

# Elm Planting Locations- Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons, January 2026

After much deliberation and planning over the previous months, 34 young Elm trees, of 6 disease resistant varieties, were planted across both commons in January of 2026. This report maps the locations of these trees in their respective parts of the commons, as well as some of the background on each location. These trees represent one of the most interesting and diverse collections in this region, particularly for being in such a publicly accessible location, and the hope is that in time, they will allow the public to enjoy elms in a way not experienced since the catastrophic losses of Dutch Elm Disease. Additionally, we recently confirmed that White-Letter Hairstreak butterflies are present on both commons, hanging on to a vulnerable large Field Elm at Rusthall Common, and a row of incredibly rare Belgica elms on Tunbridge Wells common. These are rare and threatened butterflies that will benefit massively from the planting of these new trees, and within a few years, they will have a safety net if any of the trees they are currently using fail.

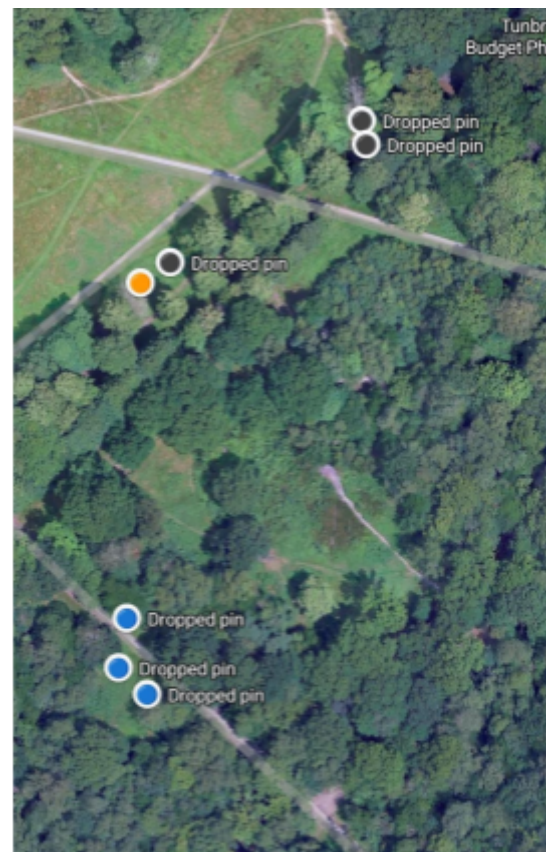
The maps included in this report are accessible using the link below, with each variety being colour coded and labelled- [https://maps.app.goo.gl/W9kVcqHuBjraJFAj7?g\\_st=ac](https://maps.app.goo.gl/W9kVcqHuBjraJFAj7?g_st=ac)

## Tunbridge Wells Common

### **Site 1- Restoring Victoria Grove, and creating a new Elm avenue**

After the discovery of the historic *Ulmus Belgica* adjacent to Victoria Grove, one of the main targets has been to restore this area to its former glory, and enhance the elm habitat available here. Scrub clearance has taken place, and 3 Accolade elms have been planted to create a new avenue, with possible extension in the future. This complements the existing elms and restores a feature to the Grove that was thought to be lost with the felling of avenue elms in 1972. Now that White-Letter Hairstreaks have been confirmed on the Belgica, increasing the amount of Elms in this area helps safeguard the future for this rare and elusive butterfly.

Additionally, there were a number of gaps in the main avenue of Victoria Grove, and these have been appropriately filled with the formal plantings of 2 Lobel



Site 1- Victoria Grove, Accolade (Blue), Lobel (Orange), Vada (Black)

Elms in the centre, and 2 Vada elms at the eastern end of the Grove. In time, these trees will restore structure and rhythm to the rows, and represent succession planting as many trees in the avenue start to decline with their age. It is also important to increase the diversity of this area as climate change and new diseases make monoculture tree plantings potentially risky as threats continue to evolve, and having a wide range of trees helps hedge these risks.

It is also suggested that some additional fencing is established here due to the amount of footfall this area receives and the potential vandalism risk that carries, as well as deer already having snapped one of the Accolade elms.



Site 2- Fir Tree Rd- Accolade (Blue), Ademuz (Yellow), Lutece (Red)

### Site 2- Diversifying Elm Habitats, adjacent to the Fir Tree Rd carpark

During the elm survey of 2025, a large area of typical English Elm scrub was found adjacent to the Fir Tree Rd carpark, bordering Bishops Down Rd. It is quite possible White-Letter Hairstreaks exist here, and this was identified as a suitable area to enhance the elm habitat with the planting of Ademuz and Lutece elms. Ademuz is particularly suitable here as it is thought to be very closely related to the English elm, and is therefore probably the closest thing we have to a true replacement at the time of writing.

