4.6 Hedgerow Management Plan

1. Introduction

Hedgerows within Cranbrook are either historic, predating the development or have been planted as part of the development. Hedgerows in Cranbrook hold several values depending on location: visual barriers, privacy, wildlife and identifying boundary borders. As such different methods of management are required to meet needs.

This plan outlines the management, maintenance, and monitoring requirements for the hedgebanks within the designated area, ensuring ecological preservation, structural integrity, and compliance with best management practices.

2. Methodology

2.1 Monitoring & Responsibilities

A survey review will be conducted annually to determine health and required maintenance. Prior to the hedge cutting season (September-February) representatives from the Town Council and a chosen contractor will review the proposed hedgerows to be cut. This review may determine whether a hedgerow requires maintenance out of its categorised regime. If survey results identify the need for additional remedial management works, i.e. replacement of dead planting on a like for like basis, the designated contractor will be instructed accordingly.

The ongoing management process will include monitoring and review of the following:

- Stage of Hedgerow Management Cycle (HMC) (see appendix a)
- Monitoring of newly planted / established shrubs with specific replacement of dead or dying species on a like for like basis.
- Monitoring of ditches associated with hedgerows, recommendation of ditch clearance.
- Monitoring of hedgerow structure, with all breaches, gaps and leggy sections being noted and recommended for remedial works.
- Recommendation of laying or coppicing once a hedgerow has progressed to HMC7/8 (see appendix a).

A mapped plan of the decisive cuts will be produced. A record will be kept for future reference. Upon completion a review of the season's cuts will be completed by a representative approved by the Town Council.

a) Hedgerow Designation

Hedges can be designated into 3 categories dependent on location:

a) Residential – requiring an annual cut. Hedges adjacent to public highways and residential areas that may otherwise block access or cause safety concerns.

b) Borders – Hedges that do not necessarily obstruct access but may benefit from a rotational cut on a 2/3-year basis to prevent any obstruction of view. This will promote health and ecological value whilst preventing excessive growth.

c) Open Space – Monitor and cut on an ad hoc basis to promote ecological value. Hedges do not restrict access or require any functional need to be cut. Such hedges can grow into Linear Woodlands such as those in the Country Park and Green Spaces.

3. Management

b) Management Techniques

*Refer in reference to **appendix a** Hedge Management Cycle (HMC)*

3.1.1 Laying or Steeping

This should be carried out as required to keep the hedge thick at the base **(HMC 1/2/7/9)** typically at points 1, 2 and 7 of the HMC and may be used in conjunction with coppice management. The woody shrubs in the hedge are cut about ¾ of the way through at the base and 'layed' in one direction uphill where possible along the top of the bank. This reduces the height of the hedge with new growth sprouts along the trunks and at the cut base producing a thick new hedge within 2-3 years. This should aim to create two rows of woody species on the combs of the bank (i.e. top edges of the bank sides). Laying is the favoured management technique for defunct hedgebanks as it is of greater ecological value, aesthetically pleasing and provides structure for casting up / bank retention.

3.1.2 Trimming/ Mechanical Cutting

Where trimming is required **(HMC5/6)** hedge height 1-4m and where branches and stems to be cut are less than 25mm diameter, trimming should be carried out using suitable flail machinery. Where individual stems and branches are thicker and hedges are of a greater height 4-6m with dense healthy stems **(HMC6/7)** the sides should be lifted in preparation for laying **(HMC7)** or coppicing or re-shaping **(HMC8)**, and a circular saw should be utilised. Repeat flail cutting at the same height will eventually produce a mass of scar tissue and dead branch ends. To avoid this, the cutter head will be raised by 10cm at each successive cut.

If flail cut is taken back to the main upright trunk bark can be torn off, flails should therefore not be used on larger branches and a circular saw used instead.

Notwithstanding the Open Space Specification, trimming should occur during January and February when most of the fruit has been taken by local wildlife and carried out according to best practice guidance. Trimming should not be undertaken during severe frosts, or during the bird nesting season (this is generally accepted as being from March to September inclusive). Sides, ends and tops of the hedgerow should be pruned to an 'A' profile, where practicable, and dependant on access, to achieve an appropriate shape and structure in relation to the height of the hedge.

