

CABINET

17 JULY 2007

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL TREE STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFT

REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING CONTROL

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Cabinet is asked to approve the draft Tree Strategy for public consultation. Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Operations) in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Planning and Transport to consider the consultation responses received, to make minor amendments considered necessary and to approve the final version of the strategy. Any comments received which are agreed but which would require significant changes to the draft will be reported to Cabinet.

An executive summary of the Tree Strategy is included as an appendix to this report. The full Strategy is too bulky to be printed as part of the report but has been enclosed for Cabinet Members, Group Leaders and Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee. It is available for inspection in the Members' Library and on the Council's website.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet agrees the Tree Strategy as a draft for public consultation.
2. That the Corporate Director (Operations), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, be authorised to approve the final version of the Tree Strategy following public consultation. If it is considered that significant changes are required to take account of comments received a further report will be made to Cabinet.

CABINET17 JULY 2007WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL TREE STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFTREPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING CONTROLDETAIL:Winchester City Council Tree Strategy

- 1.1. Winchester City Council has responsibility for in excess of 50,000 trees on land in its ownership. In addition, the Council also administers 1,900 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and related applications for consent to carry out works on trees. Officers responsible for tree related matters also provide consultation advice on planning applications, review notifications for tree work in conservation areas and answer queries from residents on an array of tree matters.
- 1.2. As a landowner, the Council has a duty of care to manage its trees in a way which reduces the risk to persons and property. Council management of trees should also follow best practice guidelines, setting an example for other organisations and individuals to follow. A risk management survey of Council owned trees has commenced and the Tree Strategy will form the umbrella policy document for this process.
- 1.3. In carrying out their duties officers rely on their skills, training and professional judgement, cross coordination of experience and a set of informal policies which, if challenged, could not be evidenced by formal policy. A Tree Strategy for Winchester City Council enables these current ad hoc policies to be brought together under a formal strategic framework. The Strategy would provide formal guidance to officers directly working with tree issues as well as a formal framework to aid decision making at Committee or Cabinet by setting out:
  - single set of policies for the Council
  - identified element of the Environment Strategy
  - key policy document for the framework of tree risk management of Council owned trees
  - framework to initiate Winchester's first and much needed Tree Preservation Order review.
  - springboard for supporting materials for public and developers.
  - best practice example to partner organisations
- 1.4. The Tree Strategy will link with various existing policy documents including the Local Plan, Community Strategy, Winchester Biodiversity Action Plan and Winchester Landscape Character Assessment.

### 1.5. Statutory Obligations

1.6. The City Council has an obligation to make provision for the protection of trees within its area. This involves the making of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and the administration of Conservation Area notifications and TPO applications. In addition, a large commitment of officer time is spent in offering consultative advice on planning applications which may impact upon trees.

1.7. Government guidance in *Tree Preservation Orders: a guide to the law and good practice* (2000) states that councils should make provision for the review of their tree preservation orders. More recently Government review of policy has indicated that area based TPOs are likely to be phased out in the next few years, possibly accompanying the legislative amendment required to change the format of applications in the '1App' process in April 2008. This would result in a time limit of 5 years to review and remake TPOs using more appropriate classifications (i.e. individual, group or woodland). The current mechanism would not allow for a review in this time frame, leaving many high value amenity trees unprotected.

1.8. Specific action plan targets relevant to TPO review and streamlining the approach to tree protection are included within the strategy. Officers are also currently reviewing management and resource arrangements for TPOs and a further report may be forthcoming which focuses on these areas. In addition many of our early TPOs (circa 1947), some of which cover large tracts of Winchester City, would prove very difficult to enforce if tested by an offence or an appeal.

### 1.9. Non statutory commitments

1.10. The City Council provides ongoing advice, information and support to parish councils on tree management. Several parish councils have requested a formal tree strategy which they could use and support in relation to tree management on their land.

1.11. Council officers also work with partnership organisations to deliver tree related government policy, initiatives and grant funding with colleagues from Hampshire County Council and the Forestry Commission.

