

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee
– 9 November 2023

Subject: Refreshed Tree and Woodland Action Plan 2024 - 2034

Report of: Strategic Director, Growth and Development

Summary

A refreshed Tree and Woodland Action Plan (TAWAP) has been developed in the context of the adopted Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy. This was reported to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee and was agreed in March 2023.

This report sets out the draft TAWAP and highlights the key actions contained within it. It provides a summary of key evidence and engagement with partners to date and how public consultation will further help to shape the Action Plan before its final approval in early 2024.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note the report and endorse the draft Tree and Woodland Action Plan for the purposes of on-line public consultation.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Manchester's green infrastructure helps to capture and store carbon. Attractive green routes encourage walking and cycling, reducing reliance on cars with a consequent reduction in carbon emissions. Local green space, both public and private can be used to increase the amount of sustainable, locally grown food.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The improvement of our green and blue spaces allows for greater environmental equity for all Manchester's residents. Delivery of the strategy down to neighbourhood level seeks to increase the equitable distribution of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure can bring.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	A high quality environment, including trees and open spaces, increases the attractiveness of Manchester as a place in which to work and invest. Jobs are created in the environmental sector through the need to plant and manage the local green and blue infrastructure resource.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Manchester competes on a world stage to attract skilled people. A high quality natural environment makes an important contribution to this.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	An attractive tree filled natural environment should be accessible to all communities within Manchester, offering the potential to gain health benefits through improved air quality and opportunities for relaxation and exercise and learning new skills through volunteering opportunities.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The city's tree stock plays a valuable role in storing carbon and creating a liveable city. High quality multi-functional open spaces also improve the quality of life.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Appropriate tree planting along transport routes can help mitigate poor air quality. Appropriately located and designed green infrastructure can also increase the permeability of the city reducing surface water flooding along transport routes.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

1. Draft Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan 2024-2034
2. Growing Manchester's Trees Study: May 2023
3. Ward Based tree capacity posters May 2023
4. City Roots: May 2023
5. Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan and Tree Action Plan – Report on Progress: to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee March 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Since inception, the previous versions of the Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan (TAWAP) have successfully galvanised activity across a diverse range of organisations, departments and individuals involved in tree and woodland planting and management. Information on these actions is given in the annual report to Scrutiny on Green and Blue Infrastructure.
- 1.2 The Tree and Woodland Action Plan will continue to be an integral part of the G&BI Strategy Implementation Plan enabling more detail to be provided regarding how the City's tree assets can be cared for not just by the Council but by a range of stakeholders. It will look longer term, over the course of ten years instead of five years. This report sets out how the Tree and Woodland Action Plan is being updated in line with best practice and our most recent evidence, so we can continue to meet the current challenges facing our trees and woodlands.
- 1.3 The full TAWAP can be found in Appendix One.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 A revised TAWAP will be the third iteration since the first tree strategy was produced in 2005.
- 2.2 In developing the new TAWAP, we have been working with a range of partners, including the Tree Council and City of Trees.
- 2.3 The Headline Actions have been revisited and streamlined down from 21 to 16 across the four key objectives. This will help provide clarity, maximise their effectiveness and avoid duplication.

3.0 Tree & Woodland Action Plan – The Vision

- 3.1 The TAWAP will allow a focus to be given to trees, helping to ensure that they will continue to be planted in Manchester selectively and appropriately, with due regard given to location, landscape character and sustainability.
- 3.2 Within the context of the wider G&BI Strategy our vision for the City's trees and woodlands will be to:
- 3.3 Secure a long-term future for our trees and woodlands for generations to come, providing the right management and strong protection, ensuring their positive contribution to climate resilience in a growing, world class City.

4.0 Tree and Woodland Action Plan - Objectives

- 4.1 It was considered that the four, well established, key objectives continue to provide broad, easy to understand priorities for the City's treescape.

4.2 These four objectives from the original Tree Strategy will continue to shape the many actions that both the council and stakeholders are already undertaking individually and in partnership, as well as future actions that are required.

(i) Managing Sustainably - The sustainable management of the City’s tree stock has included tree audits and the development of an internal tree management system. This objective is still relevant and will continue to help in terms of forward planning and future proofing the City’s tree stock.

(ii) Planting Appropriately - This objective continues to be appropriate; the right tree planted in the right place is part of creating a diverse and maturing tree stock that is sustainable and resilient and can cope better with the adverse effects of climate change, including new pests and diseases that may appear over time.

(iii) Protecting Strongly – The aim of this objective is to ensure that Manchester’s existing tree stock, both in public and private ownership, continues to have adequate protection. With a fast-growing population, demand for residential growth and developing transport infrastructure, the City’s trees and woodlands will continue to face challenges, but informed decision making supported by an appropriate policy framework will improve the future for trees and woodlands within Manchester.

