglect, which have afflicted many types of woodland nationally over the past 75 years or more. It must also take into account the multi-purpose objectives which woodlands today must fulfil.
65. Woodlands are inspected to identify any Health and Safety issues in areas where there are paths and where the boundary abuts roads or property.
66. Woodland management is a specialised subject that requires particular knowledge and expertise, with emphasis on nature conservation and biodiversity. The Council works in partnership with the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project on woodland and nature conservation sites within the Mole Valley catchments. The Project has skills and expertise and has the added value of undertaking all their work with the help of volunteers. The practice of rotational coppicing will be applied as a woodland management technique and production of charcoal.
67. Trees and scrub on nature conservation sites have a special role for the integrity of the site, and hence are managed for nature conservation and biodiversity. The trees which include dead wood, nest holes, refuge for birds and the leaf litter of deciduous species provide an invaluable and intricate contribution to the ecology of the site.
68. The tidy and 'lollipop' image of a street tree is entirely inappropriate for sites that are managed for nature conservation as are the non native planting schemes that tend to be the preference during the design stage. There are few native species that lend themselves to the myriad of constraints that are found along the highway.

Policy 19

Ensure woodlands are managed with nature conservation and biodiversity as part of the main objectives. Intervention will only happen when there is a valid Health and Safety or conservation reason for it.

Policy 20

Natural regeneration will be supported on appropriate sites

Policy 21

Where appropriate the Council will ensure standing dead and fallen wood is left on site unless there are sound conservation and / or safety reasons for its removal. Habitat pile construction from pruning and coppice will be undertaken to encourage biodiversity of the site

Policy 22

Encourage community involvement with woodland management

Policy 23

Encourage expansion of the urban woodland in appropriate locations ensuring selection of species reflects the local woodland character

Policy 24

The Council will manage woodland to fulfil its obligation as owners to ensure safety of people and property whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places and the level of acceptable risk must reflect this.

18. Privately owned trees

69. A majority of the Boroughs tree stock is located within privately owned property, gardens and communal grounds. These trees form a critical part of the Borough's local landscape and make a significant contribution to visual public amenity. This Tree Strategy is not primarily concerned with privately owned trees. The Council's policies on these trees are part of its planning and development control policies. This section is included for completeness and gives an overview of how the Council supports the management of these trees.

18.1 Tree Preservation Orders and Trees in Conservation Areas

70. The Council has a statutory duty to protect trees, which make a significant contribution to visual public amenity, and has powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to regulate works to trees and prevent unnecessary felling or inappropriate pruning through the introduction of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), the processing of tree works applications for TPO trees, and tree works notifications for trees situated within a Conservation Area (TCA). The Council aims to deal with all applications for consent to carry out tree works within the statutory deadlines, 8 week for trees the subject of a tree preservation orders and 6 weeks for trees situated within a conservation area.

18.2 Trees and Development

71. The Council seeks to achieve successful and satisfactory retention of trees within new development in the Borough. Trees can occupy a significant part of a development site and can have a major influence on the design and layout of a new development. Poorly designed schemes in relation to trees may be resented by future occupiers and will place pressure for trees to be pruned or removed. The Council aims therefore to promote the use of good practice and place trees at the front of the design process.

72. The Council has powers to impose conditions upon the grant of planning permission for development, to ensure that existing trees worthy of retention are protected and not damaged during and/or after construction. The revision of British Standard BS: 5837 2005 *A Guide for Trees In Relation to Construction* has improved the processes for protecting trees on development sites. The Council aims to fully utilise new guidance documents when determining planning applications through the use of conditions attached to planning permissions for new development, in order to ensure successful tree retention within the Borough.

18.3 Resurvey and Updating of Existing Tree Preservation Orders

73. Local Planning Authorities are advised by Central Government to keep their TPO's under review by making full use of its variation and revocation powers in order to ensure their TPO's are up to date. The reasons why it may become important to vary or revoke a TPO are for example if an order was made before the implementation of later changes to the model order. Some TPO's were made in the 1940's and 1950's with many trees either missing or no longer merit protection. Central Government have also recommended that Local Planning Authorities put in place a programme for reviewing its old area orders. The Council will aim to assess and compile a list of all its area Tree Preservation Orders to help establish a framework and timescale, in view of putting into place a resurvey strategy.