Following pruning operations all significant arisings (cuttings), such as large branches should be removed from the site, or alternatively, and occasionally, they can be piled in small, designated areas to encourage the creation of hibernacula habitat.

3.1.3 Coppicing

Carried out to rejuvenate old and/or gappy hedges when the hedgerow shrubs have become too thick to lay **(HMC8/9/10)** or the shrubs are too leggy, mop headed or sparsely distributed to form an effective hedge **(HMC1/2).** Typically, this may be carried out in conjunction with laying and/or casting up. Shrubs and trees are cut off at the base and allowed to regrow use of circular saw or chainsaw may be required.

3.1.4 Gapping-up

Where a hedge is open or gappy through loss of shrubs or erosion it is necessary to replant gaps with new plants. Gapping up is often necessarily carried out in conjunction with laying and coppicing.

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Gapping up should only be undertaken in areas of sparse growth or following the removal of undesirable vegetation. Following identification of a hedgerow for gapping up it will be the responsibility of the management contractor on site to assess areas that require further planting prior works.

3.1.5 Casting Up

Eroded and slumped soil which has accumulated at the base of the Hedgebank will be ‘cast up’/ ‘faced up’, i.e. replaced back on top of the bank, to maintain the height and profile of the bank. It is important that with any repair work the choice of facing either turf or stone must match the existing bank.

Where stoned faced bank repairs are required, the largest stones should form the base. Backfill the cavity made between the two faces with soil or small stones at the end of each course. The batter of a stone-faced hedge is generally 0.3m for a hedge 2m high, with a concavity of 80-100mm.

Turf facing repairs require the hedge to be cut back to the original width to form a well tampered ledge for the new turves (turf wedges cut from nearby about a shovel width and 100-125mm thick). These are placed grass face out on the hedge in level courses in a crossed formation as if bricklaying. At the end of each course fill in behind the turf with loose soil from the base of the hedge and tamp down well. Take the turves up to the height of the existing hedge and finish with loose soil or turf over the crown. The face of the bank should slope backwards approximately 0.3m for every 1m in height.

This can be carried out at any point but typically occurs between **HMC 1/2/8/9/10**. Specific areas along the Hedgebank to be cast up should be assessed by contractors on site prior works conforming to cross section provided in.

c) Technique Timeline

Task	Description	Timeline	Frequency

Pre-Management Assessment	Survey hedgebanks, assess health, and identify required interventions.	March - April (Year 1)	Once before initial work
Tree & Hedgebank Protection	Install protective fencing around retained hedgebanks before construction or disturbances.	April - May (Year 1)	Before major site activities
Initial Clearance & Gapping Up	Remove deadwood, invasive species, and replant native shrubs/trees in gaps.	September - November (Year 1 & Year 3)	Every 2-3 years as needed
Hedgebank Trimming	Trim hedge to maintain a dense structure and prevent overgrowth. Rotate sections annually to maintain habitat.	January - February (Annually)	3-year rotational cycle
Coppicing & Laying	Coppice overgrown sections and lay hedges to encourage healthy growth.	Winter (Every 5-7 Years)	5-7 year cycle
Casting Up & Soil Stabilisation	Restore eroded banks by adding soil and replanting native grasses and shrubs.	October - November (Every 3 Years)	Every 3 years
Ditch Clearance	Remove obstructions and maintain water flow in ditches associated with hedgebanks.	September (Every 2-3 Years)	Every 2-3 years
Ecological Monitoring	Conduct surveys on plant diversity, bird nesting, and invertebrate populations.	June & November (Annually)	Twice per year
Post-Storm Inspections	Inspect hedgebanks for damage after extreme weather. Carry out emergency repairs if needed.	As needed (After severe storms)	Ongoing
Formal 5-Year Review	Comprehensive assessment of Hedgebank health, management effectiveness, and necessary updates to plan.	End of Year 5, 10, 15, etc.	Every 5 years

4. Considerations

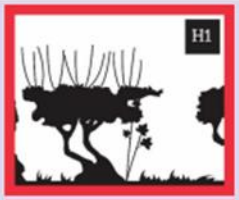
- Avoid management during the bird nesting season (March–August).
- Ensure a mix of techniques (trimming, coppicing, and laying) to balance structure and biodiversity.
- Adapt schedules based on ecological monitoring results.

