



Your Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) can be a valuable tool to protect existing trees, hedges, woodlands and wildlife habitats. The NDP is an opportunity to plan for enhancing your area by planting new trees, creating new woodlands and habitats. It can also set out how you want trees and wildlife to be included in any new development.

This guidance note aims to help you address trees, woodland and wildlife in your NDP; part 1 focuses on trees and woodland and part 2 focuses on wildlife.

1. Trees and woodland

The benefits of trees to your community

Trees and woodlands are central to our enjoyment of rural and urban environments and provide numerous benefits to our residents and visitors.

They can play vital **environmental and social roles**, reducing soil erosion and managing floodwater; they are integral in adapting to climate change. Trees and woodlands provide valuable habitat for wildlife, they engage communities in the outdoors and encourage physical activity; improving both mental and physical health.

Trees and woodlands have a beneficial role within development, **enhancing and integrating development into the landscape**; greening streets, open space and private gardens. The presence of, and access to mature tree canopies is known to increase property values. A useful reference document can be found [here](#)

Trees are a growing, sustainable asset that we sometimes take for granted but we should recognise that they are facing challenges. We must plan for their future if trees are to remain an asset in our communities and must take steps to both protect the existing canopy cover and increase it. Neighbourhood planning has an important role in doing this.

The challenges

Design and construction - trees require adequate physical space and access to good quality soils to develop. The pressure for development and the provision of housing can lead to high density development with little room for either the retention of existing trees and hedges, or to deliver new planting. Furthermore, construction operations can damage retained trees and soils, adversely impacting upon tree health, safety and longevity.

Perceived risks from trees and nuisance issues such as shading, leaf litter, seasonal and root damage are all commonly cited by residents. Poor design/layout and inappropriate species can lead to conflicts and pressure for removal of trees following development.

Urban environment - with hard surfaces, limited irrigation, reflected heat and often poor soils, urban areas are a challenging environment for trees. These issues, along with inappropriate species selection and poor planting practice can often prevent the successful establishment of new planting.

Pests and diseases – with global trade and climate change increasing the number of pests and diseases present in the UK, the population of our native tree stock is under significant threat.



Climate change - the increasing numbers of extreme weather events leading to prolonged drought, flooding and storm damage puts an increasing demand on choosing tree species which can cope with the increasing environmental pressures.

Woodlands & ancient/veteran trees - a change of site use places pressure upon retained woodlands within or adjacent development, conflict (discussed above) and increased public access can erode the quality and cover of woodland. The National Planning Policy Framework 2018 recognises this and has enhanced the protection afforded to ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees.

Coastal geography – this and the local topography of much of Cornwall impacts upon the establishment of trees and can limit tree cover. This sometimes restricts options for woodland creation and can limit the choice of suitable tree species for planting.

The opportunities

Your NDP gives you a great opportunity to protect green assets that are important to your community and also provides opportunity for development to enhance and sustain their living environment. Through policies in your Neighbourhood Development Plan, you can ensure the challenges are addressed, securing:

- **strategic protection** of important trees and woodlands within your parish. A powerful way to do this is through the designation of Local Green Space, if the area in question meets the tests of the NPPF para 100. Please see our Guide Note on Local Green Space and Green Infrastructure
- **use of survey and assessment** when building your evidence base. This might lead to the making of strategic Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). This is a separate process to neighbourhood planning; TPOs can only be used to protect trees that have ‘significant amenity value.’ TPOs allow for the consideration of existing trees during the design, planning and development processes, but do not necessarily prevent development. Further information regarding the making of TPOs can be found at under the Council’s Planning Service webpages.
- **an increase** in your tree and woodland cover, through the identification of sites suitable for woodland creation or ‘off-site’ mitigation
- **early and better consideration** of existing trees, woodlands and hedges, during the design process creating space for the retention of trees and new planting
- **robust protection** through the construction and landscaping processes. BS5837 is the British Standard for Trees and applies to all trees that could be affected during the design, demolition or construction phase of a development.
- **adequate mitigation** for tree losses **and environmental enhancements** for the site through the provision of good quality robust and sustainable planting schemes
- **sustainable tree cover** through the use of a diverse mixture of tree species and suited to the local environment and future use of the site i.e. right tree, right place. Tree selection should be climate change and disease resistant.
- **minimal adverse impact** upon woodland cover, through the provision of suitable buffers and/or site management plans to secure their protection and ongoing management
- **site specific policies** – where you have allocated development sites within your neighbourhood plan, you can have specific policies that protect valuable green infrastructure on that site.