1.13 Winchester City Council's area holds some of the most important, historic and beautiful tree resources in the county and the country. A formal strategy will secure the management of the rural and urban tree stock with the key benefit of improved service delivery and the resulting social, cultural and biodiversity benefits of improved tree management.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

### 2. CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

2.1. The Environment Strategy includes specific reference to the production and implementation of a Tree Strategy.

- Economic prosperity – trees contribute to the character of the District and its value as a base for business and tourism. Forestry, landscape and arboricultural jobs form part of the employment sector within the district.
- High quality environment – see comments above under links to Community Strategy.

- An efficient and effective council:

“Ensure our customers can get ready access to advice, information and services”.

“Ensure that we are efficient and offer value for money to local taxpayers”.

“Develop working practices and a working environment which benefit our customers and our staff”.

“Work with partner organisations to deliver improvements in quality of life across the district”.

## 2.2. Links to the Local Development Framework (LDF)

- 2.3. The Tree Strategy contains policies on categorisation, retention and protection of trees on development sites, tree preservation order process and conservation areas. It also contains elements relating to trees and landscape linked to major development areas, historic landscapes and landscape character. In addition, many supplementary planning documents such as village design statements and local area design statements specifically call for improved tree protection.

- 2.4. The Tree Strategy will link with various existing policy documents including the Local Plan, Community Strategy, Winchester Biodiversity Action Plan and Winchester Landscape Character Assessment.

## 2.5. Links to the Community Strategy

- Trees on open spaces and in woodlands provide places for recreation contributing to health and wellbeing (outcome 1).
- Trees filter particulates from exhaust emissions in towns contributing to health and wellbeing (outcome 1).
- Trees contribute to open space and natural environment contributing to high quality environment (outcome 4).
- Trees contribute to the historic environment of Winchester (high quality environment (outcome 4)).
- Trees store carbon and provide shade.

## 3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1. Most of the objectives contained in the Strategy can be accommodated within existing commitments and by utilising ongoing partnerships and service level agreements. Some additional resources would be required to undertake the resurvey work associated with TPOs. This is estimated at £20,000 per annum on an on-going basis but would not be brought forward separately from consideration of the Council's overall budget priorities. The action plan for resurveys will be updated later in the year depending on whether resources are available through the budget process

## 4. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Winchester City Council Tree Strategy consultation draft – full version

## 5. APPENDICES:

Winchester City Council Tree Strategy Executive Summary – Appendix A

## Winchester City Council Tree Strategy Executive Summary

### 1. **Introduction**

- 1.1. Trees form an important and integral part of the environment in every town and village throughout the District. Trees support the natural beauty of our countryside and the diversity of our natural wildlife. Veteran trees provide a unique habitat in their own right.
- 1.2. The introduction explains the benefits that trees give to our lives and our environment. It discusses the need for replacing old trees with new planting and details places where trees grow and thrive within the District. Information is provided dispelling myths about risks from trees. Links to Council initiatives through its partnerships and the role of its arboricultural officers are detailed throughout.

### 2. **Aims and key policies**

- 2.1. The contribution that trees make to the character of the District is well recognised. The Council is committed to securing the continuity of tree cover and positive management of trees on a sustainable basis.

#### 2.2. Aims

- To protect and care for our existing tree stock.
- To ensure that the significance of trees is given proper consideration in decision making.
- To manage and improve our tree stock for the future.

#### 2.3. Key policies

- T1 Healthy trees, hedges and woodlands should be protected, retained and, where possible, enhanced. No tree should be felled or pruned without good reason.
- T2 Trees, hedges and woodlands should be actively managed to ensure healthy growth and development.
- T3 The number and variety of trees in the District should be increased. Particular attention will be given, where appropriate, to native species of local provenance. A mix of tree species of different ages, including juvenile and veteran trees, to ensure a healthy, balanced, tree population is considered desirable.
- T4 Arboricultural best practice will be considered a priority in the management of trees.
- T5 The ecological and cultural importance of veteran trees, historic landscapes and important trees within the landscape is such that the retention and positive long term management of these features should be a priority.

