PRESTON

TREE

STRATEGY

2024 - 2039

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Foreword

Trees and Woodlands are vital in maintaining and improving the quality of life for all inhabitants of the city.

They help clean the air we breathe, improve a community's health and wellbeing, create a calming setting for people to live and provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife.

Trees also create an attractive setting that helps to encourage economic investment, particularly important to a thriving City, such as Preston. Preston's existing and developing tree and woodland resource will need continual management if it is to maintain its significant and highly visual status within the landscape. As public awareness of environmental issues becomes ever more prominent, there is an increasing need to focus attention on trees and their role in mitigating against climate change and loss of biodiversity.

This Strategy sets out the programme in which Preston City Council manages its tree resource, sets our policies to guide and improve its management and specifies the actions that need to be taken to achieve these objectives.

Councillor Freddie Bailey,

Cabinet Member for the Environment and Community Safety

Executive Summary

1.   Trees and woodland provide significant benefits to people, nature, and the environment. Ensuring that there are enough trees, in the right locations, providing the functions and services that we need, is more important now than ever before.

2.   Climate change, biodiversity loss, population changes, pressure on food systems, and the factors that drive these all represent potential threats to trees. However, trees can also help us to meet these challenges. In order to create liveable, productive, resilient, and beautiful places for people and nature, we need trees.

3.   This document sets out a long-term vision for the future of the treescape and explores what the Council's role should be in delivery. It has been based on a detailed review; study of the existing tree population; and consultation with a range of stakeholders.

4.   The local authority area covers 14,295ha with a varied pattern of land use. There is approximately 1,528ha of tree canopy cover, describes by this document as the 'treescape'. This includes trees growing on both public and privately owned land. Preston City Council manages approximately 8% of the land, and 17.8% of the trees.

5.   Canopy cover for the area is 10.7%, which is significantly below average. The current treescape falls short of what should be considered 'fit for purpose' in terms of delivering biodiversity, amenity, recreation, ecosystem services, food production and carbon sequestration. Tree cover is also unevenly distributed.

6.   There is widespread and growing appreciation of the environmental, biodiversity, health, and economic benefits associated with trees and a desire for more tree planting. There are also significant opportunities to modernise systems, tools and processes to improve tree management.

7.   The vision is a treescape that is sustainable; resilient; and beneficial to people, nature, and the environment.   It should be stable, suitable, well-managed, appropriately resourced, maintained or enhanced over time, and understood. It should be in good condition, without significant or systemic weaknesses, prepared for foreseeable threats and challenges, and valued. It should deliver goods and services, be useful, and add value.

8.   Progress towards this vision should be measured against five indicators: canopy cover; the composition of the treescape; accessibility and benefits; biodiversity; and ecosystem services. These should each be increasing or improving.

9.   Five strategic objectives have been identified: tree risk management; tree works delivery; planning and development; tree planting; and resources and governance. These are areas which present the greatest need or opportunity for positive change. The Council will work towards the overall vision by prioritising and focussing on these.

10.   An overall approach to each strategic objective is set out, and actions have been identified. Some actions may require further detail before they can be implemented. This document is not intended to be prescriptive in terms of solutions but identify the areas of need and opportunity, and establish a coherent strategy for action.

1.0 Introduction

1.1   Trees and woodland provide significant benefits to people, nature, and the environment. Ensuring that there are enough trees, in the right locations, providing the functions and services that we need, is more important now than ever before.

1.2   Climate change, the biodiversity crisis, population changes, pressure on food systems, and the factors that drive them all represent potential threats to tree populations. However, trees can also help us to meet these challenges. In order to create liveable, productive, resilient, and beautiful places for people and nature, we need trees.

1.3   The treescape of the future should not be 'accidental': a by-product of other priorities and activity. There are very few truly wild or unmanaged places, and not very many places in which growing trees is the primary purpose. Trees tend to be integrated into other land uses, and grown for the benefits they provide such as beauty, screening, habitat, placemaking, recreation or timber. To preserve or improve the treescape, it is therefore important to anticipate where the trees of the future might grow, who will plant and maintain them, and how this activity should be organised. To create the treescape we need, we need a strategy.

A Vision and a Strategy for trees

1.4   This document sets out a long-term vision for the management of the treescape and describes what the future treescape should be like. It also describes what the Council's role in delivering this vision should be. This has been based on a review of existing duties, commitments, and policies of relevance to trees; the existing treescape; and on detailed consultation with a range of stakeholders.

1.5   Both the role of the Council, and the characteristics of the treescape must evolve to meet future needs and to deliver the vision that is set out here. This document takes what is understood about the current situation as a starting point and identifies areas for action and change, and areas in which our understanding must be improved to add texture and detail to strengthen and implement the strategy.

1.6   To help focus and facilitate implementation, five strategic objectives have been identified. These are areas which present the greatest need or opportunity for positive change. In simple terms, these are the areas in which action taken by the Council can deliver the most benefits in the shortest time. By prioritising these objectives and focussing on these areas, the Council will work towards the overall vision. Finally, each of these objectives is described and summarised as a series of actions that can be used as the basis for implementation.

Scope of this document

1.7   The Strategy covers all trees within the Preston City Council boundary, including those in both public and private ownership. It sets out what the Council can and will do in order to deliver benefits through tree canopy cover, including through trees on land it does not own or manage directly where appropriate.

1.8   It should be noted that the Council does not own or directly control most of the land or most of the trees in the Preston City Council area. Therefore, realising important objectives like tree planting cannot be done by the Council alone, but will require collaboration with a wide range of organisations and individuals. The Council does have a key role in leadership, regulating and consenting, as well as sometimes through direct involvement in the activities of third parties. This strategy therefore considers how the Council will pursue its strategic objectives for trees through these interactions.

1.9   This strategy covers a 15-year period. It should be reviewed and updated every 5 years to ensure that it remains current.

Figure 1 Tree lined avenue in Haslam Park, Preston

How should this document be used?

1.10   This document establishes a framework for action on trees with three tiers: The Vision; Strategic Objectives; Action Plans.

1.11   The Vision that is set out by this document is intended to organise and galvanise action on trees, including by forming the basis of a broad coalition of support. In order to convert this vision into action, it is broken down into smaller areas for focus, which take the current situation into account.

1.12   The Strategic Objectives set out by this document represent the principal areas of focus for the Council during the current period. These are broad topic areas that define the Council's approach to tree management within a topic area. They describe what changes are needed to deliver the vision, identify current opportunities, and explore actions the Council will take over the next period.

1.13   This document does not include detailed Action Plans. A high-level action plan has been produced, but this information will evolve during the life of this Strategy. Many of the actions will require further detail before they can be implemented, such as data gathering, the development of policy, or building new systems. This information is therefore not included within the Strategy in order to avoid the need for repeated updates to it. Responsibility for actions will be allocated and further work on each will be scoped as a separate exercise.

1.14   The Vision can be thought of as the destination or the purpose of tree management. The Strategic Objectives are where the work should be done right now, and soon. Action Plans will be the fine detail describing tasks.

1.15   There are three main reasons to set out this information in the form of a Strategy document. Firstly, setting out a strategy invites coalition, cooperation, and shared objectives, including by establishing a clear and consistent position for reference within the Council. Secondly, the Council is seeking to explore opportunities to improve what it does and to be proactive in its approach to trees. And thirdly, publishing a strategy allows accountability; not only can the actions and decisions of the Council be judged against the strategy, but by measuring progress against defined goals, the role played by the public and businesses can also be better understood.

Using the Vision

1.16   The Vision described by this document should be used as the basis for setting tone, language, and direction, and for establishing a shared narrative around tree management. It should be used to communicate what the Council is trying to achieve through its tree management, and to set policy and strategy in other areas. It should be shared, and provide a foundation for multilateral support and action. The Council should encourage its partners to adopt and support its vision for the treescape, and build a coalition and momentum around a 'direction of travel'.

Using the Strategic Objectives

1.17   Strategic Objectives should be the basis for organising the Council's own activity. They should result in changes to internal systems, roles, resourcing, and priorities. By working in these areas, the Council will demonstrate its commitment to and delivery of the Vision. It cannot and should not deliver this alone, but the Strategic Objectives should be used to establish what part the Council should play. It should allocate responsibility and resources to the delivery of these objectives, and review progress.

Planning for Action

1.18   This strategy document goes as far as defining Actions that the Council should take but it does not include detailed plans for implementing them. Multiple solutions are available in many cases and a prescriptive approach could become outdated. Allowing greater responsiveness and dynamism in the detail is intended to give this strategy greater resilience and longevity. Future changes (such as to technology, funding opportunities, assessment methodologies, and other local factors) may mean that the best approach to each action may evolve. Council officers will establish the fine detail of how each action will be implemented.   However, a clear line will remain between the action and its purpose, back to the overall Vision.

2.0   Evidence base

The treescape

2.1   The Preston City Council local authority area covers approximately 14,295ha and encompasses a varied pattern of land use, ranging from urban residential zones in the south to rural agricultural land in the north. Across the area, there is approximately 1,528ha of tree canopy cover, comprising individual trees, tree groups and areas of woodland which this strategy describes as the 'treescape'. This includes trees growing on both public and privately owned land.

2.2   Preston City Council owns and manages approximately 8% of the land located within the local authority area, which mainly comprises public parks and public open green spaces. Overall, 17.8% of trees are on Council owned land which means that whilst the Council is a major stakeholder, trees in private ownership are a major component of the treescape.

2.3   Preston City Council operates within a two-tier authority system meaning that local government functions are split between the county Council and the city Council. Preston City Council is responsible for managing all the trees that exist on land that is within its ownership, whereas Lancashire County Council is responsible for the majority of highway trees. Preston City Council does not manage these trees.

2.4   There are also 9 parish Councils within the Preston City Council area. Parish Council areas are located in an arc across the north of the city and are predominantly rural in nature with the exception of Ingol and Tanterton. Parish Councils contribute to the management of public areas including works to trees. Many also own and manage their own tree populations or contract works out to external trusts and organisations. Most rural parishes have multiple stakeholders with an interest in the treescape.

Canopy cover

2.5   Canopy cover is a two-dimensional measurement which refers to the total area of a tree when viewed from above. Measuring canopy cover is an effective way of assessing the extent and distribution of an existing tree population. It can provide a framework for policy development, assist decision makers, and help members of the public to better understand and visualise the treescape. Understanding the existing canopy cover provides the Council with a baseline against which changes in the treescape can be measured over time.

2.6   Bluesky National Tree Map data was used to assess existing canopy cover for the production of this document. This data provides the location, height and canopy extents for individual trees greater than 3m in height. This data was used to determine canopy cover overall, per ward and within Council ownership, reported as a percentage.

2.7   Canopy cover for the whole Preston City Council area is 10.7%, which is below the average canopy cover for towns and cities in England (16.4% mean or 15.8% median). Canopy cover of 20% is emerging and increasingly widely accepted as an appropriate minimum target for local authorities. Therefore, the current canopy cover falls short of what should be considered 'fit for purpose' in terms of delivering public objectives such as biodiversity, amenity, recreation, ecosystem services, food production and carbon sequestration.

2.8   A previous i-Tree Canopy study estimated canopy cover for Preston at 14.6% (+/- 1.58). This is higher than the current National Tree Map data suggests but the figure represents only the city of Preston, omitting some of the more rural northern areas where canopy cover is particularly low. This figure confirms a below average canopy cover in both urban and rural parts of the local authority area and is broadly consistent with the more recent findings.

2.9   Tree cover is unevenly distributed across the local authority area. The densest tree cover occurs along waterways including the River Ribble, Tun Brook, Savick Brook, Sharoe Brook and Lancaster Canal. Tree cover is limited on rural agricultural land in the north and there are low levels of street tree planting within the city centre and some residential wards in Preston. Woodland cover is also relatively limited and National Forest Inventory data for Lancashire suggests that overall woodland cover for the county was 6.6% at the time of the assessment, indicating that the area follows a wider regional trend of low woodland cover.

2.10   The majority of Council owned trees are located within public parks and open green spaces.   Whilst overall canopy cover is low, canopy cover on Council owned land is significantly above average, largely because of the proportion of parks and open spaces within the overall Council estate.

Benefits, services and value

2.11   The role of the Council includes the delivery of services to people. Planting new trees and maintaining the existing treescape is a cost-effective way to generate public benefits. Trees provide a wide range of benefits and services including improving air quality, increasing flood resilience, encouraging outdoor activity, improving mental health and providing visual amenity. A high quality treescape can deliver substantial public benefits, goods and services, and reduce service demand in other areas such as healthcare.

