4 Tree Planting Guide

Introduction

The importance of sustainability and its key components of Landscape Character, Biodiversity and Good Design to Landscape and Nature Conservation have been set out in Part 1 of this Guidance, 'Principles, Contacts and Publications'.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has produced Supplementary Planning Guidance in the form of The Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment which has identified 19 different character areas grouped under 6 different character types. This document should be consulted to ensure that new planting schemes are consistent with local landscape character and contribute towards conservation and enhancement.

These character areas include a wide range of habitats supporting a rich diversity of flora and fauna. This richness of plants, birds, animals and insects is referred to as biological diversity or biodiversity for short. New planting schemes should seek to maximise the biodiversity of the site, building on existing attributes and resources. Proposals should take into account the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan produced by Kent County Council and, where site conditions are suitable, contribute towards species and habitat action plans.

This Guidance Note has therefore been produced to offer guidance on species selection of trees and shrubs that will be compatible with objectives and requirements for Sustainability, Landscape Character, Biodiversity and Good Design. The principles set out here apply equally to other types of vegetation such as grassland and heathland. Detailed advice on these habitats is available from the High Weald AONB Unit and the Kent High Weald Project.

Selecting Appropriate Species

In order for new planting to reflect landscape character, which in part arises from the natural vegetation, it should be based on native species. However, many native species have been planted more widely across the Borough than they would naturally occur, such as beech, pine or yew, and now make a significant contribution to local landscape character. There may be occasions where, in order to reflect the landscape character of a particular location, such introduced species are appropriate. For instance, Lombardy poplars and grey alder have traditionally been used as wind breaks on fruit farms and as such are now recognised as characteristic features. Similarly, the character of many urban areas is defined by the presence of a large number of non-native species of evergreen trees and shrubs.

Non-native trees and shrubs have been introduced to this country from the continent over centuries, with trees such as the sweet chestnut being widely planted by the Romans. More recently, 19th century plant hunters introduced large conifers from America and the Far East and many of these trees are now an important part of the landscape character, acting as landmarks in the town and countryside.

Native plants occurring naturally will commonly be found on many sites and, as part of new plantings, will succeed most easily without the need for intensive cultivation, thus creating more sustainable landscapes. Native plants generally support a greater biodiversity than non-native species. As an example, the native oak tree is associated with the life cycle of 284 species of insect whereas the non-native horse chestnut is only associated with four species.

Plants of the same species will show slight genetic variations across the regions throughout which they occur. A pedunculate oak grown from seed in Kent will be slightly different to a pedunculate oak originating in Germany or even the Midlands. Protecting this genetic variation is one of the principles behind biodiversity and can be important to associated species of flora and fauna. It is therefore important that when specifying native plants to insist upon UK provenance stock, and for sensitive sites such as ancient woodlands, local provenance stock.

In summary, the emphasis of new planting is expected to be on native species. Exceptions to this approach would need to be justified. Examples may include non-native evergreens where the proposed evergreens are already part of the local character area or where the use of such planting would be the only means of successfully screening an otherwise acceptable development. It is therefore important that, when specifying native plants, particularly for sensitive sites such as ancient woodlands, to insist on regional or local provenance stock. The Forestry Authority have produced a helpful Practice Note on this subject entitled 'Using Local Stock for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs' (see Part 1: Other Useful Publications).

Design

The use of non-native species in and around developments is acceptable within garden areas and in some locations is recognised as an important part of the local character and cultural heritage. However, it must be carefully integrated with the natural environment and preference for native planting will be maintained unless non-native planting is justified by good design.

The areas and gardens immediately around new houses, for example, might be predominately non-native, although attractive small native trees such as silver birch might be widely used. Natural features within the development and boundaries with areas of countryside or natural vegetation are expected to be treated almost exclusively with native species.

