

Greening Portsmouth

Foreword from Cabinet Members

I am delighted to be able to introduce this greening strategy for our city.

We know about the benefits that more greenery in our environments can bring, and this is especially important in a densely populated city like Portsmouth. We have less green canopy, as a percentage of our land, than comparable cities like Plymouth or Southampton, but we know that greenery can support better air quality, better mental wellbeing, more physical recreation and of course, help us respond to the climate emergency.

Significantly increasing greenery in the public realm is something that I am committed to, and this document sets out our approaches and highlights some immediate priorities for action. We will also help other landowners (including householders) to increase the amount and quality of greenery in the city, and make sure all of our policies support this objective too.

The council has committed significant capital funding to get the ball rolling. The document is a "greenprint" for how we can invest this for maximum impact, and sets out what has to happen alongside this. We will also develop a mechanism as part of this work for capturing the value of trees to the city, using models that have been tried and tested elsewhere.

We can all play a part in this - green-fingered or not. I am very grateful to partners who have contributed to pulling this document together, including Portsmouth Friends of the Earth, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the Tree Wardens.

Cllr Steve Pitt, Cabinet Member, Culture and City Development.

Cllr Dave Ashmore, Cabinet Member, Environment and Climate Change

Cllr Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member, Housing

Introduction

As part of the process to develop the Local Plan for Portsmouth, and to respond to the climate emergency, work has been undertaken to look at the wider green infrastructure in the city, and identify opportunities to enhance this. The "green infrastructure network" is a term used to define a range of natural assets like parks, semi-natural and natural habitats, allotments, and playing pitches, as well as individual planting sites. The term also encompasses "blue infrastructure" including the coastline, streams and ponds. This network provides a wide range of valuable benefits for the city and its inhabitants, including but not limited to: improving physical and mental health and wellbeing; providing resilience to climate change; providing space for biodiversity and boosting economic investment.

A key component of the network is the city's trees. Trees not only serve to break up the hard, concrete fabric of the urban environment - particularly when they grow within the streetscape - but also provide many of the benefits highlighted above. For example, trees with large leafy canopies slow down surface run-off and help to reduce flood risk at times of heavy rain; they also serve to cool the environment especially in the summer by providing direct shade as well as through the effects of evapotranspiration. Trees can also provide benefits for improving air pollution, as well as providing habitat for local wildlife; whilst their simple presence within the environment has been found to benefit mental wellbeing through reducing stress and anxiety.

The local authority are ambitious to increase the amount of greenery in the city, including the number of trees in the city. If we were to double the number of trees in the next 25 years, this would mean:

- Ensuring that as many as possible of the 50,000 new trees on Horsea Island Country Park reach maturity (allowing for planned management as the trees grow)
- Adding 360 extra trees per year for the next 25 years in public open spaces, and 720 trees per year in private land, including gardens
- Adding 120 extra street trees per year for the next 25 years.

Of course, trees are only one form of greenery and we need to look at the full range of planting that can be done and the opportunities for improvement against all of our objectives. This strategy for enhancing the green spaces in Portsmouth builds upon and supersedes the previous Green Infrastructure plan considered at Cabinet, and which brought together a great deal of investigatory work. This included identifying areas of the city with the least tree cover, poorest quality open space and opportunities for planting. The document seeks to drive improvement over time and draws on a number of local and other sources including:

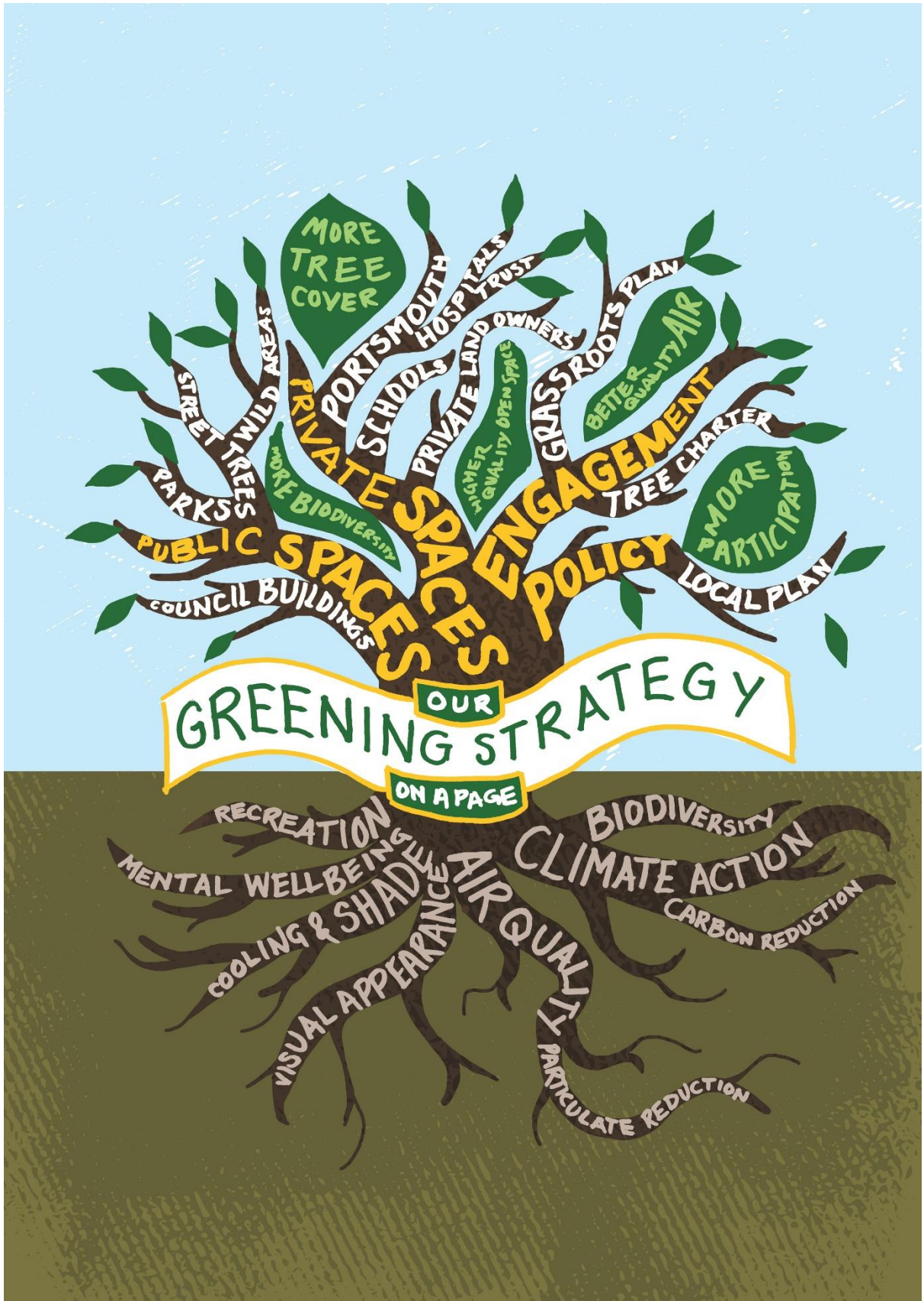
- Increasing Tree Cover in Portsmouth - Friends of the Earth, Portsmouth, 2019
- Emergency Tree Plan for the UK: How to increase tree cover and address the nature and climate emergency - Woodland Trust, January 2020
- An assessment of Tree Cover in Portsmouth Background Paper - PCC, February 2019
- Green Infrastructure Background Paper - PCC, February 2019

The strategy has four branches:

- 1) Branch 1 - Greening the public realm
- 2) Branch 2 - Greening private space
- 3) Branch 3 - Grassroots engagement

- 4) Branch 4 - Policy approach - how does the broad policy environment that the council sets support and improved green infrastructure in the city

This document will support other programmes of work in the city, including the Climate Action Plan and the Air Quality Plan. Please see the below diagram, setting out our plan on a page.



OUR
GREENING STRATEGY

ON A PAGE

RECREATION
MENTAL WELLBEING
COOLING & SHADE
VISUAL APPEARANCE
AIR QUALITY
PARTICULATE REDUCTION
CLIMATE ACTION
BIODIVERSITY
CARBON REDUCTION

MORE TREE COVER
STREET TREES
PARKS
PUBLIC SPACES
COUNCIL BUILDINGS
PRIVATE SPACES
SCHOOLS
HOSPITALS
TRUST
PRIVATE LAND OWNERS
GRASSROOTS PLAN
BETTER QUALITY AIR
TREE CHARTER
LOCAL PLAN
MORE PARTICIPATION
HIGHER QUALITY OPEN SPACE
MORE BIODIVERSITY