### 3. **Policies for Tree Protection and Planning**

- 3.1. Winchester City Council has certain obligations imposed by statutes and legal agreements, which relate to trees and the public interest.
- 3.2. This section details various statutes and outlines policies, in line with Government guidance, for statutory protection of trees and the decision making process for

applications. Policies are included for determining Hedgerow applications, investigating nuisance hedges and protocol for enforcement action. Details are provided on tree surgery work which is acceptable to the Council providing that justification for such work falls within Council guidelines (also detailed within this section).

- 3.3. Trees are an important consideration when assessing planning applications. This section details policies which will ensure compliance with relevant sections of the adopted local plan, government guidance, British Standards and other industry best practice documents.

#### **4. Policies for Winchester City Council owned trees**

- 4.1. Owners of trees have a duty of care and are legally obliged to carry out regular inspections to ensure that any foreseeable hazards can be identified and the risks associated with such hazards reduced. As a responsible land owner Winchester City Council will introduce a system of regular inspection and monitoring of its trees.
- 4.2. It is important that Council trees are managed in a way which accords with current arboricultural best practice, setting an example to our partner organisations and to the general public. This section of the Strategy details policies in relation to the Councils tree risk management. It ensures that work to our trees is consistent with that expected of residents making applications for work to protected trees and ensures good cross cooperation between the relevant Council officers in each respect.

#### **5. Policies for partnerships and people**

- 5.1. *People derive satisfaction from growing and planting trees, caring for them and sharing the experience. This builds a strong sense of ownership, helps reduce vandalism and increases the sense of individual and communal achievement.*
- 5.2. Only a small proportion of trees in our area are in public ownership. To keep up our tree rich landscape we rely on each other to plant, nurture, care for and maintain trees, often with benefits shared by the whole community.
- 5.3. This section details how we can all help to secure a good future for our tree stocks within the district and the initiatives that can be supported by the Council. The section includes our commitment to The National Tree Warden Scheme and to our parish councils. In addition it offers opportunities for funding and support from local businesses, partners and individuals and details links for more information.

#### **6. Action Plan**

- 6.1. The Tree Strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan for implementation which runs for 5 years from the date of adoption by cabinet.

# **Winchester's Trees**

*Protecting our heritage, growing our future*

## **Winchester City Council's Tree Strategy**

### **Introduction**

February 2007

## **1.0 Foreword**

To be drafted (portfolio holder?)

The Council is committed to securing the continuity of tree cover across the district for the benefit of future generations and, in particular, to providing positive management for those trees for which it has a responsibility.

The Council sincerely hopes that it will gain the support of other statutory bodies, landowners and developers in setting high standards of care and best practice. Promoting the value of trees and engendering the need for custodianship is also a valuable part of the strategy and will result in a continuing high quality environment for the district.



## **2.0 Introduction**

2.1 Winchester City Council is responsible for a large, predominantly rural district with a rich, diverse and unspoilt landscape, much of which is designated for its scenic quality.

One of the distinctive qualities is the wealth of tree cover, which compliments landscape features and the historic heritage of the district. Trees make a significant impact on our surroundings and more subtly on the quality of our lives. They form an important and integral part of the environment in every town and village throughout the district. Trees support the natural beauty of our countryside and the diversity of our natural wildlife. Veteran trees provide a unique habitat in their own right.

The Council is committed to securing the continuity of tree cover across the district for the benefit of future generations and to providing good management of those trees for which it has direct responsibility.

The Council hopes that it will gain the support of other statutory bodies, landowners, developers and our community in setting high standards of care and best practice.

2.2 The City Council's policies in relation to trees are set out in this strategy: *Winchesters Tree's: Protecting our heritage, growing our future.*

The strategy is subdivided into sections which address particular aspects of policy and management. It is intended to be used by those who have responsibility for decision making which will affect trees as a guide to the City Council's ambitions and policies

## **3.0 Trees and our sustainable future**

The area covered by Winchester City Council is constantly changing. If that change happens in ways that meet the social, environmental and economic needs of today's population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, then we can call this "sustainable development".