3 Ademuz Elms were planted in this area, two within the sheltered clearing, and one on the green immediately adjacent to Bishops Down Road. It is hoped that this will help screen the view of the ugly extension to the care home opposite, even if that does take many years.

A Lutece elm was also planted in the sheltered clearing as a supporting feature, as well as another Accolade elm on the border with the carpark.

### Site 3- Upper Pantiles Carpark, enhancing elm habitats

Similarly to the Fir Tree Rd carpark, the Upper Pantiles Carpark also has more typical English Elm scrub around its edges, including some particularly tall trees which we are hoping to vaccinate with DutchTrig. Therefore, 3 Lutece elms, and one large Ademuz elm, were planted at regular intervals around the perimeter of the carpark as can be seen on the map below. The same logic applies here as with the previous site, and these trees will enhance the elm habitat available to the species that rely on it.



Site 3- Upper Pantiles Carpark- Lutece (Red), Ademuz (Yellow)



### Site 4- Specimen trees across Mount Ephraim

After discussion reflecting on the original planting plan for this project, it was decided to plant 3 specimen trees at intervals along Mount Ephraim. This included an Accolade adjacent to the Mount Edgecumbe pub, a Wingham on the intersection between Church Rd, Castle Road and Mount Ephraim, and a Lobel not far from Gibraltar Cottage. These trees were selected for their formal and attractive appearances as they age, and may well become 'landmark' trees in prominent areas of the Common. They have been planted thoughtfully, where it is hoped they will enhance the vistas present rather than obstruct them, and indeed replace aging and diseased trees in their vicinity. As prominently placed, and valuable trees, some more heavy duty fencing or guards might be worthwhile until they reach a good size.

Site 4- Mount Ephraim, Accolade (Blue), Wingham (Purple), Lobel (Orange)

## Rusthall Common

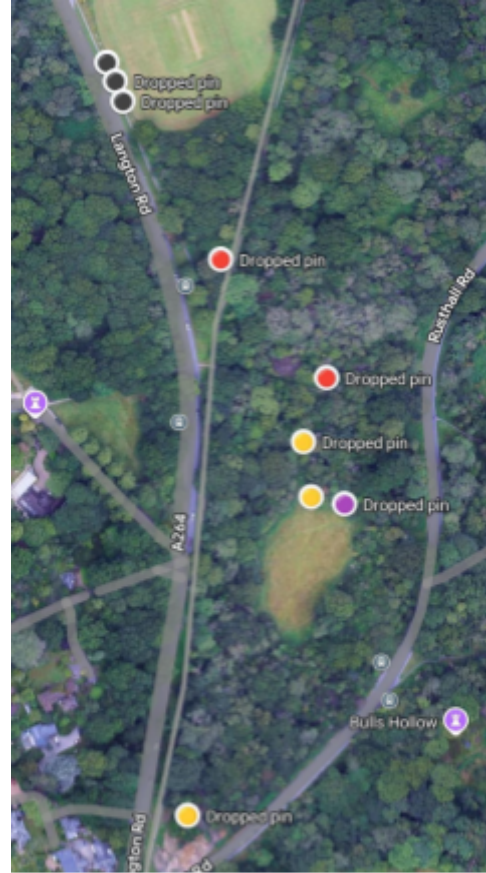
### **Site 5- The Bumps meadow and beyond, forming Elm corridors**

This is the site that really started everything in terms of developing a strategy for safeguarding the White-letter Hairstreaks that exist on a large Field elm here. Given the vulnerability and isolation of the colony surviving in the most part on a single tree, there has been an appropriately high number of trees and corridors established in this area to enable their survival.

