



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Alex Marsh (01438) 242587

Committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: R Broom (Chair), A McGuinness (Vice-Chair), J Ashley-Wren, L Brady, F Chowdhury, A Gordon, S Mead, C Parris, E Plater, N Williams and J Woods

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. UPDATE ON THE TREE & WOODLAND STRATEGY AND THE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

To receive an officer presentation updating Members on the Tree & Woodland Strategy and the Green Space Strategy.

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3. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

4. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

5. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Environment & Economy Select Committee

Tree & Woodland and Green Spaces Strategies

20 MARCH 2025

Public Engagement



November – December 2023

On-line consultation (with residents and through schools) to understand general views on trees and green spaces



July – September 2024

In-person + on-line engagement to establish priorities for principal parks



January – February 2025

On-line consultation on draft strategy documents
Feedback from SBC officers

Timeline

- March: E&E Select Committee
- April / May: Final revisions and finalise design
- June: Cabinet
- June /July: Publish on Council web pages



Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 - 2035

CRISTIAN PINTA

ARBORICULTURE & CONSERVATION MANAGER

Why is a Strategy Needed?

Trees positively contribute to our lives in many ways, providing a wide range of benefits:

- Promote health & wellbeing
- Create habitats for wildlife
- Prevent flooding
- Improve air quality
- Attract business
- Connect us to our heritage
- Can be a source of biomass for energy

The strategy sets out the way in which the town's tree stock, including amenity trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, are managed and developed to ensure that they continue to contribute to an attractive and healthy environment for people and wildlife now and in the future.

Phase 1 Consultation Headlines (1 of 2)

- 47% felt that the tree stock in Stevenage was good or excellent
- Amongst the most popular responses for why trees are important to residents were:
 - providing food and shelter for wildlife
 - making a space more attractive
 - helping to prevent climate change
- 90% of adult respondents felt that more trees should be planted, but this dropped to 70% of young people
- 33% of young people said additional trees should be planted to create woodlands while 28% of adults felt that streets and parks would be the best location.

Phase 1 Consultation Headlines (2 of 2)

Concerns about the tree stock largely related to:

- Removal of trees for development purposes (8%)
- Maintenance of existing trees (32%)
- The need to replace removed trees with new ones (8%)



Volunteers helped to plant the 5,000 trees at the micro woods

Picture: Stevenage Borough Council

Three new 'micro woods' planted in town's parks

THE planting of three new 'micro woods' in Stevenage has now been completed.

In total, 5,000 trees have been planted across three parks – 2,000 in St Nicholas, 1,500 in Hampson, and 1,500 in Shephalbury. More than 200 volunteers helped

during the planting days, as well as 215 primary school pupils and college students.

Stevenage Borough Council was awarded £36,000 following an application to Defra's Coronation Living Heritage Fund, which supports tree-planting initiatives

to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III.

Councillor Simon Speller, portfolio holder for environment and climate change at Stevenage Borough Council, has previously said: "We are the only council in Hertfordshire to have been

awarded this funding, and it shows our commitment to reducing our carbon emissions and reaching net zero."

Each of the three micro woods in Stevenage measure around 200 square metres –roughly equivalent to the size of a tennis court.

Contents

- Introduction: benefits of trees, threats & challenges, vision statement
- Context: national, county and local
- Evidence base: qualitative and quantitative for woodlands and amenity trees
- Collaboration & Engagement
- Funding
- Consultation
- Targets and Action Plan
- Monitoring and Review

Action Plan 2025 - 2035

Theme	No. of Actions	Examples of Actions
Tree Canopy Cover	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify low canopy coverage areas and prioritise tree planting in these areas Explore opportunities to develop a tree planting sponsorship scheme
Engagement & Collaboration	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver volunteer engagement opportunities for trees & woodlands Work with partner organisations to deliver tree/woodland themed events
Woodland Management	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop management plans for each woodland Seek to capitalise on woodland management by-products
Nature Connectivity	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase woodland biodiversity in line with the BAP and Herts LNRS Plant 5 new micro-woods by 2035
Climate Change	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate trees with maximum carbon storage potential whilst observing other considerations Identify green infrastructure locations that would benefit from creation of shade from trees

Theme	No. of Actions	Example of Actions
Age Diversity of Trees	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider opportunities for new tree planting within existing areas of mature trees • Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date the new town
Tree Species Diversity	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an accurate audit of amenity trees • Select tree species which are most appropriate to local conditions and future climates.
Tree Health & Resilience	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All trees planted on SBC land will be certified as sown and grown in the UK. • Commit to actions within the Tree Resilience & Recovery Strategy for Herts.
Tree Risk Management	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a comprehensive inspection of every woodland to inform a cyclical programme of proactive works. • Survey trees in tenanted gardens to identify risk and propose mitigation actions.
Protecting & Enhancing the Historic Environment	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to prioritise the retention of trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town. • Implement a best practice approach to the management of hedgerows

Monitoring & Review



Report progress to the Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee at least every two years.



Review every 5 years to ensure that priorities and actions are still relevant.

Draft Strategy - Resident Feedback (1 of 2)

- 76% felt the strategy was easy to understand
- An average of 70% did support the actions identified against each priority; 18% did not and 12% were unsure.
- Comments include:
 - *“Hope these trees are maintained well. Unlike the thousands of other ones planted too close to people’s houses.”*
 - *“Not strong enough sanctions against develop damage. Permits issues with no enforceable obligation to re-plant.”*
 - *“I am concerned that even if the strategy translates in to action that there are problems with improving age and species diversity. In my experience too many saplings are vandalised before they have a chance to establish. Therefore, we need to find a better way of engendering respect for the environment and safeguarding our trees.”*

Draft Strategy – Resident Feedback (2 of 2)

- *“ Trees that cause structural damage and subsidence are not monitored or maintained...SBC should be more proactive in monitoring and trimming the trees as necessary.”*

New Action

R6: Analyse tree related subsidence insurance claim data to identify opportunities for a more targeted, proactive approach to manage trees and minimise future risk

- *“Please publish regular updates about progress on your website...”*

Addition to Monitoring & Review

The Council will explore opportunities to provide an annual update of progress against actions via the Council’s web pages.

Questions?



Green Spaces Strategy 2025 - 2035

JULIA HILL

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Why is a Strategy Needed?

Good quality green spaces are increasingly recognised as an essential quality of life resource as they:

- help to mitigate the impact of climate change,
- act as green corridors for wildlife,
- provide an affordable way to get people active – boosting mental wellbeing and physical health
- Increase property values and attract inward investment
- Encourage people and communities to come together
- Provide a sense of local identity

Following consultation with local residents the strategy sets out priorities for green spaces so that we can focus resources to ensure that public green space in Stevenage will continue to delivery benefits for our communities in future.

Phase 1 Consultation Headlines

- 81% felt that, overall, green spaces in Stevenage were good or excellent, but this dropped to 55% for young people
- The top 3 features identified as important for green spaces were:
 - provision of trees
 - cleanliness and
 - provision of wildlife friendly areas
- 70% would like to be involved in some form of environmental volunteering
- 64% said they felt safe in green spaces, but there was a concern about personal safety after dark.

Phase 1 Consultation Headlines

Concerns about green spaces largely related to:

- Loss of green space for housing development (20%)
- Maintenance standards (23%)
- Personal safety (20%)



Contents

- Purpose
- Introduction: importance of green space, challenges, new green spaces
- Context: national, regional and local
- Funding
- Consultation
- Aims & Objectives
- Priorities & Actions: Our Community, Our Environment, Our Spaces
- Monitoring & Review



Our Community

ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2035

Action Plan: Our Community

Theme	No. of Actions	Example of Actions
Access & Provision	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to ensure that green spaces are accessible to all and provide accessibility information for key sites• Investigate opportunities for mobile refreshment franchise at key parks
Communication	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear information about facilities for families, children and teenagers within our green spaces• Work with other community providers to share information about green spaces.
Engagement	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and potential changes to green spaces.• Regularly measure customer satisfaction.
Community Safety	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with partners to develop a suite of measures that ensure our green spaces remain safe.• Support and promote group activities within parks to increase presence levels for longer periods.



Our Environment

ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2035

Action Plan: Our Environment

Theme	No. of Actions	Example of Actions
Nature & Wildlife	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve access to wildlife sites whilst affording protection to habitats and species.• Preserve existing, and create new, green corridors for people and wildlife.
Sustainability	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide secure facilities for temporary storage of bicycles within the main parks and green spaces.• Work with partners to improve local water ways for wildlife and people.



Our Spaces

ACTION PLAN 2025 - 2035

Action Plan: Our Spaces

Theme	No. of Actions	Example of Actions
Health & Wellbeing	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a range of opportunities for people to be physically active in green spaces.• Explore opportunities to fund and develop a combined wheeled sports facility.
Maintenance	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review maintenance regimes to ensure the highest possible standards and best practice are achieved.• Seek to increase the diversity of the workforce within the operations team.
Development	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a range of good quality play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities.• Develop an allotments strategy.
Management	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a local quality standard for green spaces in Stevenage.• Develop partnership arrangements to extend the range of facilities available, increase capacity, share resources and secure external funding.

Monitoring & Review



Report progress to the Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee at least every two years.



Review every 5 years to ensure that priorities and actions are still relevant.

Draft Strategy – Resident Feedback

- 76% felt the strategy was easy to understand
- An average of 63% did support the actions identified against each priority; 9% did not and 28% were unsure.

Comments include:

- *“If you install it you must maintain it!”*
- *“We believe this (flat circuit for wheeled sports) should be a priority as this would encourage people of all ages to get active.”*
- *“It would be nice to see the development of more green space in addition to the maintenance of those that exist already. There's no greenery on the High Street for instance.”*
- *“Share with Care” principle should be embraced and encouraged throughout green spaces”*

Draft Strategy – Resident Feedback

- *“The actions on community safety, sustainability, health and well-being should recognise that this work is ongoing; there needs to be a commitment to take ongoing action...”*

Action timescales reviewed and some changed to ongoing.

- *“I think it would be important to clarify the provision for “wheeled sports” must state non-motorised!*

Action amended to reflect this suggestion.

Questions?