Key information about greenery in Portsmouth



86,500
trees in Portsmouth

9.8% tree canopy coverage

8,500 street trees,
around 10% of all city trees

27,000 trees in private gardens,
around 31% of all city trees

50,000 trees in Horsea
Island Country Park



760

hectares of publically
accessible open space

84 hectares of green corridors
between different areas

22.4% of the city's surface
is covered in grass

289 hectares of open space
inaccessible to the public

713 hectares (17.7% of the entire area of the city)
covered by private gardens

Council sites

8 allotment sites

3 cemeteries

Parks and gardens,
3 with Green Flag status



Branch 1- Planting our public realm

To double canopy coverage in the city, we need to add 360 new trees in parks and open spaces, and 120 new street trees (net of replacements) every year for the next 25 years.

Portsmouth City Council is responsible for a huge amount of the publically accessible land in the city, including parks, public and communal gardens, cemeteries, and the wider highway network, including pavements and verges. This includes management of over 25,000 trees in the city. The council is committed to developing and improving the city's trees, many of which are prime specimens from a wide variety of species.

The council has been seeking to increase tree stock in the city over recent years. Planting schemes have focused on areas where air quality impact must be addressed, but also where there is space for additional trees to be added. So, planting has been carried out in areas such as Lake Road, Northern Parade, Eastern Road, Rectory Avenue and Goldsmith Avenue.

The council operates a planned programme of inspections for all of its tree stock. Sites have a specific visual assessment at least every four years, with many having a basic visual inspection annually as part of a general site safety survey. The inspections are carried out by professionally certified inspectors.

The council has a clear set of principles for the management of trees and planting, to ensure that greenery is protected but is also safe and sustainable:

- Portsmouth City Council will only permit removal of a tree in its management when the tree is dead, dying or diseased such that it will cause a danger; prevents a significant risk to public safety or property; or is required to enable achievement of development in line with planning policy - our detailed guidance on when removal is permitted is attached as part of our Tree Charter at Appendix 1.
- When a tree is removed, a replacement will be planted (although not necessarily at the same site) to ensure that there is no net reduction of trees in the city
- Wherever possible, planting will be permanent and into the ground, rather than of a temporary nature in planters
- Planting solutions will be right for the place, so considerations will include tree species and size, water dependency, root systems, hardiness and proximity to property
- Planting will take into account longer-term maintenance implications and be designed with this in mind
- Planting - including replacement planting - will be considered to ensure that the whole green infrastructure network for the city is balanced.

These principles ensure that trees are afforded a high degree of protection in the city, and that the conditions are in place for future planting to be sustained and thrive.

However, we accept that we are in the midst of a climate emergency, and have an immediate and urgent need to address issues of air quality in the city. This means that as well as preserving trees and greenery in the city, we need to proactively accelerate the planting of trees in the city, as well as take other measures such as enhancing lower level planting (hedges and shrubbery), finding opportunities for less structured planting, and space to innovate - for example, creating green walls or green roofs.

It is also important that we make sure that the right trees and plants end up in the right place. For example, urban landscapes need drought tolerant trees, and some species can actually be hazardous to air quality, for example, by adding pollen and other organic compounds to air, or creating a canopy which impeded air circulation.

Bearing this in mind, Portsmouth City Council has made capital funding available to augment the existing budgets for planting and plant management in the city, so that we can start greening the city. In the first phase of delivery (next two years), we will seek to implement (in addition to business as usual activity):

- Significant additional planting in our parks and open spaces
- Development of wild areas across the city
- Improved and enhanced planting on PCC housing land
- More street trees in priority areas.

We will also ensure that we model expectations from development in our own interests as a commercial landowner and promoter of schemes in the city, for example as we bring forward schemes for Lakeside and Tipner as an example. We will also be considering opportunities to bring greenery into projects delivered through the Future High Streets Fund in Commercial Road and Fratton (if successful). Opportunities for green enhancement will also be looked at in the Southsea Coastal Defences.

Finally, there are opportunities to consider where schemes for general landscape softening, such as depaving could be pursued. Such schemes provide wider environmental benefits, such as improved flood management and support climate adaptation and well as enhancing and softening the landscape. This is an area that we will explore more fully in implementing this strategy, and consider in tandem with plans to reprioritise streets. Separate to the Local Plan, as part of our commitment to greening the city, we will also investigate opportunities for temporary greening and acknowledge the contribution made to recreational objectives, air quality, and carbon reduction by temporary greening pending permanent development.