Sustainable development is measured as much by improved quality of life and economic prosperity as it is by environmental stewardship – a greener environment can effectively enhance all these factors.

For example, businesses in the US have found that 74% of the public prefer to visit retail outlets within a green landscape. Offices will look down on the trees – people who work in green surroundings are less stressed, have a greater capacity for problem solving and can concentrate for longer.

## 4.0 Why are trees important?

Here are a few of the positive contributions trees give to our lives.

- *Protecting us from floods*

Tree canopies act as a natural 'umbrella'. Rain falling onto trees, rather than the ground, reduces flood risk and helps to conserve groundwater.

Trees can be used in sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS) to provide a self sustaining, cost effective storm water management strategy complementing engineering options.

- *Providing us with shelter and shade*

Trees slow down wind speeds and reduce air turbulence, especially around buildings making towns and cities more comfortable.

The dappled shade of trees provides a useful barrier to ultra violet radiation, helping to reduce heat induced stress. Summer shade is particularly important in car parks, school grounds and around retirement homes.

- *Natural air conditioning*

As trees lose moisture from their leaves, the air surrounding them is cooled. Trees cast shade and also reflect heat upwards from their leaves helping to cool our streets on hot days.

The shelter from trees also reduces air conditioning costs of buildings. This can save as much as 10% of annual energy consumption.

- *Noise reduction*

A dense belt of trees can reduce noise levels and there is evidence that simply hiding the source of some kinds of noise can make them seem less intrusive.

- *Better landscape*

Trees and woodlands help to soften and compliment the built environment, making it greener and more attractive. Trees provide a particularly important setting for our historic buildings in Winchester and are a major part of the rural character of our district.

- *Better economy*

Trees provide direct employment in landscaping, forestry, horticulture and tree surgery. Trees also provide valuable materials, fruits and nuts which form part of locally grown produce.

A tree rich local landscape is increasingly recognised as an important requirement for successful modern businesses. An attractive green setting can also deliver secondary economic benefits in the form of increased commercial rents. Recent studies in the UK have shown that house prices are between 5% and 18% higher where property is associated with mature trees.

- *Better Globally*

Trees and woodlands make a significant contribution to biodiversity giving food and shelter to myriad small creatures and a variety of more common wildlife. Veteran trees provide conditions that support some of the rare and endangered species in the UK.

As trees grow they absorb and store carbon in their timber, making trees and forests important in the fight to reduce the rate of global warming.

## **5.0 Trees do not live forever**

Old trees are all around us. Many were growing before we were born and will still be growing when we die, but they are not eternal. Most of our tree species in the United Kingdom will live for less than 200 years and their maintenance and replacement has to be part of our planning for the future.

In our past, trees and woodland were an essential part of life, providing food, fuel and timber for buildings and ships. Our ancestors carried out sustainable management, always planting new trees to replace those removed or using techniques like coppicing or pollarding to produce a continual crop of wood. Many of these skills have gone and with them the economic value of planting more trees. As a result our tree stock is getting older and as trees get older they start to decline.

## **6.0 Threatened Trees – the pressures of modern life**

Changes in the way we live, how we live and in the climate all affect the way we assess the trees that surround us. There is increased concern about large trees and their potential to fall in high winds like those in 1987 or 1990. If weather patterns continue to change and our climate alters through global warming there will be a consequent change in the type and variety of our tree cover. New tree planting schemes will need to take into account peoples fears. Designs will need to incorporate better knowledge of species, form and ultimate size.

Diseases and pests cause death to our trees in a variety of ways. The majestic elms in our landscape which died because of Dutch elm disease have been replaced by small clumps of small specimens, often in our hedgerows which succumb when they reach a juvenile age. More recently we have been informed of pests such as the Asian Longhorn Beetle.

Our Tree Officers keep up to date with latest pest and disease threats to our trees and liaise with other authorities and agencies as required to assist in their control and containment.

Even greater than any of the natural threats, which trees have always had to contend with, is the increasing pressure from the influence of humans mainly because of;

- Pressures for new and increasingly dense levels of development and supporting infrastructure
- Public concerns about tree safety
- Threat of litigation

The population within Winchester City Council's area is growing and the pressures of development have squeezed the land available for trees to grow and new trees to be planted. The ongoing impact of development pressure has led inevitably to the loss of woodland and many larger, older, veteran trees.

