

Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

- 9.51 This policy recognises the important contribution trees, woodland and hedgerows make to the character and quality of urban environments, the green and blue network, and the wider social, economic and environmental benefits they provide, including mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- 9.52 Through planning and development, it aims to significantly increase tree cover, protect and enhance trees and woodland, and connect people to the trees and woodland around them.

Policy G6 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

Protecting trees, hedgerows and woodland

Trees, hedgerows and woodland are vital green infrastructure as they provide multiple public benefits, and their value will be protected and enhanced through a range of measures including:

- a) protecting ancient woodland, as identified on the policies map, and ancient or veteran trees elsewhere unless there are wholly exceptional reasons as identified by national planning policy and a suitable compensation strategy exists;
- b) affording strong protection to trees that are subject to a tree preservation order or are located within a conservation area;
- c) protecting hedgerows, particularly those of historic or biodiversity importance, and securing appropriate replacement, enhancement and expansion of this priority habitat, using the Defra biodiversity metric, where their loss is unavoidable;
- d) encouraging the positive management of trees, woodland and hedgerows to maximise their green infrastructure functions including ecological quality.

Where trees are located within a development site, a tree survey must be submitted as part of the ecology report, including the location, size, condition and species of all trees and hedgerows on the site and adjoining land.

Proposals will only be supported where it is demonstrated that:

- e) all reasonable steps have been taken to avoid tree loss;
- f) trees of significant amenity, historic or ecological/habitat conservation value have been retained as part of the site layout;
- g) retained trees have been positively integrated on a sustainable basis, and will be satisfactorily protected from construction impacts and site works;
- h) the public realm includes new tree planting, ensuring that they meet the council's minimum specification standards and maximise potential ecosystem services.

Tree replacement

Where it is imperative to remove trees, and as a last resort, suitable replacement planting will need to be provided. Based on the British Standard for Tree Assessment (BS5387), as a

minimum requirement, trees less than 15cm in diameter at a height of 1.5m should be replaced at a ratio of 2:1 and the size of the trees planted should reflect the size of the tree removed. All existing trees above 15cm in diameter should be assessed by using an agreed valuation tool e.g. the CAVAT full method and the assessment submitted with the planning application. The value of the trees lost will form the starting point for discussions on replacement trees.

Increasing and enhancing tree canopy cover

The quantity, quality and neighbourhood equity of tree canopy cover in the borough will be increased and enhanced in conjunction with meeting the requirements for biodiversity net gain, urban greening, and design.

Development should seek opportunities to increase and enhance the value of the tree canopy.

Major development will be expected to meet a minimum target for tree canopy cover (upon maturity) across the whole site area, in accordance with the evidence set out in the council's emerging green infrastructure study.

Where there are existing ecological, historical, landscape, or operational reasons, or other site characteristics, that may affect the ability of meeting the canopy requirements (as applicable), evidence to support this should be provided, and an alternative percentage of canopy cover should be agreed with the council including off-site provision in neighbourhoods deficient in tree canopy cover.

Where new streets form part of the proposal, trees should be integrated into the design as part of the public realm wherever possible, considering key constraints such as highway safety, street furniture, lighting and underground services. Tree planting in private gardens should be avoided where possible. Planning applications will need to provide clear, justifiable and compelling reasons where this cannot be achieved.

Tree planting and aftercare

All tree planting and aftercare, whether as compensation for trees lost, or to increase and enhance tree canopy cover, must achieve high standards, to retain the multiple benefits that trees provide and ensure the highest possible survival rates.

Proposals must demonstrate that:

- i) trees will be planted of a suitable size and species, and in an appropriate location, with a preference for on-site provision;
- j) the council's standards for tree planting will be met, with an emphasis on quality over quantity;
- k) they meet the cost of planting and establishing new trees; and
- l) they provide an appropriate management and maintenance plan with identified financial resources to deliver it, including watering for at least five years.

Places for Everyone Links:

Policy JP-G7 Trees and Woodland

Reasoned Justification

- 9.53 National planning policy recognises the important contribution trees and woodland make to the character and quality of urban environments, and the provision of ecosystem services.
- 9.54 Places for Everyone highlights the importance of the Greater Manchester Tree and Woodland Strategy and the contribution that planning and development can make to help deliver the aims and objectives of the Strategy. Trees and woodland should be protected during the construction phase of development and where development would result in the loss of existing trees, replacement should result in a net enhancement in the character and quality of the treescape and biodiversity value in the local area.
- 9.55 The average tree canopy cover across towns and cities in England is 16% although there is significant variability between and within urban areas. Evidence suggests that 20% tree canopy cover is a suitable aspiration for towns and cities.
- 9.56 In Greater Manchester, the average tree canopy cover baseline is currently 15% and there is an aspiration to increase this to 17%. However, due to underlying land cover types, the figures are highly variable across the different geographies of Greater Manchester. In Rochdale, due to the large areas of upland and lowland agriculture, the current average baseline is 8%, although this is also highly variable between wards and neighbourhood areas of Rochdale: some areas meet the minimum standards for towns and cities whereas other areas are very deficient.
- 9.57 Our aspiration is to achieve greater tree equity across Rochdale whilst also increasing the percentage of tree canopy cover more in line with other areas of Greater Manchester. Therefore, in addition to setting targets for tree canopy cover from new development, this policy requires that where semi-mature trees are lost because of development, they should be replaced based on their value and the benefits they provide. A two for one policy, whereby saplings are planted to replace older trees, is often appropriate for immature trees but it does not recognise the true value of semi-mature and mature trees and therefore would not make a sufficient contribution to increasing tree cover across the borough. We expect development to take account of the real value and benefits of semi-mature and mature trees by applying a valuation tool e.g. the CAVAT full method (Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees) and a commuted sum to be paid to the council for tree planting improvements across Rochdale.
- 9.58 Proposals will need to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right place. Native species common to the area should be planted in locations where there will be a long-term public benefit, and therefore private gardens should not form part of the calculation for tree canopy cover.
- 9.59 We will also set tree canopy cover targets, based on evidence, at ward and neighbourhood level to account for the significant variation in tree canopy cover across the borough and ensure that there is an appropriate uplift in tree canopy cover across all neighbourhoods, especially those urban areas which are currently deficient.