Our advice

Cornwall Council Forestry team recommend that in the development of your neighbourhood plan you undertake a holistic and landscape scale review of your trees, hedgerows and woodland cover. Identify those existing features that are of key importance and where there is the potential for these to be negatively impacted by development.

It is also recommended that you identify those environmental features that are not present or in poor condition but that could be provided or improved through development management.

As part of this review you may wish to undertake a survey to find out the extent of existing canopy cover in your town or parish; this would allow you to consider what percentage increase you might seek to achieve through your policies.

It is recommended that you include within your plan policies that address the challenges and opportunities previously listed above. Good examples of policy statements relating to trees and the natural environment are listed at the end of this Guide Note

Cornwall Council's Forestry Team will comment on your draft plan and suggest amendments or issues for further consideration.

More detailed arboricultural and woodland advice appropriate to the scale of your neighbourhood planning area and the existing tree stock can also be provided. An initial assessment would involve a minimum of half a day (4hrs) at a cost of £272.00 (incl. VAT) and would include:

- Discussing with the NDP group the results of any survey and the value placed upon trees and any concerns that have been raised.
- Identifying potential sites, trees or woodlands for the placing of strategic TPOs
- A desktop assessment of the tree stock (canopy) in the area and its importance
- General advice on appropriate species choices (in the face of climate change and pests and diseases) and opportunities to enhance developments through individual or group planting
- General advice on protecting valued trees from future development and appropriate best practice
- Any advice on how to approach woodland planting (including highlighting any available funds)

If it is identified that subsequent detailed advice and input will be of value, this can be offered, with further advice charged on an hourly basis (at £68 incl. VAT).

If you would like to have input from one of the team then please contact forestry@cornwall.gov.uk



Some key questions to consider in relation to trees in Neighbourhood Planning:

- What tree and woodland cover is there in your town or parish?
- What value does your community place on existing trees and where can trees enhance development (e.g. street trees, open spaces, private gardens etc.)?
- What benefits provided by trees can enhance the community and its environment?
- Are you currently a small village or rural community, but will development make you suburban in the next 20 years? What role can trees play in making those developments integrate with the local landscape?
- Will future development increase pressure on trees that have value to your community?
- If you currently have no woodland with community access, how can you develop this type of green infrastructure and public asset?
- If you already have street trees, what are the pros and cons and how would expert input ensure that more of the benefits are realised?

Tree and Woodland Planting

In January 2019 Cornwall Council declared a climate emergency, recognising the need for urgent action to address the climate crisis. Arising from this commitment came the Forest for Cornwall initiative which seeks to significantly increase all forms of canopy cover throughout Cornwall, so it is clear that tree planting is to be a structural part of the plan to tackle the climate emergency. Find out how you can get involved here: [Forest for Cornwall](#)

The Planning Service are committed to supporting these initiatives and already secure thousands of new trees through landscaping schemes and planning conditions, but we would also wish to encourage the planting of trees on sites that are not subject to planning applications.

Most sites can support a tree, but it is important to consider what is already growing on the site and the existing habitat provided as not all sites are suitable for tree planting and trees should not be planted at the cost of other more delicate habitats such as wetlands and moors.

As we move into a more uncertain climate which is likely to be drier in the summer and wetter in the winter it will be crucial to select trees that can tolerate such conditions, as any trees we plant will hopefully be in situ for many decades

When designing larger schemes, it is important to be clear about what the objectives are for the woodland you wish to create as different objectives may not be compatible; for example, free public access to a woodland may not be compatible with supporting ground flora and fauna. The objectives may also help to shape and inform the species selection

The Woodland Trust offer advice on tree selection at:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/choose/>

Local funding may be available through Section 106 agreements or through the Community Infrastructure Levy. Community sponsorship, local funding and partnership arrangements can also help to deliver tree planting and tree management projects.



It is worth noting that national funding may be available to support community tree planting, larger woodland and habitat creation schemes. For example, the Woodland Trust's Free Trees for Communities and Schools.

The following questions may be useful to ask within questionnaires whilst engaging with the community:

- Should your NDP better protect trees, hedges and woodlands, especially those which contribute to public amenity?
- Should new developments set aside adequate space to accommodate long term and sustainable retention of valuable trees?
- Should your NDP include aspirational plans for new green infrastructure?
- Do you want more Street Trees?
- Are there sites suitable for safeguarding for tree planting?

