



Policy Guidance Note:
TP1 Public Amenity Assessment

August 2010



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Contents

Introduction	3
Assessment	3
Scoring.....	4
Amenity threshold.....	4

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline how the Council assesses the public amenity value of trees for use in reaching tree preservation decisions. This document contributes directly to delivery of the Council's adopted Tree Policy (Part One) and specifically Policy TP 1 below:

TP 1: The Council will protect trees and woodlands that are of important amenity value where there is a discernible threat, by making Tree Preservation Orders.

The benefit of using an identified method of assessment is that it reduces scope for subjectivity and helps the Council to reach decisions that appear logical, transparent and consistent.

The system outlined in this document has been adopted by the Council and is primarily used when assessing the suitability of trees for protection by new Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). However, in many cases it is also of use when considering tree works applications under existing TPOs and in other situations such as enforcement cases.

With regard to the making of new Tree Preservation Orders, only those trees that are most visible to the public, suitable to their location and that are in reasonable health and condition will be considered for protection.

Assessment

The subject trees are assessed on site using the Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 4 'Visual Amenity Valuation of Trees and Woodlands' which is commonly referred to as 'The Helliwell System'. This document is copyright and so copies are not made available by the Council, but can be purchased direct from the Arboricultural Association at www.trees.org.uk.

Assessment should only be carried out by those with suitable experience in Arboriculture and preferably those with experience in using the 'Helliwell System'.

Scoring

The Helliwell System scores trees and groups of trees based on the following factors:

- Size 0-8
- Expected Duration of Visual Amenity (remaining useful life) 0-4
- Importance of Position in the Landscape 0-4
- Presence of Other Trees 0-4
- Relation to the Setting (suitability) 0-4
- Form (shape and structure) 0.5-2

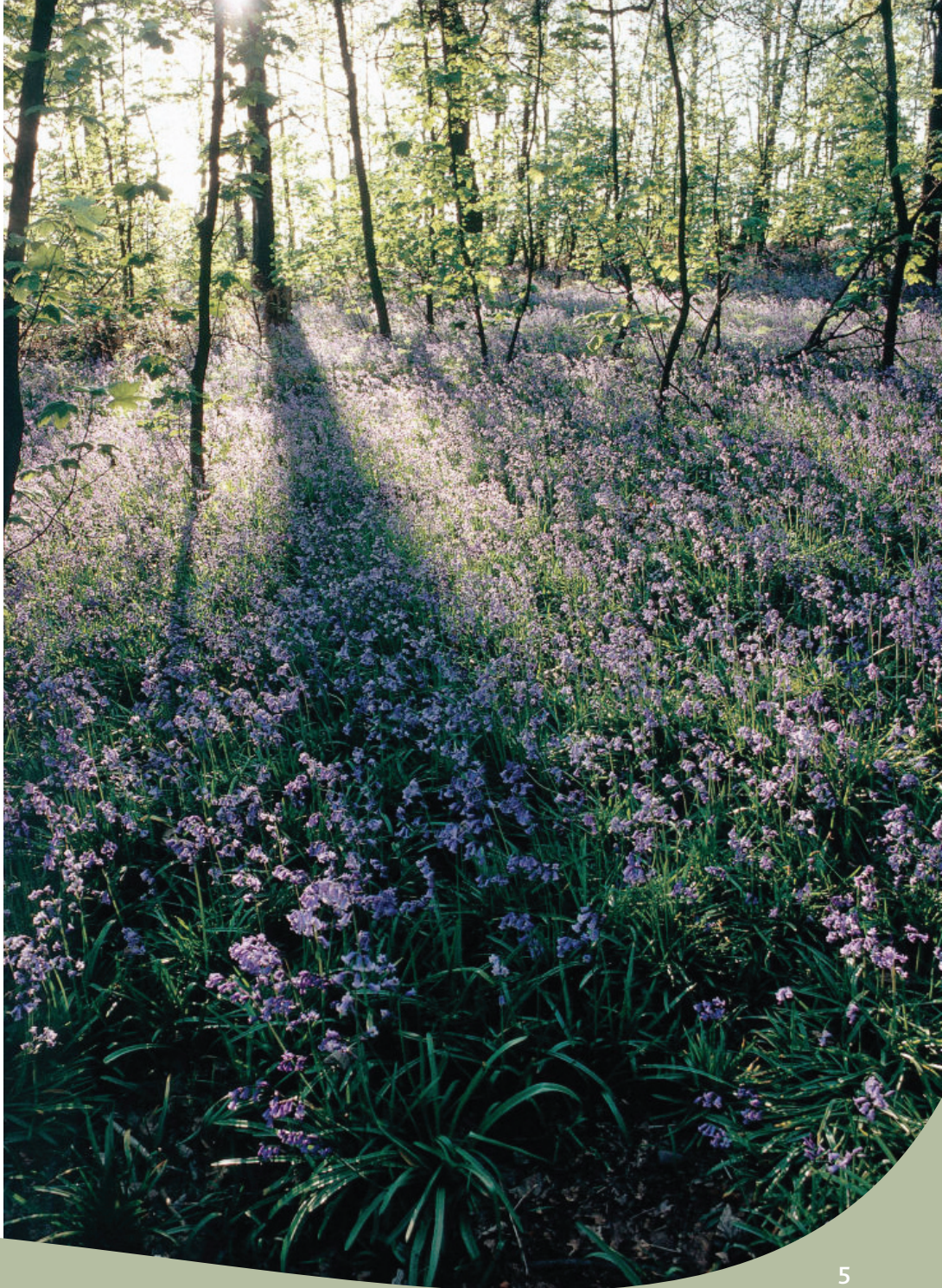
The scores are then multiplied together to give an overall figure for each tree or group of trees. This figure is then equated to a score out of 10 on the Council's scoring chart (below). This is considered more helpful when used to compare the relative amenity scores of different trees and when referred to in Council reports.

Amenity threshold

The Council has agreed that trees below a certain threshold (currently 3) may not have sufficient amenity value to justify protection by new Tree Preservation Orders. Trees scoring 3 or above will therefore be considered for protection. A separate set of 6 factors are used to assess woodlands over 0.1 hectares in size as outlined in the Guidance Note referred to above.

The resulting amenity score is used as a guide when deciding whether to protect a tree using a TPO, but is not the only consideration. Other factors may also be taken into account, which may counter-balance the amenity provided by the tree, as the Council is required to consider whether it is expedient to make a TPO.

In some situations it may therefore be the case that trees scoring 3 or more are not considered appropriate for inclusion in a TPO and, less commonly, trees scoring less than 3 could actually still be considered appropriate for protection.



ELDC Amenity Scoring Chart

Helliwell System Score	ELDC Score
0-50	1
50-100	2
100-150	3
150-200	4
200-250	5
250-300	6
300-350	7
350-400	8
400-450	9
450-500	10

The above chart and threshold will be subject to periodic review to ensure effective protection of the District's important amenity trees.



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