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Tree & Woodland Strategy for Stevenage

2025 - 2035

DRAFT

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*Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted
tree long time ago.*

Warren Buffett

DRAFT

1. Purpose

Stevenage was designated Britain's first New Town on 11th November 1946. The town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. The town continues to benefit from the foresight of the original architects who retained and protected many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands and veteran trees, to create the varied green infrastructure, wildlife corridors and sense of identity that residents and visitors enjoy today.

This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which the town's tree stock, including amenity trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, are managed and developed to ensure that they continue to contribute to an attractive and healthy environment for people and wildlife now and in the future.

2. Introduction

It has long been recognised that amenity trees are an essential landscape feature within our 21st century towns and cities, and Stevenage is no exception.

The new town planners included for extensive tree planting to be undertaken as well as the retention of much of the existing farm woodland and hedgerow during the initial development of the town. Their foresight has been realised in the tree stock which we have inherited and enjoy today.

It is a sobering thought to realise that there are a number of trees throughout the new town that were growing before the car was invented. Whilst it is impossible to predict what form of transport will be in general use in another 100 years' time, it is possible to predict that with safeguarding, good planning, and care many of the trees we plant today could still be thriving.

Trees positively contribute to our lives in many ways and just as it is us who are benefitting now, from the foresight of the original new town planners, so we must show our commitment to the future by continuing to plant new, and manage existing, trees for the benefit of future generations. The life span of many tree species is considerably greater than ours, so to achieve all the benefits that trees can provide we need to start now.

2.1 Trees

Trees can take many different forms, functions, and sizes, and can have lifespans varying from tens to thousands of years. They can stand alone as a specimen in a park, for example, line our streets and cycle networks, be managed to restrict their size and shape to create hedgerows, or be found on mass within a woodland setting, and many other variations in between.

2.2 Woodland

Over 40% of the woodlands in Stevenage are identified as being 'ancient woodland' in that which has been in existence since at least 1600; and described as 'semi-natural' because they have received management in the past. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment.

A natural woodland composed of native species without active production management is a reliable way of capturing carbon and at the same time supporting the recovery of biodiversity. In the right places they can also contribute to reducing flood risk, stabilising soils and providing recreational opportunities.

2.3 Ancient Hedgerows

Ancient hedgerows in Stevenage line many of the old roads or country lanes that existed before the new town was developed - Camps Hill Lane, Old Walkern Lane, Shephall Lane, Dene's Lane for example.

In addition to their cultural and historical importance our hedgerows are invaluable to wildlife. If managed correctly they provide shelter and food sources for a variety of wildlife including invertebrates, birds and small mammals - hedgerows with full sized trees are even better for wildlife. They also act as wildlife corridors, slow flooding, can prevent soil erosion and can capture and store carbon within the wood and in the soils on which they grow.

2.4 Benefits of Trees

A good quality treescape makes a significant contribution to every community, providing a wide range of benefits to the environment, local people, wildlife, the economy and helping to mitigate climate change.

- Urban trees promote health and wellbeing. Access to nature alleviates stress, stabilises blood pressure and eases anxiety and depression. People exercise more, and feel better around trees, so promoting healthy, active lifestyles, which subsequently reduces the future costs of health care.

- Urban trees create habitats for wildlife.
Trees, whether in an ancient woodland or a park, provide homes and a food source for a variety of birds, insects, and other wildlife.
- Urban trees prevent flooding.
Trees intercept rainwater and can help to combat surface water flooding - interception by the tree canopy can reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground by as much 45%¹. They also improve water quality by filtering out pollution.
- Urban trees improve air quality.
Trees can reduce air pollution, help to limit noise pollution and moderate local climate helping to keep buildings and green spaces shaded and cool in the summer, and protected from cold winds in the winter. It is estimated that in 2020, the air pollution removal services provided by nature avoided 2,001 deaths and prevented 49,126 years of life being lost².
- Urban trees attract business.
Trees help to create attractive environments for business investment and development, creating spaces that people want to live in, work in or visit.
- Urban trees connect us to our heritage.
Trees are the living history of our communities. Many of the hedgerows, lanes, woodlands, and veteran trees that we enjoy today were part of the local landscape before the designation of Stevenage new town. The extensive tree planting that was undertaken as the town was developed has supported the treescape that we enjoy across the town today.
- Urban trees can be an important source of biomass for energy.
Biomass (trees) takes carbon out of the atmosphere while it is growing and returns it as it is burned. If it is managed on a sustainable basis, biomass is harvested as part of a constantly replenished crop. This is either during woodland, tree management or coppicing. This maintains a closed carbon cycle with no net increase in atmospheric CO₂ levels.

2.5 Threats & Challenges to Our Treescape

Trees, like much of our landscape, are facing unprecedented environmental challenges. In Stevenage these include:

Amenity Trees

- Pests and diseases
- Climate change
- Insufficient diversity of species
- Aging tree stock
- Financial constraints
- Subsidence / damage to property
- Demand for more housing
- Pressure for more car parking
- Successful establishment of trees within hard surfaced areas – town centre, neighbourhood centres, industrial areas
- Differing expectations of residents

Woodlands

- No planned maintenance for 20+ years
- Demand for new housing
- Fly-tipping
- Financial constraints

Ancient Hedgerows

- Lack of proactive management
- Housing development immediately adjacent to homes
- Financial constraints

2.6 Our Vision

Through partnership with local residents and other stakeholders we will create a bigger, well managed, more sustainable treescape; connecting trees, woodlands and hedgerows to benefit the environment, people, and wildlife now and in the future.

3. Context

This strategy will focus on the treescape managed by Stevenage Borough Council. For the purposes of this strategy the treescape includes trees in:

- Parks and green spaces
- Verges adjacent to the highway
- Town centre and neighbourhood centres and other parts of the built estate
- Woodlands
- Ancient hedgerows

3.1 National Context

- 25 Year Environment Plan, 2018: the government sets out its aspiration to increase woodland cover in England to 12% of total land area by 2060.
- The Environment Act 2021: a target is set to increase tree and woodland cover to 16.5% to total land area in England by 2050. Other initiatives introduced through the Act include:
 - Biodiversity Net Gain which mandates a mechanism for measuring a 10% net gain in biodiversity through the planning process
 - Nature Recovery Network which seeks to create bigger, better and more joined-up places for wildlife. This will be supported through mandatory Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
 - Since November 2023 Section 115 of the Act requires highway authorities in England have a statutory duty to consult members of the public before felling a street tree.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021: A new clause requires that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees elsewhere within the development, ie in parks and open spaces. It also states that existing trees should be maintained wherever possible.

- The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that:
 - No person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size; and
 - There should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes.

Ideally, both standards would be met. However, there is acknowledgment that in urban areas where available land is more likely to be limited it may not be possible to meet the 500m threshold. In these instances the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

- Common Sense Management of Trees is published by the National Tree Safety Group: this publication (originally published in 2011, and revised in 2021) seeks to support land owners and managers with developing a balanced approach to tree risk management.

3.2 County Context

- HCC Tree & Woodland Strategy, 2022: This document sets out ambitions for Hertfordshire's treescapes until 2030, and the actions needed to achieve this.
- Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, 2020. This sets out nine ambitions for Hertfordshire including a 20% improvement in the extent and condition of Hertfordshire's habitat network through partnership working.
- Pollinator Strategy, 2019: recognises the role of trees and flowering plants in supporting pollinating insects.
- Green Infrastructure Strategy for Hertfordshire, 2022: sets out how trees, woodlands and other green infrastructure can contribute to a healthy and thriving community. The Strategy includes a plan to help plant 1.8 million trees by 2030.
- Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP): formed in 2020 the HCCSP brings together all eleven authorities and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to collaborate in a collective drive for sustainability.
- Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership: Hertfordshire is one of 48 counties in England developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The group is formed of partners from across public, private and voluntary sectors, who will collectively work in the development and delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- *Your Tree, Our Future*: As part of their Tree & Woodland Strategy Hertfordshire County Council are providing more than 100,000 trees for residents, businesses and community groups to plant across Hertfordshire by December 2025.

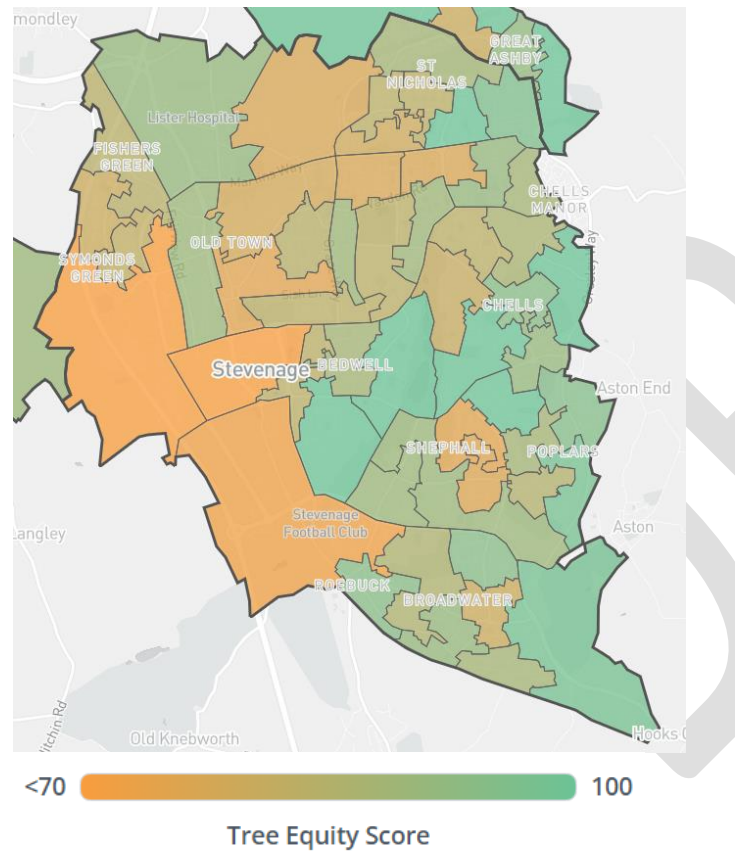
3.3 Local Context

- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP): the first document was launched in 2010 and has since been revised in 2017 and 2024. Forming the majority of the wildlife resource in Stevenage, it is recognised that the woodlands represent both an ecologically and scenically important habitat, with nearly all the woodland identified as 'Local Wildlife Sites' being ancient in origin.
- Local Plan, 2019: the plan sets out to preserve, create, protect and enhance important green infrastructure including trees, woodlands and hedgerows, and Local Wildlife Sites.
- Climate Change Strategy 2020: tree planting is one priority in Stevenage being net zero by 2030.
- Amenity Tree Management Policy, 2021: seeks to ensure that trees are retained, managed, protected and planted in accordance with sound landscape and arboricultural practice, with due regard to their contribution to amenity and urban landscape for both current and future generations.
- Green Spaces Strategy, 2024: this sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces, including woodlands, in Stevenage are maintained, managed and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable.

