

# PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

## PLANNING INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT POLICY



# A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the Borough

2010 to 2020



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Trees and woodlands are an essential part of the Borough's character and identity. They help to breathe life into the area, providing a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. They tell us of the seasons, and bring us into contact with nature. They remind us that where we now have towns and villages, a vast and ancient forest once existed. They provide shade on hot days, help to relieve us from stress, help mitigate flooding and help clean our polluted air. Trees and woodlands are good for residents, good for visitors to the Borough and good for business in the Borough.

### **1.2 The Tree and Woodland Strategy**

The Council is firmly committed to maintaining and enhancing the Borough's trees and woodlands as a vital part of the environment of the Borough. Given there is a need to firmly establish policies and to set appropriate levels of resource to plan, develop, and manage robust tree populations, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has produced this tree and woodland strategy for the period 2010-2020 following on from a public consultation.

## **2. CONTEXT**

### **2.1 A Joined Up Approach**

Trees, because they play such a significant part in our environment in many different ways, they need to be 'joined up' with wider economic, social and environmental objectives. Our Tree and Woodland Strategy therefore needs to be developed within the context of other national, regional and local policy documents and in turn will help to inform those related policies which are being prepared now and in the future. The current key policies are detailed below.

### **2.2 National Context**

Through the England Forestry Forum the Government endorsed the concept that every region in England should prepare regional expressions of the English Forestry Strategy<sup>1</sup> officially known as 'Regional Forestry Frameworks'<sup>2</sup>. This strategy, which stems from the framework, addressed the protection, management and enhancement of the Borough's trees and woodlands over the next 10 years and it is planned that it will be reviewed after 5 or as required.

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<sup>1</sup> A Strategy for England's Trees, Wood and Forests (ETWF) – Defra (2007)

<sup>2</sup> Seeing the Wood for the Trees – South East Forestry and Woodlands Partnership – (2004)

Trees and woodlands are recognised as key features within the environmental protection chapter of the 'UK Sustainable Development Strategy'<sup>3</sup> and 'The England Biodiversity Strategy'<sup>4</sup> identifies woodland as a key theme and habitat.

There are several national Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes<sup>5</sup> related to the protection, management and enhancement of woodlands and trees as well as Statutory controls and regulations which include Tree Preservation Orders and the protection of trees in Conservation Areas<sup>6</sup> (Town & Country Planning Act 1990), the protection of rural hedgerows<sup>7</sup> and the general felling of trees outside of residential gardens<sup>8</sup>.

It is also established, principally in case law, that tree owners have a 'duty of care' and this needs to be fulfilled by management of the tree stock, including regular inspection and programmed maintenance work.

### 2.3 Regional Context

The South East Plan<sup>9</sup> provides the regional spatial strategy for the region and includes the allocation of development requirements to individual local authorities. Principal policies with relevance to trees include those relating to character of the environment and green infrastructure, natural resource management and, countryside and landscape management.

### 2.4 Local Context

The Local Development Framework<sup>10</sup> (LDF) is in active preparation. Part of this is the Core Strategy, which sets out the long-term vision for how the area and the places within it should develop. It will contain a set of strategic policies focusing on key issues and provide a delivery strategy for addressing these, such as how much development is intended to happen where, when and by what means.

The Council has recently produced its Carbon Management Programme<sup>11</sup> to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from Council services and is committed to producing a Climate Change Strategy. Trees are vital in absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> and can help to offset emissions and should play a part in delivering both strategies.

Other key documents:

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<sup>3</sup> Better Quality of Life – UK sustainable Development, - Defra ( 2008)

<sup>4</sup> Working with the Grain of Nature – England Biodiversity Strategy – Defra (2002); UK Biodiversity Action Plan – UK Government (1992), Berkshire BAP Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum (1999)

<sup>5</sup> National Planning Policy - DCLG

<sup>6</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – UK Statute Law

<sup>7</sup> Hedgerow Regulations 1997 - Statutory Instrument 1997 No. 1160 - Defra

<sup>8</sup> Forestry Act 1967 – UK Statute Law

<sup>9</sup> South East Plan - South East Plan Regional Assembly (SEERA) (now superseded by the South East England Partnership Board) (2009).

