Tree and Woodland

Strategy

 

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##

## Executive summary

Ashfield District Council acknowledges the significance of its tree assets, which encompass approximately 16.6% of the district. These trees provide numerous benefits to Ashfield, such as improving mental health, boosting biodiversity, enhancing the appeal of parks, and supporting educational initiatives.

This strategy is designed to ensure that trees are preserved, managed, protected, and planted in accordance with recognised landscape and arboriculturally standards, while also considering their contribution to the enhancement of amenity and urban landscapes for both current and future generations.

By establishing a forward-looking vision for the trees throughout the district, the Council aims to align with its Corporate Plan of becoming Cleaner and Greener. This initiative will contribute to the increase and protection of biodiversity across all woodlands and green spaces, thereby improving the quality of life for both residents and visitors to Ashfield.

The vision of Ashfield District Council is to safeguard the trees and woodlands in Ashfield, allowing them to thrive, which will create a community where residents are content and visitors are eager to return, ultimately leading to increased investment in the area. This will be accomplished through several key objectives:

1. Protect and enhance existing tree and woodland assets
2. Expand canopy cover and woodland areas
3. Engage the community and promote education
4. Enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services
5. Monitor progress and embed accountability

## Introduction

Trees and woodlands offer a vast array of social, economic, and environmental advantages throughout both urban and rural areas in the UK. Ashfield District Council manages approximately 30,000 trees across the district and is dedicated to preserving and, where feasible, enhancing the tree population. The trees, woodlands, and forests are a crucial national resource which is important for Ashfield as a district as they bring many benefits which all residents can enjoy.

The objective of this strategy is to guarantee that trees are preserved, managed, safeguarded, and planted in alignment with established landscape and arboriculture practices, whilst considering their role in enhancing amenity and urban landscapes for both present and future generations.

The Council places significant importance on the safety and appropriate management of its trees. It aims to strike a balance between ensuring public safety and maintaining a robust tree population that offers numerous benefits. Trees play a crucial role in most natural land-based ecosystems, delivering a variety of ecosystem services to humanity, including alleviating the adverse effects of climate change and aiding in climate adaptation. Furthermore, trees contribute to the economy by providing timber and non-timber forest products. They foster community cohesion and hold cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic significance. Their value is acknowledged in policies at international, national, and local levels, with numerous non-governmental organisations also focusing on the conservation of trees and their biodiversity.

Like all living entities, trees are susceptible to decline and failure, and they may suffer physical damage or be affected by pathogenic organisms. As trees age, the likelihood of limb shedding or falling during strong winds increases, raising the potential for harm. Ancient and decaying trees, while often aesthetically pleasing, serve as vital habitats for wildlife. Regardless of a tree's physical condition, remedial measures should only be taken when there is a clear and discernible risk to life or property. This may involve the removal of certain parts of the tree or restricting public access in the surrounding area.

Trees play an essential role in our natural ecosystem, purifying the air we inhale, regulating temperature fluctuations, and enhancing the health and welfare of the community. They stand as prominent elements in the landscape and offer a habitat for numerous species. Additionally, they are integral to the history and culture of Ashfield. They are vital for producing the oxygen we breathe while absorbing carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, and storing it in their biomass. Trees also serve as habitats for numerous species of flora and fauna and those who entirely reliant on these environments. They offer essential nesting and roosting sites for birds and bats. Additionally, invertebrates, lichens, moss, fungi, and ground flora such as bluebells and other woodland species depend on trees for their survival.

Trees within Ashfield provide indirect or hidden financial value to the economy; some of the environmental benefits link strongly to our quality of life. They can also bring about cost savings by way of energy reduction, flood reduction and pollution mitigation. In addition, tourism or recreational use of woodland sites may give opportunities for income generation.

Trees provide numerous advantages to all individuals in the district, and it is the Council's duty to oversee and manage it’s own tree population. Implementing effective management practices will contribute to achieving the goals of the Corporate Plan aimed at creating a cleaner and greener environment. This initiative will enhance the safety of both residents and visitors in the Ashfield district.

## Key Drivers

**The Government’s Environmental Improvement Plan**

Following the introduction of the Environment Act 2021 and the 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan, the Government invested in protecting woodlands and increasing the number of tree planting throughout the country. The Government aim is to increase the number of trees outside of woodlands to help reduce the rapid loss of biodiversity across urban areas which is being seen across the UK.

**Tree planting Task Force**

A new tree planting task force was put in place on the 28/11/2024 with aims of increasing tree planting across the UK and protecting the long-term survival. This task force will oversee the planting of millions of trees and aims to help local authorities reach net zero targets. It encourages to strengthen collaborative working across the UK where possible.

**Important drivers for Ashfield**

* Protecting the environment holistically, not just across Ashfield.
* Ensuring the Council’s Corporate Plan is met, making Ashfield Cleaner and Greener.
* Increasing and protecting the biodiversity across our woodlands and greenspaces.
* Helping to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to Ashfield.
* Ensuring that if a tree is planted and is to be managed and maintained by the Council, there is a viable cost associated to cover the cost of tree planting.
* Ensuring the right tree in the right place when planting new trees.
* Prioritising the safety of all residents and visitors with regards to trees and woodland areas.
* Ensuring the protection of all TPOs across the district.