(iv) Involving People Creatively – This reflects the need to raise awareness, increase understanding, build capacity and highlight the joy of trees in the City. It vital and embraces actions by all partners not just the Council.

5.0 Governance and Leadership

5.1 The Tree and Woodland Action Plan is fully integrated into a suite of natural environment-related plans and strategies, part of a policy hierarchy that supports the city’s ‘Our Manchester’ ambitions and its drive to be climate resilient.



- 5.2 The context for the Tree and Woodland Action Plan is provided by Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester, the overarching document that provides the strategic framework for the different elements that comprise green and blue infrastructure.
- 5.3 The G&BI Implementation Plan is delivered by the Council and its Partners, led by the Executive Member for Environment. Progress against the Council actions is steered within the Council by the G&BI Board, chaired by the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing and attended by relevant Heads of Service and this will also incorporate the delivery of the updated Tree and Woodland Action Plan.

6.0 How a refreshed Tree Action Plan will sit with the G&BI Strategy

- 6.1 The G&BI Implementation Strategy was refreshed in 2022, and the TAWAP has now been updated to align strongly with 16 of the 18 G&BI Strategy Headline Actions. In particular Headline Action 3 to provide effective and appropriate tree and woodland management and planting.”
- 6.2 The Tree and Woodland Action Plan will be an integral part of the G&BI Strategy Implementation Plan enabling more detail to be provided regarding how the City’s tree assets can be cared for not just by the Council but by a range of stakeholders.

7.0 Delivery Partners

- 7.1 As a key part of delivering the City’s G&BI Strategy, the TAWAP benefits from a strong cohort of supportive partners, both internal to the Council and externally.
- 7.2 These include City Council Tree Officers, Park Managers, Planners and Policy Officers, also external practitioners including environmental charities such as City of Trees, the Tree Council, Wildlife Trust, the Groundwork Trust as well as landowners including registered housing providers, TfGM and the Universities.
- 7.3 Delivery partners including climate change engagement officers and projects such as In Our Nature are already using our tree related evidence while engaging with residents and communities around climate resilience.
- 7.4 The City Council are also a key member of the Greater Manchester Forest Partnership, an independent forum for all ten Greater Manchester Districts, chaired and facilitated by City of Trees. This forum has a direct role in feeding into the objectives of the regional Tree and Woodland Strategy for Greater Manchester “All our Trees”.

8.0 Challenges & Opportunities

- 8.1 Post Covid, the importance of nature and green spaces for the city has been magnified. The Growing Manchester’s Trees Study along with other key environmental strategies provide us with a pathway towards climate resilience,

an ability to cope with extreme weather events and a way to help improve the functionality of the City’s landscape as well as helping to address environmental inequalities.

8.2 Key challenges and opportunities identified through the new TAWAP include:

- Planning: Places for Everyone Joint Local Plan, Manchester Local Plan, Biodiversity Net Gain, GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Climate Resilience: air quality, extreme heat, flood risk, species diversity
- Pests and diseases: Ash dieback
- Addressing environmental inequalities

9.0 New Evidence, New Approaches

9.1 The new TAWAP has been underpinned by the Growing Manchester’s Trees report, associated ward-based capacity posters, and the City Roots study. These are detailed, informative and extensive pieces of evidence that represent a step-change in our understanding of the city’s treescape.

9.2 They are fully accessible to all via the Council’s website and can be viewed and downloaded here:

[Trees | Green and blue infrastructure | Manchester City Council](#)

9.3 An assessment of the treescape with this level of detail has never been undertaken before in the UK. Delivered by consultants TEP and City of Trees, in partnership with the Council, there are three elements to the work:

Evolution: City Roots – the story of Manchester’s Urban Forest is an informative 100-year look back at how the city’s treescape and its neighbourhoods have evolved over time, referencing population decline and growth, and reflecting the changes, both positive and negative, across the city’s landscape.

Opportunity and Capacity: Using highly detailed data sets on tree cover this work provides a ward-level insight into where and how tree canopy can be increased effectively, sustainably, and appropriately, planting in parks, and green spaces, gardens and roadsides to increase the city’s canopy cover where trees are needed most.

9.4 We are working towards a smart, achievable goal of increasing Manchester’s tree canopy from 18.8% to 21.8% by 2050. The table below shows how this compares with other cities.