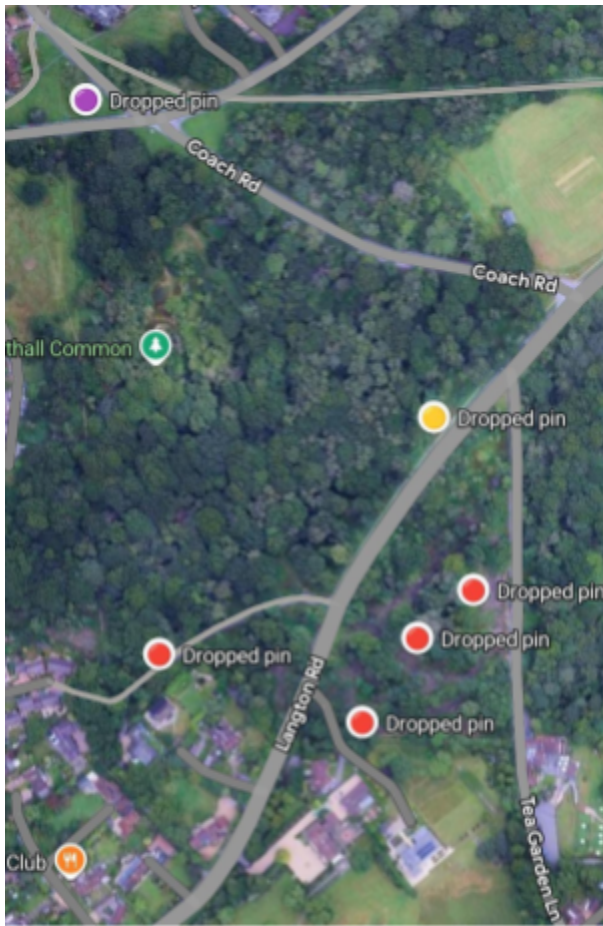
At the southeastern end of this Common, an Ademuz elm has been planted on a ridge line overlooking the recent archeological dig site, and should act as a stepping stone for Elm wildlife between Rusthall and Tunbridge Wells commons.

At the Bumps meadow itself, a large Wingham and another Ademuz have been planted on the western edge of the meadow, with another Ademuz being planted in the ride towards the large Field Elm at the junction. On the other side of the junction, a Lutece elm has been planted. This represents a core planting area to directly support the Hairstreak population. The map should make this description a bit clearer!

The next priority was to form an Elm corridor heading towards the Wych elms on Tea Garden lane, therefore a Lutece elm was planted next to the tarry path adjacent to Langton Rd, as well as 3 Vada elms planted alongside Rusthall Cricket Pitch. These Vada elms felt appropriate for this area as a more formal tree, and there is plenty of room for a potential extension of this planting around the Cricket pitch in the future.



Site 5- The Bumps and beyond- Ademuz (Yellow), Lutece (Red), Wingham (Purple), Vada (Black)



Site 6- Tea Garden Lane- Lutece (Red), Ademuz (Yellow), Wingham (Purple)

### Site 6- Tea Garden lane, enhancement plantings

There are a number of fine examples of Southern Wych Elm in the vicinity of Tea Garden lane, again with the potential to host White- letter Hairstreaks. These trees are relatively isolated from each other as it stands, and the planting of Lutece elms in this area should help interconnect the ecosystems associated with these trees. 3 Lutece elms were planted at regular intervals throughout the area cleared due to Ash dieback.

Additionally, a couple of trees were planted on the opposite side of Langton Rd, with one Ademuz being planted close to the old Beech monolith (opposite the English elm scrub- again replacement planting), and another Lutece along the access road that links up with Colbran way. This helps provide a corridor leading to the elm scrub at the back of Colbran way, but could do with further plantings in the future.

Finally, a Wingham was substituted for a Lutece planted last year on the green at the entrance to Lower Green Rd. As Lutece is more of a woodland and hedgerow tree, it was decided that a Wingham would be more appropriate here, and the Lutece was moved to a more sheltered hedge in the immediate vicinity. Wingham should grow to be monumental trees in time, and this will make an excellent entrance tree as you approach Rusthall high street.

### Conclusion and recommendations

An ambitious and dynamic project, it will be interesting to see how these trees grow in the surprisingly varied soils of the Commons, and how they fare with some of the locals, whether that be the furry or two legged kind! Of course, at least some will be lost along the way, and my hope is that supplementary plantings will take place in future seasons to plug any of these losses, and build on some of the ideas we've started to implement. It may prove that certain varieties of Elm fare much better on the Commons than others, and any future project should assess this accordingly. As a relevant side note, Lutece seems to be a popular choice with suppliers and funding bodies currently, and while it is excellent as a 'workhorse' tree, I would

suggest that it is only planted in moderation due to its extremely late bud burst compared to other elms available.

I would recommend that some investment is made into some more heavy-duty fencing or protection for some of the most vulnerable (and valuable) trees in places like Victoria Grove. Certain varieties of Elm may prove hard to replace in the future, as well as the associated costs in attempting to replace them. Ideally these could be reusable structures which you could then use for any future tree plantings. They may also help with soil compaction in the well walked areas of the Grove.

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