Appendix

a) Hedgerow Management Cycle

Hedgerow Structures

Over-trimmed



H1 Over-trimmed

- Heavily over-trimmed, hard knuckle at trim line
- Many gaps, sparse stems
- Bases may be gnarled or rotting
- Usually low and narrow
- May be invaded by elder, sycamore or other invasive sp.
- Lacks branches and foliage in the lower parts
- Closely and frequently flailed to the same line

H2 Over-trimmed

- Over-trimmed, hard knuckle at trim line
- Infrequent stems
- May be developing mushroom shaped growth form
- Often low and narrow
- Closely and frequently flailed to the same line
- May lack branches and foliage in the lower parts
- Base canopy may or may not extend to the ground

H3 Over-trimmed

- Over-trimmed, hard knuckle may be starting to form
- Still has frequent healthy stems
- Base canopy may or may not extend to the ground

Structurally managed

H4a Rejuvenated - Recently laid

- Hedge stems cut at base and laid on their sides.
- Depending on time since being laid, significant re-growth may have grown from the base. The horizontal stems (alive or dead) should still be visible
- Approximately laid within the last 5 years

H4b Rejuvenated - Recently coppiced

- Stems all cut at ground level, stumps may be visible
- Significant regrowth may be visible from cut bases
- Approximately coppiced within the last 5 years

H4c Rejuvenated - Recently planted

- Approximately planted within the last 5 years
- Stems may still be protected by tree guards

Dense and managed

H5 Dense and Managed

- Healthy dense hedgerow
- Have obviously been trimmed in the fairly recent past. (May have shoots protruding but retains basic shape)
- Frequent healthy stems
- Dense amongst most of their length
- About 2m or more in height

H6 Dense and managed

- Healthy dense hedgerow not recently trimmed.
- May have 'straggly' appearance with protruding woody branches
- May be in a non-intervention stage of management
- May be on a longer trim rotation, e.g. 3 year cut
- About 3m or more in height

H7 Dense and managed

- May have a straggly appearance with numerous long woody branches protruding from the main body
- Usually still quite dense, but increasing volume may start to shade the lower branches
- Has frequent healthy stems, about 4m high.
- This is an unmanaged, overgrown version of H6

Tall and overgrown

H8 Tall or overgrown

- **Over-mature hedgerow, tall and leggy**
- May have spreading tops
- Not been trimmed for many years
- Lacks significant foliage in the lower parts
- Stems still healthy, but may be infrequent and getting too large to lay

H9 Tall or overgrown

- **Over-mature hedgerow, tall and leggy**
- Spreading tops might be dying back
- Collapse possible
- No significant woody foliage in the lower parts
- May be developing gaps

H10 Tall or overgrown – line of trees

- Hedgerow has developed into a **line of trees**
- Very little, if any, woody undergrowth