<sup>10</sup> Local Development Framework – RBWM (expected adoption end of 2010)

<sup>11</sup> CMP – RWWM in partnership with Carbon Trust (2008)

- The Community Strategy<sup>12</sup> is a statutory visioning document, which draws together the economic, environmental and social aspirations, priorities and needs of a local area
- The Borough Strategic Plan<sup>13</sup> summarises how the Council has performed each year and explains the plans for improvement. The Landscape Character Assessment<sup>14</sup> provides a structured approach to identifying the character and distinctiveness of the landscape

### 3. KEY ISSUES

#### 3.1 Background

We have identified a number of key issues that need to be addressed over the lifetime of the Strategy.

#### 3.2 Summary of Issues

The table below summarises the issues that affect the different elements of the Borough's trees and woodlands resource.

The table shows that each of the elements have specific issues which need addressing, but also that some of the issues are a more universal problem. A lack of management and knowledge about trees as well as competition from other land uses are the factors with most important effects and therefore need addressing as priorities.

TABLE (The relevance of the issue is indicated with an 'X'. A blank box indicates no or little relevance and a 'XX' indicates high relevance where the issue needs addressing)

Issue	Woodlands	Open Space trees	Street trees	Garden trees	Landmark & veteran trees
Level of funding	XX	X	XX		
Competition with other uses eg. Utilities			XX	X	X
Pressure for development	X	X	X	XX	X
Improve public understanding/awareness	X		XX	X	X
Fear of subsidence			X	X	
Actual/perceived inconvenience to owners			X	X	
Health and safety	X	X	XX	X	XX
Improve appropriate protection				X	XX

<sup>12</sup> Community Strategy – RBWM (2007)

<sup>13</sup> Borough Strategic Plan - RBWM (2007-2010)

<sup>14</sup> Landscape Character Assessment – RBWM (2004)

Issue	Woodlands	Open Space trees	Street trees	Garden trees	Landmark & veteran trees
Improve co-ordination/communication between owners	X	X	X	X	X
Fear of crime	XX	X			
Conflict of interest with traffic and road safety			XX		
Decline in tree health	X	X	XX		X
Hostile growing environment			XX		
Improve commitment/sense of ownership	X		X	X	
Competition from foreign imports	X				
Climate change	X	X	X	X	X

## 4. FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

### 4.1 Aims

The Local Development Framework sets out the Borough's strategy for accommodating future growth. A population increase is anticipated and net numbers employed in the Borough are estimated to increase accordingly. The Local Development Plan aims to accommodate this growth in a way that addresses issues of social and economic exclusion whilst also maintaining and enhancing the quality of the environment.

In the drive for change, it is often easy to forget the essential ingredients that make the Borough special for those living and working in the Borough or visiting it. Trees and woodlands play a major role in shaping the Borough's environment and peoples' appreciation of it.

The strategy provides a strategic approach to trees and woodlands that delivers the Council's vision for the Borough within the context of the Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests and the Regional Forestry Framework. In doing so, the strategy seeks to ensure that:

- The existing stock of trees and woodlands is managed and maintained to safeguard its value to the Borough both now and in the future
- There is increased awareness of the value of trees and woodlands to the health and well being of all residents
- The contribution of trees and woodlands to the Borough's sustainability and quality of life is maximised

- Natural regeneration and new planting in appropriate locations is encouraged to further enhance the contribution of trees and woodlands to Borough life.

To achieve the Strategy's general goals, four key aims have been identified that will act as a focus for the future:

- A. To ensure trees and woodlands contribute to a high quality natural environment
- B. To help shape the built environment and new development in a way that strengthens the positive character and diversity of the Borough
- C. To improve community and individual peoples well-being and social inclusion through peoples contact with trees and woodlands
- D. To support the Borough's economy

## 4.2 Objectives

### A. To ensure trees and woodlands contribute to a high quality natural environment

The Borough contains urban and suburban areas, villages and a rich and diverse natural environment. Amongst the buildings and infrastructure there are significant areas of open and green space. Some of the most important sites for biodiversity are woodland habitats, especially ancient woodlands, and these bring nature close to people. Trees and woodlands play a vital role in defining us as a 'Green Borough'. Within the Borough are a number of larger sites such as Windsor Great Park, Bisham Woods, Ashley Hill and other open space containing important trees and woodlands which are important for nature conservation. The River Thames and its associated tree lined and wooded banks also provide an important feature. The Borough is permeated by trees and woodlands at a smaller scale, and these can be of major significance at a local level. Examples are the urban parks and gardens within the built environment. Even small areas of naturally regenerated woodland, or a single tree in a small park, contribute significantly to the Borough's landscape and wildlife habitat. The priority in the Borough is therefore to protect and appropriately manage the existing resource.

#### Objective A1

Safeguard, and improve the management of the Borough's existing tree and woodland resource.