However, the zone between these two styles, whilst performing a role of integration, can still rely predominantly on native species. If, for instance, there is restricted space for street trees then fastigiate or compact forms of native oak, hornbeam or field maple can be used. Where formal hedges are required then preference should be given to hornbeam or beech for deciduous and holly or yew for evergreen. If screening is a priority then mixes of native whips and transplants can be augmented with non-native evergreens to improve winter coverage.

Whips and transplants establish quicker and better than larger stock, but this has to be balanced with the requirements for more immediate impact for screening or amenity.

Even within non-native planting there is opportunity to use plants that are of benefit to insects such as buddleia, lavender and sedums, or by employing management practices that encourage wildflowers and wildlife, such as areas of longer grass or undisturbed corners. Gardens can be an important source of food for wild birds, particularly in winter.

It is important that choice of location and type of planting is based on professional advice or a sound understanding of the site. In many cases, where other important habitats exist or potentially could be created, such as grassland or heathland, then woodland planting may not be appropriate. In other locations it might be more beneficial to allow the woodland to develop naturally through regeneration.

Management

The success of a landscaping scheme depends not only on the implementation of the project but also the aftercare or maintenance. The scheme should be designed to reflect the site constraints, environmental conditions and resources available so that maintenance can be effective. Existing features such as scrub, woodland and hedgerows will require more detailed proposals that could include supplementary or additional planting. Such proposals should be drawn up by competent professionals after thorough site investigations.

Management plans should cover establishment and longer term objectives for new planting which can relate to design and/or biodiversity. They should also include a means of monitoring maintenance programmes to check that the works are achieving the agreed objectives. Consideration should be given to the protection of new planting from accidental damage by people and machinery as well as from grazing animals such as rabbits, deer and horses.