18.4 The Making of New Tree Preservation Orders

74. The Council aims to make full use of its powers to introduce new tree preservation orders. The majority of new TPO's are made as a result of planning applications for new development. The Council also receives a number of requests each year from local residents to protect individual or groups of trees which are considered important to the borough. Trees nominated for Tree Preservation Orders will be assessed carefully and consistently using systems to determine their suitability and visual public amenity value, and will be prioritised in order of expediency.

18.5 Enforcement of Unauthorised Tree Works

75. It is an offence to prune, remove, wilfully or unwillfully allow or cause damage to a protected tree. Anyone who is in contravention of a Tree Preservation Order or Conservation Area regulation is guilty of an offence. The Council will use its relevant statutory powers to enforce and where appropriate prosecute the unauthorised pruning or removal of protected trees.

19. Climate Change

76. There is a general consensus amongst experts that temperatures will increase, there will be more dramatic variations in weather events such as floods, storms, warmer drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Estimates suggest that by 2050 temperatures across the British Isles will have increased by >1.5 degree centigrade. There will be changes in the hydrological regime leading to a greater risk of flood from sea, rivers and surface water drainage.

77. Urban areas warm more than rural ones because buildings absorb heat. The concentration of buildings and urban areas leads to the

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formation of 'urban heat islands'. This is where the night time temperatures are higher, a restriction in winds to disperse pollutants and increased run-off from roads, pavement, and hard standing for cars.

78. Trees in urban situations play a significant role in the adaptation of climatic change. They can counter poor air quality by effectively 'locking up' pollutants in the biomass. Trees can be used to shade and cool buildings, and absorb excess rain water.
79. When changes in soil moisture occur below the foundation level of buildings it can lead to subsidence. Tree roots are often blamed for subsidence and therefore removed. A clearer understanding of the mechanism of damage and how it can be prevented is needed particularly if trees are to be sited close to buildings in order to benefit from their shading and cooling functions.
80. Many of our most notable tree-lined streets have tree populations that are mature to over-mature. Such trees are vulnerable to climatic variations such as drought, disease and damage. An over-mature population of street trees tends to erode gradually over a number of years as individual trees decline and have to be removed. New trees should be introduced between the mature trees to ensure that there will be continuous tree cover in future years.

20. Community Engagement

81. It is important to communicate to the local community why changes and decisions are made, and to provide an opportunity for those to have involvement if they wish to do so. This may be by sponsoring or adopting a tree in their street, or by residents developing a group that could get involved in enhancing their local neighbourhood such as a Tree Warden Scheme.
82. The Council gets many requests for either a new tree to be planted or to replace a dead specimen. 'Adopt a Tree' is a positive initiative to enable the expansion of tree stock within the financial constraint of not having a dedicated tree planting budget. This situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.
83. However, there are practical and statutory reasons why residents cannot plant trees of their own accord along the highway. 'Adopt a Tree' offers the resident the opportunity to request a tree is planted at an appropriate location, which may or may not be outside their property. The initiative could take one of two options. Option One: the resident will pay for a tree (from a species list supplied by the Tree Officer) to be sourced, planted and cared for, for the required 2 year maintenance period by the Council. Option Two: the resident will pay for a tree (from a species list supplied by the Tree Officer) to be sourced and planted by the Council, the resident will then care for the

tree for two years after that it will be maintained in the 3 year cyclical maintenance programme by the Council. In either case if the tree dies it will not be automatically replaced with no charge, as the reason for the death could be a result of environmental pressure which is outside the Council's or the resident's control.

84. The cost of 'Adopt a Tree' is not fixed and will respond to any changing circumstances. The current costs and processes will be published each year in the AIP.