#### Objective A2

Enhance our knowledge and understanding of the Borough's existing tree and woodland resource.

#### Objective A3

Investigate and implement new tree and woodland planting opportunities in appropriate places.

#### Objective A4

Plan for the impacts of climate change in managing and increasing the Borough's tree and woodland resource.

**B. To help shape the built environment and new development in a way that strengthens the positive character and diversity of the Borough**

The Borough comprises 84 square miles of an urban, suburban, and rural mix of towns, villages, open spaces, roads, railways, reservoirs, offices, business parks, homes, gardens, farmland, hospitals, etc. Its character is incredibly diverse, from the dense built-up areas of the towns to the Green Belt that forms much of the Borough.

Trees and woodlands offer a sense of permanence in a rapidly changing environment. In many instances, they are indicators of an area's past, particularly the ancient woodlands and veteran trees. In other areas where trees and woodlands have been lost, their memory lives on in the names of the suburbs such as Woodlands Park or roads that have replaced them (e.g. Forest Road, Woodlands Ride, Oaklands Drive). Trees and woodlands therefore play an important role in helping to define the 'sense of place' of different parts of the Borough. They have a contribution to make towards protecting and enhancing the quality of the townscape, and achieving the highest quality of urban design.

**Objective B1**

Raise awareness and understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play in the Borough's townscapes, and defining 'sense of place'.

**Objective B2**

Ensure the needs and impacts of trees and woodlands are properly addressed in ever more densely built up towns.

**Objective B3**

Promote the important contribution of trees and woodlands to the Borough's sustainable development and regeneration.

**C. To improve community and individual peoples well-being and social inclusion through peoples contact with trees and woodlands**

There is a growing recognition that trees and woodlands can bring considerable benefits to people's health, for example by reducing stress levels, fostering community involvement and encouraging outdoor recreation. Trees and woodlands often have strong cultural associations, and in the towns they provide contact with nature in a predominantly built environment. They also offer an educational resource for all generations.

**Objective C1**

Enable residents to take greater ownership of their local trees and woodlands.

**Objective C2**

Improve the accessibility of the Borough's woodlands for all.

**Objective C3**

Raise awareness and understanding of the Borough's trees and woodlands resource.

**Objective C4**

Promote the benefits of trees and woodlands to residents' physical and spiritual health and wellbeing.

## D. To support the Borough's economy

While some of the woodlands within the Borough are used to supply timber, small-wood, and other products, many others, including the ones the Council is responsible for are managed primarily for biodiversity and amenity. The indirect benefits in terms of producing attractive environments for business and tourism, and a healthy workforce, tend to be under appreciated. Studies show that people put a high monetary value on the quality of their local green environment.

Trees and woodlands have a vital role in supporting the Borough's economy. Tree products can be used for economic benefit and in turn, the monetary returns that trees and woodlands produce can be used to directly fund their protection and management.

### Objective D1

Maximise financial opportunities to realise the full range of benefits of the Borough's trees and woodlands.

### Objective D2

Recognise and promote the contribution of trees and woodlands in providing attractive environments for business, leisure and tourism.

### Objective D3

Support the use of local tree and woodland products as part of sustainable management of the resource.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### 5.1 List of Actions

This chapter lists the different actions the Strategy will pursue in order to deliver the aims and objectives set out in the previous chapter. Some of the proposals are currently being implemented, though they will require continued support in order to progress.

#### Aim A

**to ensure trees and woodlands contribute to a high quality natural environment**

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective A1 safeguard and improve the management of the Borough's existing tree and woodland resource</b>		
Resources for woodland protection and management will be prioritised towards the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ancient woodlands</li> <li>• heavily used woodlands</li> </ul>	Production of Tree Management Guidelines and Protected Trees Policy.	March 2010

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible woodlands with important biodiversity interest</li> <li>• veteran trees.</li> <li>• orchards</li> </ul>	Survey of woodlands.	Ongoing
	Collaboration with estate owners.	Ongoing
Resources for tree protection and management will be prioritised towards street trees.	Production of Tree Management Guidelines.	March 2010
Carry out audit and condition surveys of the Council's tree stock	Management regimes.	Ongoing
Establish common management principles to be followed which provide principles and proposals for street tree, park tree and garden tree management.	Production of Tree Management Guidelines.	March 2010
Support the Ancient Tree Hunt and Ancient Tree Forum with a view to raising awareness of the importance of older trees (and promote the existence of ancient woodlands in the Borough alongside this).	Campaign support.  Input data into The Ancient Tree Hunt website.	Ongoing