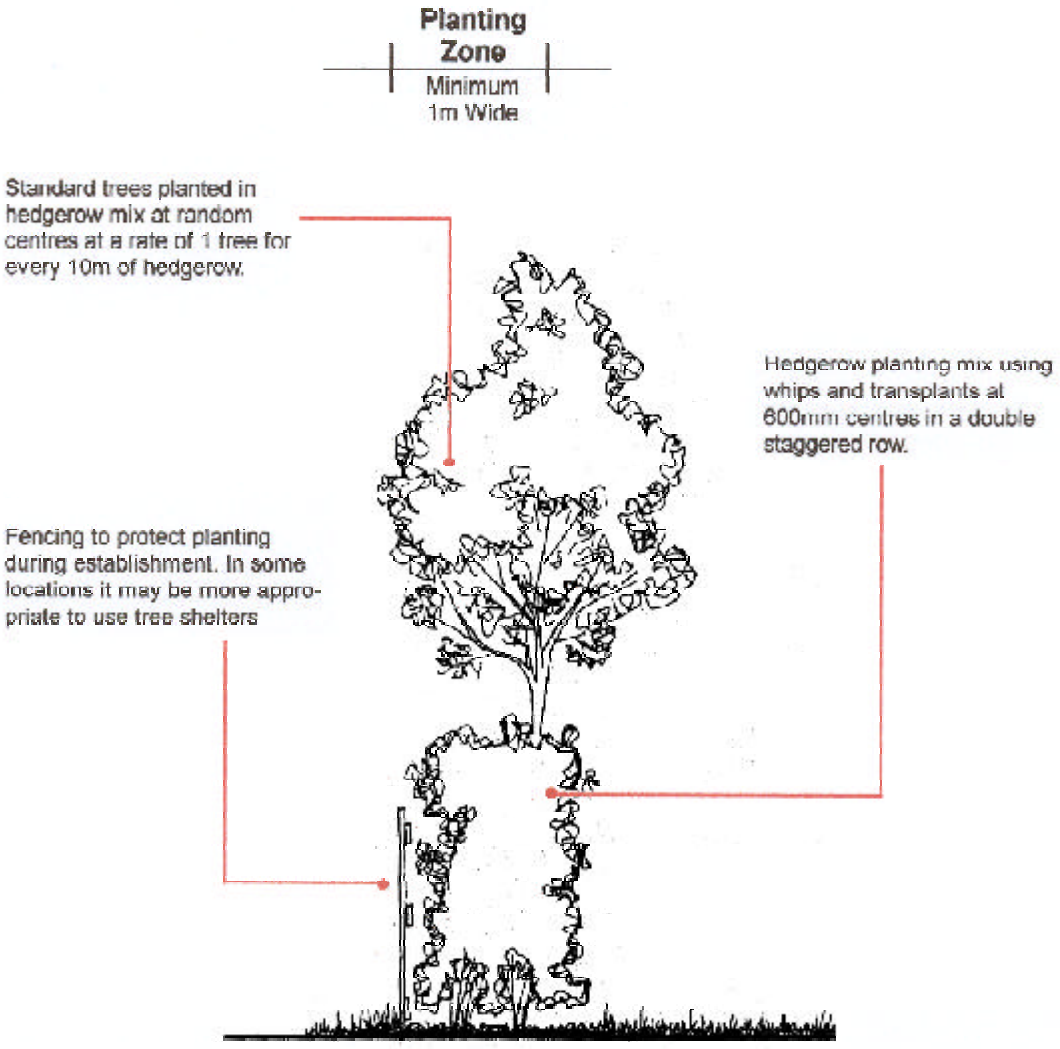
Species

The species listed in this document are intended as a guide for those preparing planting schemes that include trees and shrubs in the Borough particularly in association with new developments. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, or to cover non-native or amenity planting and it can only be used as a guide, as each site and each proposal is different, with its own influences and requirements. However, the lists do provide information on native species and non-native species suitable for use within the Borough that are consistent with natural vegetation and/or landscape character.

A summary of the vegetation characteristics and features identified in the Supplementary Planning Guidance – Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment is included in the list together with a map of the Character Areas of the Borough.

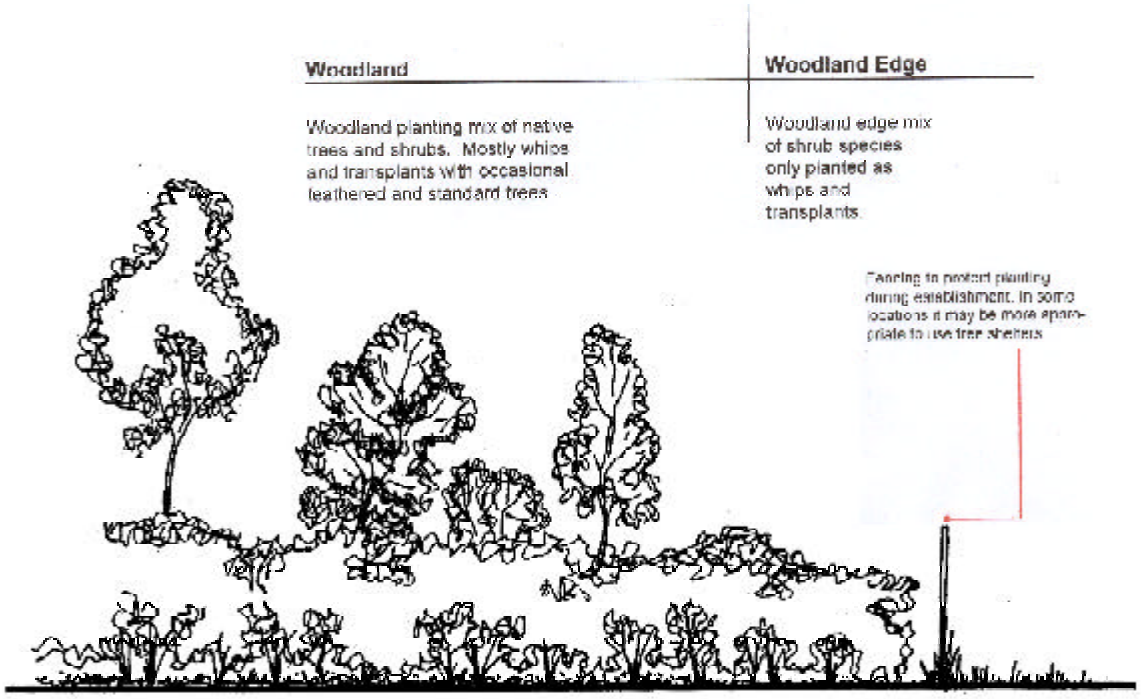
Following this page there are three illustrations giving examples of typical planting schemes that are commonly included as part of a development proposal. Again, these are for guidance only and should be treated as indicative examples as each situation will require an individual response that will be judged on its own merits.