City	London	Bristol	Plymouth	Cambridge	Torbay	Birmingham
Existing Canopy Cover	21% (2015)	18% (2018)	18.5% (2017)	17% (2008)	12% (2008)	21% (2020)
2050 Target	30%	30%	20%	19%	20%	24%

City canopy cover estimates and goals Source: Birmingham Urban Forest Masterplan

- 9.5 Our city-wide target, which is for everyone not just the council, equates to approximately 64,000 large trees, or 320 hectares of planting.
- 9.6 This target, evidenced by the Growing Manchester Report, allows a nuanced, ward level approach to be considered.
- 9.7 Every ward is provided with its own analysis, its own area-based tree opportunity assessment, taking lots of complex factors into account, including land identified for development, space for other environmental priorities – and then neighbourhoods, communities and organisations can pick these individual plans up and start shaping them into prioritised planting plans and bids for funding.
- 9.8 **Function:** Equally important is the need to look after the one million trees we already have, and cater for constant challenges such as pests, disease, and climate resilience, e.g., Ash Dieback. We will provide options for better and sustainable treescape management. A new Ash Dieback Strategy will be developed by the City's Arboriculture Team, and the TAWAP will look to update and refresh the City's Tree Management Principles document to further sustain the climate resilience of our trees and woodlands.

10.0 Delivering the Action Plan

- 10.1 Below each objective the new TAWAP lists several headline actions and a wide range of potential activities through which the objectives will be delivered. Key examples include:

11.0 Managing Sustainably

- The Principles of Tree Management document approved in 2019 (see Appendix 2) has provided clear and concise guidance regarding what the Council does in relation to sustainably managing its tree stock. As a priority, this document will be appraised and refreshed to ensure that it keeps up to date with tree related legislation and tree management approaches.
- Manchester has committed to delivering its first Ash Dieback Strategy to ensure that the potential effects on trees within the City Council's land holding are recognised and appropriately mitigated against.

12.0 Planting Appropriately

- 12.1 Within the context of a growing city which is liveable and climate resilient a key challenge will be to ensure that Manchester continues to have a healthy tree canopy formed by a mixture of trees by type, age, and location. We will:

- encourage broad collaborative partnerships to develop neighbourhood tree action plans to realise the ambition set out in the Growing Manchester's Trees document and associated ward-based capacity posters.

13.0 Protecting Strongly

- tree replacement and compensation measures will be investigated to inform decision making where development of a site may require the removal of existing trees.

14.0 Involving Creatively

- We will continue to promote tree related activity, for example by delivering the annual Manchester Festival of Nature at Heaton Park alongside a suite of locally focussed Projects.

15.0 Monitoring and Review

15.1 The TAWAP will be updated and reported on annually as part of the wider Green & Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan. The delivery and success of the TAWAP will depend on collaborative working by all partners. The TAWAP will also be monitored through a small number of potentially identifiable measures:

- Number of trees planted on known schemes,
- Number of hedge trees planted on known schemes,
- Number of orchards/fruit tree groves planted,
- The number/area of trees/woodland with management plans,
- The percentage of tree canopy cover across Manchester,
- Numbers engaged through events and volunteer opportunities,
- % of Sites of Biological Importance in active conservation management,
- Number of Local Nature Reserves designated.

Note – all of Manchester's Local Nature Reserves and 73% of all Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) have a significant tree and woodland aspect.

16.0 Funding and Delivery

16.1 Projects identified within the action plan will either rely on collaborative funding bids being developed or have been identified as part of existing budget provision. In relation to the Council's commitments, project funding could come from prioritising or reallocating existing resource, while external bids to grant schemes such as Government's Urban Tree Challenge Fund will need to be driven locally by operational leads in parks, arboriculture and neighbourhoods teams.

17.0 Next Steps

17.1 The interest and initiative by a wide group of partners that kick started the original Tree Strategy and Action Plan is still very much alive.

- 17.2 The draft TAWAP has been refreshed through engagement with these partners both within and external to the council. This draft Action Plan will be used as the basis for an 8 week online public consultation.
- 17.3 As per the previous TAWAP in 2017, online public consultation with local residents and businesses will take place immediately following the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, to gauge public opinion in respect of the plan's aspiration.
- 17.4 We will also work with other key departments and partner organisations to publicise and promote the online consultation via suitable events and activities that will be occurring over the next two months.
- 17.5 The same questions will be asked, which will provide some benchmarking against results from the last consultation in 2017.
- 17.6 This will give residents and any other interested individuals or groups the opportunity to comment on the headline actions and/or to volunteer to become more involved.
- 17.7 Once the results of the public consultation have been assessed, it is proposed that the final refreshed TAWAP, linked to the G&BI Implementation Plan, will be brought back to Environment & Climate Change Scrutiny Committee for endorsement in March 2024.

18.0 Recommendations

- 18.1 Recommendations appear at the front of the report.

19.0 Appendices

1. Draft Tree and Woodland Action Plan 2024-34
2. Tree Management Principles for Manchester