

**CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH
COUNCIL**

**TREE PLANTING IN PUBLIC SPACE
POLICY**



Change Log		
Review Date	Action	By Whom
Feb 2026	Full Review	AB

Summary

1. Introduction
2. Purpose and Aims
3. The Value of Trees
4. Social Benefits
5. Economic Benefits
6. Historic Canopy Data
7. Urban Design Principles
8. Implementation
9. Policy Context
10. Policy Review

Central Swindon North Parish Council lies at the heart of Swindons core Urban area, having been developed over a vast timeline spanning from Victorian industrial era up to the latter 20th Century; the mixed prominence of tree cover reflects the urban planning thought processes over a period of 150 years.

Today however it is universally recognised, with the benefit of modern health & wellbeing evidence which were not available when most of the Parish was constructed, that trees in the public realm make a significant contribution to residents of our Parish. Beyond health & aesthetics, trees also make environmental contributions to our Parish, they sequester Co2 and release oxygen, shade buildings and streets, and provide a psychological link to nature by signifying the change in seasons and the passage of time.

This document is designed to establish the basis for how we plant trees and develop our canopy cover as well as defining our working partnership with other organisations including Swindon Borough Council, HBUF, Natural England, the Community Land Advisory Forum and of course the residents and businesses of our Parish.



1. Introduction

1. Trees were formally introduced into British streets around 250 years ago. Today, trees are an integral component of the urban environment and are a defining feature of many parts of Central Swindon North. They can add to local character, help create a sense of place and soften the built environment, contributing to residents' physical, social and cultural wellbeing.
2. Trees need to be carefully managed, and new trees should be planted where appropriate to ensure succession and continuity over time. Councillors have consistently emphasised the importance of leaving a green legacy for future generations, building on long standing local initiatives and historic planting that has shaped parts of the Parish.
3. The management of existing tree stock is essential to ensure that important views are not obscured, conflicts with pedestrians and vehicles are minimised (particularly on the highway), and the risk of damage to property and infrastructure, including the potential to exacerbate subsidence is reduced.
4. Although many streets already contain trees, the Parish Council will consider requests for additional tree planting on public land with a view to increasing public tree stock in a coherent and locally appropriate way, in accordance with the principles set out in this document. The Council will also proactively identify suitable new planting locations that do not detract from existing amenity, townscape character, accessibility, or community safety. To support this approach, the Council recognises the need to:
 - **Identify and evaluate** the age and species structure of the existing tree population, with a view to developing a long term renewal and succession programme that, as a minimum, maintains standards of amenity, biodiversity, and local and historic character; and
 - **Increase** the number of trees that are healthy and of an appropriate scale for their surroundings, with planting focused on locations where trees can establish successfully and be maintained sustainably.



2. Purpose & Aims

This document seeks to ensure that, across Central Swindon North Parish, the right trees are planted in the right places and managed appropriately throughout their lifecycle. Its purpose can be summarised as follows:

To ensure that, for the benefit of current and future generations who live and work in the Parish, tree stock is maintained, enhanced and, where appropriate, replaced in accordance with arboricultural good practice, whilst recognising the character of the urban environment and the need for sustainable long term management.

In doing so, the Parish Council will remain mindful of the ongoing financial and maintenance implications of tree planting and will consider additional planting opportunities where they are appropriate to the townscape, site conditions and available resources.

Scope and Application

This policy is intended to provide guidance to those involved in the introduction, management and maintenance of trees within the public realm, including:

- Central Swindon North Parish Council in its role as a local delivery and enabling authority;
- Swindon Borough Council as planning, highway and housing authority; and
- third parties, partner organisations and community groups involved in public realm improvements or development related planting schemes.

This policy should be read alongside relevant national guidance and Swindon Borough Council policies, including Supplementary Planning Guidance, and is intended to support partnership working rather than replace statutory planning or regulatory functions.

Policy Context

Trees on private land are often subject to statutory controls such as planning requirements or Tree Preservation Orders. By contrast, trees within the public realm are typically subject to fewer formal regulatory controls. This policy therefore provides a consistent and transparent framework to guide decision making and promote a coordinated approach to tree planting and management across the Parish.