## Strategy framework

**Our Vison**

To protect the trees and woodlands across Ashfield and allow them the flourish, making Ashfield a place where residents are happy to live and visitors enjoying coming to, resulting in increased investment in Ashfield.

**Strategic objectives**

**Objective 1: Protect and Enhance Existing Tree and Woodland Assets**

 Actions:

* Maintain a digital tree inventory with condition, species, and location data.
* Implement a scheduled inspection and maintenance program.
* Protect veteran and heritage trees through Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
* Enforce planning policies that prevent unnecessary tree loss.

**Objective 2: Expand Canopy Cover and Woodland Area**

 Actions:

* Plant 5000 trees by 2030 in priority zones.
* Develop new woodlands on underused public land.
* Prioritise native and climate-resilient species in all planting initiatives.

**Objective 3: Engage the Community and Promote Education**

 Actions:

* Create a “Tree Wardens” volunteer program.
* Organise public planting events and seasonal awareness campaigns.
* Work with local schools to deliver tree-related education programs.
* Promote tree stories and heritage across the district

**Objective 4: Enhance Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**

Actions:

* Incorporate mixed-species planting to support pollinators and wildlife.
* Retain deadwood in woodlands for ecological value.
* Use tree planting to support natural flood management.
* Track the carbon storage and air quality benefits of council-managed trees.

**Objective 5: Monitor Progress and Embed Accountability**

 Actions:

* Publish an annual “State of the Trees” report with KPIs:
	+ Canopy cover percentage
	+ Tree survival rates
	+ Biodiversity impact assessments
* Conduct a full strategy review every five years.
* Establish a stakeholder advisory panel for public input, which can be come through working with the friends of the park groups

**Delivery Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Key Milestones** |
| 2025 | Strategy launch, tree inventory update, first planting season |
| 2026 | Tree Warden program launched, new woodland sites scoped |
| 2027 | Community engagement doubled, mid-term review |
| 2030 | 5000 tree planting target met |
| 2035 | Strategy review and update |

 **Partnerships and Resources**

* Local schools, volunteer groups and conservation groups
* Forestry Commission and DEFRA
* Private landowners and local businesses
* Funding sources: Green Recovery Fund, Climate Action grants

**Conclusion**

 This strategy provides a roadmap for a greener, healthier district where trees and woodlands are central to community wellbeing, climate resilience, and environmental justice. Success will rely on cross-sector collaboration, community involvement, and long-term commitment.

 **Guiding principes –**

1. Sustainability - Ensure all tree planting, care, and removal practices support long-term environmental health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
2. Right Tree, Right Place - Choose species suited to the local environment and site conditions to maximise survival, ecological value, and low maintenance.
3. Equity and Access - Prioritise tree planting in communities with low canopy cover, poor air quality, or limited access to green spaces.
4. Community Involvement - Engage residents, schools, and local groups in tree planting, stewardship, and education to foster a shared sense of ownership.
5. Biodiversity Enhancement - Promote native and diverse species to support local wildlife and strengthen ecological networks.
6. Climate Resilience - Use trees as tools for climate adaptation—such as shading, cooling, and flood mitigation—and reduce the council’s carbon footprint.
7. Evidence-Based Decision Making - Use data (e.g., canopy surveys, GIS mapping, and ecological assessments) to guide planning, monitor progress, and adapt strategies.
8. Partnership and Collaboration - Work with landowners, community groups, government agencies, and experts to co-deliver outcomes and share resources.
9. Protection of Existing Trees - Value and safeguard mature trees through robust policy enforcement, ongoing care, and recognition of their ecological and social benefits.
10. Transparency and Accountability - Commit to public reporting, measurable goals, and regular reviews to ensure the strategy remains relevant and effective.

### **Near-Term Targets (2025–2027)**

1. Tree Inventory Completion
	1. Digitally map and assess 100% of council-owned trees by end of 2026.
2. Tree Planting
	1. Plant 2000 new trees in priority areas by end of 2027.
	2. Achieve 85% survival rate for newly planted trees.
3. Policy & Protection
	1. Update planning policies to strengthen protection for mature trees.
	2. Increase Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) by %.
4. Community Engagement
	1. Launch “Tree Wardens” volunteer program with at least 5 active members by 2027.
	2. Hold 1 community planting events per year.
5. Woodland Management
	1. Develop site-specific management plans for all existing woodlands.
	2. Begin invasive species removal on 3 key sites.

### **Medium-Term Targets (2028–2030)**

1. Canopy Cover Expansion
	1. Increase district-wide canopy cover by 5% from 2025 baseline.
	2. Achieve tree equity in all neighbourhoods (no community below 5% canopy cover).
2. Tree Planting and Woodland Creation
	1. Reach 5000 trees planted by 2030.
	2. Create new woodland on council or partner land.
3. Climate & Biodiversity Impact
	1. Measure and report on annual carbon sequestration from council-managed trees.
	2. Increase native species diversity in new plantings by 40%.
4. Education and Awareness
	1. Reach 80% of local schools with tree-related environmental programs.
	2. Deliver public campaigns to reach 10,000 residents annually.
5. Monitoring and Reporting
	1. Publish annual “State of the Trees” reports beginning in 2026.
	2. Conduct full mid-strategy review in 2030 to adjust long-term goals.