Branch 2: Private Open Space

To double canopy coverage in the city, we need to add 720 new trees on private land, including gardens, every year for the next 25 years.

As well as the open space that is publically accessible, there is a significant amount of open space in the city that is not generally accessible to the public, or is only open to them occasionally. Whilst these areas do not have quite the same breadth of benefits that publically accessible spaces do, it is still important to consider them, as they still perform a number of functions. The functions these private spaces can potentially play include adapting to and mitigating climate change, contributing to biodiversity as well as providing the wider benefits that open spaces generally provide to some portions of the community.

In Portsmouth, this non-accessible space includes school grounds, MoD land, private sports clubs, Portsmouth Water land, horse paddocks, and the land around the Lakeside site at Northharbour. It is calculated that this private open space amounts to 289 hectares of land although also included within this figure is the area of landfill that is being reclaimed to form the Horsea Island Country Park.

The other significant dimension of private space with value as open space is that of private gardens. Whilst each is only accessible and therefore provides direct benefits to the residents of that property, these spaces can still have a benefit to the rest of the community and city as a whole. Gardens can be beneficial through helping ensure that neighbourhoods are more resilient to some of the impacts of climate change, but also through the benefits they bring to local ecology and overall biodiversity in the area. Indeed, it is now recognised that some of the UK's declining wildlife species are now found more often in gardens than anywhere else. Furthermore, because of the propensity to play host to a range of species, they can be the main avenue through which people witness the natural environment day to day.

A significant proportion of the city is covered by private gardens due to the highly built up nature of Portsmouth, and the area represents about 713 hectares in total which equates to 17.7% of the entire area of the city, a sizeable proportion of the city's land coverage. These private gardens play an important role in providing space for trees to grow - just under 27,000 of the city's trees (or 31% of all trees in the city) are in private gardens.

However, in reality not all gardens in the city are working as well as they could in terms of providing green infrastructure. Many gardens are now completely paved over with artificial materials, and devoid of natural surfaces or vegetation such as trees and shrubs, whilst others do still retain greater proportions of the natural assets that form a vital part of the green infrastructure network.

There is therefore critically important that when we are considering the opportunities to add further trees and greenery to the city scape, these areas of private land are not overlooked. Larger areas, such as school grounds provide a huge opportunity to enhance the city's green environment, but also to support children in their developing understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment. The council is already working, in collaboration with the Tree Council, on a project to plant fruit trees and fruiting hedges in schools.

There is expertise and resource that the local authority can leverage to provide help to ensure that the right sort of planting is provided and given the right care to ensure that greenery becomes established, and we will consider how we can make this happen through the strategy. An excellent

example is a recently started partnership project working with Portsmouth Hospitals Trust to consider how the area around Queen Alexandra Hospital can be enhanced as green space.

We also need to help homeowners and tenants understand how they can make their own spaces an effective part of the green infrastructure in the city, and provide support to do this. Again, the authority has skills and expertise in green space development that can be geared towards helping residents make the most of their space and the ability to make linkages across the community - for example, in making resources available or creating the spaces for communities to come together around these aims. Assets such as the Waterfront Garden Centre are important in promoting the green agenda in the city, as an easy way for residents to stock up on plants and equipment (and of course, Christmas trees!).

Branch 3: Engagement and consultation

The greening strategy supports a huge range of wider objectives in the city, including the commitment, made as part of Portsmouth's response to the climate emergency, to achieving zero net carbon by 2030, and improving air quality. These in turn support drives to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of the population, and the function of the city as a habitat for flora and fauna. Greenery in the environment supports the idea of building a city that is both liveable and loveable. For this reason, we want people to feel really engaged with and involved in their green environment, and able to do as much as they can to contribute to building the city's green infrastructure.

We will therefore develop a programme of communications activity to make sure that everyone in the city understands our approach to trees and greenery as a local authority, but will give people help and advice to play their own part. We will consider how we can improve the information around the city about trees and greenery so that people can understand why these things are important, and republish the Tree Charter for the city. We will create a strong mechanism for gathering feedback about where people think a "greening intervention" could be helpful and make sure that we respond to ideas on a regular basis. This will help us keep our action plan fresh and up to date.

A really important element of this is including awareness of the natural environment in education from an early age, and this is why it is so important to continue to work with our schools so that the imaginations of young people are captured.

We will seek to build on the success of our previous social media campaign which included:

- Informing people about the benefits of greening and why we need more city greenery
- Informing people about lesser known green spaces near them - there are quite a few!
- Sharing some of the fantastic images that we have, demonstrating the greenery in the city.