The Parish Council recognises that it has limited control over trees managed by other organisations, including those on Housing Revenue Account land, private land or sites managed by partner organisations. This policy seeks to encourage collaboration and joined up working where possible.

Aims of the Policy

To support the Parish Council's approach to tree planting and management, this document has the following aims:

1. **To promote awareness of the value of trees** and their contribution to the character, amenity and environmental quality of the Parish.
2. **To provide guidance on tree planting within the urban environment**, ensuring that trees contribute positively to townscape character and the quality of public spaces.
3. **To support the health and wellbeing of residents and improve local environmental conditions** through appropriate tree planting and management.

4. **To promote an understanding of practical site considerations**, ensuring that trees are appropriately located and do not create avoidable conflict with residents, infrastructure or public use of space.
5. **To provide a proportionate framework for decision making**, recognising that this document is not a technical manual for arboricultural practice, does not address privately owned trees, and does not replace the policies or statutory responsibilities of Swindon Borough Council.

3. The Value of Trees

Trees provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits that contribute positively to the quality of life of those who live and work within Central Swindon North Parish. These benefits are particularly important in densely developed urban areas where access to traditional open space may be limited. In addition to their visible contribution to the townscape, trees provide wider benefits that are less easily quantified but nonetheless significant.

3.1 Environmental Benefits

Central Swindon North Parish is a highly urbanised environment, characterised by major transport corridors, industrial areas and dense development. Local air quality can be affected by traffic congestion at key routes and junctions, including Bruce Street Bridges, Moonrakers Roundabout, Transfer Bridges and Great Western Way, as well as emissions from commercial and domestic activity.

Although the Parish currently has no designated Air Quality Management Areas following highway improvements in recent years, concentrations of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide may occasionally exceed recommended levels under certain atmospheric conditions. Tree planting can contribute to improvements in local environmental quality by helping to filter airborne pollutants and by influencing local microclimatic conditions. Trees may provide environmental benefits through:

- **Improving local environmental quality** by filtering airborne pollutants and particulates through their leaves and branches.
- **Enhancing microclimate and thermal comfort**, providing shade and helping to moderate local temperatures in built up areas.
- **Supporting water management**, including interception of rainfall and helping to reduce surface water runoff and localised flooding.
- **Providing habitat and supporting biodiversity**, either directly or by contributing to wider ecological networks and green corridors.
- **Producing oxygen and contributing to natural environmental processes** associated with vegetation in urban areas.

The design and placement of trees must take account of their surroundings. For example, in locations with heavy traffic or limited space it may be appropriate to select species with lower foliage density or forms that do not create excessive enclosure or restrict visibility.

3.2 Local Climate and Urban Conditions

Urban areas can experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural locations due to the concentration of buildings and hard surfaces. Tree planting can help mitigate these effects by providing shade and improving local environmental conditions. Careful species selection and appropriate planting design are therefore important in ensuring that trees establish successfully and provide long term benefits

4. Social Benefits

The aesthetic and experiential value of trees is one of their most immediate and visible contributions to Central Swindon North. Trees can soften hard urban landscapes, improve parks and public spaces, and help create distinctive places that residents recognise and value. They can also support community identity by reinforcing the character of neighbourhoods and streets.

Trees can contribute to social value and wellbeing by:

- **Providing historic continuity**, as established trees can form an emotional and physical link to local history and personal memories.
- **Enhancing established public spaces**, including areas with mature tree stock such as Mannington Recreation Ground, where trees form an important part of the setting and landscape.
- **Marking the changing seasons**, through autumn colour, spring flowering and seasonal variation, contributing to local pride and initiatives such as community “in bloom” activities.
- **Acting as landmarks**, supporting navigation and giving visual emphasis to pedestrian and vehicular routes, where additional structure and greening may be beneficial (for example along longer linear corridors such as the Beech Avenue).
- **Improving comfort during warmer periods**, including providing shade and reducing heat stress in exposed public spaces.
- **Supporting mental wellbeing**, by providing contact with nature, visual interest and a softer streetscape that can reduce stress and improve the experience of everyday environments.
- **Contributing sensory benefits**, including scent, sound (wind in foliage) and seasonal interest that can positively influence how places feel and are used.