**Delivery themes**

### **1. Tree Planting and Canopy Expansion**

Focus: Increase tree numbers and overall canopy cover across urban and rural areas.

Includes:

* Urban greening projects
* Woodland creation
* Street tree programmes
* “Right tree, right place” principles

### **2. Tree Protection and Management**

Focus: Safeguard existing tree stock and ensure long-term health through proactive maintenance.

Includes:

* Tree inspections and pruning cycles
* Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
* Risk management and storm response
* Development control policies

### **3. Community Engagement and Education**

Focus: Empower local residents, schools, and groups to participate in and value tree stewardship.

Includes:

* Tree Wardens and volunteer planting
* School partnerships and environmental curriculum
* Public awareness campaigns
* Co-designed planting projects

### **4. Biodiversity and Climate Resilience**

Focus: Maximise the ecological and environmental benefits of trees and woodlands.

Includes:

* Native species prioritisation
* Wildlife habitat creation
* Trees for flood management and air quality
* Urban heat island mitigation

### **5. Governance, Policy, and Funding**

Focus: Ensure strong leadership, clear policies, and sustainable funding for delivery.

Includes:

* Cross-department coordination
* Integration with local plan and climate strategy
* Securing external grants and partnerships
* Transparent progress reporting

## Benefits of trees

The trees and woodlands throughout the Ashfield District provide numerous benefits for both the local community and the environment. These natural resources enhance the appeal of greenspaces for residents and visitors alike in Ashfield. Some of the main benefits have been categorised into social, environmental, economic and culture benefits. The desired outcome for Ashfield is to ensure all trees and woodlands are professionally managed and maintained, allowing them to thrive in their environment. This outcome will bring many benefits which include.

**Social benefits**

A social benefit occurs when an outcome from the trees benefits society as a whole and brings benefits which can be enjoyed by all.

* Enhancing mental wellbeing – Studies indicate that spending time in natural environments, particularly among trees, reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, thereby contributing positively to mental wellbeing. The presence of trees motivates residents to engage in outdoor activities, which further benefits mental health.
* Providing shade – Properly maintained trees can offer shade over places such as playgrounds, schools, and green spaces. This shade protects individuals from the sun, making parks more enjoyable during the summer months.
* Enhance public safety – Some reports have shown that areas with more green spaces have lower levels of crime. By ensuring tree canopies are not too low also bring a better sense of safety due to areas being lighter.
* Promoting physical activity – The presence of trees in town centres, along roadways, and throughout green spaces encourages outdoor activities such as walking, cycling, and playing, which results in improved physical health.
* Enhance attractiveness – Trees are considering an attractive asset to an area, therefore by having a range of trees across the district can help encourage more business to the area.

**Environmental benefits**

An environmental benefit is where a positive impact occurs because of tree planting on the environment which can include increasing biodiversity.

* Soil conservation – This is done by the tree roots, which play a crucial role in preventing soil erosion. By anchoring the surrounding soil, tree roots contribute to the preservation of soil fertility, thereby enhancing the conditions for the planting of new trees or flowers.
* Enhance biodiversity – Trees support many different types of animals, particularly insects. This therefore allows different ecosystems to thrive within Ashfield.
* Improve air quality – Trees take on carbon dioxide and other pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and ammonia, and omit oxygen, significantly improving the air quality
* Water cycle regulation – Trees absorb rainwater through their leaves and roots which reduces the amount of surface water, decreasing the chances of flooding. They also release water vapor back into the atmosphere.
* Chipping to be used within the allotments – Where trees are cut down and the wood is safe to be put into the chipper; they will be donated to allotments across the districts which ensure as a Council we are being environmentally friendly due to this being biodegradable. These logs are also to be used for inset hotels within schools ensuring residents throughout the district can enjoy them.

**Economic benefits**

An economic benefit is where the outcomes can be measured in terms of monetary value or result in a cost saving for the Council.

* Reduced health costs – As the trees increased the outdoor activities which take place it can result in better physical health.
* Tourism revenue – Trees can make green spaces more attractive to visitors which can result in increased numbers of visitors, who want to enjoy the green spaces across Ashfield.
* Increase property value – Reports have showed that streets which contain mature trees have increased property value and are more attractive to buyers.
* Creates jobs – Tree maintenance includes both inspections and tree works, which will need to be completed to ensure tree safety.

**Cultural benefits**

A cultural benefit is where a positive outcome makes Ashfield a more enjoyable atmosphere to be around.

* Community identifier – Mature trees are used widely within the community as meeting places for different groups as they stand out and can be a place everyone knows.
* Support education – Trees support their local ecosystem as they help different animals and insets. This allows more learning to take place around nature.
* Artistic inspiration – Art can be inspired by many different ideas, lots of art evolves around the environment and trees. This therefore helps encourage artists work to be started.
* History and heritage – Trees can allow cultural connections to different times through history. This can be seen through photographs, seeing a tree grow over time.

**Promote the Value of Trees**

The Council is keen to promote the value of trees and ensure residents understand the various ways trees can provide a benefit to the local community, some seen visually and others not. A range of benefits are explained above.

