

Policy for Trees and Hedgerows on Parish Lands

Introduction

This Policy for Trees and Woodlands in the Parish will help Great Missenden Parish Council meet its statutory biodiversity obligations, and work within the constraints of the National Planning Policy framework. Its overall aim will be to protect and enhance the existing trees and the cover they provide, recognising the benefits for people and wildlife. It will seek to connect, protect and enhance designated sites, ancient woodlands and veteran trees, and promote native tree planting.

Trees and Woodland

1. Development which would result in the loss of, or damage to, ancient or notable trees will not be permitted except in wholly exceptional circumstances.
2. The planting of trees within any new development shall be sought, to benefit wildlife and biodiversity, to enhance landscape and provide public amenity and health. A target canopy cover of at least 20 per cent will be pursued through the retention of important trees, the appropriate replacement of trees lost through development, ageing or disease, on a 'two for one' basis, and by new planting to support the green infrastructure.
3. Detailed guidance on implementation of this policy will be set out in the Trees Strategy below.

Strategy for delivering the Parish Council Policy for Trees on Parish Lands

The resource

The lands owned by the Parish have no Ancient Woodlands. The most significant trees on parish owned land are found around the Buryfield, in the centre of Great Missenden behind the library. Other lands owned by the Parish which include trees are 6 allotment sites, Prestwood Common, the Lovell Estate around Lodge Lane in Prestwood and Ballinger Common. Any leased Open Space to also be included, for example Prestwood Recreation Ground.

Other significant trees are found in the Parish on land owned by BCC (Abbey Park), by CDC (Angling Spring Wood) and in the Forestry Commission's Rook Wood. Both Prestwood and Great Missenden Parish churches also have old trees. In addition private gardens may contain notable trees, but these are outside the remit of this Policy, except when homeowners seek planning permission for the removal of trees in the Conservation area or those with Tree Protection Orders.

The benefits delivered by trees and woodlands are:-

- The reduction of pollution through transpiration.
- Leaf cover contributes to shade and cooling in times of raised temperatures through Climate Change and global warming.
- Alleviation of flooding
- Trees can foster a feeling of well-being and health.
- Provision of habitat for associated natural species

Common complaints about trees

These may include interference with light, radio or internet signals, crossing garden boundaries, shedding leaves or fruits and dropping twigs or branches. The Council will not act in any of these

cases. The owner of the tree may be approached by a neighbour and agreement about the nuisance may be agreed and paid for by the complainant.

BCC may take action if the falling branches affect highways. The contact in these cases is online through the BCC website to report branches/tree debris on highways or call in an emergency; in office hours 01296 382416 or out of hours 01296 486630.

Sustainability and Natural Capital

The 140 trees on GMPC-owned land are surveyed regularly by a tree expert who monitors the health of the trees. Remedial work is undertaken where necessary as agreed by the Council. In order to maintain the tree cover of the Parish at a reasonable level, this policy proposes that any tree which is removed is replaced by new planting of at least two, and up to five, native trees (according to the diameter of the removed tree)

The Council will avoid felling trees unless absolutely necessary. Large woody debris from fallen or felled trees should be left on site, and trunks left standing whenever possible.

Climate Change, Pests and Tree Disease

Hot summers such as the one experienced in 2018 call for greater tree cover for cooling buildings, shade and human wellbeing. There are likely to be more such summers in future so it is essential to maintain or improve the amount of shading.

There are several significant ash trees in the Parish and ash dieback is a very real threat. No action is necessary at this stage but trees should continue to be monitored. It will be important to replant other native trees (2-5 for each according to size) in order to replace the diseased trees.

Planning and Development

Duties under Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and NPPF - National and local planning policy – give protection to trees and the Green belt when considering areas of development.

The District Local Plan contains the following directive ‘Trees of good quality, landscape significance or amenity value will be expected to be retained in good conditions, even where this will restrict or prevent development’.

In the absence of a neighbourhood plan covering the Parish, any planning decisions will be made on the basis of national guidance. This tree policy refers to that set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. There are also specific requirements for trees in the Conservation Area and trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders which are not specifically referenced in the strategy/policy document. Such trees require specific consent for works to the tree and/or their removal. More guidance is available on the government website (See link in Appendix 1).

The Planning committee of the Council does, and should seek to continue to protect trees, especially those with Tree Protection Orders and/or in conservation areas such as central Great Missenden. Whenever removal is essential the Parish Planning Committee will request that they are each replaced by 2-5 new native trees. (See Appendix 2).

Developer obligations - Any development of areas within the parish should include tree planting plans either in new open spaces or new verges/pavements to offset the increased traffic pollution/biodiversity loss/increased noise levels.

Appendix 1

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas>

Appendix 2

The following is a hypothetical example of replacement tree standards from Bristol's tree strategy. 'A development proposal results in the loss of two street trees, which have trunk diameters of 27cm and 33cm respectively. The tree with the 27cm diameter trunk will require two replacement trees and the tree with the 33cm diameter trunk will require three replacement trees. The obligation will require the provision of five replacement street trees.

Signed

Date adopted

This policy is due for review annually from date of adoption.

Adopted February 2019

Reviewed – no amendments - April 2021

Reviewed – one amendment – January 2023 –

The Resource to include Any leased Open Space to also be included, for example Prestwood Recreation Ground.

Acknowledgements:

This policy was written by Cllr Valerie Marshall with guidance from the Woodland Trust, and example policies from local councils of Hook, Hazlemere, Stratton St Margaret and Bristol City, and the encouragement of members of GMPC Open Spaces group.