Figure 1 Hedgerows



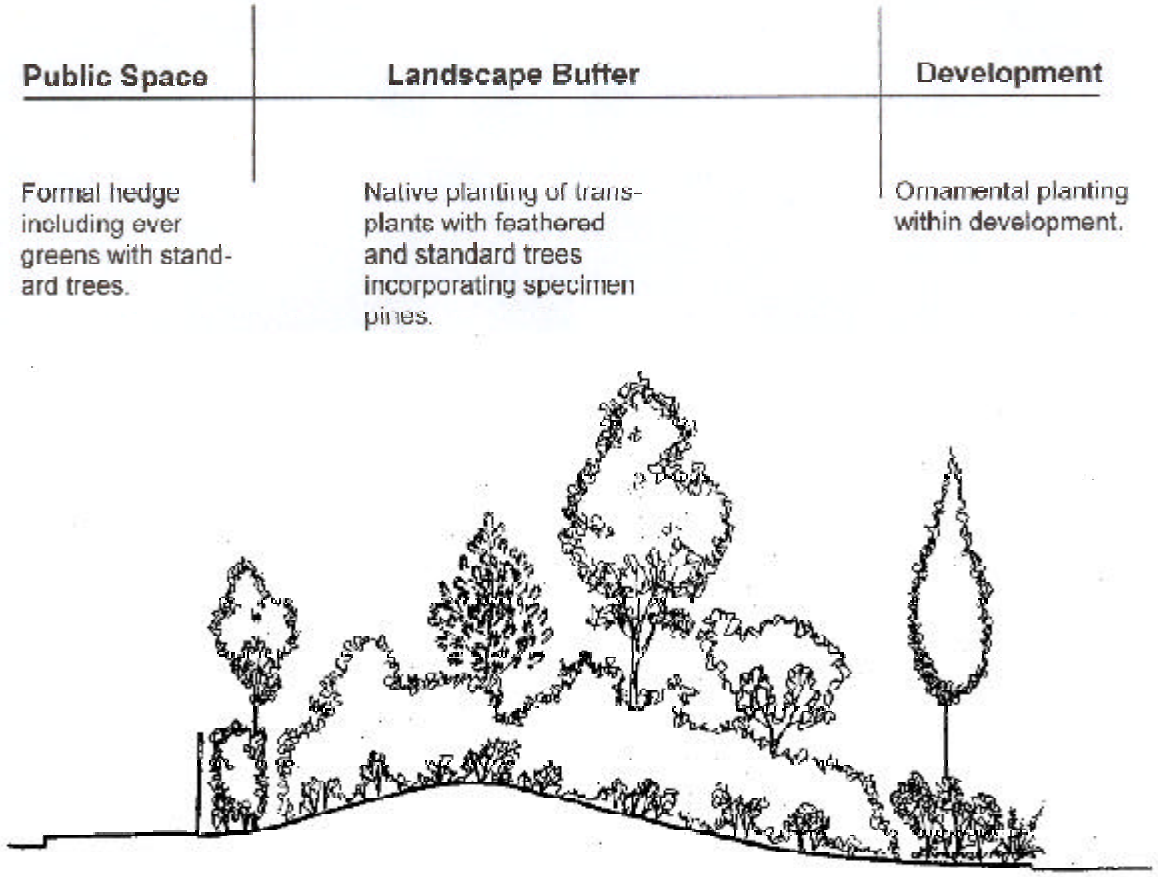
Planting should include appropriate seed mixtures, perennials and bulbs for ground flora.