85. Interest groups are able to access external funding for specific projects.

86. A series of interpretative material using different media will be produced to disseminate information.

Policy 25

Every effort will be made to encourage initiatives such as 'Adopt a Tree' schemes

Annex 1 - Cyclical pruning schedule

Ward	Financial year 2007-2008		Financial year 2008-2009		Financial year 2009-2010		Financial year 2010-2011		Financial year 2011-2012		Financial year 2012-2013	
	April - Aug	Sept-March	April-Aug	Sept-March	April - Aug	Sept-March	April - Aug	Sept-March	April - Aug	Sept-March	April - Aug	Sept-March
St James	█						█					
Chessington South	█						█					
Norbiton	█						█					
Berrylands		█						█				
Alexandra		█						█				
Coombe Vale		█						█				
Coombe Hill			█						█			
Canbury			█						█			
Surbiton Hill				█						█		
Beverley				█						█		
Tolworth & Hook Rise				█						█		
Old Malden					█						█	
Chessington North & Hook					█						█	
Grove						█						█
St Marks						█						█
Tudor						█						█

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Annex 2 - Tree Strategy Policies

Policy 1

To ensure street trees are inspected by a suitably qualified person on a three-yearly basis and maintenance works commissioned as necessary

Policy 2

Requests for tree removal will be refused unless the tree is deemed to be in a hazardous condition subject to inspection by a qualified Tree Officer.

Policy 3

On application for a vehicle cross-over the Tree Officer will be consulted for their view on amenity. If the tree is of high amenity value the application will normally be refused. Applicants have the right of appeal to their Neighbourhood Committee.

Policy 4

Promote public awareness of how trees are managed

Policy 5

Aim to plant new street trees in appropriate locations; vacant tree pits will take priority

Policy 6

Priority will be placed on the replacement of over mature tree stock, planting large growing species where appropriate.

Policy 7

Identify a dedicated tree planting budget when the opportunity arises.

Policy 8

Encourage sponsored planting through the Neighbourhood Committee Policy Statements.

Policy 9

There will be a presumption against the removal or pruning of trees which are healthy but subject to complaint (e.g. branch and root trespass, loss of TV/satellite signals, alleviation of bird mess, honey dew, leaf or fruit fall, loss of light etc) unless the basis of the complaint is an overriding justification and no alternative management practice can be implemented.

Policy 10

Respond to investigations for insurance claims within 4 working weeks.

Policy 11

To take appropriate action to remove the risk posed by a street tree as a result of subsidence.

Policy 12

Seek to establish new areas of urban woodland that offer multiple benefits to residents, wildlife and the landscape

Policy 13

Seek to create a varied and sustainable tree population in parks.

Policy 14

Seek to develop management plans for parks and open spaces to prevent tree population decline.

Policy 15

There will be a presumption against works being undertaken as a result of complaint unless there is an overriding health and safety reason for doing so.

Policy 16

Continue where appropriate to plant trees within parks depending on sufficient budget.

Policy 17

The Council will endeavour to fulfil its obligation to ensure the safety of people and property.

Policy 18

The Tree Department will work with the Housing Department towards developing a cyclical maintenance programme for all trees on Housing Land.

Policy 19

Ensure woodlands are managed with nature conservation and biodiversity as part of the main objectives. Intervention will only happen when there is a valid Health and Safety or conservation reason for it.

Policy 20

Natural regeneration will be supported on appropriate sites

Policy 21

Where appropriate the Council will ensure standing dead and fallen wood is left on site unless there are sound conservation and / or safety reasons for its removal. Habitat pile construction from pruning and coppice will be undertaken to encourage biodiversity of the site

Policy 22

Encourage community involvement with woodland management

Policy 23

Encourage expansion of the urban woodland in appropriate locations ensuring selection of species reflects the local woodland character

Policy 24

The Council will manage woodland to fulfil its obligation as owners to ensure safety of people and property whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places and the level of acceptable risk must reflect this.

Policy 25

Every effort will be made to encourage initiatives such as 'Adopt a Tree' schemes