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective A2 enhance our knowledge and understanding of the Borough's tree and woodland resource</b>		
Compile, assess and map existing information on the nature, extent, condition and ownership of woodland, including orchards, in the Borough, and identify gaps in data to be addressed.	Research and survey.  Collaboration with estate owners.	Short term (within 2 years)
Put forward sites for inclusion in Natural England's provisional inventory of Ancient Semi-natural woodland and as Wildlife Heritage Sites.	Research and survey. Collaboration with Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre - surveys and assessment programme.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective A3 establish new tree and woodland planting in appropriate places</b>		
Carry out new planting on Council owned/maintained sites particularly adjacent to the public highway where they are most visible.	Via tree planting contracts Minimum 40 standard trees planted each year Through existing annual budgets and S106 funding.	Ongoing
Actively promote and disseminate guidance to all stakeholders.	Promotion of the Tree Strategy and its guidance	Short term (within 1 year)
Establish priority locations for new tree planting,	Local Development	Ongoing

taking into account such factors as transport corridors and gateways, derelict land, flooding mitigation, biodiversity objectives, areas of regeneration and community forests.	Framework (Area Action Plans) Open space strategies. Wider 'greening' and 'regeneration' initiatives.	
Draw on lessons from existing planting initiatives and disseminate good practice. Seek to review, revise, monitor and evaluate these lessons as appropriate.	Tree planting contracts.	Ongoing

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective A4 plan for the impacts of climate change in managing the tree and woodland resource</b>		
Disseminate latest research and predictions for climate change and the impacts on trees and woodlands, and look to develop guidance on methods for accommodating climate change in urban environments, e.g. species to be planted, changes in planting and management techniques.	Dissemination of research information and literature. Preparation of guidance.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)
Improve knowledge of the potential role of trees and woodlands in flood control, improving air and water quality, soil stability and climate control including information on flood risk areas and the opportunities and constraints for planting.	Desk study. Consultation. Review research.	Medium term within 2 to 4 years)

### Aim B

to help shape the built environment and new development in a way that strengthens the positive character and diversity of the Borough

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>Objective B1 raise awareness and understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play in the Borough's townscapes, and defining 'sense of place'</b>		
Produce strategies and design guidelines showing how trees and woodlands can enhance that distinctiveness	Borough Open Space Strategy. Development Briefs and Urban Design Guides (e.g. Supplementary Planning Documents).	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective B2</b> <b>ensure the needs and impacts of trees and woodlands are properly addressed in ever more densely built up towns</b>		
Provide and distribute documentation to help reduce the number of insurance claims with respect to subsidence.	Policy/guidance. Review existing Documentation. Collaboration with insurance industry.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)
Provide and distribute documentation and publications to the general public to counter negative perception of trees in relation to subsidence, giving the facts and allaying the fears.	Production of information leaflets on the web. Dissemination of literature.	Short term (within 2 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective B3</b> <b>promote the contribution of existing and new trees and woodlands to the Borough's sustainable economy through urban development and regeneration</b>		
Promote the role of trees and woodlands in creating an environment which attracts people to live, work and visit, and as an essential element of environmental infrastructure.	Awareness and information campaign targeted at stakeholder organizations	Short term (within 2 years)
Ensure any development, regeneration strategy or design for new development proposals give proper attention to the needs of trees and woodlands and maximizes the benefits that existing or proposed trees and woodlands can make to the overall scheme.	Local Development Framework.  Development Control guide.	Short term (within 2 years) March 2010
Regularly monitor the health of the tree and woodland resource, and identify issues arising and take action as required.	Open Space and Tree Management Guidelines. Borough management teams.	Ongoing

### Aim C

to improve community and individual well-being and social inclusion through people's contact with trees and woodlands

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective C1</b> <b>enable residents to take greater ownership of their local trees and woodlands, especially in more excluded communities and localities</b>		
Launch an 'Adopt a Tree' scheme - for highway trees.	Publicise. Tree Warden Scheme.	Medium term (within 2 years).
Identify those communities where there is a poor availability of existing trees, and the opportunity to improve access to trees and woodlands.	Research. Consultation. Ranger activities. Tree Warden Scheme	Ongoing
Prioritise 'socially and tree/woodland deprived' communities for engagement, and define and organise projects to involve the community in tree and woodland planning and management.	Consultation. Existing networks and organisations (e.g. religious institutions, community groups, etc.) Tree Warden Scheme. Ranger activities.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years) then ongoing