In addition, the insurance industry has become more stringent in terms of buildings insurance cover. Trees are increasingly cited as actual or potential causes of subsidence damage to properties. Unfortunately the perceived cheapest solution is usually the removal of the "offending" tree, without full consideration of the tree's "value" as an amenity asset and often without any significant body of evidence that clearly identifies the tree as the main agent of damage or that removal will halt the damage.

If nothing is done, development pressure, storms, old age, litigation, pests and diseases will change and limit our tree population to small, short-lived ornamental tree varieties. These, when compared to our larger, native species, have comparatively little ecological benefit and much less visual impact.

Such changes may be rapid and irreversible; especially where development pressure is greatest and if weather patterns continue to alter.

## **8.0 Trees in our lives – are they really a threat**

### **Size**

Many people develop a fear of trees simply because they have grown to such a great size. Our tree officers regularly have to reassure tree owners that size does not necessarily increase risk despite how threatening a large old tree may appear when it sways in the wind. Trees have had to cope with high winds and harsh winter weather conditions for many years.

*FACT:* Trees are designed by nature to bend and sway during harsh winds, if they didn't they would be more likely to snap or break.

It is prudent to have large trees inspected regularly and, if necessary consider some remedial work rather than felling to make them safe. However there is nothing that makes a tree less safe just because it has grown larger.

## **Need**

We are often being told that trees “need” maintenance or “need” pruning.

*FACT:* trees in their natural state grow and adapt to create equilibrium where forces and balance are uniform to create the least stress in the tree.

If trees could talk they would, in most cases, ask us not to prune them. They do not “need” anything from humans. Different trees grow in different ways. Some have a more upright habit, others more spreading. What people usually mean by the tree needing to be pruned is that it is blocking daylight or blocking gutters with leaves.

Trees can be pruned to lessen the density of leaf cover and thus allow more light through to the house or garden but this should be seen as a last resort. The Council will not permit works based on the need for daylight, television reception, views, or to reduce leaves in gutters or berries on patios.

Advice about the right tree in the right place at the outset can mean that the trees do not become a nuisance as they grow.

## **Property Damage**

Trees rarely cause significant damage to houses. However we all want to feel safe in our homes so we often fear that trees may cause damage. In addition, since the 1976 drought, claims to insurance companies for subsidence claims have increased. This has resulted in householders being advised to remove trees simply because they are growing close to the house. In many cases there is no evidence or investigation into the level of potential threat.

*FACT:* Trees only contribute to subsidence damage where there is heavy shrinkable clay.

The roots extract water from the clay, through which water travels slowly. The clay then dries and in times of low rainfall the ground shrinks and buildings can subside. However this situation is very infrequent and only happens on heavy clay soils and where foundation depths are inadequate.

*FACT:* Many applications to fell trees in subsidence situations are supported by little or no evidence to prove that the tree is the main cause.

An early consultation between the property owner, a WCC Tree Officer and a representative of the insurance company can allow agreement on the tests and data required to justify felling and speed up the process, much to the benefit of the home owner.

Other types of tree root damage to property are usually minor and can be remedied without the loss of the tree, for example disturbance of paving or patio surfaces. Roots are not capable of entering properly constructed drains or other underground services, but many of us fear that they can.

Of course there will always be genuine situations where trees do become dangerous and the Council can help with advice or initiate appropriate action.

Very often our fears about trees are misguided. If you are buying a new property take a good look at the tree or trees in the garden – it could well be older than the house – and ask yourself a simple question:

“Can I live in a house with a tree in the garden?”

Unless you are certain that the answer is a positive “YES” there will be a good chance that in a few years time you may begin to blame the innocent tree for your inability to get along and be asking for it to be felled.

## **9.0 Trees all around us**

### **Small gardens**

Trees need space to grow. They require room for the spread of branches and below ground space for the roots to develop and flourish. The bigger the tree, the more space it will need. It is important to remember “right tree, right place” and to think about the ultimate size and spread of your chosen specimen before taking it home to plant.