Figure 2 Woodland Strip



Planting should include appropriate seed mixtures, perennials and bulbs for ground flora.

Figure 3 Landscape Buffer



Planting should include appropriate seed mixtures, perennials and bulbs for ground flora.

Schedule of Species List

Trees and Shrubs Native to Tunbridge Wells Borough

- Species suitable for use in natural woodland, copse and tree belt planting mixes on typical soils of Weald Clay and Sandstone
- Topographical and soil variations

  Drier sandier soils

  Wet heavy soils

  Wet and waterlogged sites
- Hedgerows

Non-Native Trees Commonly Associated with Tunbridge Wells Borough

Character Area Variations

- Fruit Belt: 1) Matfield/Brenchley, 2) Horsmonden, 3) Goudhurst, 4) Cranbrook
- Wooded Farmland: 5) Speldhurst Sandstone Ridges, 6) Benenden, 7) Sissinghurst 8) Bayham, 9) Groombridge & Penshurst, 10) Kilndown 11) Hawkhurst
- Low Weald Farmland: 12) Frittenden Pastures, 13) Paddock Wood/Five Oak Green
- Forested Plateau: 14) Pembury, 15) Bedgebury
- River Valleys: 16) Rother Valley, 17) Medway Valley, 18) Teise Valley
- Open Farmland: 19) Bayhall

Trees and Shrubs Native to the Tunbridge Wells Borough

Species suitable for use in natural woodland, copse and tree belt planting mixes on typical soils of Weald Clay and Sandstone

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comment
Dominant Tree Species		
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	The balance between oak and ash will vary with oak more common on the heavy soils and ash on the drier soils.
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak	
Minor Tree Species		
Acer campestre	Field Maple	
Betula pendula	Silver Birch	Often a colonising plant that will give way to more dominant species.
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam	More common on heavy soils.
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	Widespread but at very low density.
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	
Prunus avium	Gean or Wild Cherry	Widespread but at very low density.
Salix caprea	Goat Willow	
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	
Sorbus torminalis	Wild Service Tree	Widespread but at very low density. Ancient Woodland indicator species – do not plant in existing woodland without consulting Kent Wildlife Trust.
Taxus baccata	Yew	Poisonous to livestock so planting locations must be chosen with care.
Tillia cordata	Small Leaved Lime	Widespread but at very low density. Ancient Woodland indicator species – do not plant in existing woodland without consulting Kent Wildlife Trust.
Shrubs and Understorey		
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood	
Corylus avellana	Hazel	
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	
Hedera helix	Ivy	
Ligustrum vulgare	Privet	
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	
Rubus fruiticosa	Bramble	
Sambucus nigra	Elder	
Viburnum opulus	Guelder Rose	

Topographical and Soil Variations – Species variation and additional species relevant to different soil types and topography

Drier Sandier Soils

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comment
Trees		
Betula pendula	Silver Birch	Locally dominant
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	Locally dominant – more common as planted tree
Pinus sylvestris	Scots Pine	Locally common – mainly on acidic soils
Quercus petrea	Sessile Oak	Occurring locally replacing Q. robur
Shrubs		
Cytisus scoparius	Broom	Locally common – mainly on acidic soils
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	Locally common – mainly on acidic soils

Wet Heavy Soils

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comment
Trees		
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	More dominant
Quercus robur	English Oak	More dominant
Salix caprea	Goat Willow	Locally common
Shrubs		
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood	More common
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	Locally dominant in suckering thickets
Salix cinera	Grey Sallow	Locally common

