University of Chester

Tree Management and Protection Policy

Version 1.0

Document revision history (most recent first):			
Author:	**Version:**	**Summary of changes**	**Authorised and date:**
Justin Moston	V 1.0	New policy	Sustainability Committee 27/01/26

Date of next review: January 2028

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure sustainable management, health and safety risks associated with trees within the University of Chester's grounds. Trees provide ecological, aesthetic, and social benefits, and this policy aims to balance these benefits with risk management and legal compliance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all trees located on land owned by the University of Chester regardless of their size and location.

3. Policy Statement

The University of Chester acknowledges that trees are vital assets for the University, providing multiple ecosystem services that support biodiversity, climate resilience, and human well-being. They offer habitats for birds, insects, and other wildlife, contributing to ecological connectivity and species diversity. In addition, trees play a significant role in carbon sequestration, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change impacts.

Beyond carbon benefits, trees help reduce climate hazards:

- Flood Mitigation: Tree root systems improve soil infiltration and reduce surface runoff, lowering flood risk.
- Heatwave Resilience: Canopy cover provides natural cooling, reducing urban heat island effects and energy demand.
- Air Quality Improvement: Trees filter pollutants and improve overall air quality.

The University is therefore dedicated to adopting a Tree Management and Protection policy that both supports the sustainable management of trees for safety, while balancing the need to preserve trees for their environmental and well-being benefits. This means fostering an approach to estate planning that minimises the removal of healthy and mature trees, and seeks to integrate existing trees into the design of construction projects. Aligning closely with the principles set out in the Sustainable Construction and Refurbishment Policy.

4. Commitments

a. Map and survey university tree stock to support the maintenance of healthy and safe trees and quantify tree cover across the university estate.
b. Preserve and enhance biodiversity and landscape aesthetics by:
    a. Consider trees and other flora throughout the lifecycle of all estate development and landscapes projects (from design and development to

management and monitoring), with tree retention and integration being prioritised, especially mature and ecologically significant trees.

b. Planting native species wherever practicable and maintaining green corridors to enhance ecological connectivity. Native species will be selected on the basis of climate resilience and enhancement of ecosystem services.
c. If there is no option other than to remove a tree, the university commits to replace every tree removed with two trees. Where possible replacement trees will be semi-mature.

c. Minimise risk to people, property, and infrastructure.
d. Ensure all organic waste is diverted from landfill by implementing on-campus composting
e. Comply with relevant legislation and environmental standards (including UK Tree Preservation Orders, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and Health & Safety Executive guidelines) including:
    - Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Tree Preservation Orders).
    - Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012
    - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (protection of nesting birds and habitats).
    - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (risk management for tree works).
    - Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 and 1984 (for open land) and (for premises accessible to visitors)
    - CWAC Planning Portal – Local Planning Authority (LPA)
    - Town and Country Amenities Act 1990
f. Demonstrate the organisation has taken reasonable steps to ensure the safety of trees on their land and in line with their 'duty of care' under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 and adhere to UK-specific regulations (see Appendix 1 – Tree Management & Maintenance Operational Process)

5. Key Performance indicators

To support these commitments the University of Chester will:

1. Ensure Trees are surveyed on at least a five yearly basis, to inform proactive tree maintenance, preservation of existing mature and ecologically valuable tree stock, and to ensure the health and safety of trees across our estate.
2. Develop a tree cover baseline for the estate to support the development of relevant targets.

6. Legal Purpose

a. To protect individual or groups of selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have significant impact on the environment and its enjoyment by the public.
b. To protect trees that are deemed to have value with regards to importance to nature conservation or response to climate change; contribution to, and relationship with the landscape; and contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.
c. To protect trees that have future potential with specific amenity landscapes; have value regarding rarity, cultural or historic value; or are of interest regarding size or form.
d. To protect trees that may be at risk due to development pressures.
e. To prevent the harm of trees covered by an order unless consent is obtained from the LPA.
f. To secure the replanting of trees permitted for felling.
g. To prevent the felling, mutilation, and harming of trees or woodland covered by an order, unless consent has been obtained of the LPA.

7. Reviewing

The University will share this Policy with stakeholders, and review it periodically (every 2 years) to ensure it remains current and aligned with university policies and national legislation.

8. Related Documentation

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documentation:

- Sustainability Policy
- Waste Strategy
- Grounds Management Process
- Sustainable Construction and Refurbishment Policy

Appendix 1

Tree Management & Maintenance Operational Process

Tree Identification

Each tree regardless of its size, species, or property location has an identification number which is visible on a white tag attached to each tree. The numbers assist with the identification of the tree and its position which is plotted on a plan using GPS technology.

A tree survey is produced for each site/property by Tree Solutions which generates the following data:

- Tag number
- Tree numbers
- Species
- Age (approx.)
- Height in meters
- Stem/truck diameter at 1.5m
- Crown spread
- Overall condition
- Location
- Targets e.g. footpaths, roads, buildings
- Remarks/structural condition
- Preliminary management recommendations
- Hazard rating
- Priority for action – green/amber/red

For reference the document is a Tree Condition Survey (Risk Assessment) and all trees are surveyed from ground level. No samples of wood, roots, or soil are taken for analysis unless further investigation is required based on advice from Tree Solutions - no guarantee, either expressed or implied, of the tree's safety, stability or internal condition can therefore be given. All trees are surveyed and rated on the day of inspection so no warranty can be given that problems or defects may not arise in the future, which are not noted in the survey.