There are numerous small growing species that do not take up much space and have attractive foliage, ornamental bark or spectacular flowers. A variety of tree shapes and foliage colour growing in adjacent small gardens can give the same collective visual impact as a single large tree in a larger garden.

### **Large Gardens**

Larger gardens can offer locations for larger trees in greater numbers without being a danger or a nuisance to persons or buildings. However, larger town gardens are becoming rarer with the recent trend of in-filling development. Property owners of larger gardens bear the responsibility of maintaining large trees for the benefit of the local environment without any financial assistance. As a result the Council, through its Tree Officers, is keen to encourage landowners to appreciate the importance of their trees and to offer advice and guidance over appropriate management. The loss of larger gardens to sub division and infill does of course mean that space for planting large trees is becoming ever more precious.

### **Veteran Trees**

A veteran tree can be described as a tree in the ancient stage of its life, is old in relation to others of its species and has biological, cultural and aesthetic interest. For example the old yews in Corhampton Church and the Bishops Garden, Winchester, are well over 1000 yrs old and the plane trees in Winchester College, were some of the first of this species to be brought to the UK in the 1700s, the others going to Kew Gardens in London.

The importance of veteran trees was publicised by English Nature in 1999. Previously such trees were often disregarded as curiosities or safety risks but are now recognised as important habitats for many rare and endangered species of plants and insects. The UK has more veteran trees than most other EU countries. A single veteran oak, with dead branches, cavities and decaying roots can support more than 200 species of plant and animal life. It would take dozens of younger trees many years to begin to approach this level of wildlife benefit. Amazingly the benefit to wildlife does not end when the tree dies, in fact in many cases it is the start of its benefit to 100s more species involved in the decay process. For that reason we encourage tree owners to leave standing dead trees so that their great ecological value and historical interest can continue. This is not always possible for safety reasons so we sometimes encourage the retention of a standing stump rather than felling to ground level so that the ecological benefits lives on whilst safety concerns are lessened.

The loss of large trees through development brings a serious threat to many forms of wildlife and the food chains that depend upon this special habitat for their survival. In 2005 British Standard 5837 relating to trees on development sites was re-launched in an updated form giving significantly more protection to veteran trees. This allows veteran trees to score highly in the assessment of trees on development sites so that their retention and protection can be properly taken into account.

## **Public Open Space**

Greenspaces in our towns and villages play an important role in providing sites for new trees and can often be locations where a number of different species come together to provide a spectacular display of tree form, size, shape and colour. Despite these green spaces only providing approximately 20% of the trees we see they often have the strongest visual impact as they are accessible to the whole community.

Retaining land as public open space and planting trees gives us an important tool in redressing the trend of tree loss, in particular large trees which require good space for their ultimate spread and height. These green spaces may be in the form of traditional formal park or planned green routes passing through new development, providing tree lined footpaths or cycleways that can easily be enjoyed by everyone.

## **Highway Trees**

Highway verges offer good sites to develop tree cover and establish hedges but they need special attention to ensure that they do not become dangerous or a nuisance to vehicles or pedestrians. Excavation for underground services can damage tree roots and tree roots can damage paving and road surfaces.

Winchester City Council has a good relationship with the Highway Authority and our Tree Officers are often asked to comment or give advice on a number of issues. A good example of our joint working can be seen in the ongoing management of the lime trees in Cheriton Road, Winchester.

### **Trees and Railways**

The trackside is a rich source of plant and wildlife habitat. Trees can be planted to screen and enhance the appearance of the, often bleak, aspect of railways. Public safety is of paramount importance and efficient running of the railways must not be compromised by risk of damage to the track.

Winchester City Council is advised by the rail operators of intended work in the area and we offer advice and recommendations on achieving the above without excessive or unnecessary tree losses.

### **Woodlands**

In the past woodlands were an essential means of providing food and shelter for people and livestock. As our needs have changed so their importance and purpose has changed and many traditional uses of woodland and wood products have become redundant.