##

## Managing Trees

The existing trees within Ashfield need to be managed and maintained to a legal standard, to ensure the safety of residents and visitors. The trees will need to be fit and healthy for the changing environment and consideration taken for the future of the landscape and trees.

**Ash dieback**

Ash dieback is a fungal pathogen called ‘hymenoscycphs fraxineus’ which is leading to the decline and death of Ash trees throughout the UK. This is believed to have originated from East Asia and was spread to Europe in the early 1990s. The first case in the UK was reported in 2012 and since then it has continued to spread across the country. Within Ashfield, data shows that Ash Dieback is predominantly within the north and is beginning to spread towards the south.

Ash Dieback is spread through the release of fungal spores which are mainly spread through wind, rain, and human activity. The tiny spores can travel long distances and effect many healthy ash trees. There is currently no effective cure to treat affected trees; the best method to ensure safety is to monitor and manage the tree effectively ensuring the safety of the tree and surrounding areas is the main priority. The loss of ash trees will negatively impact the surrounding environment due to many different species’ reliance on ash trees.

Some of the main symptoms which can indicate that a tree is in the early stages of Ash Dieback are:

* Dark lesion on the leaves, which turn black and can die off early,
* The veins of the tree can appear like they have been bleached,
* Fungal fruiting bodies can appear across the tree’s bark,
* The branches can start to die from the top of the tree progressively moving down the tree.

Ash dieback is measured through four different stages as below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage**  | **What are the signs** |
|  **Stage 1** | 0-25% - a healthy tree with a good healthy leaf coverage. There may be minor signs of disease.  |
| **Stage 2** | 25-50% - a tree starting to show signs of diseases. Reduced leaf coverage/ crown density with some other indicators: some leaf browning, lesions, or brown keys |
| **Stage 3** | 50-75% - a tree which is clearly diseased. Significantly reduced leaf coverage/ crown density. Tips of the branches showing dieback, brown keys evident and foliage becomes ‘clumpy’ |
| **Stage 4** | 75-100% - a tree which is clearly in terminal decline. Extremely sparse or no leaf coverage/ crown density. Large dead branches may be present  |

**Other Tree Diseases**

Numerous tree diseases impact the landscape of Ashfield, and as a Council responsible for the care of many trees, it is essential for us to remain vigilant and monitor these issues. We need to ensure that we monitor all tree across Ashfield for signs of the different infection to help stop the spread of these and protect all other trees from the spread. This proactive approach will enable us to respond appropriately when necessary.

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| **Name** | **Affects**  | **How spread** | **Impact on tree** | **Symptoms**  | **How to manage?** |
| **Anthracnose** is a group of different fungal diseases that affect many different trees and shrubs, and is the most infectious in warm, humid areas. | Most trees andshrubs.  | This is spread through the splashing of rain or irrigation water. | It will result in killing of the buds and the loss of most/all new leaves. | The trees will show darkened, sunken leaf spots, blighted flowers or fruits, and twig dieback. | Best practice for managing this disease is removing fallen leaves, pruning infected branches, and, in some cases, fungicide application. |
| **Pine Wilt**Is caused by a microscopic (1 mm) roundworm called the pinewood or pine wilt nematode. | Many different species of pine trees. | This is spread through insect vector and different beetles moving from tree to tree. | It will result in disruption to water conduction in the tree. | The tree will show browning/ yellowing of the needles. | Best practice is the removal and destruction of infected trees to prevent the spread of the nematode. |
| **Verticillium Wilt**Is a fungal disease which is known to affect a wide range trees and shrubs; where the infection can occur all year. | Wide range of different tree species.  | A soil-borne fungal disease which infect trees from their roots.  | It will result in the discoloration of water conducting tissues in the tree roots. | The tree will show wilting, yellowing, and curling of leaves, often on one side of the tree. | The best management is to remove and destroy infected plants. |
| **Armillaria Root Rot**Is a common fungal disease which affects many trees and other woody plants. | Affect different trees and shrubs. | This is spread through root contact and the fungus grows from an infected root onto a healthy root. | This results in the death of the tree’s roots and causes wood decay to be visible.  | The tree will show signs of yellowing and drooping of leaves, branch dieback, and often, clusters of honey-coloured mushrooms at the base of the tree. |  Best practice is to maintain tree health and, in severe cases, removal of infected trees. |
| **Phytophthora Root Rot** This is also known as water mould or *phytophthora ramorum.* It is a fungus-like organism that spreads through infected water.  | Affect different trees and shrubs.  | This is spread through the splashing of rain, irrigation water, and runoff water. It can also come from infected gardening equipment.  | Leaves can show sings as well as the root. Crown rot can appear drought stressed. | The tree will begin to have wilting, yellowing, or darkening of leaves, branch dieback, and decline in general tree vigour. | To help manage the trees the best practice is to improve soil drainage and avoid excess watering. |

