



TREE STRATEGY AND POLICY



Beech tree on Lincoln Road, Sleaford

Adopted September 2021

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PART 1 TREE STRATEGY

1 Introduction

Why we need a tree strategy

- 1.1 A Tree Strategy will help the council to meet its statutory biodiversity obligations as set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (s.40; duty to conserve biodiversity) and to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (section 11; Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).
- 1.2 Trees on public open spaces make an important contribution to the local environment and the wider landscape. There are around 700 trees on land owned by Sleaford Town Council, and our aim is to ensure that they are well managed to maximise their benefits and minimise any problems. We also aim to increase the number of trees on land owned by us and to assist others in the town to increase trees on their land, for the many benefits described below.
- 1.3 A Tree Strategy and Policy will help to guide our responses when consulted on planning applications and when answering requests from others for trees to be removed or provided.

The benefits of trees

1.4 Trees provide many benefits to people and nature, including:

- The removing and storing of carbon dioxide (CO₂) a 'greenhouse gas' that contributes to global warming,
- Filtering harmful pollutants from the air
- Cooling the air by shading the ground
- Providing habitat for wildlife under stress from global warming
- Enhancing the landscape

With more trees in our town, we will see more of those benefits.

Most trees take many years to reach maturity. However, some native species such as Birch, Rowan, and Strawberry Tree, do put on a lot of growth in their early years, making an obvious difference to their setting. Which means that the benefits of planting more trees in and around the town would be visible quite soon. Planted in the right place, and with the right care and maintenance, trees will continue to provide multiple benefits for decades and in some cases centuries. This longevity makes trees an excellent low-cost, long-term investment of council funds.

Climate and ecological emergency

1.5 Sleaford Town Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency statement at its meeting on 9th October 2019. More trees in the town will help to implement the recommendations in that statement, especially 'Work towards being carbon neutral' by mitigating the impacts of global warming by:

- Extracting carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air and storing it in trees
- Shading and cooling the urban area on hot days
- Reducing the impacts of flooding by slowing down the movement of water across land and increasing infiltration into the ground
- Increasing biodiversity by providing habitat for wildlife

Tree planting alone cannot offset CO₂ emissions, however it will, alongside other actions help the Council to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The right trees in the right places

1.6 The right trees in the right places can bring many benefits. However, the wrong tree in the wrong place could bring problems for the council, for a private landowner, or for the public. Advice on tree planting should be sought from the Tree Officer at North Kesteven District Council (NKDC). STC policy for dealing with problem trees is set out in section 4 below.

Trees on STC land

1.7 STC has around 700 trees on its own land. Most of these trees are located on the public green spaces owned by the council, especially the recreation grounds at Boston Road, Woodside, and Lincoln Road. Many mature trees of both native and non-native species are a feature of our cemetery, which we hope to have designated as an arboretum.

1.8 STC maintains and improves its tree stock with advice from the Tree Officer at North Kesteven District Council (NKDC), who inspects all of our trees every three years. Section 4 below sets out how we aim to maintain and improve our tree stock.

Trees belonging to others

1.9 There are many trees in and around the town on land that is owned or controlled by other public bodies such as North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) and Lincolnshire County Council Highways Department. We will work in partnership with these and other organisations to maintain and increase the number of trees around the town.

2 Vision, aims and objectives

2.1 Vision

Our vision is that Sleaford is a town where trees play the fullest possible part in providing benefits for people and nature.

2.2 Aims

AIM 1: To be a town where the benefits of trees are maximised.

AIM 2: To increase the number of trees on land owned or managed by the town council.

AIM 3: To minimise any nuisance caused by trees to the public or other landowners.

2.3 Objectives

To help realise the above benefits as fully as possible we have set the following objectives:

- Any tree felled on STC owned land will be replaced by planting three others,
- To increase the number of trees on STC owned land by at least ten trees per year, and we will seek to acquire land for tree planting to help meet this target figure.
- To help increase the number of trees on public land owned by others in Sleaford.

3 Context

3.1 Where relevant, all decisions made in accordance with this Tree Strategy will also have regard to the NKDC Tree Strategy and NKDC tree policies.

3.2 Where relevant, all decisions made in accordance with this Tree Strategy will also have regard to the following legislation, guidance, and British Standards:

- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
- The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012
- The Occupiers Liability Act 1984
- The Environment Act 1995
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

- BS 5837: Trees in Relation to Construction (2012)
- BS 3998: Tree Work – Recommendations (2010)
- National Tree Safety Group: Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2011)
- HM Government: 25 Year Environment Plan (2019)

3.3 NKDC

This Strategy for Trees aligns with the NKDC Strategy for Trees published in 2020.

STC already work closely with the NKDC Tree Officers to monitor and maintain the health of our trees. We also consult the NKDC Tree Officers over other tree matters such as potential problem trees or new planting.

3.4 Sleaford Town Council

This Strategy for Trees will help to:

- deliver on our Climate Emergency Declaration by identifying areas in which to plant more trees to help cope with the impacts of climate change.
- Input to the development of the 'Neighbourhood Plan for Sleaford', by setting out our plans and proposals for maintaining and improving our tree stock.
- Help deliver our environmental ambitions, by providing more trees as habitats for wildlife.
- Help the town council to respond to planning applications, by setting out clear criteria for the preservation, planting and maintenance of trees.
- Inform the preservation, planting and maintenance of trees on land owned or managed by Sleaford Town Council.

4 **Our trees**

Current tree stock

- 4.1 Trees on STC land are monitored and assessed every three years by the NKDC Tree Officer under a contract with NKDC. The latest triennial survey shows that we have around 700 trees on STC owned land, and our aim is to increase that number over time.
- 4.2 Many of the trees on STC land were planted decades ago as saplings. The policy then was to plant trees mainly as boundary features. However, many of those trees have since grown so large as to overshadow neighbouring private

gardens or houses. Where any STC owned tree on 1 June in any year casts shade on:

- 25% or more of a private garden, or
- 25% or more of the windows of a private house

Then STC will consider adding that tree to our list of trees for removal and replacement by three others in suitable locations. The list of trees for removal will be dealt with in the order that they are added to the list and in line with the budget available for tree works in any one year. Any trees on the removal list at the end of the financial year will be carried forward to the list for the following year. No tree with a Tree Protection Order will be removed unless the NKDC Tree Officer advises so.

- 4.3 Any tree removed from STC land, including under section 4,2 above, will be replaced by three other trees of suitable species. The replacement trees will be planted at least 5 metres in from any boundary feature such as a fence or hedge.
- 4.4 Many of the trees on STC land are non-native, ornamental species, which enhance our recreational areas. However, when planting new trees in the future there will be a presumption towards native species of trees as these are more suited to our soils and climate, generally hardier and cheaper to manage and they support a wider range of wildlife than non-native trees.

Increasing our trees

- 4.5 In line with the objectives set out in section 2 above, we will aim to increase the number of trees on our land by looking for opportunities through planting on existing STC owned land and planting on any new land acquired by STC (such as for recreational or Local Nature Reserve purposes).
- 4.6 We will seek to work in partnership with others to increase the number of trees planted on land owned or controlled by them, including Lincolnshire County Council, NKDC, private landowners, and community groups.
- 4.7 Ancient trees are the most important trees that we have in the UK. Just because a tree has a hole in it or contains dead wood is not necessarily a risk and not necessarily a reason to fell the tree. However, we will take advice from the NKDC Tree Officer in such situations.

5 Development sites

- 5.1 We will promote an increase in trees on development sites in and around the town, through our participation in the land use planning process operated by North Kesteven District Council. Our influence in that planning process is

limited but having a Sleaford Neighbourhood Plan in place will help. The Neighbourhood Plan will also generate funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to improve recreational areas, which will potentially give more opportunities to plant trees.

6 Implementation

Tree management

6.1 Our policy and practice for everyday tree management will follow that set out in the NKDC Tree Strategy and other best practice guidance documents as decided by the Town Clerk.

Action Plan

6.2 The following Key Actions will be implemented, monitored and reported to the Full Council by the Town Clerk at regular intervals.

KEY ACTION 1: Over the four years from 2020 to 2024 we aim to increase the number of trees on STC land by at least ten trees per year, as set out in section 2,

KEY ACTION 2: We will seek to acquire land to help meet the tree planting target figure.

6.3 We will actively search for suitable locations for new tree planting on land that we own. We also aim to assist other public and private partners in planting trees on land that they own or control in and around the town. We will use data from our own staff and the staff of others such as NKDC to monitor progress towards these targets.

6.4 Delivery partners

The council will work with NKDC and a range of delivery partners, including developers and private landowners to deliver the Tree Strategy and the Tree Policy.

6.5 Monitoring

We will monitor the key outcome(s) of this strategy by:

Key outcomes	Measures of success
1 Over the four years from 2020 to 2024 we aim to increase the number of trees on STC land by at least ten trees per year.	1 The number of trees on STC land has increased by at least ten trees per year.

2 We will seek to acquire land for tree planting to help meet this target figure.	2 Land has been acquired to help meet the target figure above.
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6.6 Future review

This Strategy for Trees will be reviewed by the Full Council every four years. The policy and practice on tree management will be reviewed by the council's Finance and Services Panel every four years or sooner if required and any recommendations for change will be made to Full Council.

Sleaford Town Council
September 2012

PART TWO: TREE POLICY

1 POLICY AIM

1.1 This policy sets out how Sleaford Town Council will implement its Trees Strategy with regard to trees on its land. The policy sets out the broad principles of how existing trees will be managed and where new tree planting may take place.

1.2 This Policy will:

- Ensure that all Council owned trees within Sleaford are regularly inspected, managed, and cared for.
- Ensure that the quantity, quality, resilience, and biodiversity of trees is sustained and enhanced through appropriate maintenance and new planting.
- Provide a decision-making framework for the maintenance of Council-owned trees that prioritises tree safety and health, and prevents unnecessary or harmful works; and
- Support the appropriate planting of trees on Council-owned land, where doing so will enhance biodiversity and reduce the need for grass cutting.

Where relevant, all decisions made in accordance with this Policy will also have regard to the following legislation, guidance, and British Standards:

- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
- The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012

- The Occupiers Liability Act 1984
- The Environment Act 1995
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- BS 5837: Trees in Relation to Construction (2012)
- BS 3998: Tree Work – Recommendations (2010)
- National Tree Safety Group: Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2011)
- HM Government: 25 Year Environment Plan (2019)

2 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Land owned by Sleaford Town Council contains a large proportion of all the trees in an urban setting within the parish boundary. The vital functions that those trees perform are set out in the Tree Strategy above.

2.2 Trees also play an important role in the wellbeing of local residents. Areas owned and managed by Sleaford Town Council such as Boston Road Recreation Ground, Woodside Recreation Ground, Sleaford Cemetery, and others provide attractive green spaces for recreation and experience of nature.

2.3 Existing Trees

The Council is committed to the maintenance of its existing trees.

The pruning or felling of council owned trees may only be carried out for the following purposes, as assessed by an expert such as the NKDC Tree Officer:

- a) To maintain the tree in a healthy condition,
- b) Where the tree is diseased and will not recover and is a risk,
- c) Is undermining or touching or about to touch a property with the likelihood of causing damage to that property,
- d) The tree has become dangerous to the point where there is an unacceptable risk to people or property.
- e) The tree is overhanging a neighbouring property by more than 25% of the surface area of that property,

2.4 Trees may not be pruned or felled for:

- a) Cosmetic reasons,
- b) Dropping of leaves,

c) Overhanging into neighbouring properties by less than 25% of the surface area of that property,

d) Blocking of light,

2.5 Where Tree Preservation Orders are in place, trees may only be managed or felled where permission has been granted by the Tree Officer at NKDC.

Planting of Trees

2.6 Wherever possible, where an existing council owned tree has to be removed, three new trees will be planted in its place. The new trees will wherever possible be planted in the same location as the tree that was removed. The new trees will be planted at a distance of at least five meters from any boundary feature. If this is not possible then one or more of the two new trees may be planted in another suitable location. The new trees will usually be native species and of be of a similar type to the removed tree. But where a similar type may be prone to the same problems as the removed tree, such as disease, a substitute will be planted instead.

2.7 Tree planting in new locations will have regard to the surroundings. Consideration will be given to the proximity of any building or other structure that might be overshadowed or could suffer from root damage from trees when fully grown. Where planting is proposed in proximity to native tree species or another type of natural habitat, such planting will only take place if it enhances rather than risks damage to those native trees or natural habitat.

2.8 The Council will consider requests from individuals, community groups, other local authorities, or other organisations for the planting of sponsored trees, memorial trees, community orchards, small copse or new wooded area on its land. Each request will be subject to review which will examine all relevant issues such as the site implications, the benefits of the tree(s) and the ongoing costs of maintenance. The council reserves the right to decline any such request after due consideration of the issues.

Memorial sponsorship of existing trees

2.9 Sometimes a tree holds a special place for people, and they ask whether they can have a memorial plaque placed on or nearby. If this is to be considered, then a sponsorship charge could be made. Consideration could also be given to the sponsorship of a bat box or bird nesting box. Fees for such sponsorships would be set by the council at budget setting time or as required.

2.10 Requests for sponsorship of existing trees and associated memorial plaques/bat boxes/nesting boxes will be considered in respect of the impact

on the tree and the surrounding area. This will be undertaken by the Town Clerk under delegated powers and this policy confirms the delegation of the decision to allow or decline such a memorial sponsorship.

Trees on development sites

- 2.11 Development which would result in the loss of, or damage to, ancient woodland and ancient or notable trees will be resisted except in wholly exceptional circumstances.
- 2.12 The planting of trees within new development shall be sought, to benefit wildlife and biodiversity, enhance landscape, public amenity, and health. We will seek appropriate replacement of trees lost through development, ageing or disease on a 'three for one' basis and by new planting to support green infrastructure.

3 IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 Sleaford Town Council will continue to call on the services of the Tree Officer at North Kesteven District Council for services such as a regular three-year survey of our trees and advice on their management. Any necessary tree management will be carried out by suitably qualified STC staff or contractors.

4 COMPLAINTS REGARDING TREES

- 4.1 There are sometimes requests from neighbours of council land for trees to be pruned or felled for various reasons. In such cases the policy statement in relation to existing trees will be followed. See section 2 above.

5 RIGHTS OF NEIGHBOURS

- 5.1 Common Law Right Property owners have a Common Law right to remove a nuisance associated with trees. The following advice is given to anyone wishing to exercise their Common Law right. This advice is given only as a guide to the legal situation, which may change over time. You are strongly urged to seek your own legal advice from a professionally qualified person. Sleaford Town Council cannot be held responsible for any result arising from any person following the advice below:

a) You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.

b) You are strongly advised to consult an Arboricultural Association registered tree surgeon (www.trees.org.uk) for guidance on how best to prune back

encroaching trees, unless the works are small enough to do with hand secateurs or similar.

c) Before you consider doing any works to a tree(s) you must find out if it is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or whether it is within a Conservation Area. If the trees are protected, you will need to gain consent by making an application / give notice to the Tree Officer at North Kesteven District Council. If you fell or prune a tree that is protected, you may be subject to prosecution and unlimited fines.

d) Whilst the law requires you to offer any cut wood back to the tree owner, where the wood is not wanted, you are responsible for making adequate provision to dispose of any wood or cuttings at your own cost. For clarity Sleaford Town Council does not require the return of the wood or cuttings. Please do not place, return, or tip the wood or cuttings on to council land. If you do so the council will seek to recover the cost of disposal and associated administration costs which are likely to be higher than your own cost of disposal.

6 MONITORING

6.1 This policy will be monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Review of Risk Systems associated with the policy.	Services Panel
Implementation of the policy.	Town Clerk
Routine activities associated with the policy.	Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk.

7 POLICY APPROVAL

7.1 Approved at Council Meeting in September 2021.

8 POLICY REVIEW DATE

8.1 Every four years, or before if necessary. Next review due September 2025.

Sleaford Town Council
September 2021