

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?