**Fungal Diseases**

Fungal diseases rank among the most common and damaging afflictions that impact trees. These pathogens flourish in moist, humid conditions and can disseminate via spores transported by wind, water, or insects. They can compromise every aspect of a tree, including its leaves, bark, roots, and wood. Gaining insight into these fungal diseases and recognising their symptoms is crucial for early identification and effective management. This can also help reduce the further spread of the disease. While fungicides can frequently assist in controlling these ailments, ensuring the overall health of the tree, and adhering to proper sanitation practices are also essential in preventing fungal infections.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Affects**  | **How spread** | **Impact on tree** | **Symptoms**  | **How to manage?** |
| **Heart Rot**Is a fungal disease that causes the decay of wood at the centre of the trunk and branches. | All hard wood trees. | This will enter the tree through wounds in the bark and slowly rot the heartwood over several years. Can also occur when a tree has been pruned. | This can often lead to the tree having mushroom bodies or conks growing on their trunks,decay in the centre of the tree, causing structural instability, | The tree will have dead or broken branches, scars, wounds, cracks, and forks.  | Avoiding any unnecessary wounding of trees and maintaining the overall tree health by providing proper irrigation, fertilization, and soil management. |
| **Powdery Mildew**This can consist of millions of tiny fungal spores that can be spread by the wind to other parts of a tree and on to new hosts. | Most trees. | This is spread through fungal spores being carried by the wind to plants close by or to plants far away.  | The tree’s leaves may begin to turn yellow and fall prematurely during the growing season. | The tree’s leaves may be cupped and or twisted at the site of the infection. | Physically removing the infected parts. |
| **Cankers**This is caused by various species of fungi that can infect wounded or stressed trees | Most trees and shrubs. | This can be spread through any injury or open wound on a tree and then spreads under the bark.  | The trees inner bark will turn black as the tissues start to die.  | They can appear as localised, sunken, slightly discoloured, or dark lesions on the bark of trunks and branches, or as injured areas on smaller twigs. | Apply fungicides, keep caring for the tree's overall health, and removing any infected trees. |
| **Leaf Spot**This is a limited, discoloured, diseased area of a leaf on a tree which is caused by fungal, bacterial, or viral diseases, or by injuries from nematodes, insects, environmental factors, toxicity, or herbicides. | Most trees and shrubs. | This is spread through wind and splashing of rain which carries spores of the pathogen and spreads the disease throughout the canopy. | This will result in weakened trees and shrubs by interrupting photosynthesis. | The trees will start to show spots on the leaves are usually defined margins and brown, black, tan, or reddish centres | Reducing the shade and improve soil aeration and water drainage. |

**Bacterial Diseases**

Bacterial infections in trees are not as common as fungal diseases; however, they can be just as destructive. These infections typically gain entry through wounds or natural openings in the tree and can manifest a range of different symptoms, which can vary based on the specific bacteria and the species of tree involved. Treatment options for bacterial diseases differ, but they generally include pruning the affected areas, applying antibiotic sprays, and ensuring the overall health of the tree to enhance its resistance. Timely detection and accurate diagnosis are essential for the effective management of these bacterial infections.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Affects**  | **How spread** | **Impact on tree** | **Symptoms**  | **How to manage**  |
| **Fire Blight**This is a highly contagious disease affecting apples, pears, and some other members of the Rosaceae family. | Some fruit trees. | This is spread through entering the tree via blossoms and new shoots and is best spread through wet and warm conditions.  | This can cause dead and blackened leaves and fruit cling to branches throughout the season, giving the tree a scorched appearance | Cankers on a tree's bark that look like discoloured or wet patches, often with areas of dead or decayed sapwood around their edges. Weeping wounds. The ends of shoots, twigs, or branches are drooping or dead (they often look like a shepherd's crook) Burnt-looking, dead leaves. | Maintain good disease control to help protect the tree as much as possible. |
| **Crown Gall** This affects the normal functions of the twigs and other plant parts, causing curling and stunting of growth. | Euonymus, fruit, and nut trees, rose, and willow. | This can be spread through the soil and water movement or contaminated pruning tools. | This can cause the tree to be susceptible to drought stress, winter injury and secondary diseases that enter the plant through cracks in the gall. | This disease will show galls enlarge, they become woody and hard. The outer layer turns brown and corky. | Treatment of the soil with heat. |
| **Bacterial Leaf Scorch**This is also known as Marginal leaf burn, which is a chronic and systemic disease. | Maples and oak trees. | This is spread by leafhoppers and treehopper insects carrying the bacteria.  | The trees twigs and branches to die back until eventually the entire tree dies. | Some signs of this are yellow or reddish-brown band may be present along the interior edge of the scorched tissue | The cultural practices that promote tree vigour may help slow the rate of decline. Remove and destroy branches as they become infected and exhibit symptoms. |
| **Bacterial Canker**This is a disease of the stems and leaves of Prunus trees. | Prunus species. | Spread by rains, which allows the diseases to enter the plant through natural openings or wounds | This can produce a gummy, resinous ooze. The wood in the cankered area is typically discoloured. | Some of the main signs of this are localised, sunken, slightly discoloured, or dark lesions on the bark of trunks and branches, or as injured areas on smaller twigs | Carefully remove the affected parts several inches below the infection. |

## Transformation Growth, Protecting Woodlands

Ashfield is situated in Nottinghamshire, nestled on the edge of beautiful countryside, with three vibrant towns and picturesque rural villages. Renowned for its welcoming, supportive, and passionate communities, the area boasts a mix of beautiful countryside, complemented by award winning urban and country parks. Ashfield District Council covers an area of 10,956 hectares and is located on the western side of Nottinghamshire. It has an estimated population of 126,600. The three main towns of Sutton in Ashfield, Hucknall and Kirkby in Ashfield together with three large villages in the substantial rural area mainly to the west of the M1 motorway.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Land Use | Area(ha) | Area% |
| Trees | 1823.6 | 16.6% |
| Agricultural & Grass Land | 5312.7 | 48.5% |
| ADC | 10954 |  100% |

Ashfield as an area is full of nature environment with a large amount of land we want to protect. Ashfield district is around 10,954 hectors, with 48.5% being agricultural and or grass lands, which includes all the award-winning parks which our residents and visitors enjoy. Our trees are situated within this and other areas of the district and cover a total of 1823.6 hectares.