Tree Survey Brief

To undertake a tree survey of all trees to satisfy the following criteria:

- The current physiological and morphological condition of the subject trees.
- Establish the short/long term consequences for the trees on each site.
- Assess the risk posed by the trees in relation to potential targets.

- Advice on remedial tree surgery work(s).

Hazard Rating

During the tree risk assessment survey, the tree and target are given an overall hazard rating, assigning a value for each of the three components (Matheny & Clark 1994):

Failure Potential (4 points)

Failure potential identifies the most likely failure and rates the likelihood that the structural defect(s) will result in failure within the inspection period. Rating examples are:

1 = Low: defects are minor – e.g. dieback of twigs, small wounds with good wound wood development.

2 = Medium: defects are present and obvious – e.g. cavity encompassing 10-25% of the circumference of the trunk, co-dominant stems with partial bark loss.

3 = High: numerous and/or significant defects present – e.g. cavity encompassing 30-50% of the circumference of the trunk, multiple pruning wounds with decay along a branch.

4 = Severe: defects are very severe – e.g. heart-rot decay, cavity encompassing more than 50% of the trunk

Size of defective part (4 points)

Size of defective part rates the size of the part most likely to fail. The larger the part that fails, the greater the potential for damage. Therefore, the size of the failure affects the hazard potential. Examples are:

1 = most likely failure less than 15cm in diameter.

2 = most likely failure 15-45cm in diameter.

3 = most likely failure 45-75cm in diameter.

4 = most likely failure greater than 75cm in diameter.

Target rating (4 points)

Target rating rates the use and occupancy of the area that would be struck by the defective part.

1 = occasional use – e.g. jogging/cycling lane.

2 = intermittent use – e.g. picnic area, day parking only.

3 = frequent use, secondary structure – e.g. seasonal camping area, storage facility.

4 = constant use, structures – e.g. year-round use for several hours each day, residences, main roads.

The points in each category are added to obtain the overall rating, with 12 being the maximum value which requires immediate action.

Failure potential + Size of part + Target rating = Hazard rating

Remedial action recommended in the survey considers the effects of tree works in the short, medium, and long term.

Recommended work(s) is split into three 'Priority for Action' categories depending on the severity of the disorder and target value. Each tree is coded with colour within the survey schedule and listed in table format. When no colour coding is visible this indicates 'no work required' meaning the tree is identified as been in good health on the day of inspection.

Colour coding indicates the time to act along with monitoring for further decline.

🔴 High = immediate action

🟡 Medium = 6-12 months

🟢 Low = 12-24+ months

Statutory Provisions

With reference to the Cheshire West & Chester Council interactive map several trees are protected with Tree Preservation Orders and reside in Conservation Areas, as such, statutory planning consent is required prior to undertaking any works not considered exempt by the following:

- Cutting down a tree that is already dead.
- Cutting down a tree when the whole tree presents 'an immediate risk of serious harm'.
- Pruning part of a tree that presents 'an immediate risk of serious harm'.
- Removing dead branches from a living tree.
- Preventing or controlling a 'legal nuisance'.
- When requested by an organisation listed in the council's regulations.
- When it is in the interest of national security.
- Where the tree is a fruit tree being pruned in accordance with good horticultural practice, or where the tree is in a commercial orchard.
- Cutting down trees in accordance with a grant or felling licence obtained from the Forestry Commission.
- Where the tree is directly obstructing development for which full planning permission has been granted (not including permitted development).

- The University of Chester is subject to the following:
- DCH1269 Liverpool Road (Chester) Conservation Area
- DCH1270 City Centre (Chester) Conservation Area
- DCH1471 Queens Park (Chester) Conservation Area
- Tree Preservation Order Ref: X/86/10156/ORD

If a tree is rooted in a Conservation Area but not subject to a TPO it is still protected.

Protected Species – mature trees often contain cavities, crevices, and hollows that offer habitats for species such as bats and barn owls. Both are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Bats are also protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 – this covers all bat species and roosts, and the legislation applies internationally.

All tree work shall be completed in line with BS 3998 (Recommendations for Tree Work)

Sudden/Summer Branch Drop

This is a natural phenomenon that remains unpredictable whereby branches unexpectedly break off trees which is thought to be due to drought stress. It happens worldwide and unfortunately has led to fatalities. Because of the unpredictable nature of this syndrome, it is not possible to detect which trees may drop branches. However, the survey will flag any large scaffold limbs showing excessive end-loading or potential structural weakness and appropriate remedial works will be recommended to reduce the risk.

It's advised that students, staff, and visitors at all sites avoid sitting, playing, or congregating under large trees.

Emergency Response

During normal working hours/out of hours – Justin Moston jmoston@chester.ac.uk 07876657932 or security@chester.ac.uk

When the task is beyond the capability of the Grounds and Gardens Department an external contractor will undertake the task, this is currently:

Treefellers Ltd – info@treefellers.co.uk 01244322328