

1. INTRODUCTION

Mike Smith and Lin Whiting were appointed as Tree Wardens for NHPC early in 2017. The role was effectively new, as we had no previous relevant experience, and the role had not been actively filled in recent years. No previous information regarding the trees in the Parish was available to hand over.

A small pack of information was provided by WSCC. This included the Tree Council's Tree Warden Handbook, which has proved to be a useful and thorough and reference document.

In order to familiarise ourselves with some of the key contacts, we have met the WSCC Trees and Woodlands Officer (March 2017), HDC Tree Officers (June 2017) and the NHPC Facilities Officer (June 2017).

This report summarises the findings so far and sets out suggested future activities.

2. TREE REGISTER DEVELOPMENT

One of the initial aims has been to establish the occurrence and status of trees in the Parish and recording this on a Tree Register. An initial register has been developed from sources including the 2013 Horsham Society Green Space Survey, detailed maps provided by WSCC, and on-site inspections. This initially seeks to identify key areas rather than logging individual trees.

Over 60 areas have been included in the Tree Register. These vary from large copses to green spaces with just a few trees. The majority of these are publicly owned, the main exceptions being those North of the A264. The areas include some surviving Ancient Woodland, defined as woodland that has existed on the same site since 1600AD.

In addition to these areas, there are many individual or small groups of trees of note, for example along older roads such as North Heath Lane or where specific plantings were made as part of a development.

The areas are detailed on an Excel File attached to this report. Each area has been given a code number by Ward, and where applicable is also cross referenced to the Green Space Survey code. An annotated large scale map has also been produced, which allows a visual overview of the areas (see Appendices - Maps).

Ownership of some areas has often been surprisingly hard to identify. There is also often lack of clarity of the boundaries, where many trees are often to be found. Trees frequently overhang between areas and some tree trunks may even straddle a boundary.

There are three key Public owners:

West Sussex County Council – responsible for all trees along the highways

Horsham District Council – responsible for trees in many copses and open spaces across the Parish.

North Horsham Parish Council – responsible for the trees in a number of designated areas (see section 4)

Private ownership is in three main types – Domestic, Commercial and Farmland. The latter generally only occurs North of the A264 and Commercial space is limited to sites such as the Holbrook Club and former Novartis.

We view the current Tree Register as a good start, but still in need of considerable further development. It is quite high level and does not include any historical context or much details on individual trees.

3. DESCRIPTION OF TREES IN THE NHPC WARDS

The dominant tree in North Horsham is the Oak, of which there are many fine examples. Other prominent trees to be found in almost every copse and hedgerow are Ash, Hazel, Hawthorn, Elder and Sycamore. Commonly found are Blackthorn, Silver Birch, Horse Chestnut, Sweet Chestnut, Scots Pine, Rowan, Holly, Wild Cherry, Hornbeam, Beech, Field Maple and Lime. Other observed but less common trees include Alder, Aspen, Willow, False Acacia, Lebanon Cedar and Eucalyptus. This list does not include the even wider variety of species to be found on domestic properties.

3.1 ROFFEY NORTH

Generally woodland was not retained or planted when housing development took place in the Roffey Wards. The exception to this is the newer Earles Meadow and Amberley Close play area/allotments (see section 4). The main open space is around Roffey Rec/FC/Cricket Club where there are mature Oaks but no copses.

3.2 ROFFEY SOUTH

To the East of the ward there is open land including some private copses such as the Birches and parts of Severals Bottom and High Wood. The latter is designated Ancient Woodland.

Although there are few copses in the urban area, some areas such as South Holmes and The Glade have many mature trees, which are protected by some of the oldest TPO's from the 1960's

3.3 HOLBROOK EAST

There are surviving areas of Ancient Woodland along the Riverside Walk by Channells Brook, most notably Dutchells Copse. This stretch is also notable for many previously coppiced Hazels. The Brook also passes through the Motte and Bailey site.

There are a number of strips of woodland planted when the housing estates were established which are now maturing. In both Holbrook wards many trees have also been planted along the A264 to provide screening.