4. Evidence Base

4.1 Quantitative: Trees

For urban communities trees are an essential element of green infrastructure to support public health and climate resilience, but not all urban areas currently have equal access to the benefits that trees provide.



Tree Equity Score UK (<https://uk.treeequityscore.org/>) was launched in winter 2023, and was co-developed by the Woodland Trust, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and American Forests. It provides a measure of how well the benefits of trees are reaching communities in towns and cities across the UK.

The score ranges from 0 to 100. The lower the score, the greater priority for tree planting. A score of 100 means the neighbourhood has enough trees.

The map shows the current position for Stevenage. This data will help identify priorities for future tree planting within Stevenage.

4.2 Quantitative: Woodlands

The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size, and there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes. However, it does acknowledge that in urban areas the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

Their 2017 publication *Space for People, Targeting Action for Woodland Access* provides the following data for Hertfordshire:

	% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% of population with access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km	% extra population with access to a 2ha+ woodland within 500m if existing woods opened	% extra population with access to a 20ha+ woodland within 4km if existing woodlands opened	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km
Broxbourne	19.2	100.0	37.5	0.0	43.3	0.0
Dacorum	33.5	72.1	31.3	21.0	35.2	6.9
East Hertfordshire	8.8	67.5	56.5	31.5	34.7	1.0
Hertsmere	15.4	95.3	39.9	4.7	44.8	0.0
North Hertfordshire	9.4	10.9	39.2	71.5	51.4	17.5
St Albans	24.4	71.9	42.8	27.0	32.8	1.1
Stevenage	45.8	100.0	23.1	0.0	31.0	0.0
Three Rivers	43.9	99.3	41.9	0.7	14.3	0.0
Watford	3.1	100.0	64.9	0.0	31.9	0.0
Welwyn Hatfield	30.3	100.0	31.8	0.0	37.9	0.0
County Average	23.38	81.7				

4.3 Qualitative: Amenity Trees

Infographic to be inserted:

- Estimated 29,800 amenity trees
- Most common species: Norway Maple, Prunus, Ash
- Provide 22% canopy cover
- 94% deciduous and 6% evergreen
- Around 20% of trees rate as the highest carbon storage trees over the period of their lifetime

Provide ecosystem services (based on i-tree report) such as...

Remove 47 tonnes of pollution each year	Storing 53,000 tonnes of carbon	Intercept 26,000m ³ of rainfall each year	Sequester 2,140 tonnes of carbon a year
That's equivalent to the annual CO ₂ emissions of x cars	Worth £12,348,220	Which equates to £33,561 each year	Worth £491,692 annually

4.4 Qualitative: Woodlands

Infographic to be inserted:

- 130 hectares of woodland,
- Includes semi-natural broadleaved, planted broad-leaved, planted coniferous, and planted mixed woodlands
- represents around 5% of the Borough
- Around 54 hectares is defined as 'ancient woodland' (from Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory).
- Storing around 27,750 tonnes of Carbon (based on Natural England Research Report NERR094)

5. Collaboration & Engagement

As a co-operative council we will provide a range of opportunities for residents, business, community groups to be involved in and support the management and maintenance of our trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

5.1 Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)

Launched in 2023, the CCCF is a grant available to local community groups and organisations to address climate change and its effects, through their own community-led projects. Funding is available across all thirteen wards in Stevenage and may be used to support environmental initiatives such as the creation of new treescapes, which may include street tree planting, small woodlands or community orchards.

5.2 Green Space Volunteers

These volunteers work with the Council and undertake tasks to help manage and improve community green spaces around the town including woodlands. Tree related tasks to date include woodland ride maintenance, tree planting, woodland coppicing to improve the structural diversity, restoration of ancient hedgerows, improvements to woodland ponds, wildlife surveys and installation of bird / bat boxes.

No previous experience is required. We will continue to encourage and welcome people from all sectors of our community to volunteer in green spaces by providing a range of opportunities.

5.3 Memorial Tree Planting

We will continue to work with residents, community groups or businesses who wish to fund the purchase, planting and aftercare of a memorial tree(s) in suitable agreed locations within Stevenage.

5.4 Community Tree Watering

Newly planted trees will require regular watering during the warmer and drier months of the year for, at least, the first three years if they are to have a reasonable chance of surviving to maturity. The watering regime for newly planted trees in Stevenage accounts for a significant portion of the annual tree planting budgets.

While it is not feasible for volunteers to help water trees planted in our parks and green spaces there may be an opportunity for residents to help water newly planted street trees. We will seek to develop a scheme that enables local communities to help with the establishment of new trees so that resources might be freed up to enable greater numbers of trees to be planted by the Council in future.

5.5 Your Tree, Our Future

We will continue to support Hertfordshire County Council in the promotion and delivery of their Your Tree, Our Future initiative – providing more than 100,000 trees to residents, businesses and community groups to plant across the county by December 2025.

5.6 Sponsored Tree Planting

We appreciate that not everyone is able to plant a tree in their garden or grounds, and that the cost of funding a memorial tree may be prohibitive to some. However, for those residents, businesses or community groups that would like to support tree planting in Stevenage we will seek to deliver an opportunity to sponsor tree planting. We will explore sponsorship opportunities that will enable all sectors of our community to contribute to the annual programme of tree planting activity in the town.

6. Funding

Like many other local authorities Stevenage Borough Council has faced a sustained period of austerity and still faces a challenge to bridge the gap between the increased cost of delivering services and the reduction in funding received to enable us to do so. We have worked hard to find ways to continue to deliver vital front-line services whilst maintaining financial security with minimal negative impact for our residents.

Regular funding for green spaces in Stevenage is achieved through a variety of methods including:

Revenue Expenditure: The Council's net budget, to support over 100 services, is around £13 million a year. This is funded by government (4%), business rates (41%) and council tax (55%).
Around 4% of the council's budget is allocated to the management and maintenance of trees and woodlands.

External Grants: In the past we have had success in bidding for funding from third parties including the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Coronation Living Heritage Fund which has enabled the delivery of community orchards and micro-woods.
These funding streams usually have very specific eligibility criteria and competition for the grants has increased significantly so securing funding is not always possible.

Developer Contributions: New developments are usually required to provide funds to mitigate the impact of the new development. Depending on the size of the development, developers are required to deliver or contribute to a wide range of community facilities including schools, GP surgeries, highway improvements, parks etc. Developers contribute to the maintenance and improvements of open spaces through Section 106 agreements, commuted sums, Community Infrastructure Levy or Biodiversity Net Gain.

We need to continue to be creative in finding ways of doing more with less. Examples of this include:

Environmental Volunteers: Stevenage has a terrific network of environmental volunteers across the town who help to pick litter, manage woodlands, plant trees, maintain planting etc. These volunteers choose to give up their valuable time to help

keep Stevenage looking clean and green and add value to what the Council is able to do rather than replace them.

Advertising:

Advertising spaces is sold on the roundabouts throughout the town. The income that is generated from the advertising helps to support the costs of maintaining the landscape provision associated with the roundabouts.

Concessions:

In some instances we already have contracts in place with third parties who provide facilities or activities that increase the service offer within our green spaces, but also benefits the Council through payment of an agreed sum that helps contribute to the running cost of the green space.

Sponsorship:

At present, residents & community groups already have the opportunity to sponsor a memorial tree or bench. The sponsorship sum paid could help cover the cost of the initial provision and the ongoing future maintenance. The Council is already looking to extend the current offer, but also to develop a range of opportunities that are affordable for all sectors of our local community.

7. Consultation

The Council has a long-standing commitment to work with the local community to help shape their local areas and the services that they use.

During winter 2023 we directly contacted 1,500 community groups and 36 schools, and reached out to all residents to let us know what they thought about the trees and woodlands in Stevenage. We received almost 400 responses and nearly 700 comments. Headlines included:

- 47% felt that the tree stock in Stevenage was good or excellent.
- Providing food and shelter for wildlife, making a space more attractive and helping to prevent climate change were amongst the most popular responses for why trees are important to residents.
- 90% of adult respondents felt that more trees should be planted, but this dropped to 70% of young people
- 33% of young people said additional trees should be planted to create woodlands, 26% in parks and 22% in streets. The responses from adults were not dissimilar with 28% feeling that streets and parks would be the best location with 25% choosing woodlands.
- Concerns about the tree stock in Stevenage largely related to removal of trees for development purposes, maintenance of existing trees, safety concerns associated with leaf fall on paths and cycle tracks during the autumn, and the need to replace removed trees with new ones.

Consultation on the draft Tree & Woodland Strategy was undertaken during January 2025.