Branch 4- Portsmouth's policy approach

In the medium and long term, planning policy plays a vital role in protecting and improving green infrastructure coverage in the city and ensuring that new development takes responsibility for delivering greening in the city. The adopted Local Plan contains a policy (PCS13 'A greener Portsmouth') which addresses how green infrastructure such as trees should be handled in development that happens around the city. It sets out various requirements in terms of protecting, enhancing and providing new green infrastructure in the city and can be viewed on the Council's website.

The Council is working on a new Local Plan which will replace the existing adopted core strategy. Whilst this work is ongoing, officers are actively working to promote green infrastructure throughout the Local Plan, and the topic will continue to be addressed in its own specific policy.

Key considerations in the development of the Local Plan include:

Protecting existing green infrastructure - The development of open spaces in the city will continue to be resisted. Development that results in a net loss of green infrastructure will be resisted, and net gains in green infrastructure in proposals will be sought wherever possible. Trees protected under TPOs or within conservation areas will continue to benefit from significant protections.

Enhancements of existing green infrastructure - The Plan will also seek to bring about enhancements to existing green infrastructure in the city such as open spaces in order to boost its multi-functionality and overall quality. This will be important for improving the resilience of these assets to the potential of increased pressures from future development needs and rising population in the city going forwards.

Delivering new green infrastructure - In recognition of the often limited space available in the more densely built up areas of the city, the plan will seek to encourage innovative design of green infrastructure in the urban environment that might utilise traditionally more wasted spaces, such as roof tops and walls of buildings in order to help meet net gains in green infrastructure. It will also seek creation of new open spaces wherever possible.

Future rounds of consultation on the Local Plan in 2020 will provide the opportunity to comment on the emerging document as it progresses towards submission and adoption. This will include opportunities to comment on draft policies and the Council will welcome feedback in order to help shape and strengthen that document. Details on the Local Plan timeline can be found on the website

Action plan

In order to achieve a greener city, we will implement the following actions in Phase One of the strategy (2 years linked to planting seasons):

Action	Lead officer	Time period	Associated resource
Branch 1- Planting public realm			
Plant around 300 new trees in city parks and open space of the strategy.	Service manager - parks and open space	Within available planting seasons - 1-2 years	PCC capital programme
Enhance planting in communal spaces in PCC housing land	Head of Estate Services	Within available planting seasons - 1-2 years	Ongoing housing improvement programme
Deliver street tree sites as identified through previous greening feasibility work prepared in July 2019, with focus on high impact sites in areas currently underserved by the green network	PCC Green Team	Within available planting seasons - 1-2 years	PCC Capital programme
Develop areas of wild growing in every ward in the city	Service manager - parks and open space	Within available planting seasons 1-2 years	PCC capital programme
Branch 2: Private Open Space			
Develop and promote resources for businesses and residents around how to green space	PCC Green Team	During 2020	Within existing resources
Work with schools to identify opportunities for planting and greening	Landscape Architects	Within available planting seasons	Within existing resources
Work in partnership with PHT to develop ideas for greening Queen Alexandra Hospital	Landscape Architects Group	Ongoing	Funded via PHT
Branch 3: Engagement and consultation			
Launch communications and engagement plan, including signage that can be used by contractors carrying out works	Communications and Engagement	Ongoing	Within existing resources

Publicise and implement the measures in the Tree Charter	Communications and Engagement	Ongoing	Within existing resources
Branch 4:- Portsmouth's policy approach			
Incorporate green infrastructure policy approach in the Local Plan	Assistant Director - Planning and Economic Growth	Within Local Plan programme - draft anticipated 2020	Within existing Local Plan programme resource

Governance and working together

The Greening Strategy will be led by a "virtual team" of officers working across the city to ensure that there is a joined up, comprehensive approach to land that is the responsibility of the city. We will ask valued partners, including Friends of the Earth, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the Tree Wardens to be part of this "Green Team".

On an annual basis, a report to the Cabinet member will be produced, highlighting progress and identifying priorities for future phases of the strategy to ensure that the action plan remains evergreen. The group will also oversee the implementation of the measures in the tree charter.

Our measures of success

We will seek to baseline our current tree stock, greenery and open space, and reassess on an appropriate basis to benchmark:

- Number of trees
- Canopy cover
- Air quality
- Engagement levels
- Open space quality assessment

We will develop a model to assign value to the green infrastructure in the city, similar to that which has been used in Bristol, for example.