The Parish Council also recognises potential disbenefits associated with trees, including allergens which may affect some residents, and will consider these issues as part of species selection and site assessment.

5. Economic Benefits

Trees can provide economic value by improving the quality and attractiveness of neighbourhoods and public spaces. Well treed streets and parks can contribute to place quality, supporting community use, local confidence and the perception of an area as cared for and well managed. This can help encourage further investment and support local vitality.

Trees may deliver economic benefits by:

- **Enhancing the attractiveness of public spaces**, supporting use for leisure, tourism and day-to-day activity.
- **Improving the setting of homes and businesses**, contributing to place appeal and, in some circumstances, supporting property values.
- **Reducing energy demand** where trees provide shade and shelter, helping moderate building temperatures and comfort levels over time.
- **Providing useful organic materials** such as composted leaf litter and woodchip mulch when managed appropriately.
- **Supporting local employment and skills**, through arboriculture, horticulture, landscaping and associated supply chains.

As with all benefits, economic value is maximised when trees are appropriately located, well established and sustainably maintained.

6. Historic Canopy Cover Data

Overview of 238 towns and cities		Comparison with nearby settlements to Swindon	
Canopy Cover	Number of towns	Urban centre	Canopy cover
Under 10%*	40	Stroud	28.6%
10-20%	175	Bath	20%
20-30%	60	Salisbury	19.8%
Over 30%	8	Bristol	18.6%
		Reading	18.4%
		Abingdon	16.3%
		Gloucester	13.6%
		Cheltenham	12.8%
		Swindon	8%

Canopy cover across Central Swindon North Parish 2023

Tree Canopy Cover across the North Swindon Parish was estimated at 12.4% (+/- 1%).

Central Swindon North Parish is a predominantly urban environment characterised by dense residential areas, historic streetscapes, major transport corridors and limited opportunities for large scale planting.

Tree cover is unevenly distributed across the Parish and is concentrated in specific locations, including:

- the Hreod Burna corridor;
- River Ray corridor;
- Diamond Woods;
- Mannington Recreation Ground and other established open spaces;
- the Moredon Tree Collection.

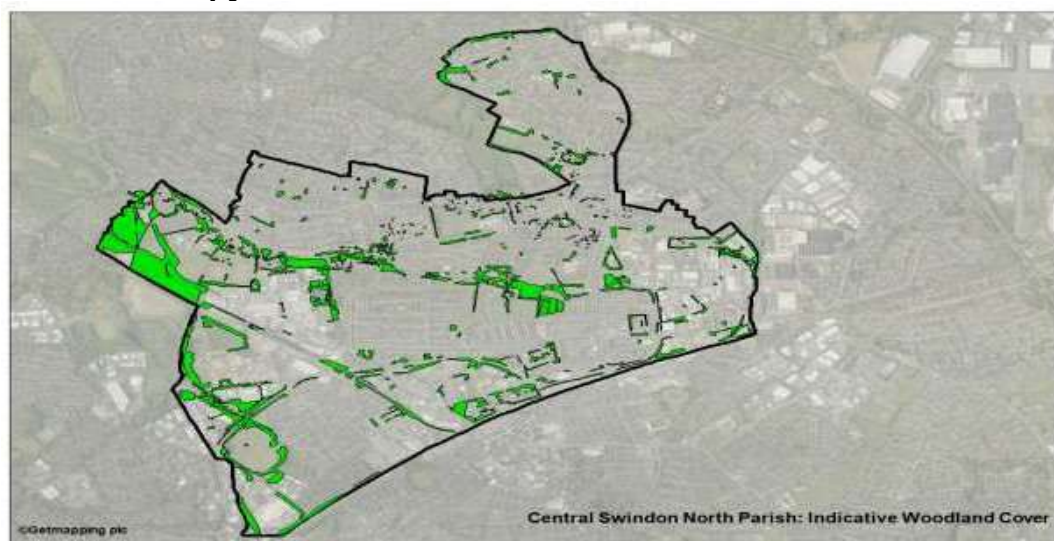
Many streets have constrained footways, underground services and competing demands for public space. Planting must therefore respond to these physical constraints while seeking opportunities to enhance environmental quality and local character.