Example Policies

Justification:

Trees offer us many benefits: they produce oxygen, intercept airborne particulates and reduce pollution, benefitting respiratory health. Access to trees, green spaces and parks promotes greater physical activity and reduces stress and studies have shown that access to trees slows heartbeats, lowers blood pressure, and relaxes brain wave patterns.

In addition, landscaping, including trees, particularly in towns and cities, helps lower crime rates and they provide important habitats for numerous bird, insect and animal species.

Climate Change

Trees can help us fight climate change as they sequester carbon, thus reducing the overall concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Trees can help to reduce energy consumption, as tree windbreaks can reduce residential heating costs 10-15%; while shading and evaporative cooling from trees can cut residential air-conditioning costs 20-50%.

Trees also capture and slow rainfall and their roots filter water. Trees reduce storm water runoff which reduces flooding thus saving water management costs and decreasing the flow of polluted water into lakes, ponds and rivers.

Economic Benefits

Areas with healthy tree-cover attract new residents, industry, and commercial activity and residential area with trees are worth 5% to 15% more than homes without them; where streets are tree-lined homes may be worth 25% more.

Policy 1: Retention of trees

All new developments should seek to retain existing trees to preserve the benefits that they provide for the community. Trees are a material planning consideration in the planning system and the presumption is that they will be retained and incorporated into designs in a sustainable manner in accordance with BS5837 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.



Policy 2: On site mitigation

If tree must be removed, on site mitigation planting should be undertaken. New trees should be of a similar sized species to those removed and the aim should be to increase the mature canopy cover of the site and to show a bio-diversity net gain. Any scheme should be inherently future proofed in terms of climate change and disease resistance through the selection of appropriate species

Policy 3: Off site planting

If on-site planting cannot be provided, an offsite scheme should be proposed. Such schemes should be publicly accessible, and the canopy cover of an offsite woodland should be double that which was lost on-site. Any such woodland should have provision in terms of resources to allow it to be managed for 20 years to allow it to develop in a sustainable manner.

Supporting the Forest for Cornwall

Justification

In January 2019 Cornwall Council declared a climate emergency, recognising the need for urgent action to address the climate crisis. Arising from this commitment came the Forest for Cornwall initiative which seeks to significantly increase all forms of canopy cover throughout Cornwall. Tree planting is to be a structural part of the plan to tackle the climate emergency.

XXX parish neighbourhood plan carried out a survey to identify areas of land which can support trees, and which are not currently providing a unique or protected habitat. These areas are safeguarded for tree planting.

Policy 4: Safeguarding Land for the Forest for Cornwall Council

There will be a general principle of increasing woodland and tree canopy cover within the parish through the planting of new trees and woodlands in addition to preserving existing assets on both public and private land. The areas shown on fig. XX are safeguarded for tree planting and shall be used to create community woodland assets that will provide ecosystem services for the local area.

2. Wildlife

When developing your NDP it is important to think about the habitats and species which might be directly or indirectly affected and what your NDP can do to protect and enhance biodiversity and ecology in your area.

The Neighbourhood Planning Team at Cornwall Council will provide you with an environmental baseline and plan context when you first designate your area. The guide note 'Environment: understanding the environmental baseline and plan context' gives advice on how to use online mapping resources to gain a better understanding of the features of your parish, such as sensitive habitats and designated sites <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/38408989/environment-understanding-the-environmental-baseline-and-plan-context-guide-note-gh-16052019.pdf>

[Cornwall Wildlife Trust](#) is also a useful source of advice



The questions below may help identify how your plan could help. Useful reference information and advice is also available with the Cornwall Planning for Biodiversity Guide.

- Are there known to be protected species using the sites you are considering? For example bats flying along watercourses or hedge lines, birds nesting on open ground or in hedges or woods.
- Are there important habitats on or near the site, for example grassland meadow, hedgerows, woodland, riverside vegetation which should be avoided, enhanced, or separated from developments with a buffer zone?
- Are there buildings which could provide important features for species, for example nesting barn owls or swallows, or bat roosts?
- Are there any “green corridors” that would be affected? For example the removal of hedgerows can break vital routes for dormice or bats. The removal of parcels of undeveloped land which are already “pinch points”, for example a field or woodland, can break a green corridor.
- Could the sites provide any protection or enhancement for protected species or habitats? For example could buffer zones for woodlands or watercourses be provided? Or could a new green corridor be created by linking two exiting habitat areas? Could more biodiverse planting and/or a change in management practices be used to provide habitat on existing open space?
- Are there any sites where community open space, for example allotments or an orchard, could be located to link with important off-site habitats?