**Tree Canopy Cover**

Ashfield District Council is aiming to enhance the canopy cover to a minimum target of 20%, which is established for all towns in the United Kingdom. Currently, the Districts’ canopy cover stands at 16.17%, a figure that does not account for the gardens of our residents. This aims to guarantee that the Council not only meets but surpasses the national average for canopy cover within the Ashfield District. The provision of this canopy cover offers numerous advantages for Ashfield. Including, reduced risk of flooding as shaded areas within parks as there is a reduction in the amount of rainfall that reaches the ground, as well as an increase in biodiversity attracting new insects into green spaces.

**Tree planting**

As a Council we aim to protect our trees and woodlands throughout the district. To help keep this promise we aim to only remove trees which are dying and or causing a great risk to life. If a tree is removed, two trees will be planted in its place. The location of new trees may differ depending on the viability of the original location where the tree was removed from. When new trees are planted, the Council aims to ensure ‘right tree right place’ so the tree can come to fruition.

The aim of this is to prevent a significant decline in tree populations and to maintain the coverage of the tree canopy. By replanting in various locations, it can enhance biodiversity across Ashfield and ensure that appropriate tree species are planted in suitable environments. This approach will contribute to the enhancement of green spaces, promoting a more native ecosystem.

 Consideration will be given to any new tree planting or replacement activities throughout the district. The selection of tree species will be made from an approved list of native trees, while also taking into account the principle of "right tree, right location." This approach will guarantee that the newly planted trees will provide benefits to the local environment and communities. To facilitate this process effectively, a comprehensive tree plan will be implemented, ensuring that the anticipated benefits of the new trees will be realized for many years in Ashfield. The concept of "right tree, right location" is essential for successful tree planting, as it ensures that the trees can thrive in their new surroundings and lead healthy lives.

## Financing Tree Planting

As a Council, we can secure diverse funding sources for new tree planting and related projects. However, it is essential to consider the financial resources required for the ongoing management of these trees throughout their lifespan. To maximise the survival rate of our newly planted trees during their initial year, they will need consistent watering. In the UK, statistics indicate that approximately 30% of new trees fail to survive the first twelve months, with some areas experiencing rates as high as 50%. Over the course of a tree's life, it will also necessitate various maintenance efforts to ensure its health and safety. To assist the Council in managing these expenses, a new pricing matrix will be implemented starting at £200 per tree, with the cost subject to maintenance demand and location. This cost will encompass the costs of planting, first-year watering, and any necessary maintenance throughout the tree's life. This cost will be internally recharged when we plant new trees and will be added to any tree planting request.

 The corporate plan of Ashfield District Council prioritizes the enhancement of green spaces across the district, with a focus on their cleanliness and sustainability. This goal will be pursued through a range of strategies, including effective tree management and planting initiatives. By ensuring the proper upkeep of the tree population, the Council aims to maintain the safety and suitability of these assets.

## Nature Connected Partnerships

Trees serve as an excellent means of uniting communities throughout Ashfield, encouraging both residents and visitors to venture outdoors and appreciate the green spaces and parks, thereby enjoying the natural environment and fresh air. To enhance community involvement, the Council will persist in its tree planting initiatives and actively engage residents in these efforts. This approach allows all community members to benefit from the advantages that green spaces provide.

Additionally, these initiatives can foster educational opportunities within schools and other learning environments, raising awareness about the significance of trees in the local ecosystem and the various benefits they offer. By promoting education regarding the local environment, we can help ensure the long-term preservation and enjoyment of trees.

To guarantee that any new tree planting or maintenance activities are well-informed, we intend to collaborate closely with the Friends of the Park groups associated with many of our green spaces and parks throughout the district. This collaboration will promote a cooperative approach, ensuring that all activities benefit both the parks and their users.

Whenever feasible, we will also engage with wildlife organisations to safeguard biodiversity and minimise negative impacts. These groups can assist in conducting assessments to ensure that any work carried out has minimal effects on local wildlife. The Council will incorporate feedback where possible from all these organisations to facilitate effective consultation.

## Council Policies

**Tree Planting Policy**

The Council’s objective is to cultivate native trees, particularly those sourced locally, as they are highly recommended, especially in natural and semi-natural environments, to optimize benefits for local wildlife. The choice of native species should be informed by the specific characteristics of the location and site conditions to ensure their successful growth. Native trees will establish a visual link to the surrounding landscape, enhancing the integration between the areas of Ashfield and the neighbouring countryside. It is importance for the Council to consider various species of Ash tree in the future, and should a resistant species be identified, the Council will seek to plant additional Ash trees in locations that are appropriate for the environment.

Planting in proximity to hard-surfaced areas poses challenges due to the prevalence of impervious surfaces and compacted soils, which impede the establishment and growth of trees. To mitigate these challenges, it is crucial to adopt construction methods that meet the load-bearing requirements for a stable hard surface while simultaneously expanding the available rooting space for trees and encouraging root development away from the hard surface.

Climate change is expected to affect future species selection, requiring considerations for increasingly hotter and drier summers, as well as warmer, wetter, and windier winters. The capacity of a species to adapt to or endure these environmental changes, along with potential threats from pests and diseases, is of paramount importance.

Additionally, the significance of biodiversity in bolstering the stability and resilience of ecosystems against the effects of disease and climate change indicates that non-native trees could provide valuable food sources for bees, butterflies, and other nectar-seeking insects, alongside native species. Consequently, it is recommended to plant a diverse range of suitable species rather than depending solely on the mass planting of a single species.

*Tree Source*: It is essential that trees originate from reputable nurseries that adhere to a nationally recognised, implemented, and verifiable bio-security policy, ensuring that the trees are devoid of harmful pests and diseases. Preference should be given to trees of local provenance.

*Mature tree size*: Larger trees provide significantly greater advantages to urban areas compared to smaller trees and should be prioritised where space permits. Nevertheless, large trees may not always be appropriate for restricted areas within streets and town centres, necessitating careful selection to achieve the desired benefits while minimising any potential drawbacks.

*Size of planting stock*: It is acknowledged that smaller stock tends to establish more rapidly. Overstocking can accommodate natural losses and promote better woodland establishment. Thinning practices will be incorporated into the management plan to ensure that developing trees have sufficient space to flourish. However, in locations that are vulnerable or lack visual appeal, the use of larger stock may be warranted.

**Tree Preservation Orders**

**Application for tree works which are being requested on TPOs.**

When work may need to be conducted on TPOs and tree in conservation areas a formal process needs to be carried out to avoid any fines or further actions.

If believed that a TPO requires any level of work from work provided by a tree surgeon to a tree being removed written permission from the Council will be required. When applying for these works, a planning application will need to be completed. The form can be found on the website to be completed.

<https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/planning-building-control/heritage-conservation/conservation-areas/tree-works-preservation/>

**System that is used to ensure trees under threat are protected.**

If a tree is to be believed to be under threat (e.g. neglected or closed to a new development sight) a requested can be made for a preservation order to be put in place. For this process to take place a formal letter will need to be sent to the Council which includes a sketch plan clearly showing where the tree is. The letter should include why the tree needs protecting. Once the application is received the Council will send out the tree officer who will inspect the tree and assess if a tree preservation order is required.

If a requested is being made, it should be sent to the below address:

Planning Department

Ashfield District Council

Unban Road

Kirkby in Ashfield

Nottingham

NG17 8DA

**Unauthorised works are taken on protected trees.**

As a Council we have a duty to investigate all unauthorised tree works and gather all relevant information. Each assessment of the case will be advised by the Councils legal team. The appropriate actions will be taken when there is justification and evidence. Depending on the circumstance there will be a serving of tree replacement notice.

If a TPO is destroyed or damaged without permission both the owner and the person responsible can be prosecuted and fined up to £20,000. If any other offensive and made on a TPO a fine up to £2,500 can be issued.

**Tree Management and Maintenance Policy**

As a governing body, we recognise our duty to protect both the public and our personnel. To fulfil this obligation effectively, we have instituted a policy that regulates the management and upkeep of our tree inventory. This policy provides a thorough framework addressing all tree-related matters, thereby minimising the risk posed by potentially hazardous trees in the district.

This policy includes a risk matrix utilized by Ashfield District Council to ensure the safety of all trees within the district, facilitating a continuous cycle of tree inspections. It also details the tree maintenance activities the Council undertakes, as well as those that will not be performed.

The Tree Safety Management Policy will ensure that:

• The risk to life and property from tree deterioration is maintained at a level that is as low as reasonably achievable.

• A systematic approach to tree inspections is implemented concerning the aforementioned risk.

• Comprehensive records of trees and their inspections are maintained.

• Personnel conducting inspections and tree works will possess the necessary qualifications.

When any major tree works take place, there will be some communication provided to ensure residents are aware of what is going on and why this needs to take place.

**When can a Tree be Felled?**

As a Council, we hold the responsibility for mitigating the risks and liabilities associated with trees, thereby facilitating the safe enjoyment of local parks and green spaces. The removal of a tree will only be contemplated when it is deemed the sole option to ensure safety at a particular site. A tree may also be removed if shows signs of being diseased to help reduce the risk of the disease spreading further. Prior to any decision regarding felling, a thorough inspection of the tree must be conducted, by a qualified tree inspector. Should a risk arise, a comprehensive risk assessment will be performed on the tree in question. Additionally, tree removal may be necessary to enhance the health of a group of trees; for instance, thinning a densely packed cluster where individual trees are not thriving.

**Having a Risk Matrix in Place**

To ensure the safety of all the Council’s tree assets located on Council-owned land, a risk matrix will be implemented. This matrix will evaluate the potential risks each tree presents to its surroundings, as well as assess the health of the tree, including any diseases. Additionally, it will determine the necessary maintenance or major work required to reduce the risk level. The risk matrix will also take into account the geographical positioning of each tree, which will aid in determining the frequency of required surveys. Tree inspections will be incorporated into a continuous inspection schedule based on the findings of the risk matrix and the results of the inspections.

## Governance, Monitoring, and Review

This strategy lays out the Council’s responsibilities for tree care and maintenance across the district. The Tree and Woodland Strategy will cover 2025-2035. This strategy is a dynamic document and subject to review every two years, or upon legislative, societal, and environmental changes that impact the Council as a Local Authority. A full review will take place 2030. It ensures that as a Council we align with government aims for the future of tree and woodlands.

Additionally, this strategy is connected to the Tree Management and Maintenance Policy, which details the Council's oversight of its trees. It guarantees that our trees undergo regular inspections and are maintained to a high standard. The Council is committed to safeguarding our tree population and undertaking necessary work to ensure their health and vitality.

## Action Plan

### **1. Tree Planting and Canopy Expansion**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Resources** | **Key Performance Indicator (KPI)** |
| Conduct tree canopy survey and assess planting needs | 2026 | Tree Officer | GIS data, staff | Complete survey and gap analysis by end of 2026 |
| Plant 500 trees in priority areas (including schools, parks, streets) | 2025–2027 | Parks & Greenspaces Team, Volunteers | Tree planting grants, volunteer groups | 500 trees planted by 2027 |
| Plant 3,000 tress to ensure bigger goals are met | 2027 | Parks, Greenspaces Team | Tree planting grants  | 3,000 trees planted by 2027 |
| Establish a tree planting program for local schools | 2027 | Education Team, Tree Officer | Education budget, volunteer support | 8 schools participating annually |
| Increase tree canopy by 5% across the District  | 2025–2030 | Council Planning, Greenspace Team | Local budgets, partnerships | 5% increase in canopy cover by 2030 |

### **2. Tree Protection and Management**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Resources** | **KPI** |
| Update and strengthen Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) | 2025 | Planning Department | Planning tools | Increase TPOs by 15% by 2027 |
| Implement regular tree inspections and health monitoring | 2026 | Tree Officer, Maintenance Team | Maintenance budget | 33% council-owned trees inspected annually |
| Develop a risk management plan for mature trees (storm, disease) | 2026 | Tree Officer, Risk Management Team | Consultant, tools | Complete risk management plan by 2026 |
| Introduce a “Right Tree, Right Place” planting guide | 2026 | Tree Officer, Environment Team | Design & print materials | Publication and distribution in year 1 |

### **3. Community Engagement and Education**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Resources** | **KPI** |
| Launch a “Tree Wardens” volunteer program | 2026 | Tree Officer, Education Team | Volunteer recruitment, tools | Recruit 3 active volunteers by end of 2026 |
| Host community tree planting days and workshops | 2026–2028 | Environment Team, Education Team | Volunteer support, event budget | Host 1 events annually |
| Develop a tree education program for schools | 2026 | Tree Officer, Education Team | Curriculum development budget | Reach 30% of local schools by 2027 |
| Promote the benefits of trees through local media | 2026–2027 | Communications Team | Media partnerships | Reach 10,000 residents annually |

### **4. Biodiversity and Climate Resilience**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Resources** | **KPI** |
| Prioritise native and climate-resilient species for planting | 2026 | Tree Officer, Environment Team | Planting budget, expert advice | 80% native species in all new plantings |
| Integrate trees into the climate adaptation strategy | 2032. | Climate Change Team | Collaboration with climate teams | Full integration by 2032 |
| Develop woodlands for flood management and natural resilience | 2027 | Parks & Greenspaces Team, Environment Agency | Funding, partnerships | Create 1 flood-resilient woodlands by 2030 |
| Monitor carbon sequestration from newly planted trees | 2027 | Tree Officer, Environmental Consultant | Carbon measurement tools | Report carbon savings annually from 2027 |

### **5. Governance, Policy, and Funding**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Resources** | **KPI** |
| Integrate tree strategy into local planning and climate policies | 2025 | Planning & Environment Teams | Policy development resources | Full policy integration by 2025 |
| Secure external funding and partnerships for tree projects | 2025–2030 | Grants & Funding Team | Funding applications, partners | Secure 3 significant grants by 2028 |
| Publish an annual “State of the Trees” progress report | 2026–2030 | Tree Officer, Communications Team | Data tracking, reporting tools | Publish annually, starting in 2026 |
| Establish a stakeholder advisory panel for tree strategy feedback | 2026 | Tree Officer, Community Engagement Team | Panel resources | Hold bi-annual meetings |

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

* Progress Reports: Annual progress reports to be submitted to the council and public.
* Mid-term Review: Strategy review and adjustments in 2028 based on performance and stakeholder feedback.
* Final Evaluation: Full evaluation of strategy outcomes in 2030 with a vision for the next decade.

### **Resources and Funding:**

* Council Budget: Allocate funding for tree planting, maintenance, and community outreach.
* External Grants: Pursue funding from environmental agencies, charities, and government initiatives.
* Volunteers: Utilize community volunteers for planting and maintenance.