Hampshire has some of the oldest and species rich woodlands in the country and those within Winchester City Council's area form an important part of that long term heritage. Our ancient woodlands, in existence since at least 1600, provide a changing backdrop throughout the seasons for a diversity of wildlife habitats and important wildlife species.

Working woods, planted for timber, contain conifers or broadleaves in managed rows in readiness for future thinning or harvesting. These also contribute to our wooded landscape with grant funding now focussing more on slower growing native species such as oak and woodlands allowing public access for the benefit of us all.

### **Farm Hedges**

Between the 1950s and the late 1980s, hedgerow loss in Hampshire was a major cause for concern. Our countryside hedgerows in Hampshire are estimated to have a total length of 9,500 miles and help create the patchwork landscape typical of our farmland.

Some of these hedgerows may have archaeological and historical importance as well as providing important habitat. They also play an important role as corridors for wildlife helping to make a link between other habitats.



Since the 1990s the rate of hedgerow removal has steadily decreased and now seems to be equalled by the rate of replacement. Changes in farming subsidies, availability of grants and the introduction of the Hedgerow Regulations have all contributed to this halt in decline.

### **Garden Hedges**

Garden hedges provide important landscape features in urban areas and offer important sites for wildlife to feed, hide or nest. They also provide a good green screen to give us privacy.

Unfortunately, in recent years, garden hedges have come to our attention because of problems rather than benefits. We hear more and more about the problems with tall trees and hedges making life a misery for next door neighbours.

Sadly sales of fast growing coniferous trees are still at a peak. These can make ideal hedges BUT only if they regularly maintained to keep them under control. Two metres tall is sufficient to maintain privacy, keep yearly maintenance costs to a minimum and avoid falling foul of the new legislation. Any taller and the costs increase alongside the increased shading and general nuisance to neighbours.

### **Historic Gardens**

Historic Parks and Gardens contain some of the oldest and most interesting individual specimen trees within the district and indeed Hampshire. They may also contain group plantings or avenues of trees that will require special attention to management issues in order to maintain their character, health and stature for generations to come.

In total our area contains 11 deer parks, 33 pre-1810 parks, 33 post-1810 parks, 14 arts and craft gardens, 4 historic cemeteries, 64 gardens of varying periods and 12 ecclesiastical gardens. In terms of trees these contain a wide variety and number of tree species and tree cover including 4 arboreta and 27 avenues.

## **10.0 Just the beginning**

We have looked at the benefits that trees can offer globally and within the district covered by Winchester City Council. We have also explained some of the many issues that affect trees and the threats and pressures placed upon trees in our modern life.

Some of the key points are:

- In recent years the threat of global warming and climate change, fire and flood disasters and a variety of environmental groups and

scientists have increased our awareness of the importance of tree cover.

- Trees in our landscape may look fine but we need to provide trees for our grandchildren to look at. If the tree cover in our area is to be as good in 50 years time we must ensure that new trees are being planted faster than they are being lost.
- The residential population of our area continues to grow. Much development to accommodate this increase has occurred on the edges of our towns and villages.
- There is an increased tendency for high density developments of small houses with small gardens. Householders are often fearful of trees close to houses and don't want their daylight blocked by tree canopies, gutters filled with fallen leaves or roots undermining their property foundations.
- Government statistics state that 80% of urban trees are in private ownership.
- Trees are viewed as a good thing, a benefit to the local area and people want to see more planted, especially in towns.
- Sometimes trees will need to be pruned and eventually every tree will die. Trees may need to be cut down for safety reasons.
- The Council plays an important role in providing information to tree owners about the right tree in the right place. We also advise on the proper standards and appropriate tree work to keep trees growing safely for many years.

Only a small proportion of trees in our area are in public ownership. To keep up our tree rich landscape we rely on each other to plant, nurture, care for and maintain trees, often with benefits shared by the whole community. There is a wide availability of tree species, at reasonable cost, to ensure that there will be a tree suited to every situation.

**This is just the beginning.** This introduction has set the scene, now please read other sections relevant to your role in ***Protecting our heritage and growing our future.***