

Strathpeffer Community Park

Tree Management Plan

Reference No: 19/03841/FUL

Planning condition:

*“No development shall commence until details of all tree **felling, planting** and **maintenance**, including existing trees and hedging, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. All approved work shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan and shall be maintained in perpetuity to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt this shall include retention and future maintenance of the roadside hedge along the A834. Reason: In order to secure high-quality open spaces in compliance with Council Supplementary Planning Guidelines.”*

Summary:

- The tree resource on the site will be managed to maximise amenity, biodiversity and carbon capture values.
- Non-native conifers will gradually be removed from the small woodland area and replaced by a range of native broadleaf trees.
- The valued beech hedge along the SE boundary of the site will be trimmed annually.
- One tree from the remains of an outgrown conifer hedge will be felled to allow construction access.
- One Sorbus may need to be felled to allow construction of an all-ability access path. This will be replaced.

1. DESCRIPTION OF TREES ON THE SITE

The site is bounded to the SE by a beech *Fagus sylvatica* hedge, an important and valued feature of the village. It out-with SRA ownership and this development but see below for our management proposal.

The site supports c. 0.15ha of woodland mid-way along the park's SE boundary (right). This woodland is densest in the centre, with more open ground adjacent to the boundary beech hedge, and to the west where it peters out into scattered goat willow, *Salix caprea*, specimens. To the south, the canopy and shrub layer are dominated by aspen, *Populus tremula*. Further north and east, there are frequent Japanese larch *Larix kaempferi*. Other trees in the canopy are wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Of these, only the aspen and wych elm are considered native. Aspen is also listed as a priority species within the Ross and Cromarty (East) Biodiversity Action Plan, and is therefore considered to be of local conservation importance.



Scattered small stature semi-mature trees (c. 15) occur along the remaining SE area of the site. These include horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, sycamore *Acer pseudopatanus*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, lime *Tillia cordata*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and birch *Betula pendula*.

2. TREE FELLING

During the construction phase it will be necessary to fell the largest of three large non-native conifers at the western corner of the site (right). This is required to allow construction vehicle access and will be carried out by a fully qualified and insured person.

The above three conifers are part of an outgrown conifer (*Cypress*) hedge that runs along the north half of the SW boundary of the site. These conifers are in poor condition. However, they also provide valued privacy and shelter for a number of properties adjacent to the development and there is some resistance to their removal. For this reason there are no immediate plans to remove these trees, although we will explore opportunities to replace them with more suitable, well-managed trees in the future.



It may also be necessary to fell one of a number of small *Sorbus* trees on SRA-owned land at the northern tip of the development. This is to allow alignment of the all-ability path that provides access from the Community Centre car-park. The tree will be replaced with one or more native, locally sourced, *Sorbus aucuparia*.

As detailed in Section 4 below, and on early advice from Nick Richards (Forestry Officer, North Highland), our long-term plans are to remove the conifer component from the small woodland area. The area of woodland cover will be maintained through enrichment planting with more appropriate native species.

3. HEDGE MANAGEMENT

This hedge is out-with the boundary of the proposed community park and maintained annually on its top and road-facing side by the Highland Council (below left). The SRA has no wish for the hedge to be removed and will work with the Highland Council to maintain it by annually trimming it back along the park-side to its current extent and working with the Council to fill any gaps should they develop (below right). This work will be done out-with the bird nesting period to avoid disturbance.



4. WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

The small area of woodland is considered to be the most valuable habitat on this site. As indicated above, our long-term plans are to remove conifers and enrich with native species such as alder *Alnus glutinosus*, wild cherry *Prunus padus*, oak *Quercus*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, crack willow *Salix fragilis*, goat willow *S. caprea* holly *Ilex aquifolium* and hazel *Corylus avellana*.

Trees will be inspected regularly and managed where necessary to ensure public safety. Particular attention will be paid to the mature aspen that are prone to forming large and potentially dangerous snags. These snags and the felled conifers will be removed from the canopy and left as dead-wood to enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

The scattered trees out-with the core woodland area will be retained. Where access is required to install the all-ability path network, root protection will be put in place to prevent damage.

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