

Practical Guidance

Ancient tree guide 3:

Trees and development

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WOODLAND
TRUST



Ancient and veteran trees are an asset



This small, private estate is built around a special yew that occupies a whole plot because the developers believed it added so much value.

Ancient and veteran trees are special because of their great size, age or condition. Retaining these trees will enhance the value of any development. They will add a unique quality, giving it a sense of place or an 'air of respectable antiquity', creating character and distinction which will be appreciated by potential owners and their families.

This leaflet is for builders, developers, architects, arborists, landscape designers and contractors who are involved in designing and constructing developments that will affect ancient and veteran trees.

Designing development around trees and woods with significant amenity, heritage and biodiversity value will foster good relationships with communities and local planning authorities. Time spent identifying and caring for all the trees of importance will pay

dividends in increasing the appeal and value of the site for clients and home owners.

Ancient and veteran trees may be present as individual trees, as part of old hedgerows or in groups as in parkland or orchards. Woodland, especially ancient woodland, is also very valuable. A development should take a holistic approach to the wildlife features on site, on adjacent land and in the wider landscape. Individual trees or groups of trees may provide important stepping stones between habitats. This will increasingly important as wildlife has to adapt to climate change.

Retaining as many of the important trees as possible and taking care of them as building work proceeds will give an immediate sense of 'permanence' to new landscapes and bring great pleasure to the community in the decades to come.

Recognising ancient and veteran trees



House of Parliament: these ancient catalpas watch the passing of time under one of our most historic buildings. Ancient or veteran trees of any species are important.

An ancient tree is one that is old in comparison with other trees of the same species. The crown may be small as the tree is 'growing downwards' through age but may still be vigorous. It will have a very wide trunk relative to

other trees of the same species. It is very likely that the trunk will be hollow. Even in this ancient stage it may stay alive for many decades and often centuries. The older the tree the more valuable it becomes for wildlife and as a heritage tree.

A **veteran tree** may not be as old as an ancient tree but bears the 'scars' of age such as decay and hollowing in the trunk, branches or roots and flaking bark, any of which will provide important wildlife habitats.

Pollards and coppice are trees that have had their canopies cut back on a regular cycle. Many are traditional 'working trees' cut for a product and in some places they were landmark or boundary trees so they are also very important from a social history perspective.

A tree may be perceived to be in decline when it is merely aging. Hollowing of the trunk as the tree ages is entirely normal. It is also important for the wildlife that either help the heartwood to decay or live in the cavities that arise in the process.

A tree owner has a duty to take reasonable care. In the case of ancient and veteran trees it is

appropriate to take into account broader issues of amenity value or habitat for wildlife. Safety obviously takes precedence over amenity in general; but that does not mean that a tree must necessarily be felled. Skilled cutting which reduces weight in the crown or the sail area, may be necessary to retain trees as they age. There may well be other possible actions that will reduce the risk such as managing access around and under the tree.



Brunel University, Egham: this ancient oak tree is so impressive, even though it is dead, the developers retained it right in the entrance to the university campus.



National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh: this veteran oak has been retained to enhance this new glass office block. It will also help to shade it to alleviate impacts of climate change. However, the future size and growth of trees needs to be considered at the design stage of the development as the canopy of this tree is touching the glass.

Jill Butler

Is the tree or development site already protected?

It is important to check if a tree is already protected.

Individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands with amenity value (eg visual, historic or nature conservation) may already be protected through Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). Most trees in conservation areas are also protected.

Elsewhere a licence may be required from the Forestry Commission to fell growing trees.

Trees may be within Sites/Areas of Special Scientific Interest, locally designated sites, the registers or inventories for gardens, historic parks, demesnes and designed landscapes and ancient woodland.

In some parts of the UK, planning authorities have a duty to make provision for the preservation of trees and to conserve biodiversity when deciding on planning applications. There may also be a planning policy specifically requiring planning authorities to avoid the loss of ancient and veteran trees and to conserve them as part of development proposals.

If it is likely that a protected species is present, you may need a licence before any tree work is started and your planning authorities will require evidence that a suitable survey and evaluation has been done as part of a planning application.

Case study I

Shinfield Park, Wokingham

The developers have made full use of the parkland ancient and veteran trees to enhance their major development.