Appendix 1 - Portsmouth Tree Charter

Portsmouth City Council is committed to developing and improving the city's trees, many of which are prime specimens from a wide variety of species.

Trees add great beauty to the city's landscape, absorb atmospheric pollutants and provide a habitat for birds and other wildlife. These benefits all contribute towards making our city a better place in which to live, work and visit.

The council will improve the quality, quantity and variety of the city's tree stock by implementing a long-term management plan. This plan will, wherever practicable, ensure a commitment to the residents and visitors of Portsmouth to enhance the city's trees, whilst ensuring that public safety is the highest priority.

We will:

- Inspect trees regularly and carry out remedial works as necessary to the relevant British Standards or best practice guidelines
- Log data to build up a history of each tree
- Remove trees only where they are dead, dying or diseased such that it will cause a danger; or present an irretrievable risk to public safety or property; or are required to enable achievement of development in line with planning policy
- Wherever possible, ensure that there is local consultation and communication about tree works
- Commit to replacement of trees that need to be removed to ensure there is no net loss - this might not be a replacement at the same location, or of the same species
- Continually seek out and assess new planting sites
- Provide advice where requested on tree-related matters to an appropriate level
- Provide information on trees in the city to enhance public understanding and enjoyment, such as the "Tree Trails"
- Commit to working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector on promoting the importance of trees in the city
- Explore funding opportunities, such as grants and sponsorship, that will help enhance the environment
- Ensure that as far as is practical, all green waste arising from city council tree works are recycled.

Residents can help by:

- Keeping us informed of all proposed planting
- Helping to water newly planted trees near your own property
- Suggesting new sites for tree planting
- Reporting any damage to city's trees.

Brief overview of tree management

The city council operates a planned programme of inspections for all of its tree stock. Tree records including survey data are stored on specialist tree management software. Sites have specific visual assessment at least every 4 years, with many having a basic visual inspection annually as part of a general site safety survey. The inspections are carried out by trained inspectors.

General principles for tree works and removals

Portsmouth City Council will only permit removal of a tree in its management when the tree is dead, dying or diseased such that it will cause a danger; prevents a significant risk to public safety or property; or is required to enable achievement of development in line with planning policy

- All requests for arboricultural works to trees growing on council land will be inspected and authorised by Council officers.
- If tree works are required in bird nesting season (February-September) trees will be examined for evidence of nesting. Where a bird's nest is found, tree works will be delayed until the end of the nesting season.
- No tree work will be undertaken on trees where there is potential to impact upon any protected species (for example, bats or badgers) until consultation has been undertaken with the Council ecologist and/or appropriate external consultants. Any work that is subsequently undertaken will be in accordance with current legislation, policy and best practice guidance.
- All tree pruning and arboriculture works are undertaken in accordance with the British Standard for Arboriculture BS3998 and will follow guidance from the Arboriculture Association's Guidance Note - An introduction to Trees and their Management.

Although all requests for tree felling or works are assessed on their own merits, these would not generally occur to remedy:

- Shading/loss of light to properties
- Minor or seasonal effects such as leaf litter, bird mess, fruit or seed fall or sticky secretions from insects and aphids (honeydew)
- Effects on TV reception (satellite or terrestrial television)
- Obstruction of private CCTV cameras
- Perceived threats - any decision will be based on inspection and evidence
- Non-actionable nuisance e.g. from overhanging branches
- Obstruction of telephone or utility cables (these are the responsibility of the statutory undertaker such as a utilities provider)

Works will not be undertaken purely for the benefit of an individual even if they are willing to pay for the removal or pruning of a tree.

Principles for tree replacement

When a tree is removed, a replacement will be planted (although not necessarily at the same site) to ensure that there is no net reduction of trees in the city. Wherever possible, planting will be permanent and into the ground, rather than of a temporary nature in planters. Planting solutions will be right for the place, so considerations will include tree species and size, water dependency, root systems, hardiness and proximity to property. Planting will take into account longer-term maintenance implications and be designed with this in mind. Planting - including replacement planting - will be considered to ensure that the whole green infrastructure network for the city is balanced.

Consultation and information

When the council seeks to remove a tree, prior information will be given to ward councillors and tree wardens, setting out why the tree is to be removed, the plan for replacement and any other relevant information to answer any queries from the public. In addition, a notice will be attached to the tree, and the information will also be placed on the PCC website.