8.Targets & Actions

8.1 Tree Canopy Cover

Target
<p>Tree canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and tree stems that cover the ground at maturity.</p> <p>In 2024 an i-Tree Canopy (an online canopy cover assessment tool, which provides a scientifically robust and consistent approach to estimating canopy cover) assessment established that the tree stock in Stevenage provided a tree canopy cover of around 22%. However, the canopy cover levels across the different Wards vary, with the lowest canopy cover being 13%.</p> <p>Stevenage, with its wide grass verges and well-maintained open spaces, offers a better environment than most towns, but even here it is estimated that around 50% of newly planted standard trees will survive to maturity. We must therefore ensure that we plant and maintain sufficient trees each year to retain the tree canopy cover and to increase provision in areas of the town with lower than 19% canopy cover.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
T1	Identify low canopy coverage areas and prioritise tree planting in these areas	Short
T2	Plant 2000 standard trees by 2035	Long
T3	Seek grant funding to support additional tree planting and establishment	Ongoing
T4	Explore opportunities to develop a tree planting sponsorship scheme	Medium
T5	Continue to support the HCC <i>Your Tree, Our Future</i> campaign	Short
T6	Ensure that all newly SBC planted amenity trees be watered throughout the spring and summer months for the first three years of life	Ongoing
T7	Explore a scheme for local communities to support watering and establishment of newly planted trees	Medium

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.2 Engagement & Collaboration

Target
<p>The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person living in an urban area should live more than 4km from a 20ha+ woodland.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence suggests that some residents are reticent about visiting a woodland as they don't know what to expect, how safe it is or how easy it is to travel around the woodland.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
E1	Deliver volunteer engagement opportunities for trees and woodlands.	Ongoing
E2	Provide improved information about Stevenage woodlands	Medium
E3	Promote our trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, and the opportunities that they provide for the whole community	Short
E4	Work with partner organisations to deliver tree / woodland themed events	Short
E5	Deliver training to Green Space Volunteers to support the management of a network of Community Orchards.	Short
E6	Explore opportunities to make woodlands accessible to the whole community whilst affording protection to a diverse range of habitats and species	Long
E7	Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and changes to the treescape in their street.	Ongoing
E8	Support colleagues, developers, and others to select the right tree species and right locations to deliver green infrastructure and biodiversity gains.	Ongoing
E9	Continue to provide technical support and guidance to colleagues, developers, and others to support the protection, retention and management of trees.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.3 Woodland Management

Target
<p>Woodlands are an important element in the natural environment of Stevenage. They provide opportunities for recreation, are a valued component of the landscape, an essential habitat for wildlife, provide employment and are an effective means of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.</p> <p>Over 40% of the woodlands within Stevenage are classified as being ancient, and of an Oak and Hornbeam mix, with Bluebells dominant in the ground flora. The EU Habitats Directive has identified this woodland type as being of international importance. These represent the most important woodland habitats for wildlife, sometimes containing species of local and regional rarity. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment and they are a wonderful resource for the borough.</p> <p>Without active management many of our woodlands have become dense, dark and lacking in structure or dynamism. This condition significantly restricts their potential for wildlife. To improve their value for biodiversity and people they would benefit from a substantial programme of conservation work such as thinning, ride creation, glade creation, removal of non-native tree species and coppicing.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
W1	Develop management plans for each woodland	Long
W2	To improve the structural diversity of at least 10% of current woodland area by 2035.	Long
W3	Create improved habitat woodland edges where possible	Long
W4	Manage invasive non-native plant species	Ongoing
W5	Seek to capitalise on woodland management by-product	Ongoing
W6	Explore opportunities for creating buffer between woodland and residential estate	Medium
W7	Consider recreational opportunities within woodlands	Long
W8	Continue to revert Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to a woodland composition more typical of Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands	Medium
W9	Manage all woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.4 Nature Connectivity

Target
<p>Across the country large areas of previously natural land have been broken into much smaller pockets providing habitat for our wildlife, and Stevenage is no different. Development for industry, housing, transport etc has resulted in lots of small, isolated patches of habitat.</p> <p>The creation of wildlife corridors helps to bridge the gap between these habitats enabling greater feeding and nesting opportunities for wildlife and supporting greater resilience to physical and climate changes.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
N1	Identify suitable locations for creation of wildlife corridors to link existing woodlands, ancient hedgerows, and tree belts.	Short
N2	Plant 5 new micro-woods by 2035	Long
N3	Undertake ecological surveys to measure the benefit of the newly created wildlife corridors	Medium
N4	Involve community in undertaking ecological surveys to support future management of woodlands	Short
N5	Increase woodland biodiversity in line with the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire	Short

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.5 Climate Change

Target
<p>Trees and woodlands help improve air quality, reduce the 'urban heat island', provide opportunities for people to re-connect with nature, help to reduce flood risk and provide spaces that can improve health and well-being.</p> <p>Sustainably managed woodlands perform a vital role as carbon sinks and reservoirs⁵ by capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it as a component of wood itself. Over time, the soil beneath the trees is enriched by adding carbon in the form of organic matter from leaf litter, branch fall and root death. In general, woodland soils have low and infrequent levels of disturbance and the total carbon content per unit area of woodland is higher than that for agricultural soils which are subject to more frequent and significant disturbance.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
C1	Incorporate trees with maximum carbon storage potential within planting schemes whilst observing other considerations.	Short
C2	Identify quantity of biomass needed for creation of energy	Short
C3	Identify and create suitable locations for creation of short rotation forestry.	Medium
C4	Identify green infrastructure locations that would benefit creation of shade from trees	Medium

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.6 Age Diversity

Target
<p>A healthy urban treescape relies on age diversity to maintain its ability to provide constant and sustainable benefits to the people who work, live and visit the town. Maturing trees must be protected and managed to ensure they thrive and survive to become veteran trees (senescent), and juvenile trees must be planted constantly to replace old trees, dying trees, and trees removed for safety reasons.</p> <p>Larger, older trees are typically more valuable in terms of carbon storage, ecosystem services and human well-being than smaller, younger trees. However, with trees taking around 40 years to reach maturity it is essential to maintain a healthy stock of younger trees to ensure successful succession planning.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
A1	Map age diversity data on Ward basis to identify areas with low numbers of juvenile trees.	Short
A2	Consider opportunities to create space for new juvenile planting within existing areas of semi-mature and mature tree planting, to support succession planning	Medium
A3	Protect veteran and mature trees, ancient hedgerows, and woodlands from inappropriate development	Ongoing
A4	Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.7 Species Diversity

Target
<p>A more diverse tree-scape is better able to deal with possible changes in climate or pest and disease impacts. Heavy reliance on a particular tree species can mean that a treescape can be largely wiped out if a pest or disease takes hold.</p> <p>Diseases affecting different UK tree species have also been shown to have a multiplying effect on the loss of associated biodiversity. If a single tree species disappears, it can have dire consequences for an entire ecosystem. For example, in the UK, the common ash hosts 45 species that are only found on ash trees, and sessile and pedunculate oaks host 326 species that are only found on oak trees. However, an additional 141 species use ash and oak as alternative habitats and depend on these two tree species only. If both ash and oak were to be lost, the number of species at risk would rise to 512⁴.</p> <p>Surveys of the amenity tree stock have provided comprehensive data on the species diversity across Stevenage.</p> <p>With Norway Maples currently constituting 23% of the amenity tree stock in Stevenage it is imperative to improve species diversity going forward.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
S1	Map species diversity data on Ward basis to identify areas of the town with particularly low species diversity.	Short
S2	Consider areas of low species diversity when prioritising new tree planting.	Short
S3	Maintain an accurate audit of amenity trees in Stevenage.	Ongoing
S4	Select tree species which are most appropriate to local conditions and future climates.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.8 Tree Health & Resilience

Target
<p>Factors including global travel / trade and changing climate have increased the chance of pests and diseases coming into the UK with the potential to cause significant damage to our tree stock. Buying UK sourced and grown trees is the best way to prevent the spread of imported pests and diseases.</p> <p>Between 2000-2021, Britain experienced a 360% increase in new tree pest and disease emergence compared with the period 1970-2000⁵. This represents 18 new emergences since 2000. The predicted cost of ash dieback alone has been quantified at £15 billion⁶.</p> <p>Pests and disease are not the only threats to the resilience of Hertfordshire's treescape. There are predictions that by 2080, changes in temperature and water availability could make the South East of England unsuitable for many common tree species and estimates a 30-50% increase in wildfires in the same period⁷.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
H1	All trees planted on SBC land will be certified as sourced and grown in the UK; or where this is not possible, nurseries or suppliers that adhere to national standards such as the Plant Health Management Standard.	Ongoing
H2	Continue to base tree planting choices on trees known to be resistant to pests and diseases.	Ongoing
H3	Keep accurate, up-to-date records of all purchases and supplies to assist with tracing exercises in the event of an outbreak.	Short
H4	Regularly clean/disinfect all tree maintenance equipment.	Ongoing
H5	Use proper off-site wash-down facilities regularly to remove any build-up of soil and organic material on vehicles and machinery	Ongoing
H6	Monitor spread of tree disease in Stevenage	Ongoing
H7	Monitor specific trees with Ash Dieback to assess safety implications	Ongoing
H8	Commit to actions within the Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire	Short

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.9 Risk Management

Target
One challenge of tree management is that, unlike man-made structures, trees grow, respond to changes in climate and season, shed parts and eventually will die. In an urban environment there is an increasing tendency to see trees as a risk rather than an essential element of the urban landscape (Britt and Johnston, 2008).

Ref	Action	Timeframe
R1	Undertake a regular comprehensive survey of every amenity tree to inform a programme of maintenance works.	Ongoing
R2	Assess amenity trees every three years to determine what, if any, works are required to ensure their health, safety, and amenity value, and undertake works as necessary.	Ongoing
R3	Continue to assess trees and plantations to identify those at a higher risk of failure in future, to inform future work programmes.	Ongoing
R4	Undertake a comprehensive inspection of every woodland to inform a cyclical programme of proactive tree maintenance to ensure the safety of people, property and enhancement of wildlife.	Short
R5	Survey trees in tenanted gardens to identify risk and propose mitigation actions.	Short
R6	Analyse tree related subsidence insurance claim data to identify opportunities for a more targeted, proactive approach to manage trees and minimise future risk.	Ongoing

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.12 Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Target
<p>Stevenage new town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands, and veteran trees, were retained to create the varied green infrastructure that residents and visitors enjoy today.</p> <p>At a time when there is increasing pressure for additional housing and car parking opportunities it is increasingly vital that historic planting is not only protected but managed to provide the best opportunity for further longevity.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe
P1	Protect veteran and mature trees, ancient hedgerows, and woodlands from inappropriate development	Ongoing
P2	Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town.	Ongoing
P3	Implement a best practice approach to the management of hedgerows to halt and reverse declines in hedgerow condition in line with Defra's Hedgerows Standard.	Short

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

9. Monitoring & Review

We will focus on the actions set out above over the next 10 years.

The Councils Arboriculture and Conservation Manager will report progress against the strategy to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee at least every two years.

A more detailed review, to check the priorities and actions are still relevant, will be undertaken in 5 years' time.

The Council will explore opportunities to provide an annual update of progress against actions via the Council's web pages.