2.12   Trees also play a vital role in increasing resilience to climate change. Ecosystems services provided by trees, such as carbon sequestration, stormwater interception and urban cooling, can help to mitigate the effects of our changing climate. Improving the treescape will also help to address the biodiversity crisis that we are facing by increasing habitat provision, improving habitat connectivity, and enhancing habitat value.

2.13   These types of benefits are increasingly understood and valued, including by the public. It is tempting to explore how such benefits might be maximised by modifying ongoing practices, such as tree planting. However, the scale of available benefits through treescape enhancement cannot be realised by 'finessing'; cultural and systemic change is needed, and a comprehensive increase in ambition. Benefits are not shared equally at present because of geographical disparities in tree cover and this should strongly inform both the opportunity mapping and delivery of corrective measures.

Figure 2 Walking in Moor Park, Preston

Relevant policies, strategies, and guidance

<u>National</u>

2.14   In 2019, the Government declared an environment and climate emergency in response to the rapid change in climate being experienced around the world. In the same year, Preston City Council declared a climate emergency, pledging a target that its own activities will be net zero in terms of carbon emissions by 2030 and that it will work with other stakeholders to make the city zero carbon by the same date. The Climate Change Act (2008) outlines the Government's proposed response to climate change and the underlying principles have been incorporated into the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), providing guidance to local authorities on how to translate this into policy.

2.15   In 2021, the Government published the England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 (ETAP) which sets out the long-term vision for trees, woodlands and forests in England and the actions required to achieve this, highlighting the important role that trees can play in tackling climate change. The ETAP builds on the ambitions established in the 25 Year Environment Plan which sets out how the Government aims to improve the state of the natural environment over the next two and a half decades.

2.16   To help deliver the Government's aims regarding biodiversity, legislation has been passed in the form of the Environment Act 2021, which enshrines in law a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including by considering what actions can be taken to further this objective; a requirement for new developments to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain; and strengthened controls on the felling of street trees, placing a duty on highway authorities to consult with the public before felling a tree on an urban road.

2.17   The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out policy guidance regarding the protection of trees and woodland. Planning policies and decisions made by local authorities are expected to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting valued landscapes, providing net gains for biodiversity and also by recognising the ecosystems services that can be provided by trees and woodlands. In the determination of planning applications, if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a proposed development cannot be avoided, mitigated, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Emphasis is also given to the protection of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland and veteran trees; development resulting in loss or deterioration of these should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons.

2.18   Tree planting is recognised as an effective way to help towns and cities mitigate and adapt to climate change. In 2021, the NPPF was updated to give more weight to the importance of urban tree planting, stating that new streets should be tree-lined, opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees into developments and measures should be taken to ensure long-term maintenance of new trees and retention of existing trees wherever possible.

2.19   There are a number of British Standards which set out best practice guidance for some activities relating to trees:

- BS 3998:2010 Tree work - Recommendations
- BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations
- BS 8545:2014 Trees: From nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations
- BS 3936-1:1992 Nursery stock - Specification for trees and shrubs
- BS 3882:2015 Specification for topsoil
- BS 8601:2013 Specification for subsoil and requirements for use

Local

2.20   The current *Preston Local Plan 2012-2026* sets out site allocations and development management policies based on the strategic policies set out in the *Central Lancashire Core Strategy*. The Local Plan aims to ensure that appropriate forms of development occur in the most suitable locations. It contains the following policies of relevance to trees:

- Policy HS3 Green Infrastructure in New Housing Developments
- Policy EN2 Protection and enhancement of Green Infrastructure
- Policy EN3 Future Provision of Green Infrastructure
- Policy EN10 Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

2.21   The *Central Lancashire Core Strategy* sets out principles for the management of sustainable development in the area. It contains the following policies of relevance to trees:

- Policy 18: Green Infrastructure
- Policy 22: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

2.22   The *Preston Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2021-2031* sets out the Council's aims to improve parks and green spaces. The Strategy focuses on improving and maintaining eight key park sites, making recommendations on how the use of allotments can be maximised, considering how best to enhance tree coverage and ensuring that biodiversity is at the core of future decision making.

2.23   The Central Lancashire Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Supplementary Planning Document (2015) sets out the approach as local planning authorities towards conserving, protecting, and enhancing biodiversity and ecological networks and provides guidance for applicants in terms of understanding the relevant Central Lancashire policies and what is required as part of the planning application process. The document aims to ensure that there is no net loss of nature conservation assets, and where appropriate, there is an improvement.

Legal duties and statutory functions

Legal duties

2.24   As well as helping to deliver the wider aims of Government policy, local authorities have a number of legal duties in regard to trees, woodland and biodiversity.

2.25   Through policy and consenting, and the management of its own land, the Council has a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Any proposed works which may affect protected species must also comply with relevant legislation.

2.26   The Council duties of care under statute and common law with regards to the safety of its trees. As a tree owner, the Council must take reasonable care to avoid foreseeable acts or omissions which may result in harm or injury and to ensure that visitors to their land, including those who are not authorised to be there, will be safe from harm. When carrying out its activities, the Council must also comply with the relevant health and safety legislation to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, employees and members of the public are not put at risk.

2.27   With regards to trees outside of their ownership, the Council may deal with problem trees in some situations which are located on private land, such as where it overhangs a road or footpath and causing an obstruction or posing a danger to the public.

Statutory functions

2.28   Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide certain services to their residents. This includes the provision of planning and development services, and housing services, both of which have the potential to influence the treescape.

2.29   The Council has a responsibility to house its residents. This could involve building new homes, enabling housing in existing residential property, or acting as landlord for residents in Council owned homes.   In 2005, the Council transferred its housing stock, along with trees present in private gardens and communal spaces, to the control of the Community Gateway Association. All housing associations across the local authority area are responsible for managing their own tree populations.

2.30   The Council also provides planning services to the public, including producing local development documents to allocate land use and guide development, determining applications for planning permission, making Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), and regulating works to TPO trees and trees within conservation areas. There is immense potential for the Council to shape the treescape through its role as a consenting authority, which intersects with a more substantial range of activities and resources than the Council controls directly.

2.31   All local authorities must have an up-to-date local plan which sets out planning policies for the local area to guide applicants and decision makers. This should include policies which relate to the protection and enhancement of the treescape in line with national policy and the law. All trees are a material consideration in planning applications and the Council has a responsibility as decision maker to ensure that trees are given due regard when determining applications.

Consultation

Identifying stakeholders

2.32   To inform the production of this Strategy document, key stakeholders were identified. Organisations or people involved in the delivery of relevant activities, or with a significant and relevant external perspective were shortlisted. These included individuals from the Council's Parks and Planning departments; a range of technical, management, support and administrative staff; elected members; representatives from the parish councils, Lancashire County Council, Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council; Friends Of groups from local parks; local environmental charities; and housing associations.

Methodology

2.33   Key stakeholder's opinions were captured during in-person and on-line interviews and workshops, exploring the intersection between respective stakeholders' areas of expertise and interest and trees. These were chaired discussions of approximately an hour including up to 7 people. Workshops collected views on the number, distribution, health, benefits and management of trees within the area and aspirations for the future. The sessions also explored barriers to, and ways to achieve, improvements in the quality, functionality and management of the treescape. In total, 34 people from 15 organisations were involved in the consultation.

2.34   The consultation sessions were chaired by TEP. Sessions were recorded. Notes and transcriptions were processed, and all data was anonymised.

2.35   The views of the general public were also explored via an on-line questionnaire during July and August 2022. This was sent out to community groups on social media platforms via Preston City Council, and directly to local organisations for circulation but responses were submitted by individuals. 253 responses were received.

2.36   Data from the public consultation was in the form of ten questions, including a mix of closed, open and multiple-choice questions.

Emerging Themes

2.37   The stakeholder consultation covered wide-ranging topics, with individuals giving detailed comments in relation to their respective experience, expertise and perspective. Throughout these observations, significant themes emerged which are useful to characterise the current situation, perspectives, and challenges or aspirations. These aggregated themes are the primary finding of the consultation with key stakeholders and are outlined below.

2.38   There is no clear direction, strategy or vision for the treescape. Organising principles for tree management and planting would be desirable. Leadership and coordination are weak, particularly multilaterally. There is an appetite for a shared vision for local partners to rally behind and work towards.

2.39   There are significant opportunities to modernise systems, tools and processes to improve efficiency and add value in many areas of local authority tree management. A reactive 'asset management' approach is limiting; a proactive and vision-led approach is preferred.

2.40   The multi-tier authority structure presents a particular set of challenges to management and enhancement of the treescape. Relevant resources, land, systems, skills and information are disaggregated through county, parish, neighbourhood and city councils. This can limit economies of scale, make public engagement and communication more difficult, add complexity to delivery of new projects, and create barriers or inertia.

2.41   The planning system should embed and ensure delivery of improvements to the treescape, through tree planting, appropriate tree protection, and securing resource provision for tree and woodland management. Planning should be a major vehicle for positive change, but it is not.   Policy and guidance are vague, not applied consistently, poorly understood, and not enforced. There are significant opportunities but realising them will require political support, coordinated action, and a change of approach. Net positive development outcomes are not currently guaranteed.

2.42   There is widespread and growing appreciation of the environmental, biodiversity, health, and economic benefits that trees and green infrastructure deliver. The level of consultee awareness of related topics such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and threats to trees from pests and diseases was high.   There is strong and widespread support for increased canopy cover within the area, as well as support for establishing canopy cover targets to facilitate action on treescape.

2.43   Consultation data and transcripts of consultations are not included in this Strategy for data protection and anonymity reasons.

Public perception and support for action

2.44   The public consultation focussed on how the treescape is valued and understood, and what it should be like. The responses demonstrated a high level of engagement with the topic, with over 90% of respondents indicating that trees were very important to them: trees matter very much to many people.

2.45   A large majority of respondents (83%) thought that tree canopy cover is too low, and over 90% hoped for a future with more, or significantly more trees.

2.46   Respondents generally felt that there were too few trees across a range of land use types, but were most satisfied with the level of tree canopy cover on natural land and nature reserves, and the least satisfied with the level of cover on commercial, retail and industrial land.

2.47   There was general perception amongst respondents that there is some space, or even a lot of space, available for additional tree planting.   The areas in which respondents perceived the smallest amount of available space were along roads and in residential gardens. The most available space was perceived to be in parks, on farmland and in nature reserves.

2.48   Many respondents have had some prior dealings with the Council in relation to trees. Typically this is around Tree Preservation Orders, tree maintenance, planning applications and reporting or querying incidents and works. There was a strong preference amongst respondents for communication with the Council via email and the website, whereas telephone calls, and written or app-based communication was not supported.

Particular issues and challenges for trees

2.49   Climate change is increasing extreme weather events such as drought and flooding and this impacts trees and woodlands. Extreme weather conditions may lead to a decline in health in the existing treescape and make it harder to establish newly planted trees. Higher temperatures, especially in urban locations, may mean that some commonly planted species are no longer suitable and greater consideration will need to be given to appropriate species selection.

Figure 3 Avenham Park, Preston

2.50   Ensuring a tree population is resilient to the effects of climate change is important to ensure the ongoing health of the treescape and continuity of benefits it provides. Trees which are weakened by extreme weather conditions may be more susceptible to attack by pests and diseases, and novel pathogens are increasingly common because of changes in natural range, international trade and travel, and changes in climate.   Significant pests and diseases already affect the local tree population including Chalara ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Dutch elm disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) and bleeding canker of horse chestnut (*Pseudomonas syringae pv aesculi).*

2.51   A lack of species diversity makes tree populations less resilient to environmental and biological threats. Limitations in historic species selection and a large proportion of street trees belonging to the *Rosaceous* family mean they share susceptibility to some diseases, and a significant number have declined or failed. Appropriate species selection is particularly important for new tree planting schemes across the city.

2.52   Selecting native species can have benefits for biodiversity. However, as the climate changes, some native species may no longer be appropriate for certain town centre locations and successful schemes will rely on the right trees being planted in the right place. Understanding what constitutes the right tree relies on defining objectives including size, the constraints or threats in the location, and the purpose of planting.

2.53   The authority structure (county council, city council, and parish councils) presents particular challenges to the management of the tree population, which does not reflect or recognise administrative boundaries. In simple terms, the authority structure means that the asset (the treescape) is fragmented into multiple jurisdictions, and the responsibilities and resources that are available to manage or improve it are also but differently fragmented. This creates the potential for duplication and inefficiency, and it introduces inertia to critical pathways that could otherwise be more streamlined. Staff and skills, land ownership, public and political support, systems and tools, budgets, access to funding or revenue streams, policies, powers and procedures are spread between organisations and therefore not necessarily readily assembled to delivery services where this would require any particular blend.

3.0   Vision for the treescape

3.1   Trees should be increasingly recognised as fundamental to the Council 's overarching objectives including creating high quality places for people to live, work, and visit; keeping people healthy and safe; protecting nature and the environment; and careful stewardship of public resources.

3.2   By gathering information about the treescape today, a local picture has emerged that reflects both the challenges facing the treescape, and priorities for the future. This vision is set out within the section below. It has broad support both within and outside the Council, and it is compatible with or supportive of other important priorities. It builds on what we have and what we know right now, and in this way the level of ambition and detail is tailored to ensure that the vision is realistic and deliverable.

3.3   This vision is described in terms of a 'direction of travel', that is measured against indicators that are locally relevant. In general, fixed targets are not used. Partly, this is intended to allow multilateral support with some flexibility in application. Whereas, in some instances this approach reflects gaps in current knowledge that should be filled over time.

3.4   The vision speaks to a local area and a point in time. It may be refined or evolve in the future as needs and resources change. However, it is not likely that the vision will be fully delivered or cease to be relevant within the timeframe of this strategy. The objectives and actions that should be pursued are likely to change more frequently, and will vary between different organisations or individuals seeking to 'do their bit' in support of the overall vision.

3.5   The role of Preston City Council is explored at the end of this section and set out in more detail in the remainder of this strategy. Other councils, organisations, groups and individuals are invited to adopt, whether formally or informally, this vision and explore what contribution they can make.

The treescape

3.6   The vision is a treescape that is sustainable, resilient, and beneficial to people, nature, and the environment.

3.7   A **sustainable** treescape is stable, suitable, well-managed, appropriately resourced, can be maintained or enhanced over time, and is understood.

3.8   A **resilient** treescape is in good condition, does not have significant or systemic weaknesses, is prepared for foreseeable threats or challenges, and is valued.

3.9   A **beneficial** treescape is delivering goods and services, it is useful, and it adds value. It serves people, nature, and the environment. It supports and links these three in a way that is additive, not exclusive[1].

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[1] Tree management decisions should be taken to balance benefits delivered to people, nature, and the environment. None of these should be prioritised at the expense of the others. Trees should not be chosen, planted or removed to satisfy preferences that would do harm to nature or the environment; habitats should not be enhanced or created where this would significantly reduce environmental benefits or amenity; and useful environmental functions like carbon sequestration should not be pursued at all costs without considering the needs of people and nature.

(i)   People benefit from beauty, health and wellbeing, recreation, economic, cultural, and amenity benefits. They value and enjoy the treescape and it is prioritised. This benefits Nature and the Environment.

(ii)   Nature benefits from habitat provision and connectivity, better tree management practices, stronger protection, and cultural shifts.   Wildlife flourishes and is more accessible, benefitting people and ecosystem services.

(iii)   The Environment benefits from services provided by trees.   Trees improve or regulate the air, water, and soil, and they mitigate extreme weather. Places where people and nature live are protected, enhanced, and integrated together, to mutual benefit.

Figure 4 Green space in the heart of the city at Winckley Square Gardens, Preston

Indicators of progress towards the vision

3.10   The vision is a description of a future that is aspirational. In order to chart progress towards this scenario, it can be expressed in terms of five indicators.

- **Canopy cover** is increasing
- The **composition** of the treescape is improving
- Benefits provided by trees are increasingly **accessible**
- The **biodiversity** supported by the treescape is increasing
- **Ecosystem services** provided by trees are increasing

3.11   These indicators should be used as a 'litmus test' for decisions, policies and action by any party that is working in support of the overall vision. Any action that runs contrary to these indicators is less likely to be compatible with the vision, whereas actions that support one or more of these indicators are more likely to be aligned to the organising principles of the vision.

3.12   These indicators can also be used by the Council and other organisations to monitor progress and determine whether the vision is being delivered effectively. Each organisation should develop its own approach to monitoring, according to its own needs and resources. What is meant by these indicators, more detail on what they include, and some ways they could be monitored are set out below.

Canopy cover

3.13   Canopy cover is the total area of land, expressed as a percentage, which is beneath the leaves, twigs, and branches of trees. Since many of the benefits that trees provide are linked to canopy volume, canopy cover is a reasonable and useful proxy for all other benefits provided by trees.   Subject to the principle of 'right tree right place', canopy cover is a good primary indicator of progress, and it is also easy to measure and monitor. It is therefore included here as the foremost indicator and a core organising principle for the tree strategy.

Table 1 Canopy Cover: where are we now?

We know…	We think…
…canopy cover in this area is very low compared to other areas across the UK	…there is significant scope for increase in tree canopy cover without harming other objectives for land use
…research, national policy, and industry standards promote a higher level of canopy cover, and/or increasing canopy cover	…there is widespread and growing support for significant increases in canopy cover, provided it is delivered in suitable locations
…there are emerging threats and weaknesses in the tree population that could reduce canopy cover without intervention	…the level of canopy cover that is regarded as desirable or suitable will increase because of climate change

How should we measure progress?

3.14   At any future point, do the following statements describe the current situation?

Table 2 Canopy Cover: where are we going?

Indicators of progress
Canopy cover can be shown to be increasing, using a robust and replicable methodology.

Indicators of progress
A model of the capacity for increased canopy cover has been developed and thereafter embedded in the way this indicator is evaluated.
A target has been set for canopy cover and thereafter embedded in the way this indicator is evaluated.
Preservation of existing tree canopy is prioritised, including through improvements to the diversity and resilience of the tree population, protection of existing trees, and management decisions.
Pathways for the delivery of new tree planting has been developed for all use cases and shared widely, including mechanisms for offsetting tree removal by planting.
Increasing canopy cover has been firmly embedded as a principle in the development of all other policy, procedure, and in management activity, development, and all other relevant actions.
No action is undertaken that runs contrary to this central objective, either by avoiding removal of tree canopy, or by offsetting removal that is necessary or otherwise desirable.

Composition of the treescape

3.15   What the tree population comprises is very important to both the functions it provides, and also whether trees are regarded as a welcome benefit or a problem. Composition includes the proportions of trees at different ages or maturity; the diversity of species in the population; the mix of tree form and management[2]; and whether trees are suited to their location and the surrounding land use. A good tree in the wrong place, and a poor tree in the right place can both represent a problem.

Table 3 Composition of the treescape: where are we now?

We know…	We think…
…there are instances of 'wrong tree in the right place'	…there is a narrow age range in some parts of the tree population, particularly street trees
…climate change is increasing pest and disease threats, and that greater diversity could help to meet this challenge and improve resilience	…the range of species and genus is too narrow, that the mix of species is not 'future-proof' in terms of adaptation to climate change
…the distribution of some types of trees, including woodland and garden trees, is geographically uneven	…tree planting has reduced in some sectors, which could lead to future problems with composition

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[2] E.g. woodland, specimen trees, pollards, hedgerow, coppice, plantation, scrub, orchards, and veteran trees

We know…	We think…
…management practices have been led by resource availability and this has limited creativity and proactive approaches	
…there is support from key stakeholders for changes to composition to prioritise wildlife and respond to climate change	

How should we measure progress?

3.16   At any future point, do the following statements describe the current situation?

Table 4 Composition of the treescape: where are we going?

Indicators of progress
An accurate, reliable, and replicable baseline for composition has been established for the whole treescape, and specifically for Council trees.
Targets have been developed, and are or can be used to monitor composition.
The age profile, species mix, distribution, and variety of management type/form of trees within the treescape are all improving.
The understanding and modelling of anticipated threats to the tree population in terms of impact on canopy, composition, and cost are improving.
Opportunities to require or encourage tree replacement are increasingly exploited to increase diversity in the composition of the tree population.
Proactive interventions are a routine activity, including tree replacement, to improve composition, for climate resilience, and to enhance the treescape.
Planning and development are a strong driver for improvement in composition; diverse planting is required and delivered to a good standard.
The number of complaints about trees from the public to the council is reducing, indicating a better relationship with more suitable trees.

Access to benefits

3.17   Access is principally about people, and how trees are both actively and passively engaged in human activity. This covers the times that people make choices that are influenced by trees, like visiting a park for exercise, as well as local benefits that trees provide 'passively' such as improvements to air quality.

3.18   For people to have good access to these advantages, trees need to be nearby (physically or visually accessible), and they need to be providing benefits that will reach people. This is sometimes about trees, but it is also about their context: education and culture, interpretation and signage, hard infrastructure and information sharing, and community engagement and events. Improving access to trees can increase their value without changing the trees at all.

Table 5 Access to trees: where are we now?

We know…	We think…
…tree cover is low overall	…an abundant treescape would deliver more accessible benefits
…the distribution of trees is very uneven, with significant disparities between wards, and some wards with very few trees	…there are significant differences between urban and rural; public and private; and other land classifications that do not reflect the capacity for trees but other factors too
…people use and value parks, woodland, footpaths, and cycleways, but that access to public green space is not evenly distributed	…people increasingly want trees where they live, not just to visit green places, and that regular contact with trees normalises higher canopy cover
…there is strong community engagement and a sense of ownership in some areas, such as through 'Friends Of' groups and events	…the scope for change to the treescape in large parks is relatively limited, but that changes to usage and access can add value
…that a deeper understanding of the value and benefits provided by trees influences the relationship people have with them	…the 'customer experience' when engaging with public services can influence the perception of and relationship with public trees

How should we measure progress?

3.19   At any future point, do the following statements describe the current situation?

Table 6 Access to trees: where are we going?

Indicators of progress
The standard deviation of tree canopy cover between wards is reducing; the distribution of trees is becoming more even.
A reliable and replicable baseline has been developed and we understand where areas of higher 'arboricultural deprivation' are.

Indicators of progress
A simple metric has been developed and is being used to characterise, measure, and talk about access to trees (e.g. the '3-30-300 rule'3).
Greater effort to protect, plant and enhance the treescape, and improve access is being made in places with fewest trees.
Access to information, services, and events are increasing. There is better communication between the Council and the public.
People understand the benefits that trees provide and increasingly value them. The number of garden trees, and volunteering are increasing.
The number of requests, suggestions, and reports about trees (excluding complaints) from the public to the Council is increasing.
Cooperation between stakeholders is increasing, including through partnerships, across sectors, with businesses, and with the public.

Biodiversity

3.20   Biodiversity is a general term for the variety and complexity of life, including species, habitats, and ecosystems. In terms of trees, biodiversity can be thought of as including the range of tree species, the variety and complexity of the habitats they provide or contribute to, and the other species that they support with food, habitats, shelter, or transport routes. High biodiversity is typically associated with diversity of tree species, and particular management practices, as well as time for habitats and species populations to develop without disturbance. Choosing the right trees to promote particular species or habitats is also important, as is the connectedness of the treescape.

Table 7 Biodiversity and trees: where are we now?

We know…	We think…
…there is a biodiversity crisis at the international and national level and think that healthy biodiversity will require significant changes locally	…trees contribute significantly to biodiversity, but we don't fully understand how, or what the priorities should be to promote biodiversity in the treescape in this area
…trees, woodland and hedgerow are a significant component in ecosystems and habitats, and are suited to the region	…there is significant scope for increasing biodiversity through changes to management practices and new tree planting

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[3] [Promoting health and wellbeing through urban forests – Introducing the 3-30-300 rule | IUCN Urban Alliance](#)

We know…	We think…
…some types of habitats do not benefit from tree planting, but we do not clearly understand how or where these should influence strategy	…invasive species, ash dieback and other emerging pests and diseases represent threats that requires action to conserve biodiversity
…woodland, trees connected to rivers and water, and mature trees are particularly beneficial, and that distribution of these is patchy	…the low tree in rural northern and denser city wards may impact some types of biodiversity in these areas
…there is increasing awareness and support for biodiversity as a priority, including through public opinion, law, regulation and policy	

How should we measure progress?

3.21   At any future point, do the following statements describe the current situation?

Table 8 Biodiversity and trees: where are we going?

Indicators of progress
The role of trees in biodiversity should be mapped and better understood, creating a baseline against which to measure progress.
Clear targets have been established, are embedded in decision making and management practices wherever possible, and are being met.
Canopy connectivity between large parks and significant areas of tree cover and woodland should be increasing4.
The amount of woodland should be increasing and the amount that is actively managed to promote biodiversity should be increasing.
The spread of invasive species in woodland is not increasing.
Tree management practices increasingly promote biodiversity, including through the creation and retention of standing and aerial dead wood.
Tree planting increasingly promotes biodiversity through species choice, diversity, and structure of planting.
The number of registered sites delivering biodiversity net gain is increasing and their anticipated contribution to the treescape is understood.

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[4] Reference should be made to the Lancashire Ecological Woodland Network

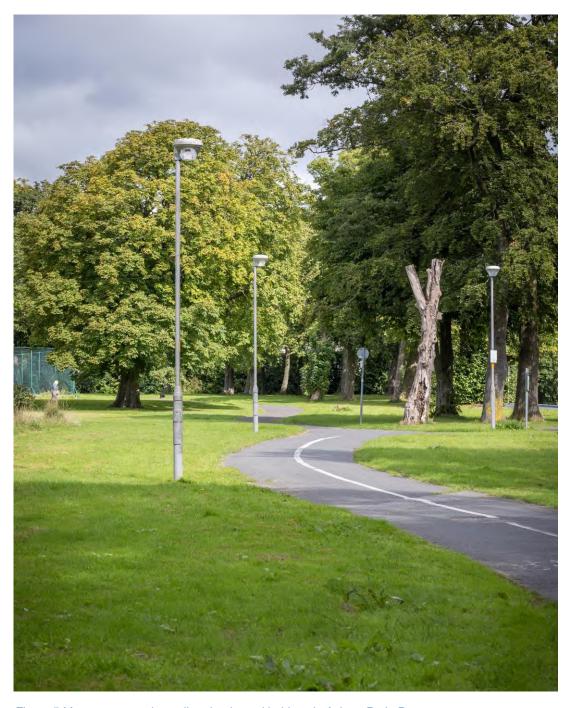| Indicators of progress |
|---|
| The amount and status/condition of sites with ecological designations is stable or increasing, and the role of trees is understood. |

Figure 5 Mature trees and standing dead wood habitats in Ashton Park, Preston

Ecosystem services

3.22   This is a broad concept, including the range of beneficial services that are provided by nature. It often includes services provided by animals, like pollination, but in this context the term is used specifically to describe services provided by trees. These are principally environmental; trees that influence the physical environment in useful ways.   These include functions like shading, carbon sequestration, particulate trapping, rainfall interception and flood mitigation, erosion control, remediation of contaminated land, and also the production of useful materials or products.

Table 9 Services provided by trees: where are we now?

We know…	We think…
…almost all trees provide some beneficial services wherever they are, but that they are not evenly distributed	…trees are providing significant benefits, but we don't clearly understand what these are or how to value them
…tree planting and species selection has not historically been done with environmental benefits in mind, many current benefits are incidental	…there is significant scope to increase benefits through tree management decisions, tree replacement, and new planting
…ecosystem services are not generally accounted or valued in existing budgets or resourcing	…further investment in the treescape would yield a good 'return' in terms of cost for benefits provided
…grant funding is moving towards provision of ecosystem services, and that natural capital is increasingly commoditised	…services provided by existing trees and woodland or capacity for creation of new assets might have financial value that could be recovered
	…landscape scale multilateral action would deliver the greatest systemic and significant improvements; no one party can do this in isolation

How should we measure progress?

3.23   At any future point, do the following statements describe the current situation?

Table 10 Services provided by trees: where are we going?

Indicators of progress
The environmental services trees provide have been modelled and are well understood. This provides a reliable and replicable baseline.
Priorities have been identified that include targets for key services, and reflect geographical variation in needs and opportunities.

Indicators of progress
Trees are making an increasing beneficial contribution to air quality, flood mitigation, water quality, energy efficiency, carbon sequestration, temperature regulation, and soils.
Local needs are understood and there are mechanisms in place to meet these by using trees to deliver useful functions.
The value of services provided by trees is understood, embedded in decision making, and represented in resource allocation and budgets.
There is an increasing understanding of the environmental services trees provide across all sectors, including within the Council and the public.
Planting on soft ground and/or which can naturally regenerate is prioritised, including through SuDS, woodland creation and within agriculture.
The number of sites under registered schemes such as Woodland Carbon Code or Countryside Stewardship (with relevant units) is increasing.

The role of the Council

3.24   The Council has four core functions in respect of tree management.

Table 11 Core functions of Council tree management

What should the Council do?
Ensure that its own trees do not present a risk to health and safety
Ensure that its own trees do not damage or obstruct other important services and amenities
Act as a consenting authority and/or regulate the actions of third parties
Identify and take opportunities to maximise benefits provided by trees, both proactively and incidentally as part of other Council activities

3.25   The first three are things that the Council <u>must</u> do. In each, there is effectively a minimum scope and standards for what the Council must do to discharge its legal obligations and deliver core services. The vision for how the Council should operate therefore must include the delivery of these core functions to a good standard.

3.26   In addition, the public benefits, goods, and services that can be realised through a high quality treescape are substantial and many relate indirectly to duties or national policies such as those around biodiversity, or climate change. Therefore, a fourth core function covering these is included.

<u>Measuring performance</u>

3.27   Bearing these core functions in mind, what does good local authority tree management look like? What should we be able to say about how the Council acts? The following statements describe the ambition of the Council, and its role in delivering the treescape.

Table 12 Council tree management standards

Standards for tree management
1. We know enough about our trees to manage them well.
2. We understand what our trees are doing for us, what value they have and what we want from them.
3. Our plans and policies reflect the priorities and objectives that we have.
4. Management and decisions are proactive and led by plans and policy.
5. There is political and public support for our objectives for trees.
6. All stakeholders can access the information they need easily.
7. We have access to the right skills for the services we need to deliver.
8. There is sufficient capacity to meet demand for services.
9. The trees we manage are in good condition and fit for purpose/location.
10. Trees do not present an unacceptable risk to people, property, or other objectives.
11. We have plans in place to meet future needs and challenges.
12. We have sufficient resources to meet current and anticipated needs.

3.28   The Council will aim to meet these standards in its own work and for its own trees, and will also be open, proactive and positive in the way it engages with partners and stakeholders in the management of all trees in the local authority area.

4.0 Tree Risk

4.1 This chapter explores one of the five Strategic Objectives for tree management: tree risk. It sets out current priorities within this topic area and explores where action should be taken.

What is it?

4.2 Preston City Council owns and manages a range of publicly accessible open spaces across the city, including parks, cemeteries, and nature reserves, which contain the majority of Council-owned trees. Tree risk refers to potential harm from the failure of one of these trees. The Council has a duty of care to take reasonable actions to reduce foreseeable risk of injury to people or property.

4.3 The approach to tree risk management set out in this Strategy applies to all Council-owned trees. Where responsibility for the management of Council trees has been transferred to other parties, the Council will require them to adhere to the principles set out in this Strategy, such as through lease agreements. Where the Council provides arboricultural advice to any third party, it will do so in accordance with this Strategy.

How does this support the vision?

4.4 Tree risk management can provide the architecture for successful management of the existing tree population and therefore contribute to a healthy, thriving treescape. Risk management is not the only objective, but the activity it requires provide familiarity with the treescape, data, systems, and opportunities for intervention that can support other objectives.

4.5 Effective management regimes will ensure that existing canopy cover is retained or enhanced wherever possible and will help to increase resilience to future challenges such as climate change. The data collected as part of this process will help to establish an accurate baseline for the treescape, allowing the development of key targets and the measurement of future progress.

4.6 Efficient tree risk management saves money and avoids unplanned and unexpected costs. This supports a broader enhancement strategy by allowing resources to be diverted away from fixing problems and towards proactive improvements.

What are the Council's strategic objectives?

4.7 These are the key deliverables for the Council in this topic area:

Table 13 Strategic Objectives for tree risk management

Ref	Strategic Objectives
TR1	Discharge legal duties with regards to trees safety by developing and implementing a proactive tree risk management programme to manage the spatial relationship between all its trees, and people and the environment.

Ref	Strategic Objectives
TR2	Maintain a system for assessing the level of risk associated with all of its trees; undertake periodic inspections of trees to maintain the reliability of the assessment; intervene to reduce risk where it exceeds defined thresholds and within timescales that are set in proportion to the level of risk.
TR3	Ensure that adequate resources are in place to carry out tree risk inspections in a timely manner, whether this be staff employed by the Council or external contractors meeting defined minimum standards.
TR4	Maintain suitable software systems and GIS infrastructure to accurately record, process and store tree risk information.
TR5	Make tree population data produced by tree risk surveys available as widely as possible for use in planning, for decision making in other departments and sectors, and by sharing key basic information with the public.

Proactive Philosophy

4.8   The Council aims to take a proactive approach to tree risk management, identifying and managing risks before failure occurs. For the purposes of risk management, a 'tree failure' is any harm that arises as a result of a change in the form or condition of a tree. It might include a mechanical or structural breakage, or growth leading to a hazardous obstruction. Tree risk assessment by the Council will seek to identify all such risks, assess them, and act where the risk is unacceptable.

4.9   Tree risk management starts the moment a tree is planted. Species selection, planting techniques, tree pit design and adequate volumes of uncompacted soil all help with the successful establishment of healthy and problem-free trees, such as by increasing resilience to external factors such as pests and diseases. Formative pruning and regular maintenance will remove potential weaknesses and improve the structure of the crown, reducing the chance of future limb failure. Establishing healthy tree stock from the outset will reduce the need for future tree risk management. Small interventions by skilled operatives can avoid larger later remedial costs.

4.10   Preston City Council is fortunate to have many mature trees in its streets, parks and open spaces. As these mature trees start to decline, they may pose a higher risk of failure, which due to their urban setting, could result in harm to people or property if it is not managed. The Council will develop a proactive approach to sensitively managing the decline of mature trees which is appropriate to their settings. For example, in some larger open spaces it may be possible to allow the natural decline of trees by moving targets away from potential harm or to reduce trees to standing monoliths and maintain them for biodiversity.

4.11   Above all, the proactive philosophy means looking for and anticipating risks rather than waiting for problems to materialise, and using resources efficiently to mitigate risks. In this, it is essential that decisions are taken systematically and objectively. Action will be taken where it will be most effective in reducing risk, not where it will satisfy the most persistent complaint. Tree works will not normally be undertaken in response to a perception of risk, or a preference; doing so draws resources away from more effective interventions.

Tree Risk Inspections

4.12   In order to manage tree risk, the Council will undertake regular inspections of all trees that it owns. These will be planned in advance in a rolling programme. Trees in more sensitive locations will be inspected more often than those in less sensitive locations.

4.13   Although tree risk management is the core aim of this activity, it will also be integrated with other objectives to add value. Tree inspection can help to generate data, provide familiarity with the tree population, and inform decision making in other areas. It also requires good systems, all of which can deliver benefits more broadly.

4.14   The main output of tree risk inspections is the mapping of all the trees that the Council has responsibility for, along with sufficient information about each tree to understand and monitor its condition and make a risk assessment.

4.15   As a minimum, the following information will be recorded during tree risk inspections. The format is not prescribed by this Strategy, but the core contents of each assessment should always include:

- Type of feature (tree, group, woodland)
- Species
- Age class
- Dimensions (e.g. height, stem diameter, canopy spread)
- Condition
- Risk assessment
- Works recommendations

4.16   It may be advantageous to expand the range of data that is collected during tree inspections in support of other objectives.

4.17   The data generated through tree inspections will provide the Council with a snapshot of its current tree population. This will be helpful in understanding the spatial distribution of tree cover across the area, and the current condition, age and species composition of the treescape. As re-inspections are completed, this information will be kept up-to-date and therefore remain useful as a baseline for decision making.

Systems

4.18   Tree risk management undertaken by the Council will use a GIS based approach comprising a map of tree locations, and a database containing the information produced by inspections.
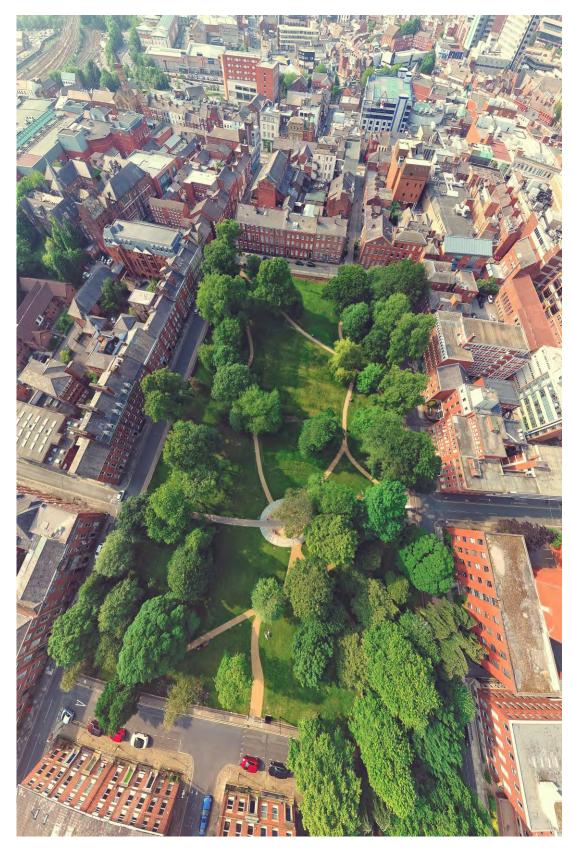
Figure 6 Aerial view of Winckley Square Gardens, Preston

4.19   To record information consistently during inspections, the Council will use a tree risk management software system. Observations and recommendations will be recorded electronically on site and saved onto a shared central system where all relevant staff members can access them.

4.20   Any employee expected to use tree risk management software will be given adequate training and will undergo refresher training as required. External contractors will also be expected to use the Council's system for undertaking inspections, or to produce data in a compatible format that can be uploaded directly into the database.

Risk assessment process

4.21   Tree inspections will be undertaken by an appropriately qualified arboriculturist and will involve a systematic risk assessment of each tree. This will include an assessment of the likelihood that a failure could occur, the sensitivity of the surrounding context to harm, and the type and significance of harm that could occur in the event of a failure.

4.22   Risk assessment will be undertaken at defined intervals to ensure that it remains reliable as a description of a dynamic and organic asset. The frequency of ongoing inspections for trees will vary according to one or more elements of the risk assessment. Inspections will be more frequent where deterioration in the reliability of the assessment over time could have greater consequences or is more likely.

4.23   The results of the risk assessment will be used to categorise trees in terms of their relative level of risk. A threshold will be established within the assessment process to define the level of risk that is tolerable.

4.24   Tolerable risk is an important concept in this approach. It represents risks that are broadly acceptable because they are outweighed by the many benefits that trees provide. They include both minor inconveniences that do not warrant intervention, and also more significant harms where a competent assessment has identified that the possibility of occurrence is sufficiently remote.

Risk management

4.25   Trees which, based on the outcome of the risk assessment, are hazardous (i.e. those with a level of risk that exceeds the threshold of tolerable risk) will be identified and appropriate remedial measures will be recommended, with input from other specialists or managers as required. Interventions will be designed to mitigate the particular combination of attributes that have been found to exceed the level of tolerable risk. Interventions may also incorporate other objectives such as habitat creation or amenity where these do not run contrary to the core objective of risk management.

4.26   Interventions may include tree pruning and/or removal as well as other operations such as redirecting or relocating targets, providing structural support or bracing, or making changes to the context to reduce the likelihood of failure.

4.27   Interventions will be proportionate to the actual risk posed by an individual tree or tree group. The Council can never guarantee that a retained tree is completely safe but disproportionate responses to actual risk can result in unnecessary intervention or widescale tree removal which will be avoided.

4.28   A timescale for completion of each intervention will be defined. This will be set in proportion to the urgency and significance of the hazard, and sometimes to reflect the optimum season for completion. Proactive or routine interventions may be completed with a lower priority, whereas immediately hazardous or emergency situations will be given a higher priority.

4.29   Remedial tree works will be carried out as specified by competent individuals and verified by an appropriately qualified member of the arboricultural team. Completion of works will be recorded, typically with photographic evidence.

Surveys and surveyors

4.30   All tree risk inspections will be carried out via a rolling programme of surveys. These will be undertaken by competent arboriculturists with appropriate qualifications, training and experience.

4.31   Detailed inspections requiring specialist equipment (e.g. aerial, invasive, stress loading or scanning inspections) will be carried out by an expert and will usually require an external consultant. These are expected to be a relatively uncommon occurrence.

4.32   Tree Inspectors will be qualified to a minimum RQF Level 3 in Arboriculture. They will also have either:

(i)   Lantra Professional Tree Inspectors course; or

(ii)   Equivalent relevant qualifications and/or experience, and the support of Tree Inspectors that have passed the Professional Tree Inspector course.

4.33   Surveyors will undertake regular CPD and ensure that they are up to date with relevant policy and guidance.

4.34   Responsibility for quality assurance of all survey work will rest with a nominated Tree Officer or other appropriately qualified senior member staff.

4.35   Where external consultants are used, the same minimum standards will be applied as to Council staff, according to the role they are performing.

Resourcing

4.36   Initially, the Council will need to forecast survey requirements for all Council owned trees and allocate resources accordingly. After an initial assessment has been undertaken, future surveying resources will be based on recorded inventory data.

Reactive Inspections

4.37   The Council will carry out reactive inspections in response to specific events such as tree failures or storm damage. The Council will develop a plan defining when reactive inspections will be carried out and how they will be undertaken.

4.38   Where an enquiry relating to tree safety is submitted by a member of the public, a tree inspection will be undertaken before any works are specified on the grounds of risk management.

5.0 Planning and Development

5.1 This chapter explores one of the five Strategic Objectives for tree management: trees in planning and development. It sets out current priorities within this topic area and explores where action should be taken.

What is it?

5.2 Development has the potential to significantly influence the treescape and the planning system provides a means by which the Council can protect and enhance the treescape.

5.3 Trees must be considered when determining planning applications. Tree retention, protection and planting can be secured through site allocation, design decisions, the use of planning conditions and planning agreements. The Council is able to provide guidance to applicants and decision makers through policy, supplementary guidance and through the Local Plan. Taken together, these represent one of the most significant opportunities available to the Council to shape the treescape and the benefits it delivers.

5.4 Through the planning system, the Council is also able to make Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) to protect amenity provided by specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands and to regulate the management of private trees within Conservations Areas.

How does this support the vision?

5.5 To increase the level of canopy cover, existing trees should be protected wherever possible, and substantial tree planting must take place on privately owned land. The Council can use the planning system to help to coordinate and deliver this. Establishing new tree planting through regeneration and development will help to improve canopy cover distribution and equitable access to trees. Trees can also add value to retail, residential, transport and regeneration developments by delivering or enhancing compatible and complementary benefits.

5.6 Retaining and protecting established trees and woodland on development sites can be beneficial for biodiversity, and new planting schemes delivered through development also provide an opportunity to increase tree cover and connectivity and improve the composition of the treescape.

5.7 The Council does not own or directly manage a large proportion of the overall land within the authority area. The treescape crosses boundaries and multiple ownerships and it is therefore essential to any strategy for improvement that all opportunities to positively influence the tree population are utilised. Planning and development are key to this because they embed an advisory, consenting and regulatory role into decisions around land use and design. In particular, this tends to be at times when change is proposed and opportunities to reimagine local treescapes are most available.

What are the Council's strategic objectives?

5.8 These are the key deliverables for the Council in this topic area:

Table 14 Strategic Objectives for trees in planning and development

Ref	Strategic Objectives
PD1	Maintain an up-to-date inventory of Tree Preservation Orders and continue to protect trees with identified amenity by making new Orders where appropriate.
PD2	Maintain a digital inventory and mapping system giving public access to TPO information.
PD3	Develop strong, unambiguous planning policies covering tree removal, tree protection, tree replacement, and tree planting that guarantee enhancement of the treescape by development.
PD4	Maintain appropriate expertise and capacity to deliver advice into the planning process on the subject of arboriculture, including to applicants, planning officers and inspectors.
PD5	Provide clear validation requirements for planning applications in relation to supporting arboricultural information, in accordance with national and industry standards.
PD6	Publish minimum standards for compliance with tree protection and tree planting. Require developers to monitor and report on compliance, via a standardised system.
PD7	Maintain a suite of standard planning conditions for use in the regulation of trees on development sites.
PD8	Periodically review and publish supplementary planning documents, standards, and specifications for use in planning and development as appropriate.
PD9	Use the CAVAT system as the basis for recovering compensation for the removal or damage of Council-owned trees, or tree removal without adequate replanting.
PD10	Utilise a range of measures to enforce the protection of existing trees and successful delivery new planting on development sites.
PD11	Consult relevant external organisations on planning applications wherever appropriate.

Overall approach

5.9   There should be a presumption against the removal of trees for development unless the need for or benefits of development outweighs the loss. The removal of trees should always be justified, and the strength of the justification should be in proportion to the quality of the trees and/or the significance of the effects.

5.10   Trees of higher quality tend to include those which are mature and/or large, those delivering the most and/or particularly desirable benefits such as screening; those with desirable and/or valuable characteristics such as habitat or cultural significance, and those with the longest remaining contribution due to species and/or condition.

5.11   Harm to trees should be mitigated at every stage in the planning process, including through site selection, masterplanning, design, and construction. All residual harm should be offset by new tree planting or other suitable enhancements to the treescape. These should normally respond directly to the type and location of harm and seek to reinstate or replace benefits that would be lost.

Planning policy

5.12   For the Council to effectively deliver tree planting through new development there must be strong, prescriptive policies in place which are specific to trees. Policies must be unambiguous and provide clear guidance to applicants and decision makers as to what will be expected with regards to trees on development sites.

5.13   Planning policy should be clear and specific so that developers understand what is expected of them when developing plans and making decisions, and so that planners and officers within the Council are able to apply them consistently. Trees may also be relevant to compliance with other policies and laws, such as those involved in managing biodiversity. These do not cover the full range of benefits and functions delivered by trees and are therefore not suitable in isolation to regulate effects on the treescape.

5.14   The new joint Local Plan for Preston City Council, Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council will include planning policies relating to trees, detailing how existing trees will be protected and how new tree planting will be secured. The Local Plan will also include a canopy cover target, towards which development will be required to make progress.

5.15   The central organising principle for planning policy will be that enhancement of the treescape embedded within development and is a guaranteed outcome of the planning process. It is not necessary, and it should not be possible to secure planning permission within the authority area that would result in any degradation to the treescape. Planning policy should therefore capture this principle and reflect it clearly as an expectation and a minimum standard, not simply an aspiration.

5.16   An effective planning policy relating to trees and development should include the following information as a minimum:

(i)   How individual developments will contribute to, or be judged against canopy cover targets

(ii)   What trees will be protected (including any special designations or status, such as ancient woodland and veteran trees)

(iii)   What tree removal may be permissible

(iv)   How retained trees will be protected during construction

(v)   How tree removal will be offset, including by planting

(vi)   Compensation for damage to or removal of Council owned trees

5.17   Planning decisions made by the Council will support the aims and objectives set out in this Strategy. They will be made by consistently testing proposals against adopted policy, strategy, and any relevant guidance, not by exercising unregulated individual judgement.

Consultation on planning applications

5.18   The Council will only validate planning applications which are supported by the correct information in relation to trees. Table B.1 of British Standard BS 5837:2012 Trees in *r*elation to *d*esign, *d*emolition and *c*onstruction – Recommendations sets out the minimum level of tree-related information that is required for submission with a planning application. Planning applications within 15m of any tree will not be validated unless supporting information has been provided, which has been produced to an acceptable standard and with appropriate arboricultural input.

5.19   In order to deliver sound advice and make effective planning decisions with regards to trees, the planning department requires timely input from a professional arboriculturist. Therefore, the Council will establish a framework for providing arboricultural advice on applications. This could include embedding an appropriately trained officer within the planning team or arboricultural team, whose primary role is to respond to planning application consultations and manage the relationship between trees and development.

5.20   It is particularly important that consistent, accurate, and early arboricultural advice is given in response to planning applications and through pre-application advice. This process is the 'gateway' for a large proportion of the overall capacity the Council has to influence the treescape and help to deliver the targets set out in this Strategy. It will also ensure that planning decisions are based on expert advice and can withstand scrutiny or challenge.

5.21   External organisations can also provide specialist advice and local knowledge on planning applications and the Council will ensure that it consults them wherever appropriate.

Use of planning conditions and enforcement

Conditions

5.22   The Council will use planning conditions to protect existing trees, ensure tree planting is included as appropriate within landscaping schemes, and secure appropriate ongoing management. All applications are considered on an individual basis, but in general, planning conditions will cover: the provision of further information about trees into the planning process; the timing and standard of tree works; tree protection during construction; special construction methods to avoid harm to trees; tree planting; the ongoing management of trees and woodland; and monitoring of compliance with approved documents.

5.23   The Council will also maintain and publish a set of standard conditions for tree protection, planting, and management to ensure a consistent approach to development and allow developers to understand what may be required of them.
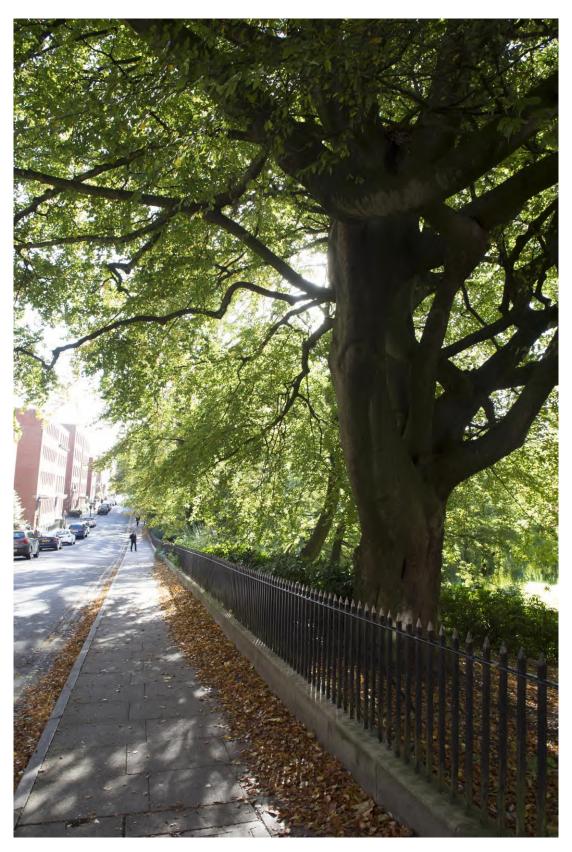
Figure 7 Mature trees lining Winckley Square, Preston

5.24   Planning conditions will be used as appropriate to secure independent monitoring and reporting on compliance with approved tree works, tree protection, and the success of tree planting and aftercare. The Council will require developers to submit reports on compliance prior to the discharge of planning conditions relating to trees. In more complex cases, this may require the engagement of an independent and/or regulated arboriculturist.

Enforcement

5.25   The Council has powers to enforce a breach of condition and will undertake enforcement action in relation to the protection of existing trees and new planting on development sites. as appropriate. The Council will be proactive in its approach to the enforcement of planning conditions to ensure that breaches are dealt with as soon as possible.

5.26   The Council will also work constructively with the public and local interest groups to ensure a plan-led approach to trees and development. This could include the use of community tree wardens to provide passive surveillance of development sites.

Tree preservation orders (TPOs) and conservation areas

TPOs

5.27   Where appropriate, the Council will make TPOs to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands with high amenity value. The Council will develop a consistent approach to assessing the amenity provided by trees. Reference information and location of TPOs and will be available via the Council's website.

5.28   When considering planning applications for development which affect TPO trees, the Council will reach a balanced planning decision which gives due regard to protected trees.

5.29   The Council will process applications for works to TPO trees in a timely manner. Where TPO trees are removed, the Council will require appropriate replacement planting or compensation.

Conservation Areas

5.30   Where appropriate, the Council will use its powers to make TPOs on trees in Conservation Areas and will inform landowners of the outcome of Section 211 notices in a timely manner.

Planning legislation

5.31   The Council will comply with relevant legislation and guidance regarding trees, hedges, woodland, biodiversity and protected species.

5.32   Updates to the NPPF provide further guidance and protection for trees. The Council will develop planning policies and make planning decisions in line with this guidance.

5.33   Requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG) through the Environment Act 2021 will be considered in parallel with decisions regarding trees on development sites.

Supplementary guidance

5.34   Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) are a means for the Council to expand on existing planning policies by providing additional guidance to applicants and decision makers. Where appropriate, the Council will review existing guidance documents and produce new SPDs regarding trees, hedgerows and woodlands to provide as much information as possible to relevant parties.

5.35   Topics which expand on the information set out in this Strategy could include:

(i)   Planting pit design

(ii)   Minimum soil volume standards for tree planting

(iii)   Species selection

(iv)   Funding for tree planting

(v)   Biodiversity and trees

Council-led development

5.36   Council-led development provides an opportunity for the Council to develop exemplar schemes in which tree protection and tree planting play a central role.   The arboriculture team will be consulted at the outset to ensure that trees are embedded in the design approach.

5.37   The Council will apply the same standards to its own development as it does to external applicants.

Canopy cover through planning

5.38   The planning system offers an opportunity for the Council to increase canopy cover through new development and regeneration. Strong planning policies and informed decision making will ensure that adequate protection is given to existing trees and new tree planting is successfully delivered.

5.39   The Council will set a basic minimum policy ambition to retain existing tree canopy cover and will undertake further research to develop appropriate canopy cover targets for increasing cover at the regional and local level. Management of the treescape will promote sustainable and expanding canopy cover.

5.40   Greater weight will be given to woodland canopy cover in decision making over individual trees as the inherent sustainability and self-regeneration capacity of woodland will provide more sustainable increases in canopy cover.

5.41   The Council will explore the role of funding tree planting through commuted sums as a means for increasing tree planting. The Council will also consider the role of mandatory biodiversity net gain in delivering tree planting through offsetting.

CAVAT

5.42   The Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) provides a system for assessing the monetary value of amenity trees. It can be used to aid decision making and provides a systematic approach to calculating a monetary value that can be used as the basis for compensation for damage to or loss of amenity trees, or to justify budgetary decisions on the basis of asset value. It is widely recognised and was developed specifically in the context of local authority tree management.

5.43   To assist in the management of its tree stock, the Council will use the CAVAT method to calculate appropriate compensation where damage or removal of a Council owned tree occurs. This could include vehicle damage, vandalism, unauthorised pruning, or unlawful removal of trees. Where compensation is received by the Council, the money will be spent on planting new trees.

6.0   Tree Works

6.1   This chapter explores one of the five Strategic Objectives for tree management: tree works. It sets out current priorities within this topic area and explores where action should be taken.

What is it?

6.2   Any strategy for management and enhancement of the treescape must ultimately be delivered, at least in part, through practical interventions. These include a broad range of tree surgery operations, woodland management, tree planting and aftercare. They may also include measures to influence the space around trees, and the way people understand or interact with them. The standard to which works are done, and decisions made during the design of operations can have a considerable influence on the outcome, especially on the range of objectives an operation might support. It is therefore important to ensure that the strategy not only identifies what interventions should be made, but that they are implemented successfully.

How does this support the vision?

6.3   Tree risk management inspections identify requirements for remedial tree works which the Council must carry out within a specified timescale. Other Council initiatives and objectives also generate maintenance and enhancement tree works that may be less urgent, but are equally important to the overall vision. Where significant tree works are taking place in areas of public access, it is also important, where appropriate, for the Council to inform the public about what works are and why they are being done. This topic should therefore be understood to include both the planning and delivery of practical tree works as well as communication.

6.4   Carrying out remedial tree works will help to ensure that the Council retains a healthy and resilient tree population which is able to tolerate changing climatic conditions and the potential introduction of new pests and diseases. From time to time the Council may also plan enhancement and maintenance works that are not related to tree risk, such as thinning, formative pruning, new crown management regimes and works for aesthetic or habitat reasons. These are key to the delivery of environmental and biodiversity benefits and will normally involve some element of practical tree works.

6.5   Carrying out works promptly will minimise the number of trees lost to failure or disease, helping to maintain canopy cover levels and preserve the ecosystem services that urban trees provide. Having good systems in place for organising and delivering tree works can assist with timescales, also improve overall efficiency and productivity. Poor standards of tree work can waste resources in the short term, and also create future management problems and defects that increase risk or cost in the long term.

What are the Council's strategic objectives?

6.6   These are the key deliverables for the Council in this topic area:

Ref	Strategic Objectives
TW1	Carry out remedial tree works within specified timescales as required by tree risk inspections.
TW2	Design all tree works operations to maximise benefits to people, nature and the environment whilst delivering the core objective of the operation.
TW3	Ensure the successful delivery of tree works by Council staff and/or external contractors.
TW4	Ensure a consistent approach to the specification and instruction of tree works operations.
TW5	Monitor current trends and produce or signpost guidance notes as appropriate to cover emerging risks, challenges and developments of relevance to tree works. For example, dealing with trees which are in decline due to novel and/or significant pests and diseases.
TW6	Explore opportunities to carry out tree works for third parties within the public sector where capacity allows. Where the Council operates commercially, it will develop and follow a pricing framework for carrying out external tree works to ensure consistency. This which will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
TW7	Carry out tree work in line with all relevant British Standards, particularly including BS3998.

Overall approach

6.7   Under normal circumstances, the Council will undertake tree works for one of the following reasons:

        (i)   To manage risk

        (ii)   To deal with a problem reported by a member of the public

        (iii)   To deal with a tree that is causing a nuisance

        (iv)   As part of normal maintenance (e.g. clearances or formative pruning)

        (v)   To deliver the vision for the treescape (see Section 3.0)

6.8   The Council will use its discretion to assess individual requests for works which fall outside of the reasons listed above and may undertake additional works where special circumstances apply.

6.9   The Council will avoid unnecessarily felling trees and will not normally cut a tree down on Council land unless it is dead, diseased, dying or dangerous. There will be a presumption in favour of tree retention, except where local or specific factors outweigh the broader value and benefits it would provide.

6.10   Tree works will be designed to deliver the core purpose of the intervention, whilst maximising the benefits to people, nature and the environment, and conserving or promoting canopy cover. In general terms, this means a preference for pruning over removal, and for the retention of viable trees for habitat, environmental and amenity benefits wherever possible.

Canopy cover through works decisions

6.11   When making works decisions, the Council will consider how they will affect canopy cover. Heavy crown reductions and pollarding may limit the ecosystems services or amenity provided by trees and reduce overall canopy cover, but in some situations would be a preferable alternative to tree removal.

6.12   If trees are removed as a result of the Council's tree risk management program, replacement planting will be carried out to ensure that canopy cover is maintained and increased wherever possible.

6.13   The Council will ensure that its mowing and hedge cutting practices allow canopy cover expansion through natural regeneration wherever appropriate, such as by allowing standard trees to grow in hedges, and by allowing colonisation of suitable verge spaces by pioneer tree species.

Exceptions

6.14   The Council does not carry out tree works on land that is part of the public highway (e.g. roads, streets, footpaths or grass verges). This is normally the responsibility of Lancashire County Council.

6.15   The Council does not carry out works to trees on private land, such as gardens. This is the responsibility of the landowner.

6.16   Problems caused by a tree in a neighbour's garden are the responsibility of the neighbour or individual who owns that land, and the Council will not carry out tree works in these cases.

6.17   Trees on tenanted land, including social housing gardens, may be the responsibility of the landowner or the tenant, depending on the details of any agreement between them.

Requests and reports from the public

6.18   The Council regularly receives queries and requests regarding the management of trees under its ownership. This is a valued source of information and feedback. Tree work requests relating to any of the reasons for works listed above will be carried out by the Council. Tree works requests for any other reason, or which run contrary to the vision and strategic objectives of the Council will not be done.

6.19   The Council sometimes receives requests for tree works that are outside the scope of works outlined in this Strategy. These include, but are not limited to, issues relating to the following:

- Shading/light
- Views
- Signal reception
- Telephone wires
- Leaf/fruit/flower drop
- Bird droppings
- Aphid excretion
- Growth associated with shading (algae/moss/lichen)
- Germinating seedlings
- Personal preferences/aesthetics
- Perceived risk

6.20   This strategy seeks to promote the wider benefits of tree cover, which outweigh minor or seasonal inconveniences. The Council will not generally undertake tree works for these reasons. Works to mitigate these issues are typically beyond the scope of the Council's legal duties, such as relating to tree safety, which the Council will prioritise. However, all requests will be assessed on an individual basis and the Council may carry out works in exceptional circumstances.

Reporting a problem

6.21   Members of the public can report a tree problem through the Council's website.

6.22   Where the problem reported is covered by the reasons for work listed within this Strategy, the Council will inspect the tree at the earliest opportunity and prioritise any works accordingly.

6.23   Problems with trees on the public highway, should be reported to Lancashire County Council.

6.24   To report a tree problem on private land, you will need to contact the landowner.

6.25   The Council will encourage and work towards the exclusive use of the online tree report system for members of the public to submit enquiries. If a member of the public calls or emails the contact centre with a query relating to trees, they will be directed to the web page reporting form. If they are unable to access the webpage, alternative provision system will be made for their report to be issued to the relevant department via the contact centre.

6.26   The Council will process reports or requests that have been received and pass the information on to the relevant departments and staff. This may involve triaging enquiries. Works which are not required by this Strategy will be filtered out as appropriate and may not be considered by a member of the arboriculture team.

Normal maintenance

6.27   As part of the ongoing maintenance and management of the existing tree population, the Council carries out regular maintenance of its trees and hedges. This may include works such as hedge cutting and clearances above paths, parking, vehicular routes, signs and lights.

Delivery model

6.28   All tree works orders will be generated by the Council's arboriculture team, according to this strategy. No tree works will be undertaken on Council land by any other team except as part of approved schemes of development.

6.29   In-house staff or external contractors may undertake tree works, according to availability, capacity, and the requirements of the operation.

6.30   In order to manage the risk posed by trees, the Council will undertake safety related tree works within defined timescales. All other works will be programmed to ensure that critical safety works can be completed on time. Where applicable, all other works will be planned to be undertaken at the optimum season to minimise harm to tree health, wildlife and ground conditions.

6.31   The Council will maintain a register of tree works competencies that sets out the operations that it may undertake using the staff and equipment that it has. This will be periodically updated. Council staff will not undertake operations that are not on this register.

6.32   All tree works orders, whether internally or externally will include standard information to ensure consistency and clear understanding of the brief. This will comprise:

- Tree location
- Description of tree (typically tree species and dimensions)
- Specification for works (the operation to perform)
- Particulars (additional details such as photographs or dimensions)
- Information about access and the working area
- Intended disposal of arisings
- Timescale for completion

6.33   The Council will monitor and report on compliance with timescales for completion in relation to all risk-related tree works.

Standards and specifications

6.34   All tree works undertaken by the Council or external contractors will be in accordance with relevant British Standards, particularly BS3998.

6.35   To ensure a consistent approach to tree works, the Council will maintain a Tree Works Specification which will be used by both Council employees and external contractors. This will provide a definition of all tree work operations that might be instructed to give clarity when instructing tree works. The specification will set out what information will be provided when instructing each operation and in what format this will be.

Equipment

6.36   The Council will ensure that adequate equipment is provided to all employees to be able to carry out their work safely and to a high standard. Equipment will be controlled, maintained, used and inspected as per the relevant regulations, including Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations, the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.

6.37   Where the Council does not have the appropriate equipment to undertake an operation safely or to a high standard, it will engage a specialist or procure the necessary equipment and any associated training.

People

6.38   It is vital that all Council staff carrying out tree works are appropriately qualified for the work they are undertaking. This will help to ensure the safety of staff, and also that works are correctly performed to minimise damage to existing trees which can make them more vulnerable to pests and diseases.

6.39   The Council will maintain a register of competencies that it has in-house, including qualifications and accreditations held by its staff. This will include any licences or limitations on what equipment, vehicles and plant can be used by each individual.

6.40   For performing tree pruning, felling and chainsaw work, appropriate qualification normally means holding a Licence to Practice via qualification in the relevant National Occupational Standards. National Proficiency Test Council 'CS units' are common but are being replaced by equivalent RQF Level 2 and Level 3 Awards.

6.41   Works may be carried out by Council employees or external contractors. Where contractors are used, the Council will ensure that they are competent to carry out the required works; they will be appropriately qualified, carry the correct level insurance and their work will be in line with relevant legislation and guidance.

6.42   The Council will develop an approach to procurement that embeds defined standards to allow efficient use of contractors where necessary. This could include developing a database of approved contractors which meet the Council's required standards. The Council will require approved contractors to submit up to date insurance documents and training information on a yearly basis.

Arisings

6.43   Arisings which occur as a result of tree works range from large diameter timber to leaves and mixed organic matter. Wherever possible, the processing and transport of arisings will be minimised or avoided to reduce environmental impacts.

6.44   Where possible, material will be left intact or in large pieces, such as by leaving the main part of a felled tree in a park for habitat or as a play feature. Where opportunities exist for safe and responsible deposit of material close to the site of production they will be used, such as by the creation of habitat piles or the use of woodchip in landscaping. Where material must be removed from a site, it will be transported directly to a final use wherever possible, such as an allotment. Where alternatives have been exhausted, all other material will be returned to the Council depot or an authorised third party where it may be further processed or stored prior to use.

6.45   Wood chip from tree works will primarily be used where it is produced or in Council parks but may also be available for sale to the public if excess quantities are produced.

6.46   Timber collected as a result of tree works may be stored at a Council's depot or transferred to another site for drying prior to sale as firewood once it is certified as 'Ready to Burn' in accordance with the Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) Regulations.

6.47   Material produced during tree works may be sold for biomass fuel production.

6.48   No organic material produced by tree works will be sent to landfill except where this is required for reasons of contamination or biosecurity.

Biosecurity

6.49   Biosecurity measures are essential for limiting the spread of pests and diseases within a tree population. The Council will follow the principles set out in the Arboricultural Association Application of Biosecurity in Arboriculture Guidance Note 2 when carrying out all tree works. External contractors will also be required to follow this advice.

6.50   A number of significant pests and diseases already affect the treescape in the area. The Council currently undertakes works to deal with existing issues such as Chalara ash dieback, Phytophthora species, Dutch elm disease, and horse chestnut bleeding canker but the range and significance of pathogens is constantly evolving and influenced by factors such as tree stress and climate.

6.51   Robust tree risk management practices provide the backbone of the Council's strategy for management of pests and diseases within the existing tree population. In addition, it will consider emerging threats and modify practices where necessary, such as by targeted surveys of particular tree species or at a specific time of year.

6.52   All contractors will follow biosecurity measures when moving between tree populations and sites. These will include limitations on the movement of potentially infectious material; basic sanitation measures for boots, equipment, plant and vehicles as appropriate; and increased sanitation measures such as disinfection when working near to trees with known or suspected pathogens.

6.53   A significant source of new pests and diseases to the UK comes from the importation of live plant material. The Government has strict policies for the importation and movement including the requirement for plant passports to move regulated plant material in Great Britain and phytosanitary certificates to ensure that imported consignments meet required plant health standards. The Council will only use suppliers who follow the relevant biosecurity protocols and will use domestic and local suppliers by preference wherever possible.

7.0 Planting

7.1   This chapter explores one of the five Strategic Objectives for tree management: tree planting. It sets out current priorities within this topic area and explores where action should be taken.

What is it?

7.2   Significant tree planting is required across the region to support an increase in canopy cover and deliver the important range of ecosystems services, habitats and benefits which trees are uniquely able to provide. To achieve the increases in tree cover at this scale, a step-change is required both in the management of existing trees but especially in the rate of tree planting. In simple terms, rates of tree planting must be substantially increased wherever possible.

7.3   The Council cannot deliver tree planting at the scale that is required; it does not own or manage a large proportion of the total land area. This strategy sets out what the Council will do on its own land and what its role will be in working with others to facilitate change.

How does this support the vision?

7.4   Additional tree planting will help to increase canopy cover, offset anticipated losses due to disease and maturity, and improve the resilience, functionality and connectedness of the treescape. Increasing canopy cover is fundamental to the vision for the treescape, and this cannot be achieved without additional planting.

7.5   Improvements to the age structure and species diversity of the tree population, enhancement of biodiversity, and improvements to the resilience of the treescape can all be achieved through well-designed planting. Increasing tree cover, with the right trees planted in the right place, will help to increase the ecosystems services provided by trees, and benefits to people and nature. Planting in locations where existing canopy cover is particularly low will also help to improve the distribution of trees and provide more equitable public access to trees.

7.6   Poor planting practices limit the benefits provided by trees. Trees that fail, are unwelcome, or require excessive maintenance to thrive are not sustainable. But a well-designed planting scheme is an investment for the future. Delivering planting well is therefore also key to effective use of resources.

What are the Council's strategic objectives?

7.7   These are the key deliverables for the Council in this topic area:

Table 16 Strategic Objectives for tree planting

Ref	Strategic Objectives
TP1	Identify opportunities to establish new tree planting on Council owned land.

Ref	Strategic Objectives
TP2	Ensure planting and management activities contribute to the creation of a diverse and resilient tree population, considering climate change and the potential spread of pests and diseases, and following the 'right tree in the right place' principle.
TP3	Establish an appropriate canopy cover target based on a comprehensive evidence base and rigorous methodology.
TP4	Increase tree planting on Council owned land. This could include using volunteers or partnering with local charities to deliver tree planting.
TP5	Foster successful relationships with agencies such as the Forestry Commission and Wildlife Trust to explore opportunities for delivering trees planting schemes on Council owned land.
TP6	Review existing cross organisational working protocols and develop successful systems for working with Lancashire County Council and Parish Councils to increase street tree planting.
TP7	Ensure nursery stock is sustainably sourced.
TP8	Investigate opportunities for the Council to grow its own tree stock on areas of Council owned land which can then be transplanted to planting sites as and when required.
TP9	Use the planning system to ensure that tree planting on Council owned land delivered through new development schemes provides adequate species diversity to help build a resilient treescape.
TP10	Work with private landowners to explore opportunities for tree planting on their land. This could include providing tree planting information and advice on funding opportunities for tree planting.
TP11	Maximise opportunities for funding tree planting by the Council, such as through sponsorship from private individuals and organisations, and by pursuing a shared approach across the public sector to delivering tree planting.

Overall approach to planting

7.8   Local targets will be based on a data-led analysis of the capacity for planting. These will be periodically reviewed to reflect local constraints, the types of land, and current canopy cover to ensure that they are realistic and deliverable. The target for Council land will be higher than in other places as the Council seeks to lead on this issue. It will monitor and report on progress periodically.

7.9   Planting will need to take place on both Council land and privately owned land. Whilst the Council can directly control planting on its own land, it can only influence or advise on planting in most other situations.

7.10   The Council does not realistically have the capacity or resources to deliver such ambitious planting alone and will therefore work with volunteers, local charities and other external organisations to deliver tree planting across the region.

7.11   Planting on Council land will be maximised, in consideration of other land uses. There will be a presumption in favour of growing trees on Council land wherever possible, except where this would be contrary to other important objectives, or where it would not help to deliver the vision for the treescape.

7.12   On Council land and any other land that the Council controls, it will deliver or require replacement tree planting for any tree that is removed. Replacement tree planting will normally be determined on the basis or replacement of canopy cover and/or benefits and services within a reasonable timeframe. This may mean replacing trees with more than the same number of trees in some circumstances.

7.13   The Council will take opportunities to coordinate and facilitate the delivery of tree planting by multilateral action. Typically, tree planting requires land, funding, technical expertise, and the support or motivation to act. Bringing these together where they exist but are disaggregated will unlock planting opportunities and the Council has a leadership role in this.

Pathways for new tree planting

7.14   The Council will use, wherever possible, a range of pathways to encourage, require or deliver new tree planting. This will include but is not limited to:

(i)   Maximising tree planting on Council land, including through grant funding, commuted sums and planting budgets

(ii)   Working in partnership with other landowners to increase planting, including by giving advice and coordinating resources

(iii)   Working with Lancashire County Council to increase street tree planting

(iv)   Working with Parish Councils to increase local planting

(v)   Maximising tree planting delivered through regeneration projects, especially in urban areas

(vi)   Supporting increased tree planting on rural land, including by providing information to landowners on available grants

(vii)   Investigating ways to encourage tree planting in residential gardens

(viii) Using the planning system to require tree planting in development

(ix)   Requiring robust tree replacement for the removal of Council trees, TPO trees, and where appropriate, trees in Conservation Areas

(x)   Establishing schemes for multilateral cooperation on tree planting, including through sponsorship and information sharing

(xi)   Allocating tree planting budgets for annual tree planting either on Council land or in partnership with community groups

(xii)   Establishing a tree planting fund that is separate from annual budgets to receive and utilise available funding streams for tree planting activity

(xiii)   Providing an advisory service for private landowners who wish to plant trees on their land

(xiv)   Promoting the benefits of tree planting to members of the public, including via the Council's website

Tree planting capacity

7.15   Tree planting on Council owned land alone is not a viable solution to increasing canopy cover. Given the type of land the Council owns, a reasonable maximum canopy cover would be 40%. Because of the relatively small proportion of land under Council control, achieving this relatively high figure would only increase the overall canopy cover by a small amount, from just under 11% to approximately 12%. The ambition of this strategy is to exceed this significantly.

7.16   The Council will use the data it generates through tree surveys, and other available datasets, to monitor canopy cover. It will map planting locations and develop a model of planting capacity that reflects local factors, and monitor progress against this. Sharing information on canopy cover, capacity, progress and what can be achieved collectively is an important part of the Council's role in this ambition.

7.17   Where significant capacity for new planting is identified, the Council will focus on these areas by identifying the relevant stakeholders and developing ways to require, deliver or encourage planting, including in partnership where appropriate.

7.18   Tree planting will comprise a mix of small, medium, and large tree species which will provide different levels of cover at maturity. Woodland trees will also grow differently to individual street trees and so delivery of different types of tree planting will not always deliver the same canopy cover gains. However, taking an average tree size at 25 years, tree planting requirements for increases in canopy cover can be approximately calculated.

Table 17 Tree planting and canopy cover projections

Assumed tree crown diameter at 25 years	6m
Trees to be planted for 12% canopy cover	50,564
Trees to be planted for 15% canopy cover	252,820
Trees to be planted for 20% canopy cover	505,640

7.19   Overall, tree canopy cover across the Preston City Council area is currently 10.96%. To achieve 20% canopy cover, around half a million trees must be planted across the local authority area.

7.20   The figures above refer to the canopy cover of established trees at maturity and are not adjusted for natural failure, thinning, or the rate of delivery and growth. To achieve the increases described within 25 years, all of the trees must be planted immediately. A more realistic planting programme would spread planting over a longer period. This would tend to delay delivery, depending on the extent to which a programme could be 'front loaded'. Spreading planting equally over 25 years would approximately double the numbers required, although this approach would significantly overshoot the target canopy cover.

Figure 8 Haslam Local Nature Reserve, Preston

Delivery in partnership

7.21   In order to maximise tree planting on Council owned land, the Council will need to extend planting to land outside of its existing parks and open green spaces. The Council will ensure that all departments work together to identify Council land where tree planting can take place and prioritise this.

7.22   The Council will develop a tree planting strategy for its own land, which allocates parcels of Council owned land for tree planting and establishes a phasing plan for when planting will be undertaken. This will include canopy cover targets for all large Council sites such as parks.

7.23   The Council will cooperate with private landowners, organisations and individuals to find ways to increase tree planting on private land. The Council will cooperate with Parish Councils to identify opportunities to accommodate, fund or otherwise deliver planting within their areas. It will cooperate with Lancashire County Council to find ways to deliver additional street tree planting and, where appropriate, investigate how tree planting can be delivered in rural locations, including on farmland across the northern wards.

7.24   To increase tree cover in city centre wards significant attention will need to be given to increasing street tree planting and delivering tree planting through development and urban regeneration schemes. In the rural wards to the north, there is potential to increase canopy cover through Government tree planting programs and initiatives. The Council will support landowners to identify funding opportunities for tree planting on their land.

7.25   The primary role of the Council in facilitating planting on private land is in convening and coordinating the necessary components of successful schemes. Bringing together the funding, land, expertise and ambition to plant trees can unlock existing opportunities, even when those do not all rest with a single party. The Council may act in such situations as a chair, and a trusted independent authority to facilitate cooperation within the community, including by giving advice and information sharing.

Replacement tree planting

7.26   Wherever the Council can require replacement planting in the event of tree removal, it will do so.

7.27   Where the Council removes or permits the removal of one of its trees for management purposes replacement tree planting will be undertaken. This will not apply to woodland thinning and other enhancement activities that increase benefits, or do not reduce tree canopy cover.

7.28   Planting location and species may differ from the tree that is removed, especially where a better location can be found, but replacement planting will always follow the 'right tree in the right place' principle.

7.29   It is important that replacement planting delivers the same benefits as the trees which have been removed. Therefore, one for one replacement may not be adequate when considering the removal of larger trees which provide a high level of benefits and services. The Council will apply a replacement tree planting policy which maintains the benefits and services delivered by the treescape and help to deliver canopy cover targets.

7.30   The CAVAT system may be used in some situations to determine a financial contribution as an alternative to direct tree replacement. For example where a third party removes a tree on Council land with permission, but no nearby planting opportunities are available. Any such sums will be used for tree planting, including in partnership.

Standards and specifications

7.31 In order for new trees to survive, planting and aftercare needs to be carried out correctly. The Council will give advice on tree planting specifications, tree pit design and aftercare. If will normally require maintenance for 5 years after a tree has been planted in accordance with BS8545.

7.32 Indicative standard details and minimum standards for planting will be developed and used by the Council including, where appropriate, external contractors that undertake tree planting on its behalf. These standards will also be used as the basis for assessing the adequacy of planting schemes that are proposed as part of development. They will cover:

> (i) Planting types (specimen tree, woodland, hedgerow etc.)
>
> (ii) Species selection and provenance
>
> (iii) Tree sizes and quality
>
> (iv) Temporary support and irrigation
>
> (v) Soil preparation and planting pit design
>
> (vi) Minimum soil volume
>
> (vii) Surface finishes
>
> (viii) Aftercare and post-planting maintenance

7.33 The Council will develop a framework of costed standards for tree planting, including the cost of delivery, adoption and maintenance of a tree on Council land. If a member of the public or external organisation wishes to pay the Council to carry out tree planting on their behalf, the Council will be able to use these standards to provide consistent costings for the work. The framework may also be used as the basis for funding planting on Council land through development, or between departments or authorities. The framework will be reviewed periodically to take account of changes in the price of plant materials, labour and equipment.

7.34 Where possible, naturally regenerating forms of planting, such as woodland, and longer-lived species or tree forms will be preferred in order to minimise future maintenance and planting costs.

7.35 Native trees will generally be used wherever habitat creation is a priority, but specimen and ornamental trees, as well as trees in gardens and in parks may include non-native species. Naturalised species may be suitable in some woodland locations, particularly where they are already established or used to replace trees that cannot be replanted due to disease. Species selection will be judged on a case-by-case basis and the Council will advise on any species that should not be planted.

7.36 Diversity in planting schemes should be maximised. Within a scheme or a local area, no family of trees should dominate. This can result in tree populations that are more susceptible to disease. A wide diversity of genus and species will be encouraged, and single species planting schemes will not normally be considered appropriate.

Tree planting locations

7.37   Tree planting has sometimes been inappropriately located, with the right trees planted in the wrong place and vice versa. The Council will produce a tree planting strategy identifying potential locations for tree planting and outlining priorities for each ward.   Therefore, whoever ends up undertaking the planting, whether it be the Council, volunteers, community groups or external organisations, the Council can ensure that the right type of planting happens in the right place.

7.38   The tree planting strategy will take the geology, soil type and climatic conditions at each site into account, as well as the current species composition and select species to recommend or exclude accordingly.   Climate resilience will also be a key consideration in species selection. Where appropriate, natural regeneration may be considered as an option for increasing tree cover at a site.

7.39   Tree planting will be targeted to help link up existing parks and open spaces with green corridors.   Areas with lower tree cover will also be prioritised for new tree planting to improve canopy cover distribution across the local authority area, particularly where this would benefit the greatest number of people.

7.40   Whilst the Council understands that tree planting must be undertaken at a significant scale to reach canopy cover targets, it understands that there are some areas where trees should not be planted. There are a number of valuable habitats and other land where the Council may not encourage tree planting to take place. These include:

- Sensitive habitats such as wetland, heathland and species rich grassland
- Sites with rare or protected species
- Sports pitches
- Historic sites where planting could harm heritage assets
- Some designed landscapes

8.0 Resources and Governance

8.1   This chapter explores one of the five Strategic Objectives for tree management: resourcing and governance of tree management. It sets out current priorities within this topic area and explores where action should be taken.

What is it?

8.2   In order to successfully deliver its arboricultural services, the Council needs to have appropriate governance, organisational infrastructure, systems, and resources in place. This includes a defined organisational structure, a sufficient number of staff or contractors with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and adequate funding streams.

How does this support the vision?

8.3   Proper governance and resourcing will allow the Council to work effectively in support of all elements of the vision. In particular, proactive and planned work is more likely to be delivered efficiently, budget planning and better forecasting of demands helps to avoid backlogs or problems and reducing friction will get the best from people.

What are the Council's strategic objectives?

8.4   These are the key deliverables for the Council in this topic area:

Table 18 Strategic Objectives for resources and governance

Ref	Strategic Objectives
RG1	Review and update existing governance systems and structures, data handling, line management and internal service provision to ensure they are fit for purpose.
RG2	Develop a strategy for maintaining adequate staffing levels to successfully deliver the Council's four core arboricultural functions. Define all roles and establish minimum competencies.
RG3	Develop a framework for ensuring that the arboricultural team has a defined budget in place for the management of trees in the existing treescape and the development of a comprehensive programme of new tree planting.
RG4	Develop a new publicly accessible mapping platform for tree related information.
RG5	Update the Council website to include the most up to date information and advice regarding trees in line with this Strategy.
RG6	Supplement core functions with parallel systems using alternative forms of governance to organise, fund and/or deliver tree planting and management in partnership with other sectors and organisations.

Ref	Strategic Objectives
RG7	Produce detailed action plans for each Strategic Objective, identifying what further information is needed, what actions will occur, and specifying responsibility, timescales and resource requirements

Arboriculture team structure

8.5 The Council's arboriculture team is within the Parks and Streetscene department under the Communities and Environment directorate. It is responsible for managing all trees located on Council owned land, with the exception of trees located on Council land which is leased out. All essential tree works are carried out by the arboriculture team, or via external contractors where required.

8.6 The arboriculture team provides advice to other departments across the Council. Planning advice relating to trees is provided by the arboriculture team in response to planning applications, pre-apps and complaints from the public, and in relation to TPO trees or trees within conservation areas. The Council will develop a system for providing advice to other departments to ensure that the arboriculture team receives appropriate funds for this service.

8.7 The arboriculture team will deal with all enquiries, complaints and service requests relating to trees. The Council will develop a system to ensure there is effective communication of requests between central systems and the arboriculture team.

Leaseholders

8.8 The Council's Property department leases out land to external leaseholders. Where there are trees located on Council owned land which has been leased out, tree risk management becomes a responsibility of the leaseholder. The Council will require leaseholders to manage trees in line with this Strategy and enforcement will be carried out to ensure they are meeting their obligations.

Planning

8.9 Planning is discussed in Section 5.0.

Tree works

8.10 Tree works are discussed in Section 6.0.

External contractors and consultants

8.11 Where the Council requires an external supplier to undertake arboricultural services they will be required to meet a set of minimum standards.

8.12 Work by external suppliers will be administered by the arboriculture team and delivered through existing budgets or billed to the land-owning department for which they are undertaken.

Digital infrastructure and mapping

8.13   In order to efficiently collect and store information relating to trees, the Council will use a tree risk management software system. Where there is potential to integrate elements of the tree risk management system into the Council's overall asset management system, this will be done.   Information about trees will be stored centrally and made readily accessible to those who need it.

8.14   The Council will ensure that the software system it uses for tree risk management will be compatible with the Council's GIS systems to map out recorded trees and store relevant information.

Intranet and public mapping

8.15   The Council will develop an internal mapping system which allows all surveyed trees to be accurately plotted and survey information to be stored in one place. The site will be live so that it automatically updates every time a new programme of inspections is undertaken. This will help to build an accurate picture of the treescape as it develops over time.

8.16   The Council will also develop a user-friendly public facing tree mapping system which will provide the public with tree related information such as TPOs, conservation areas, trees where a problem has been reported, trees where works have been undertaken and trees where future works are proposed.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

8.17   GIS provides a way to map location data and record descriptive information in one place. This is especially useful when considering a large data set with wide spatial distribution such as a tree population. The data that held in this way can be analysed in a variety of ways to develop a better understanding of the treescape and how to manage it to maximise the benefits it delivers.

8.18   The Council will update its GIS software so that it is able to develop high quality, user friendly internal and public facing tree mapping systems. The Council will ensure it has the correct in-house GIS expertise to develop and manage the required mapping systems.

Skills

8.19   All roles within the Council's arboriculture team will have defined minimum qualifications to ensure that employees are properly trained for the jobs they will be undertaking. This will mean that the Council will have the correct resources for the work that needs to be carried out and will minimise the requirement for in-house training.

8.20   Staff roles and responsibilities will be defined clearly in writing. Staff members will understand their role and will be aware of their position within the wider team. Staff members will also be familiar with this Strategy and how the objectives will be delivered through the work of the arboriculture team.

8.21   Responsibility for the delivery of actions and objectives within this Strategy will be allocated to appropriate staff members. Tasks required for delivery will be clearly defined and understood.

Funding

8.22   The Council will ensure that the arboriculture team has adequate funding in place to successfully deliver its work streams, including the creation of a dedicated budget for trees. Alongside the departmental budget, tree work will be covered by a range of different funding options such as service level agreements with other Council departments to undertake tree works and fees from commercial services provided to private landowners.

8.23   Where the arboriculture team provides services, either to other Council departments or to private individuals and organisations, the Council will use a standardised contract to ensure that a systematic approach is taken.

8.24   The Council will explore options for grants to help with tree planting targets and will consider developing a tree sponsorship scheme where private individuals can donate towards tree planting.