

SG Safeguarding 3: Protection and conservation of trees and woodland

We will only approve development that would cause the loss of or serious damage to trees or woodlands, which are either covered by an existing or proposed Tree Preservation Order, or are of significant ecological, historical, recreational or shelter value, subject to other policies, if:

- 1) it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits that outweigh any potential loss; AND**
- 2) when required, an evaluation of the biodiversity and amenity value of the woodland and habitat, including current and future benefits of the existing woodland, has been undertaken; AND**
- 3) the minimum damage occurs to existing trees and woodland as a result of the development, and there is no unnecessary fragmentation of existing or potential woodland networks; AND**
- 4) the impact of the removal of any trees and the effect on the character or amenity of the area is mitigated by appropriate compensatory planting to an agreed standard.**

The Council will support the creation and protection of sensitively designed and managed forests and woodlands, in line with the Forest & Woodland Strategy and in accordance with the landscape character supplementary guidance.

Reasoned Justification

The aim of this supplementary guidance is to secure protection of individual and groups of trees. The policy also applies to designated woodland, such as Ancient Woodland.

Trees contribute to the character and amenity of an area, are of important ecological value and provide recreational, air quality and rain water management functions. It is important to retain green networks of woodland, which support a variety of species, and to avoid the loss of connectivity between different woodland habitats. Even where compensatory planting can be provided, public benefit can be lost in the short term, as it takes some time to establish a full woodland ecosystem. The value of the network under threat must be carefully considered before development is permitted and mitigation measures accepted. Some woodlands, particularly when recently formed or comprising predominantly non-native species, may be of lesser value, but there needs to be a clear understanding of what may be lost before changes to the woodland can be accepted.

Established woodlands are important as stores of historic greenhouse gas emissions, and also as stores for newly produced greenhouse gas. Creation of new woodland is identified in the Scottish Government publication, 'Climate Change Delivery Plan', as assisting with carbon sequestration.

The mitigation of tree removal through compensatory planting will be to an agreed standard, which will be detailed in a planning condition or a planning agreement.

When protecting woodland, the Council will have regard to adopted standards, and tree surveys should be carried out in accordance with BS 5837. Where necessary, we may serve preservation orders on potentially vulnerable trees of environmental value, which could be damaged by development proposals.

The Forest & Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City provides a local focus for management, enhancement, and creation of woodlands. The encouragement of woodland creation is consistent with Scottish Government targets to increase woodland cover in Scotland from 17% to 25% by 2050.