The Council will undertake financial scoping to identify funding opportunities from external sources that might be used to support the aims of this strategy.

10. References

- 1 Cases for and against forestry reducing flooding. Forestry Commission.
- 2 UK natural capital accounts: 2022 Office for National Statistics (2022).
- 3 Carbon Sinks and Sequestration UNECE
- 4 Loss of tree species has cumulative impact on biodiversity, November 2021 British Ecological Society
- 5 Application Of Biosecurity In Arboriculture, August 2018 Arboriculture Association
- 6 The £15 billion cost of ash dieback in Britain, May 2019 Current Biology
- 7 Climate Change Risk Assessment, 2012 Defra

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Green Spaces Strategy

2025 - 2035

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1. Purpose

Stevenage was designated Britain's first New Town on 11th November 1946. The Town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. The Town continues to benefit from the foresight of the original architects who retained and protected many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, ponds, woodlands and veteran trees, to create the open spaces, wildlife corridors and sense of identity that residents and visitors enjoy today.

Good quality green space significantly contributes to the health, wellbeing, environmental resilience, image and identity of a town.

This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces in Stevenage are maintained, managed and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable, meeting the needs of our communities and the environment today and in the future.

For the purpose of this document green spaces focusses on:

Page 7 Allotments	We manage 16 sites across the town, providing around 900 plots, for residents to grow their own fruit, vegetables and flowers. We are supported by a number of Volunteer Site Agents and work closely with the Stevenage Gardens & Allotments Association.
Cemeteries and churchyards	Cemeteries at Almonds Lane and Weston Road are managed and maintained by the council, and we also maintain the grounds at St Nicholas Church and St Mary's Church.
Commons	Common land is protected under several acts of Parliament. We manage five common land sites across the town - Fishers Green Common, Letchmore Common, Norton Green Common, Six Hills Common and Symonds Green Common.
Open spaces	In addition to the principal parks in the town residents also benefit from small open spaces within residential areas and larger, local, open spaces such as those at York Road, Campshill Park, Donkey Park and Blenheim Way.
Parks & public gardens	There are eleven principal parks and gardens throughout Stevenage. Many provide a range of opportunities including, sports pitches, outdoor gym / fitness equipment, spaces for quiet contemplation, children's equipped play areas, access to nature, whilst some also provide tennis courts, multi-use games areas, wheeled sports facilities, parkour, community events, lakes / ponds etc.

	The largest park in Stevenage is Fairlands Valley Park at 120 acres. This site is unique in Stevenage also providing a splash park, aqua park, water sports, model boating, and cycle hub.
Play areas	We currently manage and maintain over 50 equipped play spaces. Those in the principal parks provide equipment suitable for toddlers through to teenagers, while smaller, more local sites focus more on younger children. However, we also recognise the benefits that informal, imaginative play can provide to child development so will continue to provide open spaces in residential areas for all ages, 8 – 108 years, to enjoy.
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	LWS are identified and selected locally using robust, scientifically determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys managed by The Wildlife Trusts. Most of the designated LWS in Stevenage are managed by the Council. They largely comprise of woodlands, but there are also grassland and wetland sites. We work closely with the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust in the management and improvement of LWS and other habitat sites for wildlife.
Woodlands	There are approximately 240 acres of woodland managed by the council throughout Stevenage. Many of these woodland areas are designated as ancient woodland sites, which is a nationally agreed designation and means that the land that they occupy has been wooded since at least 1600 AD.

See Appendix A for a list of strategic public green spaces in Stevenage.

2. Introduction

This strategy sets out a vision for Stevenage Borough Council's green spaces, and the actions that we will undertake to deliver that vision over the next 10 years. It focusses on how local public green spaces such as parks, woodlands, cemeteries, wildlife sites, sports facilities will be managed going forward.

Stevenage residents have long valued the green spaces within the town.

A parliamentary inquiry into public parks in 2017 concluded that: 'Parks and green spaces are treasured assets and are often central to the lives of their communities. They provide opportunities for leisure, relaxation and exercise, but are also fundamental to community cohesion, physical and mental health and wellbeing, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and local economic growth'.

We want to ensure that public green spaces in Stevenage continue to deliver such benefits for our local communities and this strategy will help achieve that.

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2.1 Importance of Green Spaces

Green open space is a vital component in creating and maintaining a balanced urban environment and is increasingly recognised as an essential 'quality of life' resource. A report¹ in 2020 showed that nearly two-thirds of people have appreciated local green spaces more due to Covid and that they want them to be a higher priority for the government.

Good quality green spaces mitigate the impact of air pollution and climate change, act as green corridors for wildlife, provide refuges for pollinators, provide an affordable and cost-effective way to get people active, reduce obesity, and boost mental wellbeing. They can support and improve the local quality of life for residents and visitors by providing social, recreational, environmental, educational and economic opportunities - Figure 1.

Figure 1: Summary of benefits provided by green spaces.

Social Cohesion	Climate	Health & Wellbeing	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people of all ages, cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to come together. • Provide free / affordable access. • Provide a sense of local identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce urban heat through provision of shade. • Capture, and store, carbon • Reduce pollution. • Store and filter water reducing the risk of flooding and improving water quality in streams and rivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an attractive environment in which to exercise or play. • Promotes healthy behaviours. • Promote good mental health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract inward investment. • Increase property values. • Activate town centres. • Attractive to visitors, workers and businesses boosting the local economy and providing jobs⁴
<p>Over two thirds of people think that parks are the most important public space in their community²</p>	<p>The value of carbon removal by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £9 million per year³</p>	<p>Activities in natural environments can be more beneficial to health than those undertaken in other locations⁴</p>	<p>Urban green spaces raise nearby house prices by an average of £2,500⁵</p>
Biodiversity	Education	Culture	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban parks are among the most species rich types of urban green spaces for all species types. • For many, spending time in urban green spaces is their only regular opportunity to be close to nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aid the promotion and understanding of the natural environment. • Demonstrate the virtues of sustainable development. • Stimulate and enhance child development through play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects the history of the local area. • Provides an attractive, accessible space for the arts and events 	
<p>The UK's 1,500 species of pollinators provide an estimated £680 million annual value to the UK economy⁶</p>			

2.2 Challenges

Stevenage green spaces face challenges due to:

- Budget Constraints:** Public services, including local government, are experiencing ongoing financial challenges which means that Councils have to review and assess how their budgets are allocated, across a range of different services. This can impact on green spaces and there is an opportunity therefore to think more commercially about our parks as destinations, to help reduce the costs of operation, supported by external funding opportunities where possible.
- Biosecurity:** The health of our plants, and therefore our wider landscape, is increasingly under threat from pests and diseases. In order to preserve the landscape within our green spaces and streetscape it is essential that we implement precautions aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of harmful organisms. Measures might include activity to control the spread of non-native species in our woods and water ways, designing out a monoculture of tree species, and procurement of trees, shrubs and other plants from bio-secure nurseries within the UK.
- Climate Change:** The impact of climate change is increasingly evident, however green spaces can play a major role in mitigating these impacts as well as supporting our community's adaptation to climate change effects. There is a lot of emphasis placed on tree planting in response to climate change, but it is important that we retain open green spaces for people to enjoy and to provide a matrix of habitats to ensure protection of wildlife.
- Population Growth:** The population of Stevenage has increased by around 7% since 2011 and is set to grow by a further 13% in the next 20 years. The greatest anticipated growth is in the number of people aged 60 years and above. This growth will place additional pressure on our existing green spaces in terms of greater numbers using these spaces.
- Urban Development:** Increasing populations may place further pressure on land for providing both additional homes and spaces for parking.

2.3 New Green Spaces

There has not been a significant new green space in Stevenage since Chells Park during the 1980/90's, and yet with the growth of the town there is a need for additional green space to meet the needs of the increasing population.

In September 2022 the Council granted planning permission for a residential development to the North of Stevenage. Alongside the provision of homes and school etc this development will also deliver a new country park. The park will provide 38 hectares of informal open space available for use by everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It is anticipated that much of the park will be restored, and managed, as hay meadow, but will also include reinstatement of hedgerow field boundaries, tree and copse planting along with the creation of a community orchard.

The park will be created by the developers and adopted by Stevenage Borough Council for future management. The developers will also provide funds to support the management and maintenance of this significant new green infrastructure. An action plan for this park will be reviewed as part of this, and/or a future, Green Space Strategy depending on the timescales for adoption.

Planning permission for the West of Stevenage development was granted in autumn 2024. Alongside the provision of homes and a school etc this development is proposed to deliver a new playing field and associated sports facilities.

3. Context

The New Town pioneers of Stevenage had a clear vision of a town that would offer a better quality of life to people moving out of a London ravaged by war. Stevenage is regarded as one of the most outstanding achievements in town planning and development in the 20th century.

As Britain's first New Town, Stevenage was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. Existing features such as hedgerows and lanes, ponds, woodlands and veteran trees were retained and used to create open space, wildlife corridors and an immediate sense of place and many of these features still exist today.

The Town was originally designed around six similarly sized neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were designed to be relatively self-contained - each with its own schools, health facilities, local shops, community centres, places of worship and parks. The neighbourhood centres, community facilities and green spaces are all linked by wide roads and a network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Local Strategic Context:

- Amenity Tree Management Policy
- Arts & Heritage (Cultural) Strategy
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Cemetery Policy
- Climate Change Risk Assessment
- Climate Change Strategy
- Community Strategy
- Corporate Plan
- Future Town, Future Transport Strategy
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Local Football Facility Plans
- Local Plan
- Indoor & Outdoor Sports Facility Assessment & Strategy
- Trees & Woodlands Strategy



**Stevenage
Green Spaces Strategy**



National & Regional Influence:

- Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership Strategic Plan for Biodiversity
- National Planning Policy Framework
Highlights the role of planning in promoting green spaces and protecting the natural environment.
- Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (formerly known as the 25 Year Environment Plan)
Outlines the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance England's Natural Environment.
- Make Space for Girls
Campaign for parks and public spaces to be designed for girls and young women, not just boys and young men.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Accessible Green Spaces
Identifies the health and wellbeing impacts of using Accessible Green Spaces in Hertfordshire and sets out recommendations to improve health outcomes.
- The Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF)
Developed by Natural England this is aimed at developers and planners, to provide a system to analyse where green spaces are needed the most in urban settings.
- The Safer Parks Guidance, 2023
Developed in partnership between the Mayor of York, University of Leeds, Make Space for Girls and Keep Britain Tidy, it focuses on helping stakeholders understand gender-sensitive principles of safety and implement changes to make parks and public spaces safer and more accessible for women and girls.