At the South end of the Ward is the ex-Novartis site with a notable avenue of Lebanon Cedars.

3.4 HOLBROOK WEST

There are surviving areas of Ancient Woodland close to Channells Brook, historically called North Heath Copse and Pondtail Copse.

North Heath Lane is notable for a wide variety of mature trees. Some appear to be survivors from rural times, with other non-native varieties established at the with time of urban development. Pondtail Road is similar but perhaps less varied.

This Ward also includes a large area of farmland North of the A264 stretching past Graylands to Green Lane. Many of the copses here are designated Ancient Woodland. The new development could affect some of these, although much of the woodland appears to be on the North side of this (see Section 5.2).

4. TREES ON NHPC PARISH LAND

It is proposed to eventually complete a log of all trees on Parish land to supplement the high-level Tree Register. This will enable the development of a schedule of independent inspections of trees on a frequency commensurate with areas of risk, as well as deciding whether further planting is appropriate. Notes from initial visits to NHPC areas are as follows:

4.1 EARLES MEADOW

This is the largest NHPC area in terms of trees. It is partly looked after by the Earles Meadow Conservation Group, who have done work to develop and protect the woodland adjacent to the Dual Carriageway. This includes a wooden walkway, some planting, pruning and protection of the 'iconic' 270 year old Oak by a rope fence.

4.2 BIRCHES ROAD PLAY AREA

This open space has very few trees and could have potential for planting.

4.3 AMBERLEY CLOSE PLAY AREA & ALLOTMENTS

There are Cherry and Sycamore at the Western boundary. Three Silver Birch are on the tree, including one that was planted in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales.

There are well established hedgerows at the Western end and along the railway boundary. A number of substantial trees are found at the back of the allotment, to which the front access is shielded by a high hedge.

4.4 NORTH HEATH HALL AND SURROUNDS

There are some ornamental trees in the car park at the front. More substantial trees including Silver Birch border the garden at the back. The rear boundary of this area down to Channells Brook needs to be clarified, as this area includes substantial Ash, Oak and other trees along the riverbank. In August 2017 remedial work was carried out on the large Ash tree closest to North Heath Lane, and a heavily leaning Rowan tree removed.

4.5 TYTHE BARN PLAY AREA

Several ornamental trees are planted along the roadside and in front of the hall. There are established hedgerows with some larger trees around the other borders. Some trees on the south boundary may have TPO's (0579).

5. THREATS TO TREES

5.1 DAMAGE TO INDIVIDUAL TREES AND PROTECTION BY TPO'S

The main mechanism for protection of privately owned trees is Tree Protection Orders (TPO's). For trees without TPO's, owners are essentially free to do what they will.

A list of 76 active TPO's in the NHPC area was provided by HDC early in 2017. These date back to 1960, with 35 served since 2000. Many of the TPO's, particularly the earlier ones, cover multiple trees over quite a wide location. We also now have access to the HDC Local Plan Mapping site to view the location of Trees covered by TPO's more precisely.

Proposed work on trees with TPO's must be submitted to HDC. The NHPC Planning Committee is given opportunity to comment prior to their decision, and more recently these have been passed to the Tree Warden to give a view. This process generally works well.

Damage to trees may arise from a number of other causes. It may be intentional, such as from vandalism, or accidental, for example by disturbing tree roots or pollution.

5.2 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Holbrook club (Planning application DC/14/1091) - the development of Land at the Holbrook Club will pass through a well-established hedgerow at the top of the field. This will need to be monitored when it starts, as well as monitoring new tree planting (including the western 'landscape buffer') as illustrated in the plans. It is proposed to retain existing mature trees.

'North of Horsham' development (Planning application DC/16/1677) - this will potentially lead to a loss of established hedgerow and possibly some small copses, but at least should be supported by significant new planting. An extract from the Liberty site section 'A Quality Environment' states the following:

North of Horsham contains a number of wildlife habitats and protected species such as ancient woodland, wood-pasture, trees, hedgerows, watercourses, ponds, bats, great crested newts, birds, reptiles and beetles, which we will aim to retain and manage. We will maintain the ancient woodland, keeping an appropriate buffer between this and new buildings. By building homes and amenities around the woodland, we aim to protect it while managing it for more people to enjoy.

We will also be creating new wildlife habitats, such as ponds, meadows, grasslands and areas of tree, shrub and hedgerow planting. This will enhance the landscape that is already there, as well as enhancing biodiversity and providing links to the ecology of the wider area.

A new TPO (1476) was issued in 2015 to cover Bush Copse Ancient Woodland, although TPO's in such areas are effectively overridden once a Planning application has been approved.

The Woodland Trust objected to this application as 'ancient woodland is irreplaceable and no amount of planting of new trees can mitigate for its loss'. This affects Bush Copse and Furze field Copse, Hurst Wood, Tenacre Gill, Castle Copse, Seagrass Copse (not all of which are in NH Parish). Sections 6.51-6.69 of the HDC Planning Committee Report April 2017 provide more detail.

5.3 DISEASE

Ash dieback (Chalara) is a fungal disease which spread to the UK in around 2012. Symptoms include blackened leaves and dieback of shoots, twigs and branches. It has caused widespread damage in Europe and is a major concern, although it is hoped that UK trees will be more resistant. At this stage we have not noted any cases in the Parish.

Horse Chestnut trees are affected by the Leaf Miner caterpillar, which turns the leaves brown from June. This can be widely observed in the Parish. Heavily infested trees will drop their leaves early, but research has shown that this has almost no effect on the growth rate or health of tree.

6. TREE COUNCIL AND CHARTER

The Woodland Trust is launching the Charter for Trees, Woods and People in November 2017. This includes 10 Principles which underpin the Charter. It is also promoting signature of the Charter.

NHPC has become a local Council Charter Branch and this may provide some support and limited funding. The Tree Council are currently exploring ways they can further support parish council's efforts around trees.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The Parish is fortunate in having many fine and valuable trees within its boundary. This does not mean we should be complacent, and a continuing program of actions will help to maintain and improve this position. In the short-term we hope to make progress as follows:

1. Develop the Tree Register further to show more detail and historical context
2. Complete a detailed survey of NHPC Trees and agree a future inspection schedule. This will require Professional input.
3. Continue to monitor applications for work on trees with TPO's.
4. Consider implications of future Planning requirements. In particular, work with the relevant NHPC Committees to understand the Tree related implications of the North of Horsham Development.
5. Be vigilant for other threats to trees such as disease, vandalism and pollution.
6. Monitor opportunities arising from becoming a Tree Charter Branch.
7. Consider Tree Planting.
8. Increase knowledge from additional training. This has so far been limited to the Handbook, and there has been no practical training courses offered, or contact with other experienced Tree Wardens.

This is quite a wide range of actions and progress may take a while.

NHPC Tree Wardens – Mike Smith, Lin Whiting

August 2017

APPENDICES

KEY CONTACTS

North Horsham Parish Council

Pauline Whitehead - Clerk to the Parish Council

Debbie Lees - Facilities Officer

Horsham District Council

Mark Pullen - Tree and Woodlands Officer HDC (Council-owned trees only)

Will Jones - Arboricultural Officer, Development HDC (privately owned trees)

West Sussex County Council

Julie Bolton - Trees and Woodlands Officer

USEFUL LINKS

1) 2013 Horsham Society Green Space Survey

<http://www.horshamsociety.org/local/greensurvey.pdf>

2) Magic Map application – Use Habitat/Woodland filter for a good overview of Woodland and Ancient Woodland in the Parish

<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

3) Tree Protection Orders (login needed)

<https://horsham.maps.arcgis.com>

4) North of Horsham Development

<http://landnorthofhorsham.co.uk/a-quality-environment>

5) Tree Charter

<https://treecharter.uk/tree-charter-principles/>

<https://treecharter.uk/2017/03/13/local-councils-becoming-charter-branch/>

TREE REGISTER AS AT AUGUST 2017



Tree Register.xlsx

MAPS