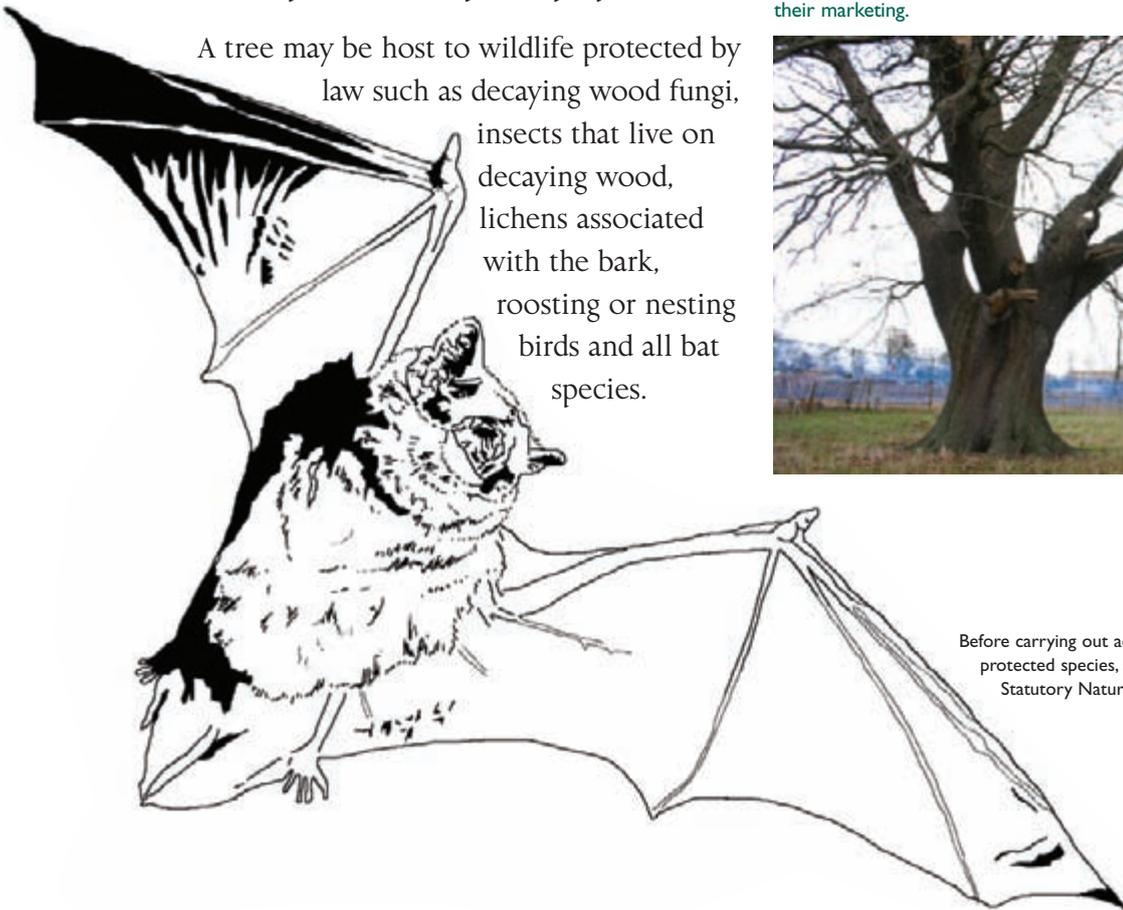


They have used the trees to promote their scheme on billboards and in their marketing.



Before carrying out activities which might harm or disturb protected species, such as bats, consult the appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation.

A tree may be host to wildlife protected by law such as decaying wood fungi, insects that live on decaying wood, lichens associated with the bark, roosting or nesting birds and all bat species.



Good practice on development sites



Substantial fencing has been used according to BS 5837 Trees in relation to construction, to protect the roots of this old pollard estimated to be 500 years old.

To protect a tree during construction local planning authorities are guided by the recommendations in British Standard 5837: 2005 'Trees in relation to construction'.

BS 5837 requires that the values of trees should be assessed initially independently of any layout and design for the development. Trees which have significant cultural, historical, commemorative or conservation values should be retained provided those values will endure for a substantial period. This includes many declining, or even dead, ancient or veteran trees.

Important trees which significantly influence both the design and layout of the development, should be carefully protected during the construction phase. The design should also take account of the long term setting for important trees and how they will relate to the use of the area in the future.

For most trees, there is a method to calculate the minimum area which should be left undisturbed during the construction phase called the Root Protection Area (RPA). The RPA is calculated as a circle with a radius of 12 times the trunk diameter of

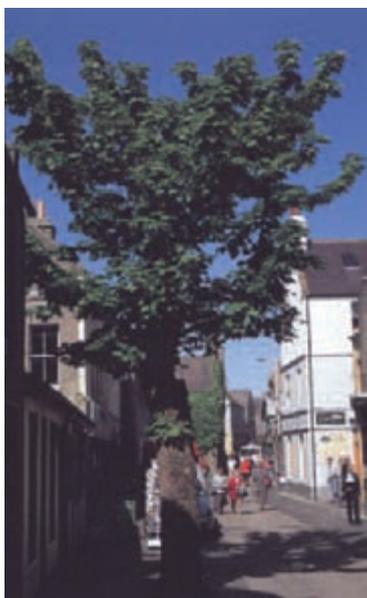
the tree, measured at 1.5m from ground level. This area is capped at a maximum of 707m² or a circle with a radius of 15m. The overall area is a minimum but it is possible for the shape to vary, provided it gives adequate protection for the root system.

In the case of ancient and other important trees this RPA may be insufficient to ensure their roots and the rooting environment are properly protected. A minimum root protection area of 15 times the trunk diameter or two metres beyond the canopy of the tree, whichever is the greater, was set out as a standard in the handbook '*Veteran Trees: A guide to good management*' published by English Nature (now Natural England.) A greater RPA will reduce the possibility of damage or disturbance to these very special trees, so they have the best chance to provide a lasting contribution to the development.

The handbook also contains detailed advice on care of and recommendations for tree work appropriate to veteran and ancient trees. These recommendations should be followed in preference to BS 3998: 1989 'Recommendations for tree work' which deals with general tree work and is widely acknowledged to be out of date in a number of important respects.

It is important to make sure the long term use of the area around and under trees is compatible with ancient and veteran trees. It is not ideal to allow parking near these trees or encourage too much access as it may cause compaction of the root system, heighten the risk to people or cause damage to property. Excessive tree surgery is often the consequence, leading to a rapidly escalating spiral of intervention. It is best to encourage communities or visitors to enjoy the benefits of the tree from a distance.

Orkney Photographic



Case study 2

The Big Tree, Orkney

Orkney's oldest tree stands in Kirkwall's Main Street. Although urban development has encroached on this hollow sycamore tree, said to be several centuries old, it is clearly a great survivor and has sprouted new, healthy growth from its cut stump. Through careful management this tree could continue to be a well loved landmark for shoppers and tourists for many hundreds of years to come.

It may be helpful to research the history of an area if it contains an ancient or veteran tree. The tree may be the last remaining vestige of an old historic park, woodland or hedgerow. Setting the tree in its historical context and emphasising its contribution to a 'sense of place' will help the design team to build on and add value to the development's local distinctiveness.



Case study 4

Veteran elm, Grantham

A rare, veteran elm adds colour and character to a neighbourhood throughout the year. Guidance on the care of trees is available for owners, see back page.



Marcus Brook

Case study 5

Ancient and champion hawthorn, Crawley

This ancient, hollow hawthorn was retained during the construction of the surrounding residential area. In England, not only does *Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and geological conservation* require Local Authorities to avoid the loss of aged and veteran trees but the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*, places a duty on all public bodies to have regard for, and conserve, biodiversity.



Case study 3

Wyesham Oak, Monmouth

Local authority housing was designed around the Wyesham Oak, which adds value as the centrepiece of the development. It is important to care for the tree and its roots after construction, so that the tree continues to provide a lasting benefit to the development.

Case study 6



Treeworks

Traditional orchard

These old fruit trees add character, biodiversity and local distinctiveness to this housing development. Traditional orchards are now a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan



Supplied by Redcliffe Homes

The traditional orchard has been carefully integrated into the design of this new development. The design of paths and roads has been carefully considered to add to the resident's enjoyment of the area.

Who to contact and where to go for more information

Advice and information on ancient and veteran trees – www.ancient-tree-forum.org.uk

Tell us about a tree you have found or to find one – www.AncientTreeHunt.org.uk

Tell us about a wood or tree under threat and get lots more information about fighting a threat – www.woodsunderthreat.org.uk

Information on Tree Warden Schemes – www.treecouncil.org.uk

Further reading

Veteran trees: A guide to good management (2000) ed H. Read. Published by English Nature (now Natural England.) No longer available in hardcopy, only as pdf from their website.

Veteran Trees: a guide to risk and responsibility. Published by English Nature (now Natural England) available as a pdf from their website.

The law of trees, forests and hedgerows (2002) Charles Mynors. Sweet and Maxwell.

Tree Preservation Orders A guide to the law and good practice (2000) Department of Communities and Local Government. www.communities.gov.uk

British Standards (BS 5837 Trees in relation to construction – recommendations (2005) and *BS 3998 Tree Work – guidance* (1989)) available from www.bsi-global.com

This leaflet is available in Welsh as a pdf from www.ancient-tree-forum.org.uk

Mae'r daf len hon ar gael yn Gymraeg fel pdf o wefan.

Other guides in this series about ancient trees:

Ancient Tree Guides No.1: Trees and Farming

Ancient Tree Guides No.2: Trees in Historic Parks and Landscape Gardens.

They are available from the Woodland Trust or can be downloaded as a pdf file in English and Welsh from www.ancient-tree-forum.org.uk.

For further information about partner organisations go to their websites:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/parksandgardens

www.naturalengland.org.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk

www.snh.org.uk

www.ehnsi.gov.uk

www.ccw.gov.uk

www.treecouncil.org.uk

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

www.fwag.org.uk



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Photographs – All images taken by Ted Green unless otherwise indicated.