4. Funding

Like many other local authorities Stevenage Borough Council has faced a sustained period of austerity and still faces a challenge to bridge the gap between the increased cost of delivering services and the reduction in funding received to enable us to do so. We have worked hard to find ways to continue to deliver vital front-line services whilst maintaining financial security with minimal negative impact for our residents.

Regular funding for green spaces in Stevenage is achieved through a variety of methods including:

Revenue Expenditure: The Councils' net budget, to support over 100 services, is around £13million a year. This is funded by government (4%), business rates (41%) and Council tax (55%).
Around 23% of the Councils budget is allocated to the management and maintenance of existing green space facilities including cemeteries, play areas, parks, allotments, woodlands, sports pitches, litter picking and bin emptying, shrub beds, trees, hedges and grass.

External Grants: In the past we have had success in bidding for funding from third parties including Heritage Lottery Fund, Football Foundation, Environment Agency, Coronation Living Heritage Fund.
These funding streams usually have very specific eligibility criteria and competition for the grants has increased significantly so securing funding is not always possible.

Developer Contributions: Developers are usually required to provide funds to mitigate the impact of the new development. Depending on the size of the development, developers are required to provide or contribute to a wide range of community facilities including schools, GP surgeries, highway improvements, parks etc. Developers contribute to the maintenance and improvements of open spaces through Section 106 agreements, commuted sums, Community Infrastructure Levy or Biodiversity Net Gain.
In terms of Stevenage green spaces funds have been received to enable delivery of outdoor gym equipment, provide new allotments, improvements to play areas, and creation of new / improved wildlife habitats.

Fees & Charges:

The Council works hard to protect the services that it provides for the benefit of our residents. However, we have introduced charges for some discretionary services that we provide and have also reviewed existing charges.

In some cases, the increased charges help to protect those service areas from budget cuts. The allotment service in Stevenage was historically heavily subsidised by residents through their Council Tax. However, recent increases now mean that the allotments are cost neutral.

Not all of these charges are aimed at Stevenage residents. For example, in recent years the Council has promoted Stevenage as a filming location and have charged companies wishing to use any of our sites. Whomerley Wood was used as a filming location by a Bollywood film production company in 2023.

We need to continue to be creative in finding ways of doing more with less. Examples of this include:

Environmental Volunteers:

Stevenage has a terrific network of environmental volunteers across the town who help to pick litter, manage woodlands, plant trees, maintain planting etc. These volunteers choose to give up their valuable time to help keep Stevenage looking clean and green and add value to what the Council is able to do rather than replace them.

Advertising:

Advertising spaces are sold on the roundabouts, and other locations, throughout the town. The income that is generated from the advertising helps to support the costs of maintaining the landscape provided on and adjacent to the roundabouts.

Concessions:

In some instances we already have contracts in place with third parties who provide facilities or activities that increase the service offer within our green spaces, but also benefits the Council through payment of an agreed sum that helps contribute to the running cost of the green space.

Sponsorship:

At present, residents & community groups already have the opportunity to sponsor a memorial tree or bench. The sponsorship sum paid could help cover the cost of the initial provision and the ongoing future maintenance.

The Council is already looking to extend the current offer, but also to develop a range of additional opportunities that are affordable for all sectors of our local community.

5. Consultation

The Council has a long-standing commitment to work with the local community to help shape their local areas and the services that they use.

Green spaces are a priority for our residents, with surveys undertaken between 2021-2023 identifying that across a range of Council services the top priority for residents was more / better parks and green spaces.

During winter 2023 we directly contacted 1,500 community groups and 36 schools and reached out to all residents to let us know what they thought about the trees and green spaces in Stevenage. Around 490 people responded, collectively providing nearly 700 comments. Headlines included:

- 81% felt that, overall, green spaces in Stevenage were good or excellent, but this dropped to 55% for young people.
- Provision of trees, cleanliness and provision of wildlife friendly areas were the top 3 features identified as important for green spaces.
- 32% of young people said their favourite outdoor space was a park, closely followed by 27% who voted for woodlands as their favourite.
- 63% felt safe when visiting a Stevenage green space.
- 70% would like to be involved in some form of environmental volunteering.

The priorities set out in this document have emerged from a combination of consultation with residents and staff, national and local research and other local plans and strategies. It aims to retain our green space to ensure that they meet the needs of the whole community now and in the future.

A series of focus groups were held during summer 2024 which provided local residents with an opportunity to have their say about their local green spaces and how they might be improved. The feedback from these sessions have informed the site-specific action plans included in the appendices of this strategy.

Whilst some feedback was site specific there were some common themes across most / all sites. The top ten requests for improvements were:

- Improvements / maintenance of equipped play areas
- Provision of toilets and changing facilities
- Provision of café facilities
- Additional benches and / or picnic benches
- Additional litter bins and / or litter picking activity
- Lighting
- Wheeled sports facilities
- Improved maintenance of grass / shrubs / hedges / trees
- Improvements to footpath networks, including cleansing and surfacing
- More for wildlife

Page 2
These themes have helped shape the priorities and actions identified below.

Page 2
Consultation on the draft strategy document was undertaken in early 2025.

6. Aims & Objectives

The principal aims and objectives of the Green Space Strategy are:

- To provide clear objectives, and priorities, for the provision and management of green space.
- To protect and enhance green space in Stevenage.
- To ensure the towns green spaces meet the needs of the whole community.
- To ensure green space enhances the quality of the local environment for residents, visitors and wildlife.
- To involve the community in future maintenance and development.

7. Priorities & Actions

Consultation has established a series of key issues for green spaces and green infrastructure in Stevenage, including:

- Concern about protecting our green spaces from development.
- Provision of safe, clean, attractive green spaces.
- Consultation and involvement in decision making.
- Opportunities for people to help look after green spaces.
- A need for improved provision for children and young people.
- Provision of a range of health & wellbeing opportunities
- Meeting demand for allotments.
- A desire to see more delivered to support local wildlife.
- Future burial provision
- Meeting the demands for green infrastructure created by new development.
- A need to preserve, and enhance, open spaces that contribute tackling the climate emergency.
- Improved information and communication about green spaces

These issues have formed the basis of this strategy within three main themes:

- Our Community
- Our Environment
- Our Spaces

9.1 Our Community

Access & Provision

We aim to provide green spaces that are welcoming, easy to visit and with something for everyone.

Communication

We aim to provide clear, concise and easy to access information to keep residents advised about green spaces, events, opportunities and activities.

Engagement

We aim to work collaboratively with local communities to deliver a network of well-maintained and well used green spaces.

Community Safety

We aim to provide green spaces that are safe for everyone within our community to use and enjoy.

Our Community: What We Know

	What you told us	What wider research told us
Access & Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83% of you visit a green space at least once a week and 30% of you visit a green space every day. • 63% of you walk to a green space. • More wheelchair access for woodlands. • Open access and free to enter. • Leave large spaces open for activities like flying a kite. • Lack of toilet provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a few exceptions a majority of households in Stevenage are within a 10-minute walking distance of a green space⁷ • Studies have identified that a lack of information about accessibility, and physical constraints relating to paths, obstacles, parking and toilets, can all act as barriers to accessing green spaces⁸
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 60% didn't feel that the Council kept them well informed about local green spaces. • Multiple ways of communicating should be used. • Information in shops, GP surgeries, churches would be helpful • More information needed about events. • Not enough information on how accessible our sites are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear wayfinding information helps visitors navigate their way. • More information needed about how residents can get involved. • Improved information about accessibility to and within green spaces is required
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% of respondents were interested in environmental volunteering opportunities. • Not enough community managed spaces • Too much red tape to get involved. • Want to be able to look after trees or shrub beds near home 	
Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% of residents who responded to the consultation reported that they did feel safe when using green spaces in Stevenage. • Concerns about personal safety at night was a common theme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the UK, 4 out of 5 women (82%) feel very or fairly unsafe walking alone after dark in parks or open spaces, compared with 2 out of 5 men (42%)⁹

Our Community: What We Have Already Done

Access & Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved signage and information provision at the entrances to our main parks • Delivered a cycle hire scheme with hubs in some parks. • Provided cycle parking provision to some parks • Extended the opening days of the Splash Park at Fairlands Valley Park.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided notice boards to the main parks. • Used social media and the Council's web pages to promote events and activities. • Promoted events and opportunities through Chronicle, social media and other local publications.
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided and supported a varied programme of environmental volunteering activity. • Developed guidance and lend out equipment to support for community litter pick initiatives. • Developed a Licence to Occupy scheme to enable residents to maintain Council land adjacent to their homes. • Developed a package of guidance to support partner organisations in delivering events within green spaces and across the town. • Consulted with children and young people to inform the design of improvements to their local play area
Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the Stevenage Community Safety Strategy • Monitored of crime levels across Stevenage • Addressed perception of crime through the Community Safety Partnership • Improved access to water rescue equipment • Installed CCTV to key locations

Our Community: What We Will Do

Theme	Action	Timescale
Access & Provision	• Liaise with partners to promote green travel opportunities, including the cycle hire scheme, to principal parks	Medium
	• Protect green space from inappropriate development.	Ongoing
	• Seek to ensure that green spaces are accessible to all and provide accessibility information for key sites	Medium
	• Review number of parking bays for people with disabilities	Short
	• Review the current provision of benches and picnic tables, and identify new opportunities	Short
	• Investigate opportunities for mobile refreshment franchises at key parks	Medium
	• Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities to key park locations	Medium
	• Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
	• Improve provision of accessible and inclusive equipped play spaces	Long
	• Consider suitable measures to protect key green spaces from unauthorised access	Medium
Communication	• Promote green spaces, and the facilities and opportunities that they provide for the whole community	Short
	• Provide clear signage and information within key green spaces.	Medium
	• Seek to work with other community providers to share information about green space opportunities.	Medium
	• Provide correct, up to date and easy to understand information about our green spaces online	Short
	• Provide clear information about facilities for families, children and teenagers within our green spaces.	Short
Engagement	• To increase environmental volunteer engagement opportunities.	Medium
	• Work with partners to develop a range of appropriate events and activities across our green spaces.	Ongoing
	• Promote the Licence to Occupy scheme.	Medium
	• Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and potential changes to green spaces.	Short
	• Regularly measure customer satisfaction with principle green spaces in Stevenage	Short
Community Safety	• Work with partners to develop a suite of measures that ensure that our green spaces remain safe.	Ongoing
	• Develop a programme to review the design, location and maintenance of vegetation to improve sight lines and remove discrete hiding places.	Short
	• Support and promote group activities within the parks to increase presence levels for longer periods.	Ongoing
	• Collaborate with partners to understand how safety and accessibility might be improved.	Ongoing
	• Implement a programme of regular technical inspection of green space infrastructure	Ongoing

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

9.2 Our Environment

Nature

We aim to provide a network of connected green spaces that collectively provide a matrix of wildlife habitats to support a wide range of wildlife.

Sustainability

We aim to provide green spaces that will support wider mitigation measures to help reduce climate change and its impacts.

Our Environment: What We Know

	What you told us	What wider research told us
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most important function of green spaces identified by you was for nature and wildlife. There needs to be more education on the importance of the fauna and flora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the last 50 years 76 species became extinct in Hertfordshire¹⁰ 1,446 species are currently threatened with extinction in Hertfordshire¹¹
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% of people walk to their local green space. Great cycle path network throughout the town The five most popular things to make green spaces more environmentally friendly were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce more wildlife friendly planting. Plant more trees. Create more meadows. Rainwater harvesting Water refill points More communication with partner wildlife organisations and to support education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stevenage has over 45km of cycleways, which are segregated from the town's roads. The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by more than 40% since humans began industrialising, resulting in a continuous gradual warming of the planet over the past century¹². The proportion of impermeable surfacing in towns and cities has risen by 22% since 2001¹³ In urban areas, the impermeable materials used for roads and pavements mean that rain is not absorbed and remains on the surface¹⁴. During periods of heavy rainfall this water accumulates and when the drainage capacity of the area is exceeded, flooding will occur. High levels of surface water run-off mean that rainwater washes pollutants away from the surfaces it falls onto, transporting them into water courses¹⁵, which can be detrimental to water quality in streams, rivers and lakes. In the UK, climate change is likely to lead to wetter winters¹⁶ which would exacerbate existing flooding and water quality issues.

Our Environment: What We Have Already Done

Nature & Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered a Biodiversity Action Plan for Stevenage • The Stevenage Borough Local Plan includes policies to protect, enhance and manage green infrastructure, natural environment and landscape of the town. • Secured Biodiversity Net Gain funding. • Worked in partnership with local wildlife groups to help inform future management of our wildlife sites
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the Stevenage Cycling Strategy • Promoted the towns cycle network as an opportunity to travel to green spaces. • Provided secure facilities for temporary storage of bicycles within some parks and green spaces. • Developed a Climate Change Strategy • The Stevenage Borough Local Plan includes policies to limit, mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change, flood risk and all forms of pollution. • Members of the Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership, helping to develop a county-wide Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity • Eliminated seasonal planting displays from roundabouts and replaced it with more sustainable planting. • Investigated effective alternatives to the use of chemical weed control. • Re-used and/or recycled green waste generated within the parks and green spaces. • Required sustainable drainage solutions to reduce the risk of flooding in new developments. Required allotment plot holders with sheds to collect rainwater from their structure. • Work with partners to support measures which can increase water flow and quality in the River Beane and its tributaries

Our Environment: What We Will Do

Theme	Action	Timescale
Nature & Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase biodiversity in line with the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to wildlife sites whilst affording protection to habitats and species 	Long
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit to a new post of Nature Recovery Officer 	Short
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek Biodiversity Net Gain solutions for delivery within the Stevenage boundary 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require new buildings to include appropriate provision to support wildlife. 	Long
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve existing, and create new, green corridors for people and wildlife 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the future provision and management of green corridors to provide safe and attractive routes for residents and wildlife. 	Ongoing
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Climate Change policies within the Local Plan to ensure sustainability is at the heart of development 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a Full Review of the Local Plan, with an opportunity to embed sustainability into future development through parks and green spaces 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote 'active travel' to get to and from our green spaces. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of the towns cycle network as an opportunity to travel to green spaces 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide secure facilities for temporary storage of bicycles with the main parks and green spaces 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop environmentally sustainable practices 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to improve local water ways for wildlife and for people 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local partners to develop and promote a network of water refill points around the town 	Long
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to explore sustainable alternatives to chemical weed control 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect existing flood storage reservoirs and re from inappropriate development 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to understand opportunities to improve water flow and water quality within Stevenage Brook 	Ongoing	
<p>Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years</p>		

9.3 Our Spaces

Health & Wellbeing

We aim to provide good quality parks and green spaces that incorporate a wide range of opportunities for people to be active and spend time outdoors.

Maintenance

We aim to provide high quality parks and green spaces.

Development

We aim for our parks and green spaces to provide great places for people to come together, and that meet the needs of those communities, and the environment, today and in the future.

Management

We aim to deliver the actions within this strategy, ensuring that our green spaces are protected and sustainable for future generations to enjoy.

Our Spaces: What We Know

	What you told us	What wider research told us
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough variety of sports activities in parks • Charging for sports facilities makes them hard to access. • Need better promotion of local sports clubs. • Provision of adapted/supported cycles to allow access for elderly or disabled visitors. • More / better basketball courts. • Residents enjoy the peace and tranquillity that parks provide. • More / better wheeled sport provision is required. 	<p>Green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year in GP visits alone¹⁷.</p> <p>Urban green spaces provide pleasant areas to relax and socialise, promoting greater levels of social activity and stronger neighbourhood relationships¹⁸.</p>
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% said that their overall impression of green spaces was good or excellent. • More regular litter picking in the woods. • Needs to be enforcement for littering. • Maintenance of playgrounds could be better. • Play equipment is out of use for too long. • More management of the woodland to keep them healthy 	<p>It is estimated over £190 million pounds was lost from local authority parks budgets between 2016-2021, and that local authorities are now receiving increased complaints about the quality of local parks¹⁹.</p>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop selling off / building on the small green spaces in residential areas 	
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More investment is required to make play spaces more inclusive. • Toilet facilities are required to enable people to spend longer in our parks. 	<p>Local authorities have a statutory duty imposed by the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 to provide allotments to its residents when there is a demand</p>

Our Spaces: What We Have Already Done

Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with Sports England to encourage Active Design within new developments. • Focussed on health improvement, protection, promotion and tackling health inequalities through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership. • Worked closely with our leisure provider Everyone Active to provide a dynamic and vibrant programme of activities within our community settings. • Developed a partnership with the National Tennis Association in the management and operation of Shephalbury Park tennis courts. • Supported a programme of health walks within Stevenage. • Bid for funding for the provision of a PlayZone (multi-sports, all-weather floodlit games area) facility to King George V Playing Fields.
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented a programme scheduled of maintenance to all green spaces. • Implemented annual independent play inspections of all equipped play spaces. • Regularly reviewed working practices to ensure that we comply with new legislation and industry guidelines. • Increased staff levels to support increased woodland maintenance. • Procured machinery to enable increased delivery standard and frequency for grass cutting.
Development	<p>Have policies to protect sites important to wildlife.</p> <p>Secure new green space facilities to meet the needs of the growing population.</p>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed an Amenity Tree Management Policy. • Developed a Cemetery Policy. • Involved children in the design regeneration of existing play areas. • Delivered a £1.5million programme of improvements to equipped spaces for children and young people, making provision for inclusive play. • Require all new play spaces to have a RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) standard post-installation inspection.

Our Spaces: What We Will Do

Theme	Action	Timescale
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the benefits of spending time in green spaces for health and encourage people to use them for that purpose. 	Short
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of opportunities for people to be physically active in green spaces, so everyone can enjoy being active outdoors, regardless of their interests or level of ability. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding opportunities for the provision of artificial all-weather pitch facilities within Council spaces 	Short
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to fund and develop a combined (non-motorised) wheeled sport facility 	Medium
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review maintenance regimes to ensure the highest possible standards and best practice are achieved 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to increase the diversity of the workforce within the environmental operations team at every level of the service. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify developments within machinery advancements to ensure appropriate, efficient and green machinery is procured to deliver maintenance programmes 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme to respond to issues of vermin 	Short
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure provision of new, good quality green spaces to meet the needs of the growing population 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways to improve the design of existing parks to make them more welcoming to all 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of good quality play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise our park byelaws 	Short
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Allotments Policy and Strategy following consultation with plot holders and Stevenage Gardens & Allotments Association 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnership arrangements to extend the range of facilities available, increase capacity, share resources and secure external funding. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Tree & Woodland Strategy for Stevenage 	Short
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure green spaces, including new green space, are connected in line with Active Travel principles and connectivity 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a policy to inform future sponsorship, memorial and dedication opportunities 	Medium

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a suite of seats, bins and signage for use in all green spaces 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with local communities to develop action plans to support the development of community parks 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require sustainable solutions to reduce the risk of flooding in new developments 	Ongoing
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a local quality standard for green spaces in Stevenage 	Long
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure external funding to enable capital and revenue improvements to our green spaces. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to increase inclusive provision within parks and green spaces 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy for outdoor, unsupervised play spaces in Stevenage 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage all woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard 	Long
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Allotments Policy / Strategy following consultation with plot holders and Stevenage Gardens & Allotments Association 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure future burial provision 	Long
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnership arrangements to extend the range of facilities available, increase capacity, share resources and secure external funding. 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve, promote and provide information about features of cultural interest within our green spaces 	Medium
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance our budget whilst achieving the aims of the strategy over the next 10 years 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop action plans for new parks following adoption by the Council 	Ongoing	

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

10. Monitoring & Review

We will focus on the actions set out above over the next 10 years. These will be considered alongside the action plans for each of our principal parks.

There will be an annual review on progress of the strategy, and this will be reported to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee and published on the Councils web pages.

A more detailed review, to check the priorities and actions are still relevant, will be undertaken in 5 years' time.