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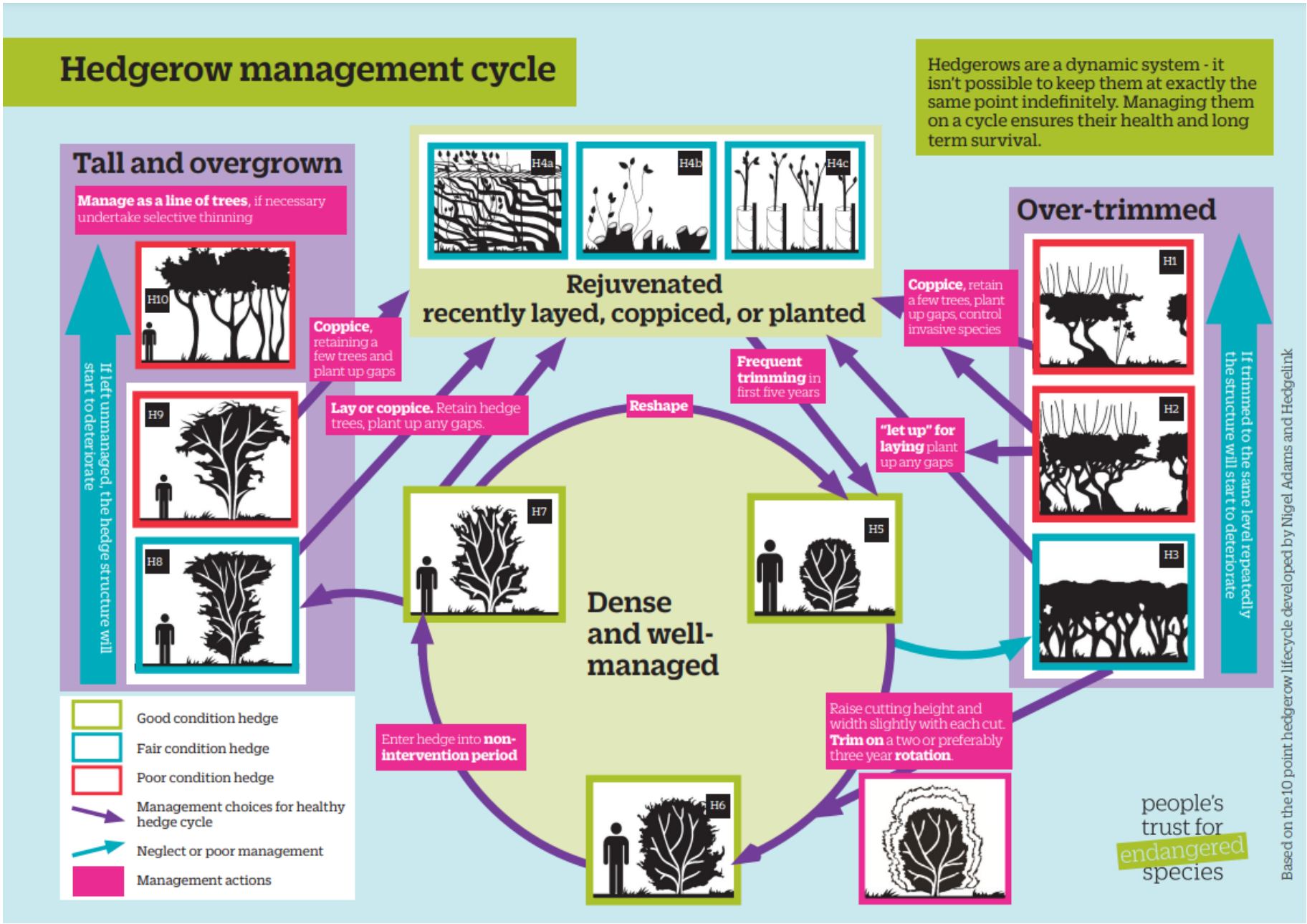
Hedgerow management cycle
Hedgerows are a dynamic system - it isn't possible to keep them at exactly the same point indefinitely. Managing them on a cycle ensures their health and long term survival.
Tall and overgrown
Manage as a line of trees, if necessary undertake selective thinning
H10
H9
H8
If left unmanaged, the hedge structure will start to deteriorate
H4a
H4b
H4c
Rejuvenated recently layed, coppiced, or planted
Coppice, retaining a few trees and plant up gaps
Lay or coppice. Retain hedge trees, plant up any gaps.
Reshape
Frequent trimming in first five years
Coppice, retain a few trees, plant up gaps, control invasive species
"let up" for laying plant up any gaps
Over-trimmed
H1
H2
H3
If trimmed to the same level repeatedly the structure will start to deteriorate
H7
H5
Dense and well-managed
Enter hedge into non-intervention period
Raise cutting height and width slightly with each cut. Trim on a two or preferably three year rotation.
H6
Good condition hedge
Fair condition hedge
Poor condition hedge
Management choices for healthy hedge cycle
Neglect or poor management
Management actions
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Based on the 10 point hedgerow lifecycle developed by Nigel Adams and Hedgelink

b) <u>Hedgerow Survey Table</u>

HEDGEROW SURVEY

DATE: **SURVEYOR:**

Hedge Number	Average Height (Meters)					Average Width (Meters)				Number of Trees in Hedgerow	Total Hedge Gaps (Meters)	Average Base Canopy (Meters)	Hedge Structure (Hedge Management Cycle)	Suggested works (In reference to Key Management Techniques)	Comments	Completion: date & sign
	< 1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4>	< 1	1-2	2-3	3>							
	< 1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4>	< 1	1-2	2-3	3>							
	< 1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4>	< 1	1-2	2-3	3>							
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