The Parish Council also recognises the historic legacy of tree planting initiatives which have shaped the townscape and contributed to local identity.

Tree Preservation Orders within the Parish are largely clustered around St Mary's Church and at the Kembury Park Estate. Protection for trees is also afforded by the conservation areas at Rodbourne Cheney and the Railway Area North.

Area	Estimate of canopy cover (%)	Estimate of other vegetation cover (%)
Central North Parish	12.4	28.5
Other areas		
South Swindon Parish	15.9	38
Urban Swindon	8.0	Figure not yet calculated
Town Centre	3.4	2.9
Swindon Central Area	9.0	15.1

Illustrative canopy cover within Central Swindon North Parish 2016.



Tree Equity Score analysis indicates that several neighbourhoods within Central Swindon North Parish fall within areas of high or highest priority for tree canopy expansion. Many LSOAs within the Parish currently exhibit canopy cover levels between approximately 7% and 13%, while canopy targets within the dataset range between approximately 24% and 36%. This highlights a significant opportunity for additional tree planting to improve environmental conditions and access to green infrastructure

[Tree Equity Score UK Map](#)

7. Urban Design Principles

The introduction of new tree planting must be considered within its specific urban context. Trees can have a significant influence on the appearance, character and function of neighbourhoods within Central Swindon North, and planting decisions must therefore respond to the design, layout and use of each location.

The presence or absence of trees contributes to a location's sense of place, which reflects the overall character experienced by residents and visitors. Whether planting a single tree, a group, or an avenue, careful consideration must be given to how planting will relate to the surrounding townscape.

Planting should:

- respect the architectural character and layout of streets and spaces;
- enhance the quality and usability of public space;
- maintain important views and sight lines;
- support safe movement for pedestrians and vehicles;
- maintain appropriate levels of daylight and street lighting;
- avoid adverse impacts on buildings or infrastructure.

Trees should form part of the overall urban design approach and should not be introduced without careful consideration of their long term impact. Trees are not appropriate in every location, particularly where space is limited or where planting would detract from the character or function of the area.

Each site must be assessed on its individual merits, with decisions informed by long term design considerations and the expected lifespan and growth characteristics of the species selected.



7.2 Long Term Design and Succession Planning

Tree planting should be undertaken with a long term perspective. Trees may remain in the landscape for many decades or centuries and their future size, form and maintenance requirements must be considered at the time of planting.

The Council will consider:

- long term growth, canopy spread and root development;
- the impact of tree maturity on light, space and movement;
- the future replacement or succession of tree planting;
- consistency of planting where avenue or boulevard effects are desired.

Succession planting may be appropriate where consistent tree form or scale is required or where space constraints limit long term growth.

Young trees may take several years to establish and may be vulnerable to vandalism or environmental stress. Planting proposals should therefore include appropriate establishment and protection measures.

7.3 Practical Site Considerations

General Principles

Tree planting in parks, recreation grounds and open spaces may be less constrained than in streets, but all planting proposals must consider existing vegetation, buildings, infrastructure and public use.

Street environments present additional constraints where public safety and accessibility are of primary importance.

Factors to be considered include:

- accessibility for people with disabilities and mobility needs;
- pedestrian flows and public safety;
- highway safety and vehicle movement;
- street lighting and visibility;
- underground and above ground services;
- maintenance and cleansing requirements;
- potential property impacts;
- opportunities for natural surveillance and community safety.

7.4 Available Space

Trees should not be planted where they would obstruct traffic signs, sight lines, lighting columns or the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Species selection must reflect available space. Locations with limited lateral clearance may require narrow or upright species, while busier routes may require trees capable of being pruned to provide adequate clearance.

7.5 Pavement Width and Accessibility

Many streets within the Parish have narrow footways that may not be suitable for tree planting.

Planting should not reduce footway width below levels necessary to accommodate pedestrians, wheelchair users, mobility scooters or pushchairs. A minimum clear footway width of approximately two metres will normally be sought where practicable.

In high pedestrian areas, including local centres and precincts, maintaining unobstructed movement is a priority. Where appropriate, trees may be located within designated street furniture zones.

7.6 Growing Conditions and Soil Volume

Successful tree establishment depends on suitable growing conditions, including adequate soil volume and moisture availability.

The Council will consider:

- soil quality and compaction;
- root space and underground conditions;
- drainage and water availability;
- proximity of hard surfaces and buildings.

Planting in constrained conditions or containers may limit long term viability and should only be considered where sustainable maintenance arrangements exist.

Climate projections for southern England indicate warmer, drier summers and more variable rainfall. Species selection and planting design should therefore support resilience to changing environmental conditions.

7.7 Species Selection

Trees selected for planting must be appropriate for the urban environment and capable of establishing successfully under local conditions.

Urban trees are subject to greater stresses than those in rural environments, including restricted rooting space, higher temperatures, soil disturbance, pollution and mechanical damage. These factors may reduce life expectancy and must be considered when selecting species.

Species selection will take account of:

- mature size and form;
- canopy density and shading characteristics;
- tolerance to urban conditions;
- resilience to pests and disease;
- maintenance requirements;
- compatibility with surrounding uses.

A diverse range of species will be encouraged to reduce vulnerability to disease and environmental change.

Native and non-native species may both be appropriate where they are suitable to site conditions and contribute positively to the environment.

Species that present unacceptable risks, including excessive fruit drop, thorns, brittle branches or significant nuisance to residents, will generally be avoided in high use public areas.

7.8 Building and Infrastructure Considerations

Tree planting proposals must consider potential impacts on buildings and infrastructure, including:

- proximity to structures;
- potential effects on underground services;
- risk of damage to pavements or surfaces;
- potential subsidence risks in susceptible areas.

Appropriate species selection and site assessment will help minimise potential conflicts.

7.9 Tree Asset Management and Maintenance

The Parish Council recognises that tree planting creates long term responsibilities and financial commitments. Trees established through Parish programmes are public assets requiring ongoing management.

Planting proposals must identify:

- establishment arrangements, including watering and protection;
- inspection requirements during the establishment period;
- long term maintenance assumptions;

- arrangements for replacement of failed trees where appropriate.

Tree planting schemes will only proceed where realistic maintenance arrangements are identified.

The Council will maintain a proportionate record of Parish tree planting activity, including location, species (where known), planting year and funding source.

7.10 Monitoring, Reporting and Canopy Cover

The Parish Council will monitor tree planting activity and outcomes to ensure that planting programmes are effective and sustainable.

Monitoring may include:

- number of trees planted;
- establishment success where known;
- replacement planting;
- funding secured.

Existing canopy cover data provides baseline context only. The Council will seek to review national and local canopy cover data and update the Parish baseline within five years to assess progress and inform future planting activity.

7.11 Community Engagement and Tree Planting Requests

The Parish Council welcomes requests from residents, community groups and local organisations for new tree planting.

Requests will be assessed against:

- site suitability;
- urban design considerations;
- safety and accessibility;
- maintenance implications; and
- available resources.

Where appropriate, local consultation may be undertaken prior to planting. Unauthorised planting within the public realm is discouraged to ensure appropriate species selection, design and long term management.

8. Implementation

An annual tree planting programme will be prepared by the council, reflecting identified need, site opportunities and available funding.

The programme will be:

- considered by the Leisure & Recreation Committee; and
- approved by Full Council.

Where proposals involve sensitive locations or complex constraints, site visits and consultation with relevant stakeholders may be undertaken prior to recommendations being made.

9. Policy Context

This policy has been prepared having regard to:

- National Planning Policy Framework;
- Biodiversity Net Gain requirements;
- Forest Research and arboricultural guidance;
- Swindon Borough Council policies and the Local Plan.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every five years or sooner where changes in legislation, national guidance or local circumstances require.