11. References

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10	Presentation to Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, 2024
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17	Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces	Fields in Trust, 2018
18	Environment & Behaviour	Sullivan, W.C, et al, 2004
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Appendix A: Key Green Spaces in Stevenage

1	18-hole Golf Course: also including a 9-hole course, putting green, driving range, clubhouse and other ancillary facilities.			
4	Cemeteries / Churchyards			
	Almonds Lane Cemetery	St Mary's Churchyard	St Nicholas Churchyard	Weston Road Cemetery
5	Commons			
	Fishers Green Common	Letchmore Green Common	Norton Green Common	Six Hills Common
	Symonds Green Common			
11	Principal Parks: These are destination parks and may include play facilities for toddlers, juniors and teenagers, car parking, sports facilities, outdoor fitness equipment			
Page 101	Canterbury Way Playing Fields	Chells Park	Fairlands Valley Park	Hampson Park
	King George V Playing Fields	Meadway Park	Peartree Park	Ridlins End Playing Fields
	Shephalbury Park	St Nicholas Park	Town Centre Gardens	
16	Allotments			
	Almond Hill	Ashdown Road	Bandley Hill	Broxdell
	Colestrete	Edmonds Drive	Eliot Road	Fairview Road
	Greydells	Hertford Road	Lawrence Avenue	Martins Wood
	Monks Wood	Oaks Cross	The Muntings	Walkern Road
17	Community Parks: these serve the wider community and generally have play facilities for toddlers and juniors			
	Archer Road Open Space	Bedwell Park	Blenheim Way Open Space	Campshill Park

	Chepstow Close Open Space	Clovelly Way Open Space	Donkey Park	Emperors Gate Open Space
	Holly Leys Open Space	Parishes Mead Open Space	Paul Mallaghan Playing Fields	Raleigh Crescent Open Space
	Riccat Lane Open Space	The Avenue Open Space	The Noke Open Space	Whitesmead Rec.
	York Road Open Space			
26 Green Corridors				
	Aston Lane	Botany Bay Lane	Bragbury Lane	Broadwater Lane
	Broadhall Way	Chells Lane	Dene Lane	Fairlands Way
	Fishers Green Lane	Grace Way	Gresley Way	Gunnels Wood Road
	Lanterns Lane	Martins Way	Meadway	Monkswood Way
Page 102	Narrowbox Lane	Old Walkern Road	Sheafgreen Lane	Shephall Lane
	Shephall Green Lane	Shephards Lane	Six Hills Way	The Avenue
	Watton Lane	Weston Lane		
41 Woodlands				
	Abbotts Grove	Almond Spring	Ashtree Woods	Bandley Hill
	Blacknells Spring	Broadwater Arboretum	Chells Wood	Collensleg Wood
	Cuckoo Wood	Duckdell Plantation	Elm Green Wood	
	Fairlane Wood	Fishers Green Wood	Great Collenswood	Gresley Way Plantation
	Gunnels Wood	Hanginghill Wood	Hertford Road Woodland	Lady's Wood
	Lantern Lane Wood	Loves Wood	Martin's Wood	Marymead Spring
	Millennium Wood	Mobbsbury Wood	Monks Wood	Peartree Spring

	Pestcotts Spring	Ridlins Wood	Roebuck Woods	Shackleton Springs
	Shephalbury Woodland	Siansean	Sinks Spring	Sishes Wood
	Six Acre Wood	Wellfield Wood	Whitney Wood	Whomerley Wood
	Wiltshire Spring			

46 Equipped Play Spaces

Page 103	Archer Road	Balmoral Close	Bedwell Park	Blenheim Way
	Burymead	Campshill Park	Canterbury Way	Canterbury Way Playing Fields
	Chancellors Road	Chells District Park	Chepstow Close	Clovelly Way
	Cook Road	Donkey Park	Emperors Gate	Fairlands Valley Park - cafe
	Fairlands Valley Park - main	Fleetwood Crescent	Glanville Road	Hampson Park
	Holly Leys	Kessingland Avenue	King George V Playing Fields	Leaves Spring
	Market Place	Martins Wood	Meadway Playing Fields	Parishes Mead
	Peartree Park	Queensway	Riccatt Lane	Ridlins End Playing Fields
	Rockingham Way	Scarborough Avenue	Shearwater Close	Shephalbury Park
	Skegness Road	Southgate	St Margarets	St Nicholas Park
	The Noke	The Oval	Torquay Crescent	Town Centre Gardens
	Whitesmead Rec	York Road		

Appendix B: Canterbury Way Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
CW1	Review the current provision of benches and picnic tables, and identify new opportunities	Medium
CW2	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
CW3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Long
CW4	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
CW5	Identify suitable opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium
CW6	Protect and enhance the Biodiversity Net Gain provision	Ongoing
CW7	Identify suitable locations for spring bulb displays	Short
CW8	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Long
CW9	Improve signage	Medium

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix C: Chells Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
CP1	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
CP2	Explore opportunities for resilient toilet / changing facilities	Long
CP3	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium
CP4	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
CP5	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
CP6	Identify suitable opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium
CP7	Protect and enhance the Biodiversity Net Gain provision	Ongoing
CP8	Identify suitable locations for spring bulb displays	Short
CP9	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
CP10	Improve signage	Medium

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix D: Fairlands Valley Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
FV1	Explore options to provide lighting along key footpaths and cycle routes	Long
FV2	Consider opportunities for improving the existing Activity Centre, Café and associated areas	Medium
FV3	Explore opportunities for improved toilet / changing facilities	Medium
FV4	Review maintenance regimes within the park	Short
FV5	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
FV6	Develop supervised and self-led activities within the park	Medium
FV7	Review frequency of footpath cleansing in response to goose poo build up	Short
FV8	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
FV9	Improve signage and interpretation provision	Medium
FV10	Identify extended opportunities for wildlife habitat creation	Medium
FV11	Increase usage of existing band stand	Medium
FV12	Consider options for future use of Fairlands Farmhouse	Long
FV13	Promote the Cycle Hub within park publicity	Short
FV14	Consider development of dog exercise park	Long
FV15	Proactively secure additional on water sport and leisure activities	Ongoing
FV16	Review provision of outdoor fitness equipment	Medium

FV17	Consider opportunities to improve the existing maze	Medium
FV18	Apply for Local Nature Reserve status to Shackledell Grassland	Short
FV19	Restoration of the Environment Lake for wildlife and people	Long
FV20	Investigate appropriate methods to enhance water quality throughout the lake system	Medium
FV21	Promote all opportunities available within the park	Short
FV22	Develop an enhanced programme of events	Short
FV23	Consider opportunities for provision of a wheeled sports facility	Long

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix E: Hampson Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
H1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
H2	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
H3	Review provision of footpaths within site to support improved access	Long
H4	Seek funding to enable improvements to the skate park	Long
H5	Consider opportunities for provision of a wheeled sports facility	Medium
H6	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
H7	Improve signage and interpretation provision	Medium
H8	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short
H9	Continue to support the Friends of Hampson Park	Ongoing
H10	Continue to manage the ancient hedgerow	Ongoing

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix F: King George V Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
KG1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
KG2	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short
KG3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Long
KG4	Progress PlayZone on the site of the former tennis courts	Short
KG5	Identify suitable opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium
KG6	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
KG7	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
KG8	Explore opportunities to create better links between the town centre and Old Town via the Park	Medium
KG9	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
KG10	Refresh planting within the Millennium Garden	Long
KG11	Consider opportunities for improved wildlife provision within the park	Short
KG12	Develop scheme to improve parking provision for park users	Long

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix G: Meadway Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
M1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
M2	Review the current provision of bins and identify new opportunities	Medium
M3	Seek to deliver site enhancements in conjunction with access improvements associated with West of Stevenage.	Medium
M4	Identify suitable locations for spring bulb displays	Short

Appendix H: Peartree Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
P1	Seek funding to support restoration of skate park for beginners	Short
P2	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
P3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Medium
P4	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
P5	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
P6	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
P7	Seek funding for provision of outdoor gym equipment	Medium
P8	Work with partners to develop a community programme of summer events	Short
P9	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium
P10	Consider opportunities for further tree planting	Medium

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix I: Ridlins End Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
R1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
R2	Consider opportunity for provision of wheeled sport facility	Long
R3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Long
R4	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium
R5	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
R6	Consider opportunities for improved wildlife provision within the park	Short
R7	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
R8	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
R9	Consider opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium
R10	Improve signage	Medium
R11	Support options appraisal for funding on-site sustainable sports provision	Medium
R12	Consider opportunities for further tree planting	Medium

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix J: Shephalbury Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
SH1	Explore opportunities for provision of toilet / changing facilities	Long
SH2	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
SH3	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium
SH4	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
SH5	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short
SH6	Explore options to provide floodlighting to the tennis courts	Long
SH7	Consider opportunities for sport and activity provision	Medium
SH8	Provide cycle racks in suitable locations	Medium
SH9	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long
SH10	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
SH11	Undertake additional tree planting	Medium
SH12	Remove old pavilion base and reinstate space within the park	Medium
SH13	Consider opportunities for improved wildlife provision within the park	Short

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix K: St Nicholas Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
SN1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
SN2	Consider future options for previous play centre land / facilities	Long
SN3	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium
SN4	Explore opportunities for provision of multi-use games area (MUGA)	Long
SN5	Review provision of footpaths within site to support improved access	Long
SN6	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
SN7	Explore opportunities for provision of toilet / changing facilities	Long
SN8	Improve provision of outdoor gym equipment	Medium
SN9	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium
SN10	Deliver improvements to dog exercise park	Long
SN11	Explore options to provide lighting along the path from St Nicholas to Great Ashby	Long

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix L: Town Centre Gardens Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe
T1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long
T2	Develop a programme to respond to issues of vermin	Short
T3	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short
T4	Seek funding to clear silt build-up from within the pond	Medium
T5	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium
T6	Improved maintenance to Garden Rooms	Medium
T7	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short
T8	Consider opportunities for composting facilities to support Green Space Volunteer activities	Medium
T9	Review and improve the existing tree trail	Short
T10	Review existing lighting within the Gardens	Medium
T11	Restore planting as required to ensure year-round interest	Ongoing

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