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective C2</b> <b>improve the accessibility of the Borough's woodlands</b>		
Encourage greater use of woodlands and open spaces through outreach work, infrastructural change and 'welcoming' events.	Ranger activities.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)
Promote to residents and visitors to the Borough the wider resource of trees and woodlands (e.g. Windsor Great Park) and improve on site educational information where appropriate.	Tourism strategies. Publicity in partnership with transport providers.	Ongoing
Improve signage and linkages from transport nodes and address access obstacles for all users (e.g. through way-marking and planting to emphasise link routes).	Orientation aids. Landscape planning. Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Local Transport Plan.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective C3 raise awareness and understanding of the Borough's tree and woodland resource</b>		
RBWM to publish information on street trees containing information on works to be carried out to trees and trees to be planted.	Council's web site	Short term (within 2 years)
Support and enhance existing environmental educational programmes linked to tree environments.	Existing Ranger activities. Schools.	Ongoing Short term (within 2 years)
Undertake a marketing campaign to increase general knowledge and understanding	Produce a Gardens Habitat Action Plan	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)
Survey residents and visitors to assess how they value trees and woodlands.	Borough open space studies (user surveys)	Ongoing
Promote the use of woodlands as outdoor classrooms, as part of the Citizenship component of the National Curriculum suited to the Borough context, ensuring that work packs and information are available, accessible for all.	Schools.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)
Promote the 'Heritage & Arts' aspect of trees	Use of lighting to illuminate important trees in Town Centres; produce postcards of distinctive trees	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective C4 promote the benefits of trees and woodlands to residents physical and spiritual health and well-being</b>		
Collate and disseminate authoritative information on the links between health and trees and woodlands.	Research Data compilation	Short term (within 2 years)
Support and enhance the use of woodlands and open spaces with trees for sport and recreation	Parks and Opens Spaces Management Plans	Ongoing
Encourage health establishments to plant trees and woodlands, and their patients to use them.	Via engagement	Medium term (2 to 5 years)
Enable people to walk and exercise in woodlands for the benefit of their health.	Parks and Opens Spaces Management Plans. LTP. School, Workplace and Hospital Travel Plans. Public Rights of Way	Short term (within 2 years)

**Aim D**  
to support the Borough's economy

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective D1</b> <b>maximize financial opportunities to realise the full range of benefits of the Borough's trees and woodlands</b>		
Review funding mechanisms in consultation with other partners, including potential of new mechanisms (e.g. Forestry Commission Strategic Regional Grant Aid). Develop a funding strategy, based on priority actions of the Strategy, Borough's priorities and availability of resources.	Research into existing funding sources. Funding strategy.	Short term (within 2 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective D2</b> <b>recognise and promote the contribution of trees and woodlands in providing attractive environments for business, leisure and tourism</b>		
Evaluate the relationship between trees and woodlands in providing attractive environments to support economic and social objectives, particularly in areas in need of regeneration.	Review research Tourism Strategy	Short term (within 2 years)

Actions	Mechanism	Time scale
<b>objective D3</b> <b>support the use of local tree and woodland products as part of sustainable management of the resource</b>		
Review existing information on the use of woodlands and their products and identify appropriate mechanisms to promote use of woodland products dependent upon findings.	Compilation e.g. existing work by Natural England. Research – e.g. review supply chain Promotion of literature	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years) Long term for implementation of findings (within 10 years)
Encourage greater use of sustainable woodland products, particularly timber, in construction.	Sustainable design guidance. Planning Policy	Ongoing
Undertake a feasibility study to examine the specific potential for use of woodland products as sources of energy in the Borough.	Review London Tree Officers' Association work on aboricultural arisings Investigate potential for Borough heating systems - feasibility study.	Medium term (within 2 to 5 years)

## 6. Annex

These documents set out in more detail, the way in which the Council manages its own trees and its policy and procedures in regard to protected trees and trees and development. These are attached separately as Annex's:

- Annex 1 - Tree Management Guidelines
- Annex 2 - Protected Trees
- Annex 3 - Trees and Development



This document was published by the Tree Team, which forms part of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Planning and Development Unit.

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Electronic versions of this document and the annexes are available on the Borough's website:

[www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/ltip.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/ltip.htm)

Information about Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's services can be made available in other formats (such as large print or audio) and in other languages upon request. For further information, please contact the Council on 01628 683 800 or by minicom on 01628 796474, or via the website: [www.rbwm.gov.uk](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk).