Tree & Woodland Strategy for Stevenage

2025 - 2035

Contents

Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree long time ago.

Warren Buffett

1. Purpose

Stevenage was designated Britain's first New Town on 11th November 1946. The town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. The town continues to benefit from the foresight of the original architects who retained and protected many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands and veteran trees, to create the varied green infrastructure, wildlife corridors and sense of identity that residents and visitors enjoy today.

This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which the town's tree stock, including amenity trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, are managed and developed to ensure that they continue to contribute to an attractive and healthy environment for people and wildlife now and in the future.

2. Introduction

It has long been recognised that amenity trees are an essential landscape feature within our 21st century towns and cities, and Stevenage is no exception.

The new town planners included for extensive tree planting to be undertaken as well as the retention of much of the existing farm woodland and hedgerow during the initial development of the town. Their foresight has been realised in the tree stock which we have inherited and enjoy today.

It is a sobering thought to realise that there are a number of trees throughout the new town that were growing before the car was invented. Whilst it is impossible to predict what form of transport will be in general use in another 100 years' time, it is possible to predict that with safeguarding, good planning, and care many of the trees we plant today could still be thriving.

Trees positively contribute to our lives in many ways and just as it is us who are benefitting now, from the foresight of the original new town planners, so we must show our commitment to the future by continuing to plant new, and manage existing, trees for the benefit of future generations. The life span of many tree species is considerably greater than ours, so to achieve all the benefits that trees can provide we need to start now.

2.1 Trees

Trees can take many different forms, functions, and sizes, and can have lifespans varying from tens to thousands of years. They can stand alone as a specimen in a park, for example, line our streets and cycle networks, be managed to restrict their size and shape to create hedgerows, or be found on mass within a woodland setting, and many other variations in between.

2.2 Woodland

Over 40% of the woodlands in Stevenage are identified as being ‘ancient woodland’ in that which has been in existence since at least 1600; and described as ‘semi-natural’ because they have received management in the past. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment.

A natural woodland composed of native species without active production management is a reliable way of capturing carbon and at the same time supporting the recovery of biodiversity. In the right places they can also contribute to reducing flood risk, stabilising soils and providing recreational opportunities.

2.3 Ancient Hedgerows

Ancient hedgerows in Stevenage line many of the old roads or country lanes that existed before the new town was developed - Camps Hill Lane, Old Walkern Lane, Shephall Lane, Dene’s Lane for example.

In addition to their cultural and historical importance our hedgerows are invaluable to wildlife. If managed correctly they provide shelter and food sources for a variety of wildlife including invertebrates, birds and small mammals - hedgerows with full sized trees are even better for wildlife. They also act as wildlife corridors, slow flooding, can prevent soil erosion and can capture and store carbon within the wood and in the soils on which they grow.

2.4 Benefits of Trees

A good quality treescape makes a significant contribution to every community, providing a wide range of benefits to the environment, local people, wildlife, the economy and helping to mitigate climate change.

- Urban trees promote health and wellbeing.
  Access to nature alleviates stress, stabilises blood pressure and eases anxiety and depression. People exercise more, and feel better around trees, so promoting healthy, active lifestyles, which subsequently reduces the future costs of health care.

- Urban trees create habitats for wildlife.
  Trees, whether in an ancient woodland or a park, provide homes and a food source for a variety of birds, insects, and other wildlife.

- Urban trees prevent flooding.
  Trees intercept rainwater and can help to combat surface water flooding - interception by the tree canopy can reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground by as much 45%[1]. They also improve water quality by filtering out pollution.

- Urban trees improve air quality.
  Trees can reduce air pollution, help to limit noise pollution and moderate local climate helping to keep buildings and green spaces shaded and cool in the summer, and protected from cold winds in the winter. It is estimated that in 2020, the air pollution removal services provided by nature avoided 2,001 deaths and prevented 49,126 years of life being lost[2].

- Urban trees attract business.
  Trees help to create attractive environments for business investment and development, creating spaces that people want to live in, work in or visit.

- Urban trees connect us to our heritage.
  Trees are the living history of our communities. Many of the hedgerows, lanes, woodlands, and veteran trees that we enjoy today were part of the local landscape before the designation of Stevenage new town. The extensive tree planting that was undertaken as the town was developed has supported the treescape that we enjoy across the town today.

- Urban trees can be an important source of biomass for energy.
  Biomass (trees) takes carbon out of the atmosphere while it is growing and returns it as it is burned. If it is managed on a sustainable basis, biomass is harvested as part of a constantly replenished crop. This is either during woodland, tree management or coppicing. This maintains a closed carbon cycle with no net increase in atmospheric CO_2 levels.

2.5 Threats & Challenges to Our Treescape

Trees, like much of our landscape, are facing unprecedented environmental challenges. In Stevenage these include:

Amenity Trees

- Pests and diseases
- Climate change
- Insufficient diversity of species
- Aging tree stock
- Financial constraints
- Subsidence / damage to property
- Demand for more housing
- Pressure for more car parking
- Successful establishment of trees within hard surfaced areas – town centre, neighbourhood centres, industrial areas
- Differing expectations of residents

Woodlands

- No planned maintenance for 20+ years
- Demand for new housing
- Fly-tipping
- Financial constraints

Ancient Hedgerows

- Lack of proactive management
- Housing development immediately adjacent to homes
- Financial constraints

2.6 Our Vision

Through partnership with local residents and other stakeholders we will create a bigger, well managed, more sustainable treescape; connecting trees, woodlands and hedgerows to benefit the environment, people, and wildlife now and in the future.

3. Context

This strategy will focus on the treescape managed by Stevenage Borough Council. For the purposes of this strategy the treescape includes trees in:

- Parks and green spaces
- Verges adjacent to the highway
- Town centre and neighbourhood centres and other parts of the built estate
- Woodlands
- Ancient hedgerows

3.1 National Context

- 25 Year Environment Plan, 2018: the government sets out its aspiration to increase woodland cover in England to 12% of total land area by 2060.

- The Environment Act 2021: a target is set to increase tree and woodland cover to 16.5% to total land area in England by 2050. Other initiatives introduced through the Act include:
  - Biodiversity Net Gain which mandates a mechanism for measuring a 10% net gain in biodiversity through the planning process
  - Nature Recovery Network which seeks to create bigger, better and more joined-up places for wildlife. This will be supported through mandatory Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
  - Since November 2023 Section 115 of the Act requires highway authorities in England have a statutory duty to consult members of the public before felling a street tree.

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021: A new clause requires that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees elsewhere within the development, ie in parks and open spaces. It also states that existing trees should be maintained wherever possible.

- The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that:

    - No person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size; and
    - There should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes.

Ideally, both standards would be met. However, there is acknowledgment that in urban areas where available land is more likely to be limited it may not be possible to meet the 500m threshold. In these instances the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

- Common Sense Management of Trees is published by the National Tree Safety Group: this publication (originally published in 2011, and revised in 2021) seeks to support land owners and managers with developing a balanced approach to tree risk management.

3.2 County Context

- HCC Tree & Woodland Strategy, 2022: This document sets out ambitions for Hertfordshire's treescapes until 2030, and the actions needed to achieve this.

- Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, 2020. This sets out nine ambitions for Hertfordshire including a 20% improvement in the extent and condition of Hertfordshire's habitat network through partnership working.

- Pollinator Strategy, 2019: recognises the role of trees and flowering plants in supporting pollinating insects.

- Green Infrastructure Strategy for Hertfordshire, 2022: sets out how trees, woodlands and other green infrastructure can contribute to a healthy and thriving community. The Strategy includes a plan to help plant 1.8 million trees by 2030.

- Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP): formed in 2020 the HCCSP brings together all eleven authorities and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to collaborate in a collective drive for sustainability.

- Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership: Hertfordshire is one of 48 counties in England developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The group is formed of partners from across public, private and voluntary sectors, who will collectively work in the development and delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- *Your Tree, Our Future*: As part of their Tree & Woodland Strategy Hertfordshire County Council are providing more than 100,000 trees for residents, businesses and community groups to plant across Hertfordshire by December 2025.

3.3 Local Context

- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP): the first document was launched in 2010 and has since been revised in 2017 and 2024. Forming the majority of the wildlife resource in Stevenage, it is recognised that the woodlands represent both an ecologically and scenically important habitat, with nearly all the woodland identified as 'Local Wildlife Sites' being ancient in origin.

- Local Plan, 2019: the plan sets out to preserve, create, protect and enhance important green infrastructure including trees, woodlands and hedgerows, and Local Wildlife Sites.

- Climate Change Strategy 2020: tree planting is one priority in Stevenage being net zero by 2030.

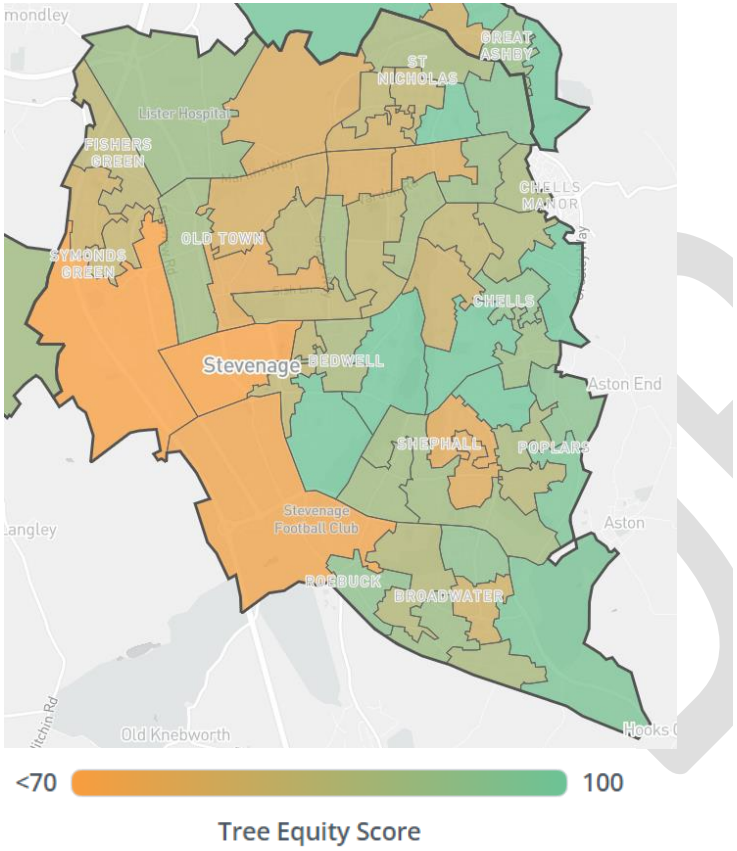
- Amenity Tree Management Policy, 2021: seeks to ensure that trees are retained, managed, protected and planted in accordance with sound landscape and arboricultural practice, with due regard to their contribution to amenity and urban landscape for both current and future generations.

- Green Spaces Strategy, 2024: this sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces, including woodlands, in Stevenage are maintained, managed and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable.

4. Evidence Base

4.1 Quantitative: Trees

For urban communities trees are an essential element of green infrastructure to support public health and climate resilience, but not all urban areas currently have equal access to the benefits that trees provide.



Tree Equity Score UK (https://uk.treeequityscore.org/) was launched in winter 2023, and was co-developed by the Woodland Trust, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and American Forests. It provides a measure of how well the benefits of trees are reaching communities in towns and cities across the UK.

The score ranges from 0 to 100. The lower the score, the greater priority for tree planting. A score of 100 means the neighbourhood has enough trees.

The map shows the current position for Stevenage. This data will help identify priorities for future tree planting within Stevenage.

4.2 Quantitative: Woodlands

The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size, and there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes. However, it does acknowledge that in urban areas the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

Their 2017 publication *Space for People, Targeting Action for Woodland Access* provides the following data for Hertfordshire:

	% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% of population with access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km	% extra population with access to a 2ha+ woodland within 500m if existing woods opened	% extra population with access to a 20ha+ woodland within 4km if existing woodlands opened	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km
Broxbourne	19.2	100.0	37.5	0.0	43.3	0.0
Dacorum	33.5	72.1	31.3	21.0	35.2	6.9
East Hertfordshire	8.8	67.5	56.5	31.5	34.7	1.0
Hertsmere	15.4	95.3	39.9	4.7	44.8	0.0
North Hertfordshire	9.4	10.9	39.2	71.5	51.4	17.5
St Albans	24.4	71.9	42.8	27.0	32.8	1.1
Stevenage	45.8	100.0	23.1	0.0	31.0	0.0
Three Rivers	43.9	99.3	41.9	0.7	14.3	0.0
Watford	3.1	100.0	64.9	0.0	31.9	0.0
Welwyn Hatfield	30.3	100.0	31.8	0.0	37.9	0.0
County Average	23.38	81.7				

4.3 Qualitative: Amenity Trees

Infographic to be inserted:

- Estimated 29,800 amenity trees
- Most common species: Norway Maple, Prunus, Ash
- Provide 22% canopy cover
- 94% deciduous and 6% evergreen
- Around 20% of trees rate as the highest carbon storage trees over the period of their lifetime

Provide ecosystem services (based on i-tree report) such as…

Remove 47 tonnes of pollution each year	Storing 53,000 tonnes of carbon	Intercept 26,000m^3 of rainfall each year	Sequester 2,140 tonnes of carbon a year
That's equivalent to the annual CO_2 emissions of x cars	Worth £12,348,220	Which equates to £33,561 each year	Worth £491,692 annually

4.4 Qualitative: Woodlands

Infographic to be inserted:

- 130 hectares of woodland,
- Includes semi-natural broadleaved, planted broad-leaved, planted coniferous, and planted mixed woodlands
- represents around 5% of the Borough
- Around 54 hectares is defined as 'ancient woodland' (from Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory).
- Storing around 27,750 tonnes of Carbon (based on Natural England Research Report NERR094)

5. Collaboration & Engagement

As a co-operative council we will provide a range of opportunities for residents, business, community groups to be involved in and support the management and maintenance of our trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

5.1 Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)

Launched in 2023, the CCCF is a grant available to local community groups and organisations to address climate change and its effects, through their own community-led projects. Funding is available across all thirteen wards in Stevenage and may be used to support environmental initiatives such as the creation of new treescapes, which may include street tree planting, small woodlands or community orchards.

5.2 Green Space Volunteers

These volunteers work with the Council and undertake tasks to help manage and improve community green spaces around the town including woodlands. Tree related tasks to date include woodland ride maintenance, tree planting, woodland coppicing to improve the structural diversity, restoration of ancient hedgerows, improvements to woodland ponds, wildlife surveys and installation of bird / bat boxes.

No previous experience is required. We will continue to encourage and welcome people from all sectors of our community to volunteer in green spaces by providing a range of opportunities.

5.3 Memorial Tree Planting

We will continue to work with residents, community groups or businesses who wish to fund the purchase, planting and aftercare of a memorial tree(s) in suitable agreed locations within Stevenage.

5.4 Community Tree Watering

Newly planted trees will require regular watering during the warmer and drier months of the year for, at least, the first three years if they are to have a reasonable chance of surviving to maturity. The watering regime for newly planted trees in Stevenage accounts for a significant portion of the annual tree planting budgets.

While it is not feasible for volunteers to help water trees planted in our parks and green spaces there may be an opportunity for residents to help water newly planted street trees. We will seek to develop a scheme that enables local communities to help with the establishment of new trees so that resources might be freed up to enable greater numbers of trees to be planted by the Council in future.

5.5 Your Tree, Our Future

We will continue to support Hertfordshire County Council in the promotion and delivery of their Your Tree, Our Future initiative – providing more than 100,000 trees to residents, businesses and community groups to plant across the county by December 2025.

5.6 Sponsored Tree Planting

We appreciate that not everyone is able to plant a tree in their garden or grounds, and that the cost of funding a memorial tree may be prohibitive to some. However, for those residents, businesses or community groups that would like to support tree planting in Stevenage we will seek to deliver an opportunity to sponsor tree planting. We will explore sponsorship opportunities that will enable all sectors of our community to contribute to the annual programme of tree planting activity in the town.

6. Funding

Like many other local authorities Stevenage Borough Council has faced a sustained period of austerity and still faces a challenge to bridge the gap between the increased cost of delivering services and the reduction in funding received to enable us to do so. We have worked hard to find ways to continue to deliver vital front-line services whilst maintaining financial security with minimal negative impact for our residents.

Regular funding for green spaces in Stevenage is achieved through a variety of methods including:

Revenue Expenditure: The Councils net budget, to support over 100 services, is around £13 million a year. This is funded by government (4%), business rates (41%) and council tax (55%).
Around 4% of the council's budget is allocated to the management and maintenance of trees and woodlands.

External Grants: In the past we have had success in bidding for funding from third parties including the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Coronation Living Heritage Fund which has enabled the delivery of community orchards and micro-woods.
These funding streams usually have very specific eligibility criteria and competition for the grants has increased significantly so securing funding is not always possible.

Developer Contributions: New developments are usually required to provide funds to mitigate the impact of the new development. Depending on the size of the development, developers are required to deliver or contribute to a wide range of community facilities including schools, GP surgeries, highway improvements, parks etc. Developers contribute to the maintenance and improvements of open spaces through Section 106 agreements, commuted sums, Community Infrastructure Levy or Biodiversity Net Gain.

We need to continue to be creative in finding ways of doing more with less. Examples of this include:

Environmental Volunteers: Stevenage has a terrific network of environmental volunteers across the town who help to pick litter, manage woodlands, plant trees, maintain planting etc. These volunteers choose to give up their valuable time to help

keep Stevenage looking clean and green and add value to what the Council is able to do rather than replace them.

Advertising:	Advertising spaces is sold on the roundabouts throughout the town. The income that is generated from the advertising helps to support the costs of maintaining the landscape provision associated with the roundabouts.
Concessions:	In some instances we already have contracts in place with third parties who provide facilities or activities that increase the service offer within our green spaces, but also benefits the Council through payment of an agreed sum that helps contribute to the running cost of the green space.
Sponsorship:	At present, residents & community groups already have the opportunity to sponsor a memorial tree or bench. The sponsorship sum paid could help cover the cost of the initial provision and the ongoing future maintenance. The Council is already looking to extend the current offer, but also to develop a range of opportunities that are affordable for all sectors of our local community.

7. Consultation

The Council has a long-standing commitment to work with the local community to help shape their local areas and the services that they use.

During winter 2023 we directly contacted 1,500 community groups and 36 schools, and reached out to all residents to let us know what they thought about the trees and woodlands in Stevenage. We received almost 400 responses and nearly 700 comments. Headlines included:

- 47% felt that the tree stock in Stevenage was good or excellent.
- Providing food and shelter for wildlife, making a space more attractive and helping to prevent climate change where amongst the most popular responses for why trees are important to residents.
- 90% of adult respondents felt that more trees should be planted, but this dropped to 70% of young people
- 33% of young people said additional trees should be planted to create woodlands, 26% in parks and 22% in streets. The responses from adults were not dissimilar with 28% feeling that streets and parks would be the best location with 25% choosing woodlands.
- Concerns about the tree stock in Stevenage largely related to removal of trees for development purposes, maintenance of existing trees, safety concerns associated with leaf fall on paths and cycle tracks during the autumn, and the need to replace removed trees with new ones.

Consultation on the draft Tree & Woodland Strategy was undertaken during January 2025.

8.Targets & Actions

8.1 Tree Canopy Cover

Target
Tree canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and tree stems that cover the ground at maturity. In 2024 an i-Tree Canopy (an online canopy cover assessment tool, which provides a scientifically robust and consistent approach to estimating canopy cover) assessment established that the tree stock in Stevenage provided a tree canopy cover of around 22%. However, the canopy cover levels across the different Wards vary, with the lowest canopy cover being 13%. Stevenage, with its wide grass verges and well-maintained open spaces, offers a better environment than most towns, but even here it is estimated that around 50% of newly planted standard trees will survive to maturity. We must therefore ensure that we plant and maintain sufficient trees each year to retain the tree canopy cover and to increase provision in areas of the town with lower than 19% canopy cover.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
T1	Identify low canopy coverage areas and prioritise tree planting in these areas	Short
T2	Plant 2000 standard trees by 2035	Long
T3	Seek grant funding to support additional tree planting and establishment	Ongoing
T4	Explore opportunities to develop a tree planting sponsorship scheme	Medium
T5	Continue to support the HCC *Your Tree, Our Future* campaign	Short
T6	Ensure that all newly SBC planted amenity trees be watered throughout the spring and summer months for the first three years of life	Ongoing
T7	Explore a scheme for local communities to support watering and establishment of newly planted trees	Medium

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.2 Engagement & Collaboration

Target
The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person living in an urban area should live more than 4km from a 20ha+ woodland. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some residents are reticent about visiting a woodland as they don't know what to expect, how safe it is or how easy it is to travel around the woodland.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
E1	Deliver volunteer engagement opportunities for trees and woodlands.	Ongoing
E2	Provide improved information about Stevenage woodlands	Medium
E3	Promote our trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, and the opportunities that they provide for the whole community	Short
E4	Work with partner organisations to deliver tree / woodland themed events	Short
E5	Deliver training to Green Space Volunteers to support the management of a network of Community Orchards.	Short
E6	Explore opportunities to make woodlands accessible to the whole community whilst affording protection to a diverse range of habitats and species	Long
E7	Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and changes to the treescape in their street.	Ongoing
E8	Support colleagues, developers, and others to select the right tree species and right locations to deliver green infrastructure and biodiversity gains.	Ongoing
E9	Continue to provide technical support and guidance to colleagues, developers, and others to support the protection, retention and management of trees.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.3 Woodland Management

Target
Woodlands are an important element in the natural environment of Stevenage. They provide opportunities for recreation, are a valued component of the landscape, an essential habitat for wildlife, provide employment and are an effective means of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Over 40% of the woodlands within Stevenage are classified as being ancient, and of an Oak and Hornbeam mix, with Bluebells dominant in the ground flora. The EU Habitats Directive has identified this woodland type as being of international importance. These represent the most important woodland habitats for wildlife, sometimes containing species of local and regional rarity. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment and they are a wonderful resource for the borough. Without active management many of our woodlands have become dense, dark and lacking in structure or dynamism. This condition significantly restricts their potential for wildlife. To improve their value for biodiversity and people they would benefit from a substantial programme of conservation work such as thinning, ride creation, glade creation, removal of non-native tree species and coppicing.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
W1	Develop management plans for each woodland	Long
W2	To improve the structural diversity of at least 10% of current woodland area by 2035.	Long
W3	Create improved habitat woodland edges where possible	Long
W4	Manage invasive non-native plant species	Ongoing
W5	Seek to capitalise on woodland management by-product	Ongoing
W6	Explore opportunities for creating buffer between woodland and residential estate	Medium
W7	Consider recreational opportunities within woodlands	Long
W8	Continue to revert Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to a woodland composition more typical of Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands	Medium
W9	Manage all woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.4 Nature Connectivity

Target
Across the country large areas of previously natural land have been broken into much smaller pockets providing habitat for our wildlife, and Stevenage is no different. Development for industry, housing, transport etc has resulted in lots of small, isolated patches of habitat. The creation of wildlife corridors helps to bridge the gap between these habitats enabling greater feeding and nesting opportunities for wildlife and supporting greater resilience to physical and climate changes.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
N1	Identify suitable locations for creation of wildlife corridors to link existing woodlands, ancient hedgerows, and tree belts.	Short
N2	Plant 5 new micro-woods by 2035	Long
N3	Undertake ecological surveys to measure the benefit of the newly created wildlife corridors	Medium
N4	Involve community in undertaking ecological surveys to support future management of woodlands	Short
N5	Increase woodland biodiversity in line with the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire	Short

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.5 Climate Change

Target
Trees and woodlands help improve air quality, reduce the 'urban heat island', provide opportunities for people to re-connect with nature, help to reduce flood risk and provide spaces that can improve health and well-being. Sustainably managed woodlands perform a vital role as carbon sinks and reservoirs[5] by capturing CO_2 from the atmosphere and storing it as a component of wood itself. Over time, the soil beneath the trees is enriched by adding carbon in the form of organic matter from leaf litter, branch fall and root death. In general, woodland soils have low and infrequent levels of disturbance and the total carbon content per unit area of woodland is higher than that for agricultural soils which are subject to more frequent and significant disturbance.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
C1	Incorporate trees with maximum carbon storage potential within planting schemes whilst observing other considerations.	Short
C2	Identify quantity of biomass needed for creation of energy	Short
C3	Identify and create suitable locations for creation of short rotation forestry.	Medium
C4	Identify green infrastructure locations that would benefit creation of shade from trees	Medium

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.6 Age Diversity

Target
A healthy urban treescape relies on age diversity to maintain its ability to provide constant and sustainable benefits to the people who work, live and visit the town. Maturing trees must be protected and managed to ensure they thrive and survive to become veteran trees (senescent), and juvenile trees must be planted constantly to replace old trees, dying trees, and trees removed for safety reasons. Larger, older trees are typically more valuable in terms of carbon storage, ecosystem services and human well-being than smaller, younger trees. However, with trees taking around 40 years to reach maturity it is essential to maintain a healthy stock of younger trees to ensure successful succession planning.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
A1	Map age diversity data on Ward basis to identify areas with low numbers of juvenile trees.	Short
A2	Consider opportunities to create space for new juvenile planting within existing areas of semi-mature and mature tree planting, to support succession planning	Medium
A3	Protect veteran and mature trees, ancient hedgerows, and woodlands from inappropriate development	Ongoing
A4	Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.7 Species Diversity

Target
A more diverse tree-scape is better able to deal with possible changes in climate or pest and disease impacts. Heavy reliance on a particular tree species can mean that a treescape can be largely wiped out if a pest or disease takes hold. Diseases affecting different UK tree species have also been shown to have a multiplying effect on the loss of associated biodiversity. If a single tree species disappears, it can have dire consequences for an entire ecosystem. For example, in the UK, the common ash hosts 45 species that are only found on ash trees, and sessile and pedunculate oaks host 326 species that are only found on oak trees. However, an additional 141 species use ash and oak as alternative habitats and depend on these two tree species only. If both ash and oak were to be lost, the number of species at risk would rise to 512[4]. Surveys of the amenity tree stock have provided comprehensive data on the species diversity across Stevenage. With Norway Maples currently constituting 23% of the amenity tree stock in Stevenage it is imperative to improve species diversity going forward.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
S1	Map species diversity data on Ward basis to identify areas of the town with particularly low species diversity.	Short
S2	Consider areas of low species diversity when prioritising new tree planting.	Short
S3	Maintain an accurate audit of amenity trees in Stevenage.	Ongoing
S4	Select tree species which are most appropriate to local conditions and future climates.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.8 Tree Health & Resilience

Target
Factors including global travel / trade and changing climate have increased the chance of pests and diseases coming into the UK with the potential to cause significant damage to our tree stock. Buying UK sourced and grown trees is the best way to prevent the spread of imported pests and diseases. Between 2000-2021, Britain experienced a 360% increase in new tree pest and disease emergence compared with the period 1970-2000[5]. This represents 18 new emergences since 2000. The predicted cost of ash dieback alone has been quantified at £15 billion[6]. Pests and disease are not the only threats to the resilience of Hertfordshire's treescape. There are predictions that by 2080, changes in temperature and water availability could make the South East of England unsuitable for many common tree species and estimates a 30-50% increase in wildfires in the same period[7].

Ref	Action	Timeframe
H1	All trees planted on SBC land will be certified as sourced and grown in the UK; or where this is not possible, nurseries or suppliers that adhere to national standards such as the Plant Health Management Standard.	Ongoing
H2	Continue to base tree planting choices on trees known to be resistant to pests and diseases.	Ongoing
H3	Keep accurate, up-to-date records of all purchases and supplies to assist with tracing exercises in the event of an outbreak.	Short
H4	Regularly clean/disinfect all tree maintenance equipment.	Ongoing
H5	Use proper off-site wash-down facilities regularly to remove any build-up of soil and organic material on vehicles and machinery	Ongoing
H6	Monitor spread of tree disease in Stevenage	Ongoing
H7	Monitor specific trees with Ash Dieback to assess safety implications	Ongoing
H8	Commit to actions within the Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire	Short

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.9 Risk Management

Target
One challenge of tree management is that, unlike man-made structures, trees grow, respond to changes in climate and season, shed parts and eventually will die. In an urban environment there is an increasing tendency to see trees as a risk rather than an essential element of the urban landscape (Britt and Johnston, 2008).

Ref	Action	Timeframe
R1	Undertake a regular comprehensive survey of every amenity tree to inform a programme of maintenance works.	Ongoing
R2	Assess amenity trees every three years to determine what, if any, works are required to ensure their health, safety, and amenity value, and undertake works as necessary.	Ongoing
R3	Continue to assess trees and plantations to identify those at a higher risk of failure in future, to inform future work programmes.	Ongoing
R4	Undertake a comprehensive inspection of every woodland to inform a cyclical programme of proactive tree maintenance to ensure the safety of people, property and enhancement of wildlife.	Short
R5	Survey trees in tenanted gardens to identify risk and propose mitigation actions.	Short
R6	Analyse tree related subsidence insurance claim data to identify opportunities for a more targeted, proactive approach to manage trees and minimise future risk.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.12 Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Target
Stevenage new town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands, and veteran trees, were retained to create the varied green infrastructure that residents and visitors enjoy today. At a time when there is increasing pressure for additional housing and car parking opportunities it is increasingly vital that historic planting is not only protected but managed to provide the best opportunity for further longevity.

Ref	Action	Timeframe
P1	Protect veteran and mature trees, ancient hedgerows, and woodlands from inappropriate development	Ongoing
P2	Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town.	Ongoing
P3	Implement a best practice approach to the management of hedgerows to halt and reverse declines in hedgerow condition in line with Defra's Hedgerows Standard.	Short

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

9. Monitoring & Review

We will focus on the actions set out above over the next 10 years.

The Councils Arboriculture and Conservation Manager will report progress against the strategy to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee at least every two years.

A more detailed review, to check the priorities and actions are still relevant, will be undertaken in 5 years' time.

The Council will explore opportunities to provide an annual update of progress against actions via the Council's web pages.

The Council will undertake financial scoping to identify funding opportunities from external sources that might be used to support the aims of this strategy.

10. References

1	Cases for and against forestry reducing flooding.	Forestry Commission.
2	UK natural capital accounts: 2022	Office for National Statistics (2022).
3	Carbon Sinks and Sequestration	UNECE
4	Loss of tree species has cumulative impact on biodiversity, November 2021	British Ecological Society
5	Application Of Biosecurity In Arboriculture, August 2018	Arboriculture Association
6	The £15 billion cost of ash dieback in Britain, May 2019	Current Biology
7	Climate Change Risk Assessment, 2012	Defra