Wet and
Waterlogged Sites

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comment
Trees		
Alnus glutinosa	Common Alder	Alongside streams and rivers
Betula pubescens	Downy Birch	Locally common – more frequent than B. pendula
Populus nigra var. betulifolia	Downy Black Poplar	Characteristic of river valleys
Salix alba	White willow	Locally common particularly in association with ponds, rivers and streams
Salix fragilis	Crack willow	Less common than S. alba and generally confined to the waterside
Shrubs		
Salix cinera	Grey Sallow	Locally common

Species suitable for use in hedgerows

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comment
Acer campestre	Field Maple	Minor species but locally forms high percentage and is widespread
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam	Minor species but widespread. Locally used as dominant or single species
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood	Usually used in very low numbers
Corylus avellana	Hazel	Widespread and should be included in most new mixed species hedgerows in modest numbers
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	Often dominant species – between 40 to 95% of mix
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	More typically associated with parks and gardens. Locally used as dominant or single species
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	Widespread and should be included in most new mixed species hedgerows in modest numbers. Locally used as dominant or single species
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	Can be invasive through suckering
Viburnum opulus	Guelder Rose	Usually used in very low numbers
Standard trees in hedges		
Acer campestre	Field Maple	
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam	
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	Normally associated with boundary hedges to parks and gardens
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	
Prunus avium	Gean or Wild Cherry	
Quercus robur and Q. petrea	Oak	Most common hedgerow tree in Borough
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	

Non-Native Trees Commonly Associated With The Tunbridge Wells Borough

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comment
Alnus incana	Grey Alder	Locally common as windbreak for hops and orchards
Populus nigra ‘Italica’	Lombardy Poplar	Locally common as windbreak for hops and orchards or as an ornamental tree
Castanea sativa	Sweet Chestnut	Naturalised species widely used for coppice plantations and as occasional specimen
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse Chestnut	Common around villages and towns
Quercus ilex	Evergreen Oak	Common around villages and towns
Juglans regia	Common Walnut	Occasional specimen around farms and villages

Borough of Tunbridge Wells
Local Character Areas
Fruit Belt
1 Marfield-Brenchley
2 Horsmonden
3 Goudhurst
4 Cranbrook
Wooded Farmland
5 Sandhurst
6 Benenden
7 Ssingehurst
8 Bayham
9 Ashurst-Penshurst
10 Kindown
11 Hawkhurst
Low Weald Farmland
12 Frittenden Lowland Pasture
13 Paddock Wood-Five Oak Green
Forested Plateau
14 Pembury Woodlands and Heathland
15 Bedgebury
River Valleys
16 Rother Valley
17 Medway Valley
18 Teise Valley
Open Farmland
19 Rayhal
0 1 2 3 4 5
Kilometers
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Character Area Variations (see Landscape Character Area Assessment Map)

Species variation and notable species or vegetation relevant to different character areas

Fruit Belt: 1) Matfield/Brenchley 2) Horsmonden 3) Goudhurst 4) Cranbrook

Feature: Hedgerows – Dominated by hawthorn with oak standard trees. Locally holly hedges common. Becomes woodland strips along rural lanes with oak, ash, holly, hawthorn, hazel and field maple.
Feature: Woodland – Woodland strips and shaws are oak/ash dominated woodland with an understorey of holly, hawthorn, hazel, dogrose and bramble. Ghyll woods have similar species but sometimes include hazel and hornbeam coppice with alder alongside streams. There are pockets of coniferous plantations and sweet chestnut coppice around 4) Cranbrook that are edged with native oak/ash woodland.
Feature: Windbreaks – Alder and poplar are used as traditional windbreaks for orchards and hop gardens and are distinctive features around Areas 1, 2 and 3. Conifers are also used for the same purpose in Area 3 and should not be encouraged.
Feature: Cranbrook Pines – Specimens of Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris) form part of the townscape of Cranbrook.

Wooded Farmland: 5) Speldhurst Sandstone Ridges 6) Benenden 7) Sissinghurst 8) Bayham, 9) Groombridge & Penshurst 10) Kilndown 11) Hawkhurst

Feature: Hedgerows – Beech and holly hedgerows are locally common and a distinctive feature associated with sunken sandy lanes particularly around 8) Bayham.
Feature: Woodland – Strong network of ghyll woodlands, shaws and woodland blocks dominated by oak/ash semi-natural woodland with alder and willow along stream edges and species-rich understorey in shaws. Coppice includes mixed broadleaf and sweet chestnut plantations. Coniferous plantations in woodland blocks dominated by Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris). Sessile Oak (Quercus petrea) mixed with birch and holly dominates narrow shaws in 5) Speldhurst Sandstone Ridges. Some areas of ancient woodland are at risk from invading rhododendron and laurel species. These species should be limited in their use and avoided altogether in sensitive areas.
Feature: Commons in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Rusthall and Southborough – Former heathland with remnant heather being scrubbed over by birch, oak, holly and beech.
Feature: Parkland – The major houses and parks, e.g. Groombridge Place, Scotney Castle, Bayham Abbey and Sissinghurst Castle exert their influence over local areas introducing specimen trees that are most notable as evergreen and non-native species. Native oak (Quercus robur) and Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris) are more common with the latter being a prominent feature around the western fringe of Royal Tunbridge Wells.
Feature: Gorse – Locally common over acidic bedrock on verges and within field boundaries. Most notable in 5) Speldhurst Sandstone Ridges.

Low Weald Farmland: 12) Frittenden Pastures 13) Paddock Wood/Five Oak Green

Feature: Hedgerows – Hawthorn hedgerows with oak standards are the common form but more species-rich hedgerows including field maple and hornbeam do occur. Locally distinct thick hornbeam hedges occur in 12) Frittenden Pastures.
Feature: Woodland – Small isolated semi-natural broad-leaved woodland blocks with some ash and hazel coppice. Small areas of alder carr in damper areas. Around 12) Frittenden Pasture solitary willow trees and small copses are a common feature of the streams and ditch sides. The copses are dominated by goat willow.
Feature: Windbreaks – Alder and Lombardy Poplar windbreaks are an occasional feature usually associated with former orchard.

Forested Plateau: 14) Pembury 15) Bedgebury

Feature: Hedgerows – Few occur owing to the extensive cover of woodland. Where they do occur they are dominated by hawthorn with oak standards.
Feature: Woodland – Large-scale blocks of mainly coniferous plantations of spruce, pine and larch. Includes areas of sweet chestnut coppice and semi-natural broad-leaved woodland. Ghyll woodlands are generally a mixture of coniferous and deciduous species and contain important areas of ancient oak woodland. Areas of lowland heathland occur in clearings and margins.
Feature: Parkland – Remnant standard trees from former hedgerows and the parks of the area, e.g. Bedgebury Pinetum and Bedgebury School give rise to a series of native and non-native parkland specimens that include pines, cedars and redwoods.

River Valleys: 16) Rother Valley 17) Medway Valley 18) Teise Valley

Feature: Hedgerows – Hedgerows are not a significant feature in this area but where they do occur they are mainly hawthorn with oak standards.
Feature: Woodland – On the valley floor occasional specimens or small groups of willow, alder and ash occur particularly alongside rivers and streams. The native black poplar is a suitable species for the valley floor but occurs infrequently. Hybrid poplars are more common occurring in rows or groups. Alder carr is found in the upper Teise valley, and on valley sides small copses of semi-natural oak/ash woodland are found.
Feature: Windbreaks – Alder and Lombardy Poplar windbreaks are an occasional feature usually associated with former orchard or hop field.

Open Farmland: 19) Bayhall

Feature: Hedgerows – Where remaining they are mainly hawthorn with oak standards.
Feature: Woodland – Blocks of woodland comprising oak over chestnut coppice on ridges are connected with shaws and ghyll woods dominated by oak/ash woodland.
Feature: Gorse – Is found on steep banks and verges along the ridge of acidic sandstone.

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Landscape and Nature Conservation

Planting Guide

Part 4

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Tunbridge Wells
BOROUGH COUNCIL
www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk