

Town Centre Gardens

Management Plan

2020 – 2025



[Town Centre Gardens - Stevenage Borough Council Website Link](#)

[Town Centre Gardens - ParksHerts Website Link](#)



Town Centre Gardens
St Georges Way
Stevenage
Herts
SG1 1XX

Foreword

Stevenage Borough Council recognises the importance of the Town Centre Gardens, both in terms of its community interest, the heritage of the site and as one of the principal open spaces in Stevenage.

The Council's success in securing Heritage Lottery funding in 2010/11 enabled the Gardens to be restored to their former glory. Now, the Gardens provide an attractive, safe and well-maintained place. It offers the chance for people to be close to nature, provides opportunities for rest and quiet contemplation, and a space for informal and organised activity for the whole community, including families, young people, town centre employees, residents and community groups.

Community involvement and interest continue to play a pivotal role for the Town Centre Gardens. With continued financial pressures for local governments, volunteers have provided their time and effort to the upkeep and improvements to the Gardens, which has shown to be invaluable. In addition, the sense of community ownership has spurred several successful funding grants for improvement projects.

With the significant future regeneration of the town centre over the next 5-10 years, the significance of the Gardens will increase for those nearby residents, which will likely bring some opportunities and some challenges.

The work that has already been achieved and the ongoing management development of the Gardens are set out in this document. We are confident that the Town Centre Gardens will continue to represent a celebration of heritage and community engagement in Stevenage.

Craig Miller
Assistant Director – Stevenage Direct Services

Statements for Key Stakeholders

We are committed to providing high-quality parks and gardens, and we are proud of the green areas in Stevenage. The Town Centre Gardens are very important as the primary green space for the newly regenerated town centre, the people living in the new town centre residential district, and the existing Bedwell neighbourhood.

It has been exciting to see the Gardens restored to their former glory and know that our community's interest and continued support will help the Gardens develop and grow for many years to come.

Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE C.C
Leader of the Council

The Town Centre Gardens are a vital heritage focal point within the urban design of the Stevenage Town Centre. As Britain's first post-war new town, The Gardens' significance in terms of heritage and social history is self-evident in the wide range of community support.

Their restoration and enhancement have helped ensure that this green oasis continues to shape the memories of present and future generations of their lives either in Stevenage or visiting the Town.

Councillor John Gardner
Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration

We volunteer in the Gardens for many reasons, principally for our health and wellbeing. In addition, being in a team of volunteers has given us a strong companionship with others with similar objectives, and there is a good team spirit.

Many people pass through the garden on their way to and from the shops or workplace, and it's seldom that the team works for a morning without someone stopping to tell us of their appreciation of the effort we put in to keep the garden looking good. It always feels rewarding to know your efforts are appreciated. When there is still severe austerity, it is good for those in the team to think that our contributions help provide such a valuable amenity for all its users.

With the planned redevelopment of the town centre, the Gardens will become an even more important asset for residents. We feel privileged to be involved in helping maintain and improve the park with the continued close support from the Council.

We endeavour to keep the Gardens maintained in good condition and make them brighter and more floriferous, so town's folk can visit throughout the year to feel up-lifted in a beautiful garden, their beautiful garden.

Jenny & David Creed
Green Space Volunteers

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1. Introduction

This plan has been prepared to aid the efficient and effective management of the park over the next five years. In particular, the plan will serve to:

- Provide one reference point for all essential management information relating to the park
- Assist with continuity and capacity planning
- Aid consultation, consensus and involvement
- Help prepare for change
- Offer a framework for decision making
- Assist in setting and maintaining standards
- Support and act as a detailed five-year plan of action
- Assist in securing additional internal and external funding.

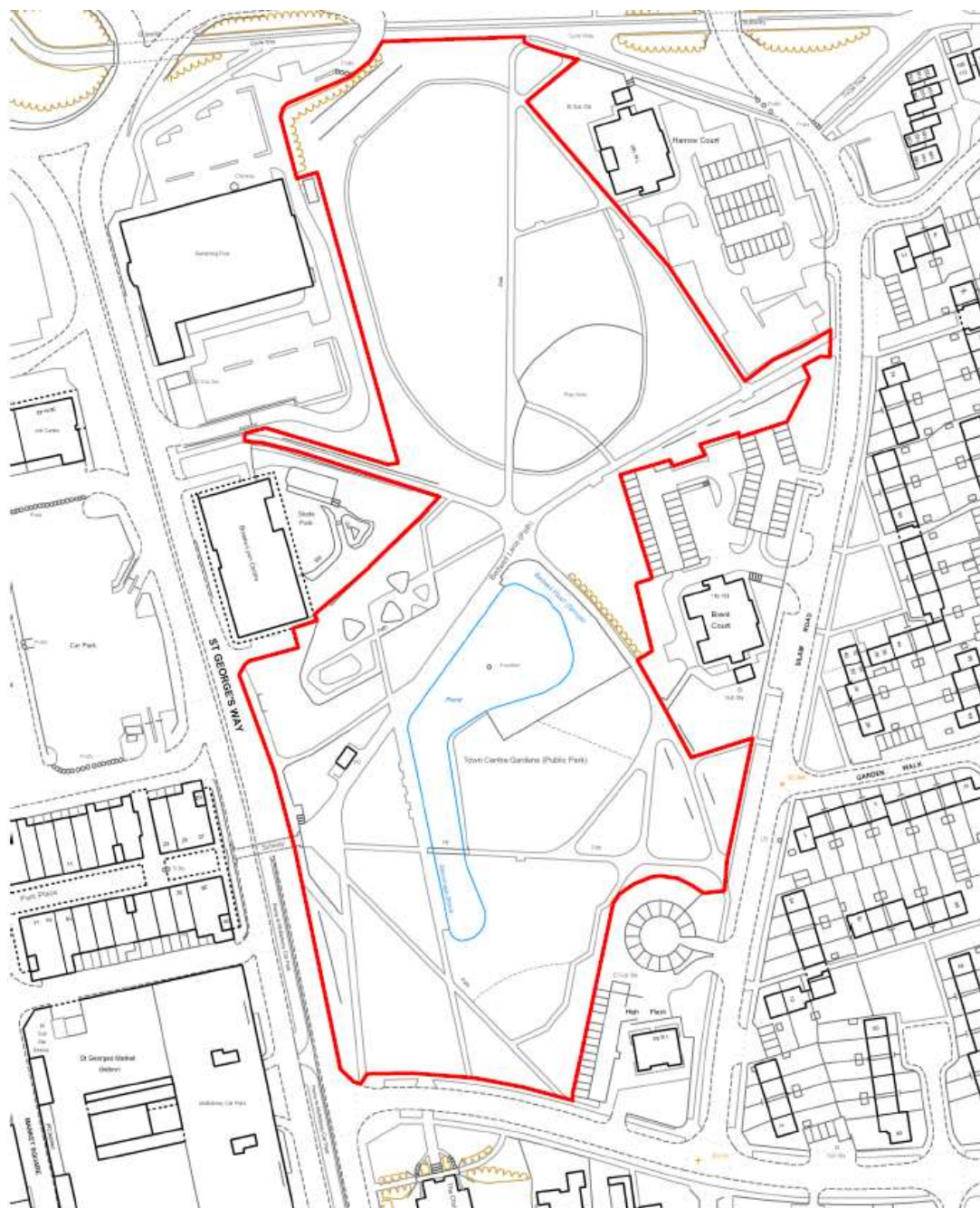
2. Site Description

2.1 Location and Site Map

Grid Reference: TL 240 243

The Town Centre Gardens are situated to the east of Stevenage town centre and falls within the Bedwell Ward. St Georges Way bounds it to the west, Silam Road to the east, Fairlands Way to the north and Cuttys Lane to the south. The area outlined in red in the below map indicated the full extent of the Gardens.

The Gardens are bordered by housing, a swimming pool and a youth centre.



2.2 Access

There is good access to the whole site for visitors, be they pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, or those using public transport. The Gardens are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, although the toilet facilities are only open during the daytime.

Parking facilities are located in the adjacent multi-storey car park, on St Georges Way, and access to the Gardens can be gained via the St Georges Way underpass.

The map to the right shows the available parking areas and the Gardens location in relation to the town.

Pedestrian access is possible from 12 points around the periphery of the whole site. An extensive town-wide cycle track runs immediately adjacent to the Gardens, along Fairlands Way.



The site is well served with a mixture of level hard surfaces and gentle gradients that provide good access for all.

Being adjacent to the town centre, with its bus and train station, the Gardens are easily accessed by those visitors who rely on public transport.

2.3 Ownership

Stevenage Borough Council is the Freehold owner of the Town Centre Gardens. There are no leases, licences, rents, concessions or agreements made to others for the land and property associated with the site.

2.4 Description

The Town Centre Gardens was initially developed in the mid-1960s and form the only formal and ornamental parkland in Stevenage, where the primary function is not the provision of sporting facilities.

The Gardens are 3.85ha and are bounded by main arterial dual carriageways to the north & west, the town's swimming pool & a purpose-built youth centre to the west, and high rise residential property to the east.

The Gardens form a vital link between the town centre to the west and the Bedwell residential neighbourhood to the east. The gardens are separated from the town centre by

St George’s Way, a dual carriageway, and pedestrian access is via an underpass. The underpass has some interesting murals; it forms a particularly uninviting and inconspicuous entrance to the park.

The Town Centre Gardens function primarily to provide a peaceful and tranquil setting for visitors and workforce from the main town centre and provide a pleasant garden and outdoor space for nearby residents.

The Gardens are divided into two sections: an ample open space to the north (often referred to as the Oval area) and a more formal southern area with structured planting.

Notable Features

The Pond:

Without a doubt, the ornamental spring-fed pond is the key feature within the Town Centre Gardens. The beautiful ‘Women and Doves’ bronze sculpture surrounded by a fountain provides a prominent and elegant act to appear as though the ladies are dancing atop the water (pictured right). A modern granite suspension bridge provides pleasant access across the pond whilst being designed to retain some transparency to retain views throughout the park.



Marginal planting to the northeast provides opportunities for wildlife. Throughout the year, visitors visit the park to feed the waterfowl or sit by the water’s edge and watch the nature and world go by.

The Garden Rooms and Sensory Garden:

Close to the pond, the Garden Rooms area provides a pleasant space for quiet contemplation and relaxation and makes them ideal for reading a book. The landscaped borders are planted with a carefully designed mixture of shrubs, herbaceous perennials and ornamental trees to provide colourful year-round interest. The modern but natural seating furniture throughout the Gardens helps add to the relaxed feel.



Also contained within the Garden Rooms area are three bespoke sculptured concrete planters surrounded by a similarly sculpted edge, which together forms the sensory garden. The three raised planters provide good access, and each planter offers a sensory experience and interaction for sound, smell and touch. The sound bed is planted with a mixture of rushes, grasses, poppies and other species that offer a

gentle audible experience during a soft breeze or when touched. The smell bed is planted with plants that emit a wonderful and varied aroma. Lavenders, Rosemary, Verbena, Cat Mint, and Sage, are some of the plants found here and leave a pleasing fragrance when touched. Finally, the touch bed is planted with a mixture of species such as Lambs Ear that are velvety soft to the touch.

Ornamental Landscapes:

Scattered carefully throughout the southern section of the Gardens is a wide assortment of ornamental landscaping, adding good splashes of colour throughout. From the plethora of vivid and aromatic Roses, Snowdrops, Daffodils, Crocuses, Geraniums and much more, colour can be found here pretty much all year round.

Nestled within the Garden Rooms is the seasonal bedding display managed solely by the Green Space Volunteers. During the summer, the bed provides an impressive swathe of vibrant annuals – this is a spectacle well worth visiting in itself and features on the front cover of this document.



Trees:

The park boasts an extensive collection of ornamental, commemorative and memorial trees. These trees are a significant asset to the Gardens, giving a mature feel to the space. They also serve to filter noise and pollutants from the nearby roads.

The Giant Sequoia near the pond is annually nominated to become the park's Christmas tree and adorned with lights. Nearby a Grand Caucasian Wingnut majestically dominates the pond margins whilst Gleditsia trees (shown right) provide some of the golden colours that can be seen during the autumn months.



Play area:

The Garden features a large play area near the northern oval area, away from the pond. The play space is suitable for toddlers, juniors and early teens and provides a mixture of fixed play equipment balanced with natural play elements. There are opportunities to play on swings,



slides, multi-units, timber climbing structures, balancing beams, spinning bowls and more.

The play space is popular with residents, and parents are known to use it with their children whilst partners are shopping in the nearby town centre.

Oval Area:

The large open space to the north of the park is known as the Oval area and is made up of close mown grassland surrounded by young oak trees. Whilst the main area provides an opportunity for informal recreation such as ball games and kite flying, the informal gravel pathway that follows the perimeter of the open space has several outdoor gym and fitness stations available for use.

The oval area is often utilised for the delivery of local community events.



Natural areas:

In addition to the formally planted areas, the Gardens also has its fair share of the natural regions that provide opportunities for wildlife.

The perimeter of the oval area is managed as a grassland meadow. This sweeps around the fence of the swimming pool and behind the play area. There is also a wooded area behind the pond, which provides a refuge for wildlife and has several nest boxes to help support birds.



You can also find remnants of ancient lane hedgerows, which provide a sense of place and heritage and a valuable wildlife habitat corridor.

2.5 A Brief History

Year	Description
1961	The original design of Town Centre Gardens by George Patterson were completed
1967	The first 'Sensory Gardens for the Blind' were opened
1981	The 'Women and Doves' fountain installed
2008	Phase 1 of the Gardens regeneration initiative begins in the open space to the north
2010	
2013	Outdoor gym equipment installed - successful award from Biffa, provided the funding
2015	
2016	Re-plant of Rose bed by the underpass - provided by LCB funding
2017	New benches, picnic tables and bins installed following a successful grant from Tesco Bags of Help by former Friends of the Town Centre Gardens. Some 1500 Crocus corms planted by Broombarns school in conjunction with the rotary club as part of Polio awareness.
2018	New fountain water feature designed and installed around the Women & Doves sculpture
2019	All Montseny benches replaced with new timber slats in collaboration with Green Space Volunteers. Volunteers undertake hedge improvements and tree planting

For further reading on the history of the Town Centre Gardens and recent improvements, please make your way to the appendix.

3. Action Plan

The Green Space Strategy 2010-2020, published by Stevenage Borough Council, sets out the following vision for parks and gardens:

A welcoming, clean, safe and well-maintained open space providing a wide and varied range of organised and informal leisure, recreational and enriched play opportunities and events for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

Stevenage recognises that improvements to its green spaces, and the engagement of local people, can have significant benefits to health and education, reduce crime, and increase pride.

3.1 Aims & Objectives

Community and professional consultation has identified a number of detailed aims and objectives for the Town Centre Gardens. For this management plan, these have been grouped as follows:

3.1.1 A Welcoming Place

The Gardens already provides a good range of opportunities for visitors. However, through structured improvements, as set out in the action plan, the park will continue to develop and evolve to ensure that it continues to be an inviting place for all community sectors.

3.1.2 Healthy, Safe & Secure

The Council is committed to providing good, safe and appropriate facilities and activities. By working with the community and relevant partners, the Council works actively to ensure the park remains a safe and secure environment and recognises the significance of good quality green spaces for health and wellbeing.

3.1.3 Well Maintained & Green

Stevenage Borough Council is committed to providing cleaner, safer and greener spaces and, as such, is dedicated to ensuring that the Gardens continue to deliver high-quality facilities for future generations

3.1.4 Environmental Management

Stevenage Borough Council is fully committed to improving how it operates its services.

3.1.5 Conservation & Heritage

Even at nearly 60 years old, the Town Centre Gardens provides various habitats, from pond marginals to meadow, ancient hedgerow and wooded areas. As a result, there is a strong desire to educate parks users using multiple appropriate methods.

3.1.6 Community Involvement

Stevenage recognises the importance and benefits of working closely in partnership with all community sectors, including providing opportunities for those who might otherwise feel excluded from community activities.

3.1.7 Marketing

The Town Centre Gardens is well visited by residents and visitors from further afield. Stevenage Borough Council, working with its partners, recognise the importance of promoting the park, its facilities, and the opportunities for all sectors of the community.

3.1.8 Management

The importance of the site as a valuable community asset is highlighted by the past and continued interest of the Green Space Volunteers. Moving forward, the Council, in partnership with volunteers, aims to make the Town Centre Gardens more exciting and inviting for visitors, whether they want to sit and enjoy the space or if they prefer to become more directly involved in the development.

3.2 Finance

The Council ensures that good standards of maintenance and provision can be achieved through adequate revenue funding for day to day activities.

Officers seek capital and/or external funding for specific improvement projects as the need and opportunity arise.

3.3 The Five Year Action Plan

The Action Plan sets out to deliver the Aims and Objectives identified through consultation to date.

Each action is linked to at least one of the following aims:

1. A Welcoming Place
2. Healthy, Safe and Secure
3. Well Maintained and Green
4. Environmental Management
5. Conservation and Heritage
6. Community Involvement
7. Marketing
8. Management

ACTION PLAN KEY:

EPDM	Environmental Performance and Development Manager
GSDO	Green Spaces Development Officer
GSPM	Green Spaces Project Manager
ACM	Arboriculture and Conservation Manager
SDS	Stevenage Direct Services (Street Scene)
GSV	Green Space Volunteers
HWE	Highways Engineer

	Objective	Action	Link to GFA Aims	Yr. 1 2020/21	Yr. 2 2021/22	Yr. 3 2022/23	Yr. 4 2023/24	Yr. 5 2024/25	Notes
	Retain Green Flag Award	GSDO	All	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Review the existing suite of parks information and signage. Consider opportunities for additional interpretation within the park	GSDO	1, 7	✓	✓				Delayed due to Covid
	Make new management plan available to all by uploading to Council's webpage	GSDO	1, 7	✓					
	Carryout extensive repairs to the impact absorbent surfacing within the play area	SDS GSPM	2, 3	✓					Some minor repairs were completed. Further works expected 2022
	Carryout further promotion of Gordon the Greedy Goose to improve education around feeding the park's waterfowl	GSDO	2, 3, 6, 7	✓		✓			Floor stickers and stencils were trialled with limited success. Social media promotion ongoing.
	Review the bin provision in the park and deliver programme of replacing all bins to standardised covered bin	GSDO SDS	2, 3	✓					Completed
	Review the silt levels in the pond. And if necessary carryout a funding bid to enable silt reduction	GSDO GSPM HWE	2, 3, 4		✓	✓			Ongoing

	Objective	Action	Link to GFA Aims	Yr. 1 2020/21	Yr. 2 2021/22	Yr. 3 2022/23	Yr. 4 2023/24	Yr. 5 2024/25	Notes
	Scheduled general maintenance of trees within the park	ACM	2, 3, 4		✓			✓	
	Map locations of current nest boxes within the park	GSV GSDO	6, 5	✓					Moved to 2022. GSVs to assist with mapping
	Liaise with HMWT & volunteers to identify suitable locations for additional nest boxes, install and add to mapped data.	GSDO GSV	5, 6		✓				As above
	Sow existing grassland meadows with a wildflower meadow mix to improve species diversity	GSDO GSV	6, 5		✓				Delayed due to Covid.
	Undertake data collection to determine visitor numbers and timings	GSDO GSPM	6, 7, 8		✓				Visitor counter equipment requires replacement. Revisit 2023
	Review and update the parks / open space survey	GSDO EPDM GSPM	6, 7, 8		✓				Parks customer survey expected to help inform a broader Parks Strategy. Strategy delayed due to Covid and capacity but revisit 2023/24

	Objective	Action	Link to GFA Aims	Yr. 1 2020/21	Yr. 2 2021/22	Yr. 3 2022/23	Yr. 4 2023/24	Yr. 5 2024/25	Notes
	Carryout promotion of the revised customer survey	GSDO EPDM GSPM	6, 7		✓				As above
	Identify and carryout repairs to the bespoke concrete planters within the sensory garden	GSDO GSPM	2, 3, 5	✓					Delayed due to Covid
	Review planting within the Garden Rooms area, draw up plan and carryout planting as required	GSDO GSV	3,6				✓	✓	
	Carry out management of the vegetation to the north of the pond. Vegetation to be controlled in thirds.	GSDO GSV ACM	3, 5, 6	✓		✓		✓	1/3 rd vegetation cut back around the pond
	Identify suitable locations and carryout further bulb planting for further flush of winter/spring colour	GSV GSDO	1, 3, 5, 6		✓				Completed
	Review algae control methods and consider replacement of the ultrasonic algae control devices	GSDO	2, 3, 4			✓			Ongoing
	Carry out replacement of the wooden boards to the pond edge.	GSDO GSPM	2, 3					✓	
	Draw up plan to address issues with triangular entrance bed off Fairlands	GSDO SDS	1, 2, 3	✓					Re-planting completed.

	Objective	Action	Link to GFA Aims	Yr. 1 2020/21	Yr. 2 2021/22	Yr. 3 2022/23	Yr. 4 2023/24	Yr. 5 2024/25	Notes
	Way and deliver project as approved.								
	Investigate construction of a small length of pathway where desire line and erosion occurs near Brent Court and the large Ash Tree.	GSDO HWE	1, 3, 5			✓			
	Make bid to Woodland Trust for whips to enable hedge planting along the fence line at the Silam Road entrance.	GSV GSDO	3, 5, 6		✓				Bid successful 2020 but unable to deliver due to Covid. Planting expected 2022.
	Liaise with HMWT and investigate opportunities for ancient hedgerow improvements.	GSDO	5		✓				
	Review establishment of roses on sloping beds by the underpass, draw up a plan and deliver planting	GSDO GSV	3, 6, 1	✓	✓				Completed - GSVs successful funding for planting improvements to 2 entrance beds.
	Identify path drainage issues and consider implementing resolutions	GSDO HWE	2		✓	✓			Issues identified. Liaising with drainage engineers.
	Consider the opportunity for developing a tree trail within the park	GSDO ACM GSV	6, 7, 5	✓	✓				Delayed due to Covid
	Carry out promotion of the Gardens, the GSV activities & involvement	GSDO	7, 6	✓	✓	✓			Continued promotion of activities by GSVs through social media.

	Objective	Action	Link to GFA Aims	Yr. 1 2020/21	Yr. 2 2021/22	Yr. 3 2022/23	Yr. 4 2023/24	Yr. 5 2024/25	Notes
	Consider opportunities for wetland marginal vegetation improvements	GSDO GSV	5, 6			✓			
	Investigate opportunities for additional picnic table seating. Particularly in or around the play area	GSDO	1, 6				✓		
	Draw up a plan for the wooded area behind the pond to develop the site for wildlife opportunities	GSDO	5				✓	✓	
	Annual review of this management plan	GSDO	All	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

4. Management & Maintenance

Stevenage Borough Council's Stevenage Direct Services business unit manages and maintains the Town Centre Gardens.

4.1 Stevenage Direct Services

The Business Unit is structured as a Direct Services Operation, and the Council is committed to continuing the delivery of services in-house. Stevenage Direct Services is the council's largest business unit with approximately 200 employees. The team delivers a range of high profile and highly visible service functions that affect all households, wards, businesses and visitors.

Stevenage Direct Services incorporates the majority of the Council's front-facing operational services, including:

- Street scene services (street cleansing)
- Grounds maintenance services
- Caretaking services
- Cemetery services
- Arboriculture services
- Domestic waste and recycling collection
- Green garden and food waste collection
- Bulky waste collections
- Trade Waste and recycling collection
- Skip hire
- Vehicle repair shop
- Fleet management
- Transfer station & depot operations
- Housing repair services
- Indoor market management
- Garage services
- Garage improvement project
- Environmental policy & development services

The in-house direct labour unit carries all grounds maintenance and cleansing activities except weed control and meadow cutting. Within the Town Centre Gardens, this team is responsible for the routine maintenance of grass, shrub borders, hedges and trees. In addition, the Town Centre Cleansing Team supports them, who maintains the toilet facilities, and the Play Fitter, who inspects and maintains the equipped play area.

The Environmental Policy & Development team is responsible for:

- developing environmental strategy and policy;
- managing environmental projects and improvements;
- promotion of green spaces;
- environmental education and campaigns;
- growing public and community engagement through volunteering, events and activities;
- delivery of the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan;
- external accreditation.

The Council's entire fleet of vehicles (refuse & recycling freighters, crew cabs, vans, tractors) and powered equipment (mowers, strimmers, blowers etc.) are maintained by the mechanics in the vehicle repair shop.

The current management structure for Stevenage Direct Services is shown on the next page.

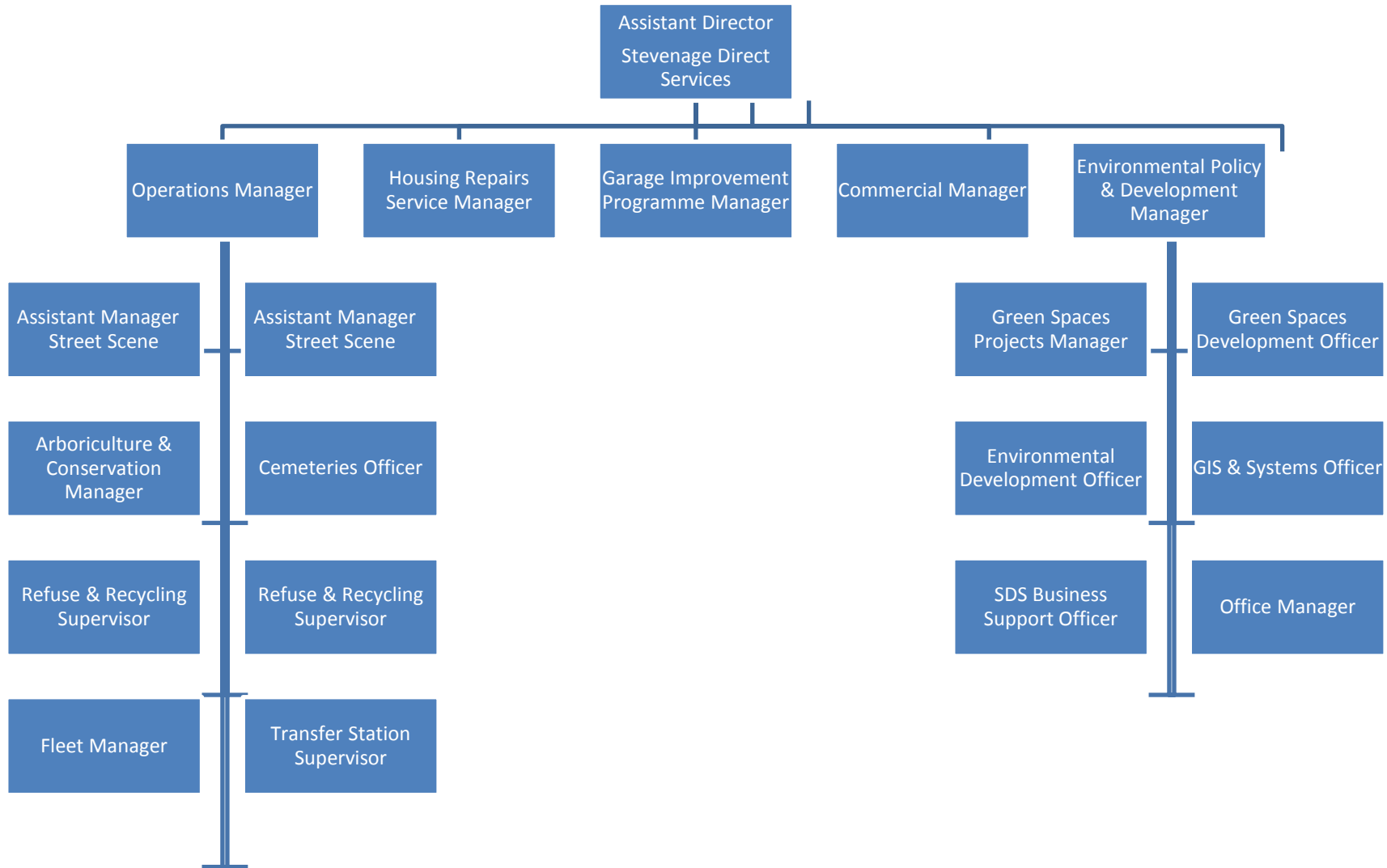
4.1.1 The Future

The Council's Target Operating Model (TOM) was adopted in 2016, following engagement with senior managers and consultation through the Senior Management Review. It sets out how the Council will operate in the future and is designed to ensure that services across the Council are aligned.

The organisation is being designed to be flatter, more agile and better able to respond quickly to agreed changes in strategic direction and/or the external environment.

The overall aim of the business reviews across the council is to drive innovation and collaboration in how we work and deliver services to customers. The Assistant Directors have reviewed their Business Units to understand what improvements are needed to services to deliver or support the delivery of Future Town Future Council and adopt the principles of the TOM.

After the new SDS management team was appointed, during 2019, the Service Managers have undertaken reviews of their respective services to inform the transformation of service delivery in future. The roll-out of new structures, and approaches to work, will start in 2020.



Current Structure of Stevenage Direct Services,
in relation to green space management

4.2 Digital Technology

4.2.1 APSE LAMS

To aid the process of site inspection reporting and recording, the council have adopted the APSE system called LAMS (Land Audit Management System). LAMS is a quality inspection system used via mobile telephone to monitor grounds maintenance and street cleansing operations. LAMS enables the council to measure the quality and at the same time benchmark these against other local authorities.

4.2.2 Fix My Street

FixMyStreet is an independent website built by an external charity to make reporting problems/issues easier, particularly with regards to identifying the organisation with responsibilities for the complaint. The report can be located by adding a marker pin to a map and adding photos to aid the identification of the problem and location.

4.2.3 Bartec Collective

The Connected to Our Customers (CTOC) programme is committed to providing more self-service options to customers and increasing customer satisfaction by investing in technology that makes our workforce more efficient and responsive.

SDS Operations are currently managed using an almost entirely paper-based system. This includes:

- Maintenance of the town's 10 principal parks and approximately 30,000 trees.
- Refuse, recycling and green waste collection from over 37,000 domestic properties and 600 commercial customers.
- Cleansing the town's pedestrianised areas, walkways and 45km of cycleways.
- Emptying every street bin in the town.

The industry standard for environmental services providers is to use a digital back-office that links with in-cab terminals for waste management vehicles and mobile devices for street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

The 'Bartec Collective' Project being rolled out in 2020 will implement a digital back-office operations system for environmental services, with in-cab and mobile devices for front-line operatives. Digitising processes across domestic and commercial waste management, street scene and grounds maintenance.

The benefits of this will:

- **Increase business resilience of SDS Operations** - Enable real-time management of operations; streamline communication between frontline operation and back-office; enable SDS to establish and enforce operational policies with confidence; measure, report and improve on KPI's accurately.

- **Harness process efficiencies from digitisation** - Use paperless processes in vehicle cabs and operationally. Creating efficiency for officers when preparing operational workflows, managing commercial customer accounts and reporting management information.
- **Better responsiveness to customer enquiries** - Ability for the back-office teams to access real-time operational information and answer customer queries at the first point of contact. The system can provide end-to-end digital self-service from the CSC when fully integrated with a corporate Digital Platform.
- **Facilitate the expansion of the SDS commercial offer** - Provide the capability to accurately invoice customers, manage more commercial contracts without producing further administrative burden and facilitate a charge-by-weight commercial waste service.
- **Facilitate move to an area-based working model and additional digital capacity of operatives** - Providing access to a mobile tablet to all front-line teams, increasing the future capabilities of operatives. This will enable area-based working and needs-based scheduling to manage the operation from the central back-office.

4.3 Our People

4.3.1 Stevenage Direct Services Change & Action Team (SDS CAT)

SDS CAT is a staff forum for members of staff within Stevenage Direct Services that was launched in 2017 in response to a range of issues, including low morale, poor communication, wellbeing etc., raised by staff, HR and management. The team's objectives seek to deliver against the Future Town Future Council, Employer of Choice programme.

The remit of the group was to:

- Ensure this is a safe environment for our people;
- Promote an atmosphere of trust and respect;
- Identify and expose areas for improvement;
- Channel feedback up and down;



- Improve employee wellbeing;
- Drive positive change;
- Make SDS a happier place to work.

Until the group's launch in 2017, SDS staff didn't have a formal or regular opportunity to raise concerns and issues.

The group (of around 12 people) meets every month, and to date, has delivered many projects which have been successful in addressing issues identified, including:

- ✓ Stevenage Direct Services Communications Strategy
- ✓ Staff consulted on major purchases that will impact them in the delivery of their service
- ✓ Notice boards installed to Cavendish Road, and sites where SDS staff work remotely – cemeteries, nursery, town centre, old town and ten site huts
- ✓ Screen installed to muster room
- ✓ Regular updates of all display screen and notice boards
- ✓ H&S team undertaking additional visits to the teams on site
- ✓ Monthly team briefings / Tool Box Talks
- ✓ Standard agenda items for above – H&S updates, project updates, corporate updates, performance & recognition, Learning & Development / HR updates, and volunteering opportunities.
- ✓ Quarterly SDS newsletters
- ✓ Development of Customer Charter
- ✓ Review of uniform provision
- ✓ Adult Learning

4.3.2 Competency Framework

The Council's competency framework provides a map of the behaviours and skills that will be valued and recognised by the Council. It sets out "how" we want people within Stevenage Borough Council to work.

In the first instance, the Leadership Competency Framework was introduced in January 2017 for the Strategic Leadership Team and to Grade 10 and above in February 2017. In 2019 the Competency Framework was extended to incorporate all employees, from Grade 1 to the Chief Executive.

The framework will be used for recruitment, performance management, development, and workforce planning. In future, it will also inform succession planning and talent management discussions.

You can find the make-up of the ten competencies in the appendix.

4.3.3 Values & Co-Operative Principles

The Council adopted a suite of Corporate Values in April 2014, which underpin the organisations approach to delivering services to its customers. The competency framework supports the delivery and operation of these Values:

<p>Excellent</p> 	<p>Excellent</p> <p>We want to be an excellent council that provides value-for-money services that people in Stevenage want. We will set ourselves high standards and always work efficiently.</p>
<p>Caring</p> 	<p>Caring</p> <p>We will respect, listen to, and look after local people, especially the most vulnerable. We will treat our colleagues with care and respect.</p>
<p>Responsive</p> 	<p>Responsive</p> <p>We will make sure we react when people tell us things, and we will do our best to fix things first time. We will aim to understand the kind of services that people want so that we can either provide them or support people to do things themselves.</p>
<p>Straightforward</p> 	<p>Straightforward</p> <p>We will make things clear and simple to understand, so we won't use jargon or complicated words. And we will be open and honest with everyone we work with.</p>
<p>Innovative</p> 	<p>Innovative</p> <p>We will look for new ways to do things, different ways to solve problems and opportunities to work commercially. Where we can't do things ourselves, we will work with our partners on joint projects.</p>
<p>One team</p> 	<p>One team</p> <p>We are one Council and one team. We will talk to our colleagues, help each other and work together to achieve the best results that we can.</p>

The competency framework also aligns and reinforces the Co-operative Council principles adopted by Stevenage Borough Council:

- The council as a strong community leader
- Working together with the community and other agencies to provide services based on needs
- Communities empowered to design and deliver services and play a role in their local community
- A clear understanding between the council and our communities – this is what we do, this is what we will help you to do
- Joined-up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer.

4.3.4 Learning & Development

R.E.A.L. Conversations is a rolling appraisal process that gives people regular and ongoing opportunities to:

- **Review** and appraise their contributions;
- **Engage** in discussing their well-being, their objectives and priorities;
- **Act** by doing what is most needed for them and the team at that time, and
- **Learn** through sharing any ambitions they might have or thoughts about skills and knowledge that might be useful to them now or in the future.

Each staff member will receive a minimum of six R.E.A.L. Conversations within 12 months.

The development requirements for SDS staff, identified through these meetings, include statutory training (such as Certificates of Professional Competence for our refuse & recycling freighter drivers) through to Diploma in Management Studies for aspiring supervisors and managers. All development requirements within SDS have been used to create a three-year training plan, which supports succession planning and financial planning.

4.3.5 Adult Learning

Through SDS CAT, it was flagged that many SDS staff needed support to help develop their literacy, numeracy and/or IT skills. The ability to be confident and competent in English, Maths and IT is vital for our staff both at home and at work, particularly as we rely more on digital technology.

Following a report to the Council's Strategic Leadership Team, the Council resolved to provide support adult learning opportunities and provide up to 2 hours of work time a week for staff to participate in training sessions.

Working in partnership with Unite and Unison, literacy training was delivered to around 12 members of the SDS team, and the Council continues to liaise with the unions to identify ways to support staff in their development of basic skills.

4.4 Investment

4.4.1 Capital

- Play Area Improvement Programme – following a study and report into the town’s play facilities, the Council has allocated a £1.5m investment in providing play improvements to 58 play areas throughout the whole of the town. Over five years, this has been rolled out as part of the Cooperative Neighbourhood Management Programme (CNM). This investment demonstrates the Council’s ongoing commitment to the importance of play and identifies where savings can be made, safeguarding play sites for the future.

In 2018, the play area in the Gardens was identified within the programme for improvement. The play area is classified as a primary site, catering for all age ranges and an assessment at the time noted that there was little scope for improvement. However, repairs to the surfacing will occur in 2020 as part of maintenance revenue funding.

- Litter Bin Improvement Programme – also part of the CNM programme, an investment of £0.5m will see litter bins replaced with a standardised and durable bin throughout the town. In 2020, the Town Centre Gardens will receive circa £3000 of investment to replace the ‘mish-mash’ of old, tired and broken bins with the smarter and standardised bin, whilst also combining litter with dog waste.
- Regeneration – The Town Centre Gardens received a significant investment in two phases. In 2008, £500k of investment from the Growth Area Fund saw improvements to the oval area. A successful Heritage Lottery Fund Grant saw a £1.75m secured to regenerate the rest park in 2010. SBC provided significant capital matching funding to bolster the HLF bid of around £700k.

4.4.2 External Grants & Bids

- Tesco Bags of Help – In 2017, the Friends of the Town Centre Gardens, successfully secured £12,000 of investment for the park through the Tesco ‘Bags of Help’ scheme. In partnership with the Council, the Friends identified that new picnic tables, benches and bins were required and were installed.
- LCB funding – In 2016, the Friends were provided with £1,500 from Councillor’s locality budgets. This was put towards replanting failed and struggling roses within the large border close to the underpass.
- Biffa Award – The Town Centre Gardens saw a grant of £25,000 awarded to install new outdoor gym equipment.
- Woodland Trust – SBC and the Green Space Volunteers have successfully received two tree planting packs from the Woodland Trust. Approx. 420 tree and hedge species were planted in the first round on the path from Silam Road, and a smaller batch of 30 was used to fill in gaps in the existing mature hedge by the park’s toilet building.

4.4.3 Future Development Contributions

In the next 5-10 years, Stevenage will see some exciting and significant changes. With the recent release of the local plan and the ongoing redevelopment of the Town Centre, it is anticipated that the Town Centre Gardens will receive some contributions through the planning process via Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Contributions will likely be shared with other open spaces, but it is currently estimated that sums will be provided to improve play and outdoor sports facilities. However, it is unclear when these funds are likely to be available.

The Council plans to adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) system in the near future, providing opportunities to bid for project-specific investment.

4.5 Partnerships

4.5.1 Green Space Volunteers

The Green Space Volunteer initiative was set up in 2011 in response to a growing interest amongst our residents to become involved in maintaining our green spaces.

The volunteers are provided with two programmes of activities each year – one for the winter period when most habitat works can be undertaken and another for the spring and summer. Volunteers are invited to undertake tasks that add value to what the Council does.

There is also a dedicated group of Green Space Volunteers for the Town Centre Gardens, and they carry out work sessions every week.

More details about the Green Space Volunteers are available in section 5.3

4.5.3 Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT)

The Council has developed a close working relationship with the Wildlife Trust for over ten years.

HMWT were appointed to write the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan, launched in 2010, and the revised document published in 2017.

An HMWT People and Wildlife Officer works within the Council's Environmental Policy and Development team two days a week to support green spaces project work. In addition, they have helped deliver community events, worked with the Green Space Volunteers, and supported the Stevenage Eco-Schools Network through site visits and presentations.

The HMWT Conservation Manager attends the quarterly Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group meetings and regularly undertakes site visits with officers to provide advice and support for habitat improvement.

4.6 Water Management

4.6.1 Algae

Algae occurs naturally in inland waters, and when conditions are right, algal blooms can appear. Some algae can produce toxins that adversely affect wild animals, pets and people. SBC continues to work closely with the Environment Agency and the parks user groups to help monitor the algae in the pond.

Former blooms in the pond have been treated using ecologically friendly treatments that starve the algae of the essential nutrients required to grow. Shading agents can also be applied to the water to deter onset algal blooms.

4.6.2 Canada Geese and Wildfowl

In recent years there has been a significant increase in Canada Geese in the park. During the peak (around August), 50+ geese can be found in the park each day.

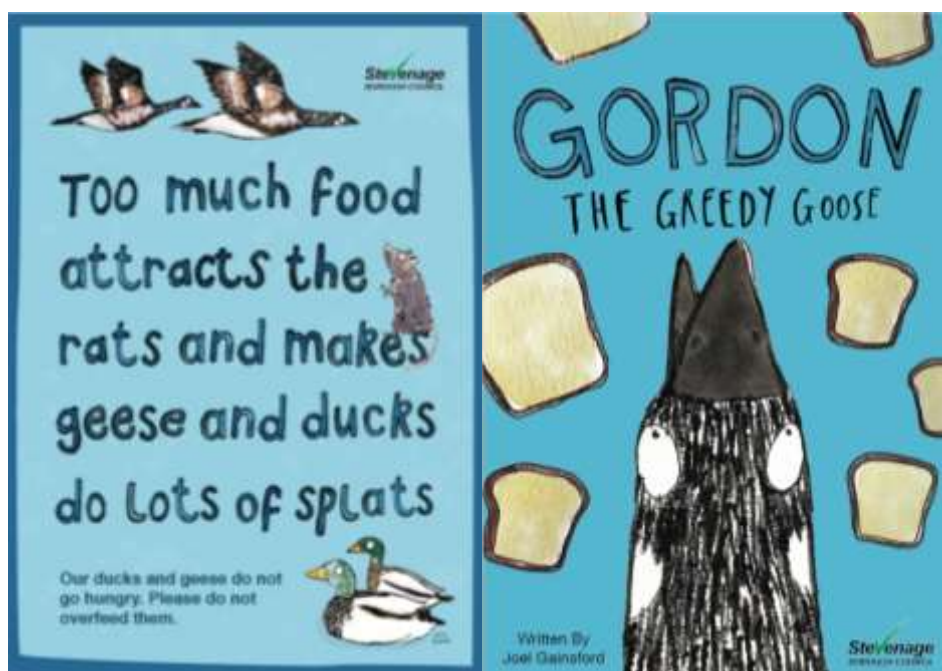
The growing number of geese has led to a significant increase in the number of goose faeces on the paths around the pond, which has caused maintenance difficulties and led to water quality issues and complaints from the public. As a result, the Council has trialled various non-lethal methods to try and control numbers.

In 2017 an innovative approach to dealing with the issues surrounding wildfowl was launched in the form of a children's book.

Wildfowl feeding campaign

To address the growing issues and concerns over the amount of goose poo in the park, an innovative campaign was launched in the form of a children's book called 'Gordon the Greedy Goose'. The campaign encompassed many of the issues associated with feeding ducks and geese bread, from poo, angel wing, aggressive behaviour and rats. The book aims to educate children and visitors in a fun way about the effects of feeding bread and suggests alternative healthy foods.

As a by-product of this campaign, a fun and colourful poster was also created using the book's illustrations. This was to help address the issues that overfeeding the birds attracts vermin and causes more droppings. The posters and signs were placed into the park's noticeboards and erected at key feeding points.



The book and campaign will continue to be rolled out and received international recognition in Little Rock, Arkansas in the United States. A donation received for the use was then used to further the campaign.

4.7 Community Safety

The Council's Community Safety Team is responsible for tackling enviro-crime and other matters such as antisocial behaviour. Under the Community Safety Partnership, they work closely with the police and other organisations and agencies.

The Neighbourhood Wardens, Police, and the Community Safety Team undertake regular patrols of the park. Council officers and volunteers also work together with these teams and partners to report concerns or incidents.

The major regeneration project in 2010 gave the opportunity to make some significant improvements to the security and safety of the park. This includes:

- Secure By Design (SBD) - the park was designed and laid out to the 'Secure by Design' (SBD) principles. We endeavour to work to these principles for any future improvements made.
- Improved lighting – the park is well lit throughout.
- CCTV – CCTV covers the park. Several lighting columns also contain mobile CCTV attachment provisions to improve coverage as and when needed.
- Community Parks Officer – although no longer available, a community parks officer provided a regular presence in the park to report concerns and issues. However, Council Cleansing Operatives, Officers and Volunteers continue to regularly visit the park and provide a presence and report problems.
- In 2014, the Town Centre Gardens was encompassed under the Public Spaces Protection Order.

4.8 Landscape Maintenance & Upkeep

A summary of the maintenance operations undertaken by Stevenage Direct Services for the Town Centre Gardens is shown in appendix 8.

Green Space Volunteers play a vital role in adding additional value to the upkeep of the Gardens. Teams within SDS work closely with the Green Space Volunteers to support their work and deliver improvements. More details about the Green Space Volunteers can be found in section 5.3.1.

The Town Centre Gardens provides a mixture of formal landscapes intertwined with aquatics, natural environments, play and exercise spaces. Due to its location, the diversity of the landscapes and facilities on offer means that the community well uses the gardens. This throws up both challenges and opportunities for upkeep.

Despite continued financial pressures, the Council is committed to ensuring that the park receives the appropriate levels of maintenance. As such, the Council aims to continue supporting the activities of the dedicated Green Space Volunteer group, which is vital in helping achieve high standards. The ongoing maintenance of the site is essential in ensuring the park continues to be a healthy, welcoming, and pleasant place to be. Regular visits and reporting from officers, volunteers, and park users help draw attention to any issues, problems etc., as they occur.

4.8.1 Soft Landscape

The soft landscape comprises those areas that are planted. Within the Gardens, this includes, but is not limited to:

- Grass
- Meadows
- Hedges
- Shrubs and herbaceous borders.
- Rose borders
- Trees
- Bulbs

SDS is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of all the landscaping with the park. The Green Space Volunteers provide an invaluable contribution to maintaining the more formalised beds, which often require a more intensive regime. This partnership combination helps keep the Gardens looking their best all year round.

The map opposite provides details of those areas within the park that the volunteers maintain regularly. However, this is not conclusive, and there are regular occasions where the volunteers choose to add further value to some of the areas SDS otherwise maintains.

Also overleaf is a map showing a breakdown of the different grass/meadow cutting areas within the park and those planted with bulbs.



Main Green Space Volunteer Activity Areas - shown marked in purple

Town Centre Gardens: Maintained Grassed Areas & Bulbs



All trees in the park are maintained following the relevant British Standards. Tree maintenance includes but is not limited to:

- Crown lifting
- Dead wooding
- Crown reductions
- Crown thinning
- Pollarding

Felling trees is only used as a last resort if a tree is identified under the 4Ds principle (dead, diseased, dangerous, or dying). Due to the design and nature of the park, tree planting and replacements are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Leaf clearance is undertaken in the park during the autumn months (Oct-Nov). Priority is given to safety and hard-surfaced areas. Leaves are then cleared from the more formal grassed areas when capacity allows. This is important as it helps reduce the amount of debris in the pond and keeps the grass healthy.

4.8.2 Hard Landscape & Street Furniture

The hard landscape includes those non-planted areas of the park and includes areas such as:

- Paving, paths, kerbing, and edging.
- Drainage infrastructure
- Planters
- Bridge
- Toilet and store building
- Water & electric supply
- Lighting
- Seating & litter bins
- Fencing & signage

SDS undertakes regular inspections of the paths and hard surfaced areas. The Council's Engineering Team supports SDS with the maintenance and upkeep of the hard landscape within the park and undertakes repair or defects works as required.

For consistency, the park has a suite of street furniture that follows the regeneration project's design principles. SDS undertakes street furniture repairs, replacements, and upkeep.

4.8.4 The Pond and Aquatics

Since 2017, the Council has appointed a contractor to maintain the pumps and aeration system in the pond. This was in response to costly and regular breakdowns and repairs to pumps.

The Contractor visits the site monthly to clean the fountain jets, pump filter chamber and aerator diffusers. This helps keep the pond well aerated and the fountain in good working order.

Litter picking of the pond is undertaken by the Council's cleansing operatives from the town centre monthly to remove litter that is reachable. In addition, officers and operatives undertake thorough ad-hock litter picks of the pond to clear larger or more difficult to reach items.

The outlet culvert basket, which traps litter and debris, is cleaned by SDS operatives every month. However, this is often needed more frequently during the autumn months, when leaves build up.

Water quality is monitored by officers visually. Any issues of pollution or contamination are reported via the Environment Agency Incident Hotline.

The silt levels within the pond continue to increase, mainly from a build-up of fallen leaves from trees and vegetation directly surrounding the pond. Management of the vegetation from around the north of the pond may help control this, and a regime of vegetation management is incorporated within the action plan.

4.10 Out-of-Hours Service & Reporting

Urgent matters and issues can be reported using the Council's out-of-hours service by telephoning 01438 314 963. Between 8 am-6 pm, matters should be reported to the Customer Contact Centre Tel: 01438 242 242

Customers are encouraged to report any general issues and problems online via 'Report It' on the Council's webpages.

[Report It](#) - Matters such as fly-tipping, littering & street cleaning, graffiti, landscaping maintenance etc., can all be reported using this method. Reporting in this way helps to identify common occurrences and issues.

5 Community

5.1 Current Use

We do not currently have up-to-date estimates for the number of visitors to the Town Centre Gardens; however previous records using the visitor counters estimated 651,000 visitors per year. Analysis of this data indicated that there is not one hour during the day/night when people do not access the Gardens.

We broadly know that the Park serves many functions, meeting the needs of young people, parents with children, older people, residents, dog walkers and commuters.



The Park serves a number of functions by providing:

- Open space for passive and active recreation activities
- Organised community events/activities
- Somewhere to sit and meet
- Children's play space
- A thoroughfare
- Education
- Community involvement through the Green Space Volunteers.

5.2 Stakeholders

There is a variety of organisations, and individuals, who have an active interest in the Gardens.

- Residents (from the immediate area, within Bedwell and the Town Centre)
- Town Centre Shoppers
- Retail & business employees
- Council Officers
- Grounds & Cleansing operatives
- Green Space Volunteers
- Stevenage Dog Watch
- Visitors to the Park
- Ward Councillors
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Members of the public associated with the memorial trees

5.3 Green Space Volunteers

There are currently around 40 volunteers who participate in activities throughout the year. They form an umbrella group for all Council supported green volunteer groups in the town. There is no dedicated officer support for our volunteers, but four officers deliver administration and activities as part of their broader role.

These volunteers work in partnership with the Council to undertake tasks to a range of green spaces throughout the town – adding value to the work undertaken by the Council's teams. Collectively, the Green Space Volunteers give around 2,000 hours each year – with an equivalent value to approximately £20,000.

We endeavour to make green space volunteering as flexible and accessible as possible. Therefore, there is no minimum requirement for the number of hours or frequency of volunteering. Volunteers are provided with two programmes each year – one in August for September – March when most habitat work is possible, and another in March for April – September. See Appendix 6, pg—83 for a typical annual programme.

The programmes provide a range of opportunities for works in parkland, woodland, grassland and ponds. Volunteers are invited to suggest sites requiring additional attention, but otherwise, the programme is primarily linked to the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan.

5.3.1 The Town Centre Gardens & Green Space Volunteers

Towards the end of 2018, the former constituted Friends group decided to dissolve to focus primarily on garden maintenance activities as Green Space Volunteers. You can find more about the Friends of the Town Centre Gardens in the appendix (pg.79).

There is now a dedicated group of Green Space Volunteers, comprising of past Friends members and new, that undertake weekly maintenance sessions within the Gardens.

They are a positive, passionate and proactive group that works closely with the Council to identify potential development opportunities within the Park and assist with management activities. They also undertake regular monitoring and report any issues/concerns to the Council.

Within the Town Centre Gardens, the Green Space Volunteers have delivered activities including:

- Weeding and general gardening maintenance
- Tree planting
- Improvements to the park entrances
- Edging back footpaths
- Assisting in the planning and delivery of events
- Meadow seeding and maintenance
- Vegetation management
- Litter picking
- Planting bulbs and perennials
- Bench improvements



The group also continues to contribute towards the park by:

- Accessing grants – such as the Woodland Trust tree packs and LCB funding.
- Providing planting improvements

5.3.2 Training

There is no dedicated budget for delivering training for our Green Space Volunteers. Still, where possible, we identify opportunities that would interest the individuals and support their volunteering activity.

Training offered previously includes:

- Butterfly surveys: a local member of Butterfly Conservation has shared knowledge and experience to support those volunteers interested in helping our annual butterfly survey.
- Short Courses provided by Beds, Cambs & Northants Wildlife Trust:
 - Coppicing
 - Pond dipping for adults
 - Grasshopper / Cricket Identification
 - Introduction to Wildflowers

5.3.3 Lead Volunteers

Originally all green space volunteer activity had to be supervised by a Council officer to ensure that the Council's insurance covered the volunteers. However, responses to a volunteer survey conducted in 2015 indicated that many volunteers were interested in giving more time to their local green space(s).

Following a proposal to the Council's insurers, they agreed that with appropriate training and support, Lead Volunteers could be developed to supervise Green Space Volunteer activity without the need for a council officer being present.

The Lead Volunteers undertake training that includes:

- Emergency First Aid, from St Johns Ambulance
- Manual Handling & Back Care, from the Council's H&S officer
- Sharps, Needlesticks and Diseases, from the Council's H&S officer
- Leading Practical Groups, from TCV.

There are currently seven Lead Volunteers. They advise when they are available to lead a volunteer session and what they would like to deliver. Officers then liaise with them to agree on the scope and extent of works undertaken. Council officers monitor the works to ensure adequate standards of work are being maintained and that the site continues to be safe for use by the general public. A Lead Volunteer Role Description is in Appendix 6 pg.88.

5.3.4 Annual Events

In the first few months of each year, the Green Space Volunteers Annual Forum is held. This event, held in the Council Chambers, is aimed at our existing volunteers and anyone else who might be interested in supporting our green spaces.

There is a short presentation highlighting some of the work that volunteers have achieved during the previous year. Other partners are invited to provide presentations that might be of interest. In the past, presentations have included:

- Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Green Flag Awards, council officer
- Birds of Prey, Herts Bird Club
- Stevenage Local Plan, council officer
- Butterfly Surveys, Butterfly Conservation
- Otter Habitat Creation and Restoration, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Woodlands – UK and Romania, council officer
- Swifts, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Hertfordshire Year of Physical Activity, council officer

The Forum provides a fun and hopefully exciting opportunity to meet fellow volunteers and chat about future opportunities.

Each summer, there is a BBQ event to thank all those that have played a role in our Green Flag Award successes that year. Green Space Volunteers, Councillors, council staff and partner organisations are invited. It is a relaxed and fun evening much enjoyed by all.



5.4 Community Involvement

Yes Futures

In November 2018, the Council partnered with the multi-award-winning education charity Yes Futures to deliver a range of charitable activities within the town. Yes Futures specialises in extra-curricular personal development programmes to help disadvantaged children make ambitious choices and realise their potential.

Within the Town Centre Gardens, the Council delivered some stimulating physical maintenance works followed by a talk and tour about the Gardens and the restoration project. This helped the children understand more about volunteering in the local community and helped develop their confidence, resilience, and life skills.

Stevenage Dog Watch

The Council has a continued long relationship with Stevenage Dog Watch, a charitable organisation working within the local community. Revolving mainly around dogs and dog walking, they deliver a range of fundraising events and activities at the Town Centre Gardens, including Doggie Day and Carnival.

They also run regular community walks, therapy dog sessions at local care homes and more. In addition, they continue to work closely with Hertfordshire Constabulary in helping raise awareness of safety, dog care and fouling.

Rotary Club & Schools

Over the last few years, the Council has worked with the rotary club to organise crocus bulb planting within parks and open spaces in Stevenage. Local schools are invited to plant the bulbs as part of the Polio awareness campaign.

Crocuses have been planted in the Oval area and near the pond.

Local schools can also be found using the park for their studies from time to time.

5.5 Community Events

Each year the Council commits to organising and assisting with delivering a range of events throughout the principal parks in Stevenage. Events are generally provided during school holidays, with the help and support of the Green Space Volunteers, and often with other volunteer organisations.

The events help promote the park and provide the opportunity to educate children and visitors.

Past community events in the Town Centre Gardens have included: Pollinators in the Park, Wildwatch, Half Term Hoot, Halloween, Family Fun Day, Christmas Fun in the Park and more.

Annually during the summer months, Dog Watch, with support from the Council, hold their 'Doggie Day' and 'Carnival' events in the Town Centre Gardens.

Some example event posters can be found in the appendices.



5.6 Co-operative Neighbourhoods

Stevenage is a member of the Co-operative Councils Network – a group of authorities who seek to move away from top-down imposed services that do not offer choice, involvement or control to residents and instead embrace the traditional values of the co-operative movement.

The Council is investing £12 million on a range of improvements to public spaces over the next few years, keeping the local areas looking good. The work will include improvements to the public realm, including:

- Play areas
- Benches,
- Footpaths, damaged walls
- Shrub beds
- Litter bins
- Green space signage
- Garage blocks

The programme of improvements is being rolled out on a ward-by-ward basis, following engagement with local people to establish the priority issues in their local area. For example, officers consult with children and young people to inform the design of improvements to local play areas. The consultation is undertaken through local schools, on-site consultation events, mother, and toddler groups etc.

6 Environmental Management

6.1 Biofuel

All small branches from tree maintenance operations are chipped on-site to enable easier transport. The larger cordwood is also cut, and all wood is transported to the main operational depot for initial storage.

The vast majority of woodchips is taken away as biomass. Roughly four hundred tonnes of low-grade woodchip is transported for biofuel each year to produce renewable bio-energy. The larger cordwood is also transported as biomass but is much higher grade. Two hundred tonnes per year is taken away for renewable bioenergy.

6.2 Green Waste

All of the green waste produced from maintenance operations (such as prunings, grass cuttings etc.) is removed from site and stored at the main operational depot, ready to be transported to an organic waste treatment facility.

From there, the green waste is produced into a high-quality Composted Soil Improver used primarily by local farmers, commercial gardeners and communities. The product is entirely organic, peat, additive and chemical-free and contains a range of beneficial nutrients to improve soil health and fertility.

6.3 Horticultural Management

6.3.1 Tree-scape

Stevenage prides itself on how green it is as a town, and when you first enter, you quickly notice many trees and green open spaces.

SBC is responsible for around 30,000 trees and the various woodlands under its ownership. The Town Centre Gardens has its fair share of trees, many of which are ornamental or memorial.

The tree stock is inspected thoroughly every five years, and its condition is noted. General routine maintenance is undertaken to the trees every three years to improve the health and condition of the tree and address access/visibility issues. This may include crown reductions, crown lifting, crown thinning, dead wooding or pollarding.

For trees that are identified under the 4-D principles (dead, damaged, dangerous, diseased), the appropriate action is taken to address the issue. The felling of trees is only used as a last resort.

Every year during the winter months, the Council undertakes a tree-planting programme. Trees are sourced responsibly from stock grown in UK nurseries and are planted to the recommended

standards. The newly planted trees are watered during the first two years to help with their establishment, and we are trialling slow-release irrigation bags.

From a biosecurity point of view, SBC recognises the importance of trees and understands the various potential threats posed to them from imported pests, diseases, climate change and more. Therefore, where possible, SBC adopts a best practice approach, and the annual tree planting scheme aims to help diversify the range of tree species within the town.

6.3.2 Mulch

Wood chippings produced from tree maintenance operations are also used in the following ways:

- Mulching of shrub beds in the park – to act as an effective weed suppressant whilst also helping to lock in nutrients and reduce water evaporation from the soil.
- The surfacing of woodland paths – to help improve access within wooded areas and reduce path erosion and damage.
- Allotments where it is used as a natural weed suppressant by plot holders or for creating informal paths.

6.3.3 Pesticides

Any applications of pesticides are undertaken in accordance with the relevant pesticide regulation and legislation.

Weed control

Within the Town Centre Gardens, pesticides are used to control persistent weeds from hard-surfaced areas and around obstacles (e.g. street furniture, fencing etc.).

Only a minimal number of applications are applied to address the issue. In addition, many of the shrub beds and borders within the Gardens are maintained and weeded regularly by hand, thus minimising or negating the need for chemical applications.

Foamstream

In 2019, the Council trialled innovative 'Foamstream' technology as an alternative eco-friendly option to weed control. The process is to apply hot foam of 97°C to the leaf's surface. The foam traps the heat against the leaf, thus destroying the plant's cellular structure. In addition, the unique foam mixture contains natural organic oils that can safely be dispersed in the environment, making it suitable for use in any weather and water.

The initial trial treatments were effective and promising, and the Council is looking at the cost viability going forward.

EcoPlugs

For larger trees and self-sets, the Council since 2016 has treated the felled stumps with EcoPlugs. The application involves drilling holes into the cambium (growth) layer and inserting a small plastic plug filled with glyphosate. Using the plugs means that pesticide is applied directly to the stumps with little to no risk of affecting the aquatic environment or other plant species. When applied correctly, the results are very effective in controlling regrowth.

Rodents

The Council's Environmental Health Officers are responsible for controlling rats in the Park. Contractors under their instruction currently use poison in bait boxes. They are governed by the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949.

6.3.4 Perennial Planting

Except for the Green Space Volunteer bed, all the planting in the Town Centre Gardens, is perennial. The use of permanent planting removes the need for regular watering, which is more sustainable.

The Council endeavour to source plant stock responsibly from nurseries committed to operating and working in a manner that protects the environment. All containerised stock shall be peat-free.

Plants choices are selected based on many factors. In most instances, planting is chosen to provide year-round interest or colour, low maintenance and drought tolerance. Preference is also given to pollinator-friendly options.

6.3.5 Annual Planting

The Green Space Volunteer bed is the only area where annuals can be found during the warmer months.

In the past, this bed was planted with potted annuals grown from a nursery which required lots of time, resources, and irrigation.

Since 2015 the volunteers, with support from the Council, has changed their approach to planting this bed. The bed is now prepared in the spring and seeded with an annual seed mix which provides a delightful flush of colour during the spring & summer months. Once established, the seeded annual mix can be pretty much left to its own devices. Only occasional maintenance and irrigation is required. Once flowering is finished, the bed is stripped and rested during the winter.

6.3.6 Ancient Hedgerow Management Plans

In partnership with the HMWT, management plans have been developed to safeguard the ancient hedgerows and their associated ecotones.

Many of the ancient hedgerows have matured, and the management plans identify several unique actions for each hedge. This may include things like:

- Surveying
- Coppicing & regeneration
- Planting
- Improved linking and connection to habitats
- Interpretation and education
- Record keeping

Only small fragments of the ancient hedgerow of Bedwell Lane can be found within the Town Centre Gardens. A management plan has not been drawn up for this but actions for the hedge are considered in section 3 of this management plan.

6.3.7 Conservation Practices

In suitably identified locations, the Council and volunteers adopt a number of conservation methods in the park. These methods often reduce the need for disposal of arisings whilst also benefiting wildlife.

Practices may include the creation of:

- Log/habitat piles - great for insects, birds, mammals, and amphibians.
- Coppicing – helps to regenerate growth, lets light into the floor and prolongs the life of a tree/shrub
- Dead hedges – carefully weaved to create a natural barrier whilst also providing a habitat for wildlife
- Meadows – great for bees, butterflies, reptiles, birds and more. You can read more about meadow management below.

6.3.7 Compost and Fertilisers

Where compost is required to improve the soil structure, only peat-free compost is purchased. Any fertilisers used to help improve plant health are organic.

6.4 Energy Efficiency

During the regeneration of the Gardens in 2010, several energy-efficient solutions were incorporated. This includes:

- LED street lighting
- Aerator and fountain pump timers

Building efficiency measures:

- Low energy lighting
- Sensory flush toilets
- Automatic hand wash and drying facilities
- On-demand heated water (no storage)
- Double glazing

6.5 Ethical Purchases & Practices

Stevenage Borough Council is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of the community it serves. Accordingly, the Council will do its utmost, as far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that its activities do not adversely affect the environment and will continue to promote awareness and understanding of environmental issues and sustainable development.

The Council is committed to meeting the current generation's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Stevenage Borough Council aims to responsibly source goods and services such as:

- Products from renewable sources – such as FSC timber. The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) promotes environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically

viable management of the world's forests. All timber products procured shall have been approved and resourced via the FSC scheme. All procurements made by the council specify only FSC stamped materials to be used in the manufacture of timbers or structures.

- Longer lasting products – such as powder coated fencing, pressure treated wood, steel seating.
- Chemicals that are less harmful to the environment
- New installations of play safer surfacing now utilise a Bonded Rubber Mulch system. The mulch fibres are manufactured from recycled tyres rather than traditional EPDM products.
- Where possible, all excavated material generated from onsite works is left on-site and utilised to build mounding and contouring. This reduces waste going to landfill and unnecessary vehicle movements.
- Consideration is given to locating spares/ parts from local sources, thereby reducing transport miles.

6.6 Biodiversity and Conservation

Despite being a large urban district, the area of all habitat types (excluding urban and arable farmland) makes up around 24% of the total area of Stevenage, somewhat less than the county total of 33.3%.

Despite this, Stevenage has 37 Local Wildlife Sites, i.e., sites that do not qualify as national importance, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) but are considered of local significance for wildlife.

Stevenage is also the only district/borough in Hertfordshire to have a Biodiversity Action Plan.

6.6.1 Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

Stevenage has been actively delivering a Biodiversity Action Plan since June 2010. The work achieved locally through the action plan contributes to county and national targets.

The main habitat types found across the Borough are as follows:

- **Woodland:** 131.5ha. The woodland type characteristically found throughout Stevenage is the Oak and Hornbeam mix, with Bluebell dominant in the ground flora. The EU Habitats Directive has identified this woodland type as being internationally important.
- **Grassland:** 446.9ha. Only 19.1 ha (4%) remains unimproved and of high ecological value, a figure surprisingly close to the county average of 4.3% given the urban nature of the Borough.
- **Ancient Hedgerows:** Many of the town's cycleways are old country lanes, with their original ancient hedgerows lining the route. These hedgerows are a precious habitat in the middle of a new town and contribute significantly to biodiversity. The hedgerows are a

mixture of mature standards such as Oak, Ash, Hornbeam and Field Maple and the more traditional hedgerow species such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Elder.

- **Wetland:** The Borough's wetland habitats include one of the few examples of a valley mire peat bog within the county; larger lakes at Fairlands Valley Park, which provide an aquatic habitat of considerable wildlife value and potential; and ponds that provide valuable habitat for various aquatic flora and fauna, with several old ponds, pre-dating the new town development.
- **Neighbourhood Nature:** Urban habitats and the built environment are critical in an increasingly urbanized Borough like Stevenage. Important species such as Song Thrush, House Sparrow, bats and Great Crested Newt can be found in residential gardens, and allotments can also provide a haven for wildlife.

The current BAP sets out 97 actions that demonstrate commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the town.

Individual actions range from the relatively simple, such as litter picking woodland, to more complex such as producing management plans for ancient hedgerows across the town, but all fit with the Council's aspirations to improve the sustainability and quality of its open spaces.

Delivery against the action plan is overseen by the BAP Steering Group – comprising Council officers, the Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration, and Conservation Manager from Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Habitat improvements delivered in the Town Centre Gardens include:

- Planting of a new hedge and trees
- Hedgerow improvements
- Installation of nest boxes
- Managing some areas of grassland as meadow

6.6.2 Wildlife Partners

The Council has partnered with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust for over ten years. However, we also liaise with several other local wildlife organisations, including:

- Butterfly Conservation has provided the Green Space Volunteers training who undertake butterfly surveys to Stevenage sites. The annual results are reported back to them to help inform the local, regional and national picture.
- Herts & Middlesex Bat Group attend some of our community events to raise awareness of bats. They also lead bat walks, organised by the council, each summer.
- North Herts Beekeepers Association have kept beehives at Fairlands Valley Park and regularly attend our community events to raise awareness of bees and the need for pollinator-friendly environments
- Herts Environmental Records Centre have supported our Volunteer Wardens at Shackledell Grassland in their training to survey and identify crickets and grasshoppers.

6.6.3 Meadow Management

A number of parkland areas have been left unmown to grow long during the summer months. Not cutting the grass throughout the summer has allowed native wildflowers to flourish, which has encouraged greater numbers of butterflies and bees. In addition, some of the meadows act as corridors, enabling wildlife to move around the town more easily.

The meadow areas are cut once or twice a year in rotation, with all arisings removed to promote the depletion of nutrients.

Green Space volunteers have carried out works to meadow areas across the town to help improve public awareness of meadow areas on some sites by cultivating and sowing a mixture of annual and perennial wildflower seeds.

6.3.4 Habitats

Green Space volunteers have assembled and installed nest boxes at prime locations in the park, but this is to be revisited as part of this document.

Volunteers have also created various habitats such as new hedges, trees and meadows. The pond also provides for a range of aquatic life and waterfowl.

6.3.5 Wildlife Surveys

Butterfly Conservation – each year some of the Green Space Volunteers participate in butterfly surveys throughout the town within various meadow sites. The council commissions Butterfly Conservation to provide training on carrying out the survey. The results each year are forwarded to Butterfly Conservation to help inform their local, regional and national monitoring.

Freshwater Habitats Trust: Green Space Volunteers have delivered pond dipping activity events for the local community. The results from this were fed into the Freshwater Habitats Trust 'Big Pond Dip' records. In 2014 the results were recorded as being 'good'.

6.7 Climate Emergency

On 12 June 2019, Stevenage Borough Council declared a climate emergency. This refers to the need to increase efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions urgently. A new Climate Change Strategy is being developed as part of this declaration.

Stevenage Borough Council has set out an aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. The emerging Stevenage Climate Change Strategy will present the council's actions to reduce its own carbon footprint and engage Stevenage residents and businesses in an active joint cross-town commitment to Stevenage's contribution to climate change.

7 Marketing

The Council's communications pledge is:

We will communicate clearly, openly, accurately and regularly with our residents, with our partners, and with each other, in order to promote mutual understanding, and give a better service to the people of Stevenage.

7.1 Customer Satisfaction

Before 2013 the Council used GreenSTAT to gather user feedback about the park. This survey was very comprehensive, but few people were willing to spend the time to complete the lengthy questionnaire.

To seek meaningful feedback, the council developed its own, shorter, customer satisfaction survey. Initially, the survey was well used, and feedback was positive and informative.

However, the response rate has not been sufficient to provide any meaningful data in recent years. The council wants to encourage feedback from its park visitors to help inform the performance, future developments and priorities for the Town Centre Gardens.

Therefore, we plan to carry out a review and explore ways the Council can improve its gathering of meaningful, up-to-date information from parks users.

7.2 Web Pages & Social Media

Both the Council's web pages and social media accounts are managed and monitored by the Communications Team. A dedicated Communications Officer identified for Stevenage Direct Services helps manage publicity, publications, press, social media, promotions, campaigns, etc. for the business unit.

The Council's website for the park provides information on:

- The history of the park
- Events and activities
- Feeding the ducks and geese
- Contact details
- Reporting form
- Links to Green Space Volunteer pages

A copy of this management plan can also be found on the website.

Social Media

Social media plays a vital part in promoting and communicating relevant messages about the park.

The Council has three main social media accounts:

- Facebook
[@stevenageboroughcouncil](#)
- Twitter
[@StevenageBC](#)
- Instagram
[@stevenageboroughcouncil](#)

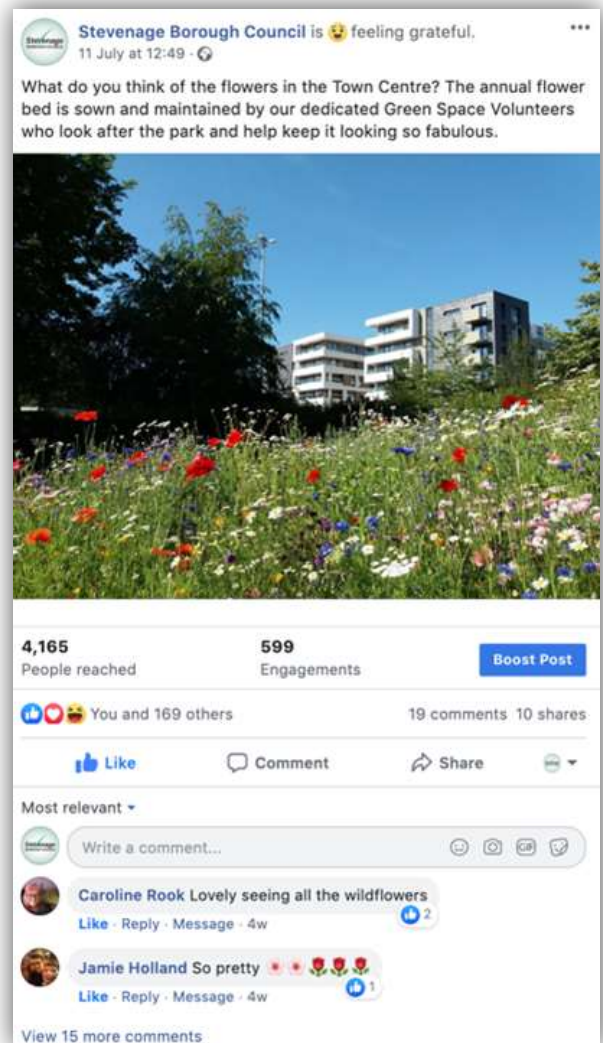
Social media provides a platform for people to raise concerns or report issues they may have found in the park.

During 2019, Council Officers from SDS, with support from the Communications Team, undertook significantly enhanced levels of social media posts to promote the work of the Council and the wonderful green spaces it has to offer.

Previous social media engagement was minimal but now has one of the best engagements with the social media following.

The recent social media post from July 2019 (shown right) shows the high reach that social media posts can achieve. This highlights the usefulness of social media in communicating and promoting messages to park visitors.

The Action Plan identifies the need to regularly review and improve information relating to the park.



7.3 ParksHerts



ParksHerts is an innovative, mobile-first website application acting as a single information point for over a hundred of Hertfordshire's parks and green spaces, irrespective of administrative ownership.

It provides a way for people to discover and enjoy sites they know and those they haven't yet discovered.

Funding for the project was secured from Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, all ten Hertfordshire District/Borough Councils and one Parish Council.

Hertsmere Borough Council led the project on behalf of the partnering authorities. SBC received training from Hertsmere officers in 2017 on its use and how to update and add information to the application.

With help from Hertsmere, SBC now holds information about 11 of its parks on the ParksHerts application, including the Town Centre Gardens. A screenshot of the landing page for the Town Centre Gardens can be found in the appendix. The Environmental Performance and Development Team are responsible for keeping the information about the park up-to-date through the simple back office administration system. The application also shows useful visiting information which may be used to assist future management decisions for the park.

The ParksHerts project demonstrates successful cross-county working to provide a great tool to encourage and promote park use.

<https://www.parksherts.co.uk/parks/view/town-centre-gardens>

7.4 Event Promotion

The Council ensures that all events and activities are promoted as widely as possible within the local community. A range of opportunities is available for the promotion of events, including:

- Notice boards
- Social media
- Chronicle - a free Council magazine delivered to every household in Stevenage five times a year
- Local press
- Banners and flyers
- ParksHerts events page
- Local radio

7.5 Signage

There is prominent signage at the main entrances to the Gardens, with noticeboards and interpretation signage situated throughout the site providing further information on events, activities, and heritage of the site.

Waymarking signage to the park can be found in the town centre. Recent development improvements in the town have improved the signage and entrance approach to the park from Park Place.

7.6 Banners & Posters

The Council has its in-house Print and Design Team that produces a range of materials for use in the marketing and promotion of the site. You can find example events posters in the appendix.

There are also various banners and display boards that have been designed. These are:

- Flag banners – several large flag banners are used at events and activities to promote the Green Space Volunteers and SBC. These can be spiked into soft ground or attached to their legs.
- Pull up banners – A full range of pull up banners are quick and easy to set up. There are pull up banners showing information on:
 - The Site
 - Green Space Volunteers
 - Each habitat type identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan
 - ParksHerts
- Daneshill posters displays – there are a small number of large display boards situated in the lobby of the main Council offices at Daneshill House. These have been used to show photographs and information about the site. They hold posters A1 in size

8 Monitoring and Review

For a management plan to be effective, the document must remain current and relevant. To ensure that the management plan for the Town Centre Gardens achieves its objectives and continues to meet the needs and aspirations of the community, the following monitoring mechanisms will be implemented:

8.1 Every Five Years

- The whole management plan will be reviewed and revised
- A condition survey will be undertaken for the tree stock, to inform the planned maintenance programme

8.2 Annually

- Seek to retain Green Flag status annually
- Maintain a photographic record
- Maintain a comprehensive record of all works undertaken within the Park, including planting plans and construction details
- Review of the work plan for the previous year to confirm that all actions have been completed, and to make explanatory notes if some actions have not been achieved
- Develop the work plan for the following year
- Review of the five-year work plan, making additions and amendments as appropriate
- Undertake a condition survey of all plant and equipment within the Park
- Undertake Risk Assessments to ensure that the Park remains safe and secure
- Monitor the condition of all permanent planting to inform future management requirements, including replacement where appropriate
- Monitor and record the number and nature of formal events taking place within the Park
- Monitor customer satisfaction
- Monitor income and expenditure against annual budgets

8.3 Monthly

- Monitor the quality of work, by Council operational teams or voluntary / partner groups, against specifications to ensure that standards are being maintained
- Monthly expenditure to be monitored against the annual budget

9 Appendices

Appendix 1	Feedback to Green Flag Judges Comments 2018/19
Appendix 2	The Council
Appendix 3	The Wider Context
Appendix 4	Competency Framework Make-up
Appendix 5	Historical Context & Recent Improvements
Appendix 6	Green Space Volunteer Information
Appendix 7	Premises Licence
Appendix 8	Summary of Maintenance Operations
Appendix 9	Health & Safety & Risk Management
Appendix 10	Promotional Material

Appendix 1: Green Flag Judges Comments and Feedback 2020/21



Green Flag Award 2020

Name of Site: Town Centre Gardens

Managing Organisation: Stevenage Borough Council

Desk Assessment Feedback (Management Plan and supporting documentation)

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	SBC Response
Presentation	<p>Recent update to Management Plan addressing some of the comments from previous assessments.</p> <p>Appendix 5 is well structured and adds a great deal of value to the MP.</p> <p>Statements of support on page 5 are incredibly beneficial and powerful.</p>	<p>Section 4 is much more suited as an Appendix. Appending 8 is an underdeveloped Section 4.</p> <p>Section 4 requires more development to better provide the management aims/objectives/prescriptions for the site.</p>	<p>Noted – further layout alternations of the MP to be considered further upon review.</p>
Health, Safety & Security	<p>In general aspects covered sufficiently.</p>	<p>Crime and personal safety are still not addressed sufficiently despite comments to suggest it has been. Focus should be on what measures are in place, secured by design principles and proactive/reactive safety campaigns.</p> <p>Timing would not have aligned with the submission however thought should be given to how the plan responds to COVID-19 and future pandemics.</p>	<p>Noted – some additional information added</p> <p>Due to the COVID pandemic, we are considering methods to respond to help control infection in line with PHE</p>
Maintenance of equipment,	<p>Maintenance of some assets are</p>	<p>This section requires significant</p>	<p>Noted - Appendix 8 and</p>

<p>buildings & landscape</p>	<p>described and useful KPI's for some aspects such as Graffiti included.</p>	<p>development to provide greater clarity on the management and maintenance activities.</p> <p>This section should be site specific and tailored to delivering the management aims/objectives rather than applying the Borough wide maintenance specification, e.g. what is the meadow management regime for TCG in isolation.</p> <p>Aquatic environs are a key feature/asset and there are no prescribed management activities beyond a litter pick. A number of actions in the 5-year plan are focussed on aquatic environs with no background as to why or how this will be achieved.</p> <p>Herbicide approach conflicts with Section 6.3.3. Application of herbicide to fence lines is considered outdated.</p> <p>Frequency of tree survey is questionable on a 5-year cycle. How would this address H&S concerns or respond to tree health issues/pest/disease which would develop/worsen in this period.</p> <p>A plan locating the assets and quantities would be beneficial and a work plan detailed the maintenance scheduling and frequencies e.g. meadow management plan.</p>	<p>Section 4 updated</p> <p>Further information has been provided to inform the management and maintenance of the pond.</p> <p>MP updated - We no longer undertake obstacle spraying.</p> <p>A map showing areas of meadow and grass maintenance has been added.</p> <p>Trees are maintained routinely on a 3-year cycle, during which if any concerns or issues arise, they are dealt with accordingly.</p>
<p>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</p>	<p>Sufficiently developed on a frequency basis.</p>	<p>Is there a reactive service in place for litter issues/overflowing bins/fly tipping?</p>	<p>Issues can be reported via 'Report It' on the SBC website. This supersedes FixMyStreet, as noted in section 4.2. Regular Green Space Volunteer presence and daily cleansing mean regular and direct reporting of issues as they arise.</p>
<p>Environmental Management</p>	<p>Described in the strategic context.</p>	<p>Approach to use of herbicides needs development. Section 6.3.3 state minimal use yet management and maintenance schedules 3x applications.</p>	<p>We no longer undertake obstacle spraying. MP updated.</p> <p>Foam stream trialled but not</p>

		<p>Good to see foam stream trialled however no mention of taking this forward in the action plan.</p> <p>Peat free needs to extend to supply of containerised plant material</p>	<p>economically viable at this stage. Alternatives being explored.</p> <p>Noted for peat-free stock</p>
Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage	<p>Sufficiently developed. Appendix 5 is well structured and adds a great deal of value.</p>	<p>The management aims here should feed into Section 4 to ensure the aims and objectives are delivered. The 'how' is not sufficiently developed.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
Community Involvement	<p>Sufficiently developed and some great initiatives. Pleasing to see that despite the FoG disbanding that the active members have the volunteer's route to maintain a connection and participate.</p> <p>The value of volunteering to the park is understated!</p>		
Marketing & Communication	<p>Sufficiently developed and covers all aspects.</p>		
Overall management	<p>The plan meets the requirements in terms of structure and many sections sufficiently developed.</p>	<p>Management and maintenance prescriptions are too generalised and much of the developed aims and objectives lack the 'how'. This was identified in previous assessments and needs to be addressed as part of the annual review.</p> <p>Activity plan requires a line for the annual review of the MP.</p>	<p>Noted – some changes have been made to the management plan</p>

Additional comments

The significance of challenges and opportunities in the next 5-10 years stated in the 'Forward' are not focussed on or discussed. Is the plan and aims/objectives sufficiently developed and agile enough to respond to these challenges.

Field Assessment Feedback

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
A Welcoming Place		
Healthy, Safe and Secure		
Well Maintained and Clean		
Environmental Management		
Biodiversity Landscape and Heritage		
Community Involvement		
Marketing and Communication		
Management		
Additional Comments		

Appendix 2: The Council

2.1 A Mission and Vision for Stevenage

The Council has adopted a mission statement of:

Council and community working together to improve the quality of life.

And the Council's vision is:

A town we can be proud of, a place people want to be.

These statements drive the Council's community leader and service provider roles. They are based on the view that the Council should be building partnerships with the people who live, work, and visit Stevenage to improve the quality of life for everyone.

The Council has adopted a framework of values to ensure that it continues to provide high-quality services and show its commitment to working in partnership with the community. These values indicate the Council's commitment to the community it serves by recognising the importance of:

- Putting people first
- Delivering value for money services
- Working together, both as one organisation and in partnership with other agencies as appropriate.

2.2 The Political Structure

2.2.1 The Constitution

In October 2001, the Council adopted a Constitution with a Leader and Executive model for its Member-level decision-making structure, under the Local Government Act 2000.

2.2.2 The Council

The Council is made up of 39 elected Members. It meets at least five times a year, including the Annual Council Meeting, in May, when the Mayor is elected and political appointments for the next municipal year are agreed. Specific matters are reserved for Council decision, including the Budget and Policy Framework of the authority.

Decisions that are not reserved for meetings of all councillors are taken by either the Council's Executive, headed by the Leader of the Council, or delegated by Council to one of its committees. The Council's Constitution also allows for some decisions to be taken by officers.

In 2011 Stevenage Borough Council formally declared itself a Co-operative Council. This means the council will:

- take a strong community leadership role
- work together with communities and partners to deliver services based on need
- empower communities to design, lead and (where appropriate) deliver services
- have a clear understanding with communities – this is what we do, this is what we will help you to do
- provide joined-up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer.

2.2.3 The Executive

The Executive meets every month and comprises the Leader of the Council, an Opposition Member and seven other Councillors from the majority group who have a specific area of responsibility or Portfolio. The Portfolio areas are:

- Environment and Regeneration
- Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Resources
- Community, Health and Older People
- Economy, Enterprise and Transport
- Housing.

Collectively the Executive take 'Key Decisions' as defined in the Council's Constitution. A 'Key Decision' may be described generally as one involving significant expenditure (or saving) or is substantial in affecting the community.

Individual Executive Members with portfolios may take 'Non-Key Decisions' relating to their specific area of responsibility. The Executive may also delegate decisions to officers of the Council.

2.2.4 Scrutiny

The Council established a Scrutiny Overview Committee to meet the requirements set out in the Local Government Act 2000. All decisions taken by the Executive are submitted to this Committee which may choose to review a decision and pass on comments to the Executive or call a decision in for further consideration by the Executive.

In addition to scrutinising decisions, the Scrutiny Overview Committee and its scrutiny topic groups may, as part of policy development work, pre-scrutinise proposals for future policies and services before Council, or Executive, taking any decisions.

Appendix 3: The Wider Context

3.1 National Context

There has been wide recognition of the value of good quality green spaces – to personal health and wellbeing, wildlife, and local economies etc. Some of the research, reports and initiatives supporting and promoting green space include:

- Biodiversity 2020 (DEFRA)
- Local Nature Partnerships (DEFRA)
- Community-Led Spaces: A guide for local authorities and community groups (CABE)
- Community Green: Using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health (CABE)
- National Policy Planning Framework (DCLG)
- Nature Improvement Areas (DEFRA)

3.2 Regional Context

3.2.1 Herts Sustainability Forum (HSF)

HSF is a county-wide strategic group of local authorities, third sector organisations and other partners working to raise awareness of environmental and sustainability issues across Hertfordshire. The Forum meets quarterly and aims to bring together decision makers to develop environmental policies for the benefit of Hertfordshire as a whole and to raise awareness of key sustainability issues.

3.2.2 Herts Waste Partnership (HWP)

HWP was formed in 1992, bringing together the ten boroughs and district councils in their capacity as waste collection authorities and the county council as the waste disposal authority. It is one of 50 such partnerships throughout the UK.

During 2017/18, the HWP dealt with approximately 513,000 tonnes of local authority collected waste at the cost of about £82.11 million.

In 2016, the HWP's remit was expanded to cover operation of the award winning Hertfordshire Fly Tipping Group, a multiagency task force which, in addition to Hertfordshire's local authorities, also includes the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Hertfordshire Constabulary, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency and the National Farmers' Union.

The Partnership is overseen by the HWP Member group, which is made up of elected councillors from each of the partners who hold the relevant portfolio for waste management.

The HWP has no authority over individual services and instead considers matters of strategic importance and opportunities for joint working. It makes recommendations about the long-term development of waste services in pursuit of:

- targets detailed in the 2007 Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy;
- objectives and principles detailed in the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership Agreement; and
- in response to legislative changes.

WasteAware is the public face of the HWP and concentrates on changing 'waste behaviour' by focusing on the 4Rs, reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery.

3.2.3 Parks Herts

ParksHerts is the collective name for the Hertfordshire Association of Cultural Officers Greenspace Management Group. This group comprises public sector managers representing the different organisations managing parks and green spaces in Hertfordshire, UK.

This group coordinated the ParksHerts Project, which provides a single web-based access point for information about Hertfordshire's parks and open spaces.

The project aims to encourage residents to make more of their valuable local space and visit parks they may not have previously explored. It also supports people to make getting outdoors part of their daily lives by finding places to enjoy and share with others.

Funding for the project was secured from Hertfordshire County Council Public Health and ten Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils. They have recognised the beneficial impact of parks and open spaces on both physical and mental health.

3.4 Local Context

Stevenage is different to its neighbouring districts. It is a medium-sized town of 87,700 residents set in a wealthy, semi-rural county. Still, unlike most other Hertfordshire districts, Stevenage has needs and problems usually associated with large, urban areas. As a result, there is a danger that the different needs of the Stevenage community are overlooked when presented to national, regional and county-level decision-makers.

Issues highlighted in Stevenage's Community Strategy include:

- Higher numbers of obese adults as a percentage of the population compared with Hertfordshire as a whole
- High levels of teenage pregnancy
- Numbers of children living in poverty
- Low educational attainment at GCSE level, and low numbers of graduates
- Higher numbers of smoking attributed deaths, compared with Hertfordshire as a whole.

As Britain's first new town, Stevenage is one of the outstanding achievements in urban development in post-war Britain, designed around six similarly sized neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were designed to be self-contained, each with schools, health facilities, shops, community centres and places of worship.

The new town pioneers had a clear vision of a town that would offer people a better quality of life, moving out of a London ravaged by war.

Whilst much of Stevenage's industrial heritage was based around the aeronautical industry, it is now home to a range of major high tech and pharmaceutical companies and the service sectors. One of the town's significant strengths is its strategic positioning, situated on the A1(M). It is home to the county's major railhead and well connected to three major airports; its transport links make it an excellent place to do business.

Despite Stevenage's ability to attract international, knowledge-based industries, recruiting skilled staff and management is a major problem, with employers identifying low career aspirations amongst young people as a barrier to recruiting residents, resulting in higher unemployment rates than surrounding districts.

3.4.1 Community Strategy

SoStevenage is our local partnership. It is made up of a wide range of public, private, voluntary and community organisations that have come together to work towards shared goals for Stevenage. SoStevenage is responsible for producing a community strategy and ensuring it is carried out.

SoStevenage has adopted five cooperative principles:

- The partnership as a strong community leader
- Working together with the community and other agencies to provide services based on needs
- Communities empowered to design and deliver services and play a role in their local community
- A clear understanding between the partnership and our communities – this is what we do, this is what we will help you to do
- Joined-up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer.

With particular regard to the environment, the strategy sets out:

What local people have told us:

- they want to volunteer, but they don't know where to start
- they aren't regularly physically active
- they value the green spaces and parks in the town.

What SoStevenage will do:

- support and encourage volunteering
- make healthy eating and physical activity more accessible.
- ensure clean and green spaces.

What residents can do:

- participate in their local community through volunteering
- make use of the town's open spaces and facilities
- respect their environment and act to protect it.

Appendix 4: Competency Framework Make Up

The framework is made up of 10 competencies:

Strategic Cluster: Setting Direction

1. Seeing the Big Picture

Seeing the big picture is about understanding how your role contributes and supports organisational objectives and the wider public needs and being a strong community leader.

2. Effective Decision Making

Effective decision making is about being able to make objective evidence based decisions, whilst being creative and innovative.

3. Adaptable to Change

Being flexible and adaptable to change is about embracing and understanding the need to respond to both internal and external challenges, in a creative and innovative manner, and delivering best value for money.

Strategic Cluster: Engaging People

4. Communicating and Engaging

Communicating and engaging is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It is about being open and transparent, valuing diversity and having a pride and passion in where we work and empowering communities.

5. Collaboration

Collaborative working is about joined-up and accessible services creating and maintaining positive and professional working relationships with a wide range of internal and external partners and stakeholders. It involves building rapport and strong working relationships to provide excellent services.

6. Effective Performance

Effective performance is about having a strong focus on continuous learning for you, others and the organisation, it about creating a learning and knowledge culture across the Council to inform future plans and support transformational change.

Strategic Cluster: Delivering Results

7. Financial Awareness

Achieving financial security is about maintaining an economic, long term focus in all our activities and services that offer value for money. For all it's about having a financial, commercial and sustainable mind-set to ensure activities deliver value for money and added value.

8. Customer Focussed

Managing a quality service is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to continuously improve the quality of service focussed on the customer, with a right first time approach and being solution focussed, minimising customer handoffs. It's also about modelling professional excellence.

9. Delivering at Pace

Delivering at pace is about delivering timely and quality outcome's, and taking responsibility and accountability. It is about an energetic approach and innovative and creative thinking to ensure we adopt the most effective and efficient process and systems for delivery.

10. Learning from Delivering

Learning from delivering is about reflecting and identifying the quality of performance, recognising high performance and challenging areas where performance could be improved. This is about making evidenced based decisions to improve organisational and individual performance and taking responsibility for our own individual and organisational learning.

Appendix 5: Historical Context & Recent Improvements

5.1 Stevenage

Stevenage was the UK's first New Town. In 1946, following the New Town's Act, six new residential neighbourhoods were planned around the old town of Stevenage. Each of these areas was to house up to 12,000 people and include their own church, schools, shops, and community facilities.

The first Master Plan for Stevenage was submitted in 1946 and revised in 1949. Clifford Holiday, Chief Architect and Planner for the Development Corporation, wanted to link all neighbourhoods of Stevenage through a public space network to:

"...form a continuous system rather than a series of isolated grounds and parks. It will be possible to pass on foot from one part of the town to another scarcely using a road by means of gardens, commons, parks and Fairlands Valley."

It had initially been intended to include a park and water gardens within the town centre area to provide relaxation and a meeting place for visitors and workers. However, this proved impossible because of the constraints of culverting the Stevenage Brook and the location of St George's Way, which meant that the Town Centre Gardens, swimming pool and other amenities became separated from the actual town centre.

5.2 Town Centre Gardens

Before the arrival of Stevenage New Town, the area, now known as the Town Centre Gardens, was a series of fields that featured 'Bedwell Plash' - a natural spring that local farmers used at Bedwell Farm to water their livestock.

5.2.1 The Original Concept

The town centre was initially designed with a traditional geometric layout – buildings arranged in rectangular blocks interspersed with small parks. However, the design of the Town Gardens was unresolved, with only an arrangement of paths and some existing trees shown.



5.2.2 Town Centre Gardens, November 1949

In 1949 the master plan was revised. It moved from providing lots of green space throughout the town centre to now providing it within just one location – the Town Centre Gardens.

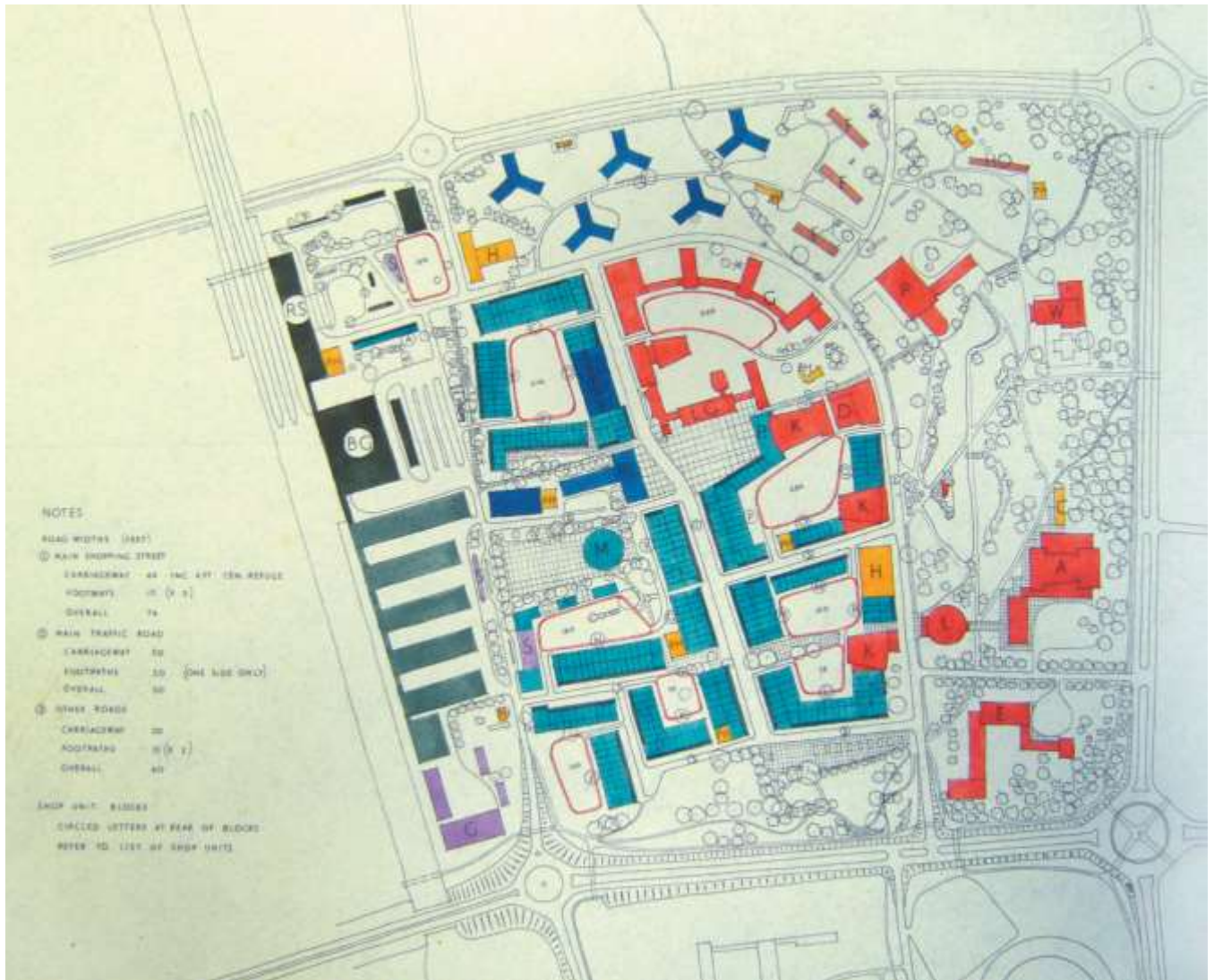
An early vision for the Town Centre Gardens indicates parkland landscape in some detail:

- Extensive tree planting was shown to the east and south of the site
- Meandering paths weave across the site
- Open grassed areas with smaller tree groups and shrub planting
- A linear lake with curving edges along the west bank.



5.2.3 Town Centre Gardens, December 1949

The plans were revised for a second time at the end of 1949. These plans indicated the proposed buildings, which included a pavilion (P), an arts centre (A), a central library (L), a place of worship (W) to be set within the designed landscape. The main arterial roads run to the north, east and south of the Gardens, while a feeder road between the Gardens and the town centre provides access to car parks without separating the two spaces.



5.2.4 The Implemented Gardens, 1961

In 1955 the development of the town centre and Bedwell began. The pond, fed by the natural spring, was created. There was still no formal plan for the Town Centre Gardens, however in 1959 / 1960, the plans for the Gardens were finalised by local consultant landscape architect George Patterson, and in the summer of 1961, the Town Centre Gardens were completed.



The Gardens failed to fulfil the original concept for cultural and community potential:

- Due to the relocation of St George's Way to the west of the site, the Gardens have not become entirely intrinsic to the town centre.
- The swimming pool and youth centre were also isolated from the town centre area.

The regeneration projects for the Gardens, and the town centre went some way in correcting this scenario.

5.2.5 The 1960s–1970s

In June 1967, the Sensory Gardens for the Blind were opened by Dame Evelyn Denington, Chairwoman of the Stevenage Development Corporation, George Balderstone, Chairman of the Stevenage Urban District Council, and Harold Wilson, the then Prime Minister.

During the late 1960s / early 1970s, St. Georges Way was converted into a dual carriageway. Formal planted beds between the road and the pond were created during the new road layout.

The Development Corporation commissioned William Mitchell, an internationally renowned sculptor, to provide artworks that were installed to the underpasses in 1973.



On 4 April 1977, the Town Centre Gardens was in the last package of land handed over, from the Development Corporation to the Borough Council. The exchange was agreed on the condition that the Gardens are protected against future development.

5.2.6 1980's

A timber bridge was installed to the southern section of the pond, sometime between 1978 and 1981, as part of introducing some new paths across the Gardens.

David Norris was commissioned for a sculptural water feature in the pond. Subsequently, in 1981, the 'Women & Doves' fountain was installed.

During the mid-1980s, the formal planting beds were removed along St. Georges Way.

A play area was installed within the Town Centre Gardens in 1989/1990. It was sited close to the Brent Court flats to serve the residents of the tower blocks best.

5.2.7 1996-1998

In an attempt to relieve some of the water quality concerns, 75% of the fish stock was removed during 1996. To improve the water flow, throughout the pond, the outlet culvert relocated to the southern tip of the pond.



Mounding and complimentary shrub planting were carried out to enhance the appearance of the Gardens entrance from the town centre underpass.

5.2.8 2002

The high volume of silt within the pond had dramatically reduced the water depth, and the pond had become unattractive and unhealthy. Following advice from consultants, the pond was drained down, and approximately 60% of the silt was removed. New pumps were installed to the fountains, and electronic algae control devices were installed. The quality of the pond water was improved as a result.

5.2.9 2003–2004

To commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, an avenue of trees were planted along the path through the northern section of the Gardens. Unfortunately, the trees were severely vandalised shortly after being planted.

5.2.10 2006

Stevenage Borough Council appointed consultants Green Heart Partnership (GHP) and HTA Landscape Design (HTA) to undertake consultation and master planning for the Town Centre Gardens.

In July 2006, GHP undertook an arts-led community consultation (Perception AREA) to determine interest and inform the HLF and masterplan brief.

The autumn of 2006 saw HTA undertake some placemaking workshops.



5.2.11 2008 – Phase 1 Regeneration of the Gardens

Following the receipt of Growth Area Funding, the Council began to develop Phase 1 of the Town Centre Gardens regeneration project, which encompassed the northern section of the site.

The project focussed on simplifying the footpath network and creating a more extensive, improved open space that could better accommodate community events:

- The three footpaths that previously crossed this space were removed, along with the vandalised Holocaust Memorial trees, and replaced with a single path transecting the green. All pathways were renewed and surfaced with resin bonded gravel to provide a more natural feel to this informal open space. A Breedon gravel circuit path was provided around the periphery of the site.



- A new suite of lights and furniture were selected to inform this and future phases of the regeneration project. Through consultation, the local community helped to identify appropriate locations for the new seating. In addition, new entrance signs of polished concrete were installed at the entrances to this section of the Gardens.
- Landscape improvements within Phase 1 sought to enhance the understated entrances of the site through the clearance of overgrown scrub and planting of herbaceous borders.
- An outer ring of semi-mature oaks (*Quercus palustris*) was planted to structurally denote the open space and compensate for the loss of the Memorial trees.
- Along the boundary, with the swimming pool, a wildflower meadow area was planted to develop the site's diversity.



5.2.12 2010 – Phase 2 Regeneration of the Gardens

Following a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People programme, works began on-site in July 2010 to regenerate the southern and more formal areas of the Gardens. With funding from the Heritage Lottery - Parks for People programme improvements to the following areas was completed.

The Pond

All fish stock was netted, removed, and temporarily kept at a stock pond (at Shuttleworth College) until works were completed. The pond was totally drained, and all silt removed. With the exception of a small quantity of silt which was used to form the growing medium for marginal planting areas, the remainder was removed from the site.

Rock rolls were used to provide a planting zone for marginal and aquatic plants.

The original Oak piles and revetments were removed and replaced with 6-metre steel 'H' piles, which were driven into a depth of 5 metres to form the bearing supports for concrete infill panels. All structural detail was then clad with new oak timbers to mirror the original pond edge design.

Selected pieces of the old Oak revetments were reused to make nesting platforms for the resident Moorhens.

Although ornate in design, the timber bridge installed in the 1980s, was out of scale with the rest of the water feature. It also obstructed the views down the length of the pond and was difficult for those in wheelchairs/pushchairs to access. Therefore, this bridge was removed and replaced with a unique slimline pre-stressed 23-tonne granite bridge, installed on newly aligned abutments - the alignment of the new bridge matched that of the serving footpaths rather than the shortest distance across the pond. The new bridge was manufactured using the latest engineering technology and, at the time, was the only one of its type in the UK. The bridge was furnished with powder-coated steel guardrails and finished with timber handrails. LED strip lights installed on the underside of the bridge provide feature lighting.

David Norris, the original sculptor of the Women and Doves statue, was on hand to oversee the removal and restoration by the foundry. He quickly identified that four of the original eight doves were missing, presumably vandalised in the past. Casts were made of the remaining doves to replace those that were missing. The internal pipework and fountain heads were renewed, and the statue was externally cleaned and returned to its original location. The plinth for the statue has been set lower into the water than the original design to create the effect of the statue standing on the water's surface. New pumps were installed to service the fountain, and new air pumps provided additional aeration along the length of the pond.

The Building

The project also included a new small building that incorporated toilet provision for the public and a storage area. The store provides a base for the former Community Parks Officer to work from and store tools and equipment for volunteers working within the Gardens.

The building is of steel frame construction with bespoke concrete panels that incorporate a leaf design inlay – see below.



Garden Rooms

The area formally known locally as the 'Blind Garden' was cleared, and the original brick raised planters were removed. In their place, three bespoke polished concrete planters were installed. Each planter was fabricated off-site and is made up of 9 interlocking sections to form a triangular shape. Each container was planted with a range of perennial plants providing sensory qualities – seasonal colours, smell, sound, and texture.

Raised ground levels were created along the eastern boundary of the Garden Rooms to make sense of separation from the main area of the Gardens whilst still allowing views and site lines across the Gardens. The raised levels are retained by a bespoke sectional polished concrete wall, providing an opportunity for informal seating. However, the wall has also been finished in such a way as to deter skateboarders.

Within the Garden Rooms, two beds are set at ground level to provide seasonal colour using spring and summer bedding. North Herts College undertook planting and maintenance of the beds during term time, whilst the Community Park Officer and volunteers maintained the beds at other times.

Play Area

The play area was significantly enlarged and now provides a range of natural play opportunities. The existing trees within the original play area were maintained as, although not good quality specimens, local children liked playing in and around these features.

New timber equipment suitable for all age ranges was installed, including cradle and flat swings, talk tubes, rockers and hammocks. In addition, ground contouring has provided suitable embankments for mound slides, scramble nets, and informal seating.

Hard Surfacing

Direct footpaths across the site were resurfaced with new two-colour flag paving and edgings laid onto an enhanced sub base for stability. Some footpaths were also realigned to improve the perspective across the Gardens and to complement the landscape. The surfacing around the pond edge was replaced with resin bonded gravel.

Furniture

The old seats and bins were removed and, where possible, reused at other sites in the town. New furniture was installed within the Gardens to provide continuity with design, style and purpose across the site. New bins were selected to deter access by wildlife – an issue that had previously led to litter in the Gardens.

New interpretation and directional signage were installed to allow visitors to understand the history of the Gardens and improve the routes across the site.

Lighting

All light columns and their locations were designed to maximise their performance and enhance the experience and safety of walking through the site at night. Three strategically placed columns have been designed to accommodate temporary CCTV should the need arise in the future.

New feature-effect lighting has been added to provide up-lighting to the Women and Doves statue and the building, while down lighting, from the bridge illuminates the water beneath.

Landscape

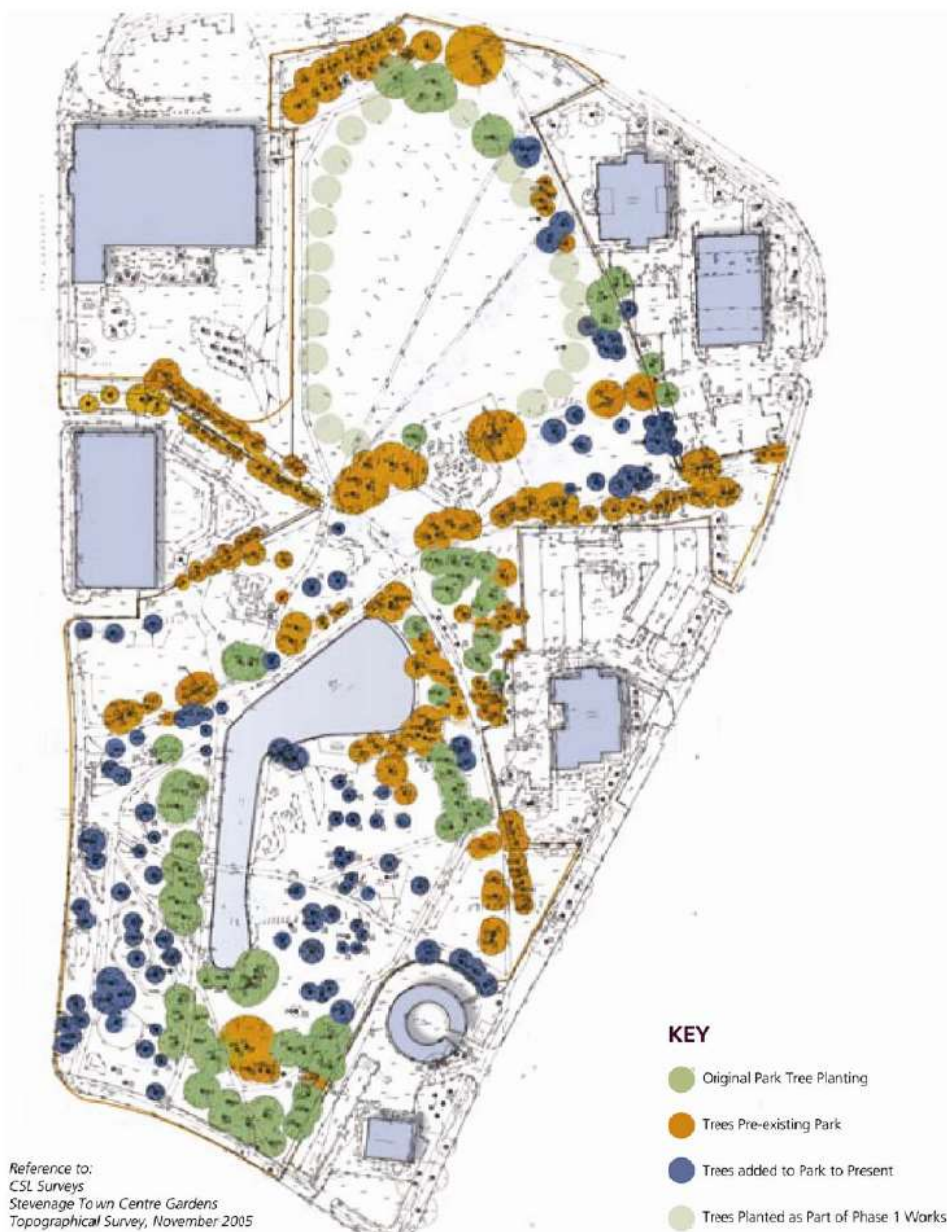
Some of the trees and many of the shrub beds that had been introduced to the site since the original implementation were removed in order to restore the Gardens to the original design concept by Gordon Patterson, 1961.

The main grass areas were reinstated with turf, and areas on the fringe of the works were reinstated with a grass seed mix. Grass areas on the periphery of the Gardens were underplanted with a spring flowering bulb mix of Crocus, Muscari and Narcissus.

With the exception of the two seasonal bedding displays, most of the new planting within the Gardens consists of perennial plants with weed suppressant matting and mulch.

Trees

The plan shown below indicates the succession of tree planting that has taken place in the Gardens during the past 50 years.



During the regeneration project works around 50 trees were removed in an attempt to restore the original design concept from 1961. However, some specimens from the more recent tree-planting were retained. In addition, 18 new trees (primarily Prunus and Maple species) were planted to replace trees either removed or lost before and/or during the regeneration works or to enhance the structural features of the Gardens.

Services

Two mains water points were installed to provide access to running water for irrigation or event purposes. Two mains electric points were also installed to enable access to an electricity supply to support future events.

5.2.13 The Friends of the Town Centre Gardens

The Friends Group first came together in late 2008 and comprised mainly of Bedwell residents, but others from Pin Green also joined. The Friends played a role in organising and delivering events, fundraising and maintaining the Gardens.

Between 2010-2015, the Friends benefitted from the support of a Community Parks Officer which the Heritage Lottery Fund funded.

With the combined loss of the Community Parks Officer post and with no successor for the group's Chair, the Friends decided to dissolve the group in 2018 and spend the remaining funds on improvements to the Gardens.

As most of the remaining members were active Green Space Volunteers, they decided to focus on the garden maintenance activities under the Lead Volunteer scheme.

5.3 Recent Improvements

2015

Wildlife Area

It was identified by the Council, park users and volunteers that the strip of land next to the old garage block near Brent Court required some considerable attention as it was attracting unfavourable activities.

In collaboration with volunteers, the Council drew up a plan to address the area and identified its potential for wildlife. During the winter months of 2015/16, the Council ran a series of additional Green Space volunteer sessions on Thursdays to deliver the project. Works included a considerable effort of scrub and tree clearance.

The Council were successfully granted 420 trees for the Woodland Trust, which enabled a hedge and wooded area to be planted around the



perimeter of the project area.

The area now has a more natural and open feel and a more regular management regime that has successfully deterred antisocial behaviour.

New Palisade Fencing

The Council became increasingly aware of complaints and issues of littering, vandalism, graffiti and antisocial behaviour in Garden Rooms & Sensory Garden area during the summer months. A key concern was that mopeds and perpetrators were accessing the Gardens through the hedge next to the youth centre, exacerbating the damage.

Working with the police and the Community Safety Team, a mobile CCTV camera was installed on one of the nearby lamp posts to keep an eye on activity.

Additionally, a section of 1.8-metre high steel palisade fence was erected to deter access and protect the hornbeam hedge. The fence is powder-coated to the colour of Anthracite Grey, which is in keeping with the park's colour scheme.

Since its erection, vandalism, littering, and graffiti have significantly reduced in the park.

2016

The Friends of the Town Centre Gardens applied to local councillors to fund replacement roses to the bank next to the underpass, which was noted to be struggling.

Working with the Friends and local rose growing experts, the funding provided enabled the roses to be replaced with more suitable and hardy varieties. Some old roses were re-planted into the former North Herts College flower bed.

The Friends and volunteers carried out the planting with support from the Council.

2017

New benches, bins and picnic tables

The Friends Group identified a need for additional seating and picnic tables within the park at specific points.

They were awarded £10,000 when their bid to the Tesco Bags of Help fund was successful. The Bags of Help Scheme provided local community groups with an opportunity to bid for the funding of local causes. Funding was generated via the introduction of the plastic bag charge.

Three new DAE Montseny benches, two stainless steel picnic tables and three bins were installed in the park.

The Friends had an informal unveiling of the benches for which they invited the store manager



from the local Tesco.

Crocus Bulb Planting

With support from the Rotary Club, the Council worked with Broombarne School, where children and teachers planted some 1000 crocus corms in the Gardens. The planting coincided with World Polio Day and the End Polio Now Campaign. The purple crocus signifies the purple shot/injection given to children to vaccinate against polio.



2018

New fountain water feature

It was noticed that the 'Women and Doves' water feature was no longer functioning as it should and that the pressure from the pump was causing damage to the statue.

As such, the Council procured a new water feature that could utilise the same pumping system whilst also protecting the significantly important statue.

A new ring was constructed and secured around the base of the statue just below the water to remain invisible. Ten water jets just poking up from the water now spray outwards, creating an attractive 'crown' effect of water. Two of these jets are maintained and positioned to spray water higher over the doves and hands to imitate the original fountain design.

The fountain is maintained monthly and provides an attractive central feature all year round.



2019

Bench slats timber replacements

Many of the Montseny bench timber slats showed decay, damage, and wear. With support from the Green Space Volunteers, all the slats were replaced with new FSC Iroko hardwood timbers. Slats were replaced on 15 Benches and eight armchairs,



and the replacements made a vast improvement to the invitingness of the park.

Hedge improvements by volunteers

Volunteers and Council Officers identified that improvements to the mature hedge close to the park's building could be undertaken. As such, volunteers applied and were awarded a small hedge pack to help fill in gaps in the hedge, whilst remaining Friends group bank funding was used to purchase complimenting spring bulbs as well as other replacement shrubs elsewhere in the park.



2020

The unforeseen Covid-19 pandemic seriously impacted the ability to deliver improvements and works within the park. However, Green Space Volunteers planted around 2000 bulbs during the winter to add a flush of additional colour in the spring. A collection of woodland bulbs, including Fritillaria, were planted to compliment the natural hedged areas in the park. Additionally, a mixture of dwarf Iris was planted in grassed areas to the east of the pond and the garden room borders.

An additional 500 bulbs of Crocus and Tulip were planted into the grassed area of the newly improved bed at the entrance from off Fairlands Way.

2021

Covid continued to impact the ability of volunteers and officers to deliver works and improvements within the Town Centre Gardens.

Green Space Volunteers apply to the 'Community Chest Fund' for £400 to deliver planting improvements to the shrub bed near the underpass. The Green Space Volunteers were successfully awarded with £1,000, which enabled planting improvements to two additional flower beds.

During late 2021 and early 2022, officers and volunteers planted 150 new lavender plants to the bank by the underpass to replace the failed and dying roses. A further 25 Hebe and 50 low growing Rosemary were planted at the Silam Road entrance, and additional ornamental grasses were added to the raised sound bed.



Appendix 6: Green Space Volunteer Information

6.1 Green Space Volunteer Programme 2019/20

Green Space Volunteers – Summer 2019

Date		Site	Event	Activities	Lead Person
May	1	Hampson Park		General tidy up	Sue
	12	Wellfield Wood		Access improvements	Cristian Pinta
	18	Fairlands Valley Park		Preparation and painting of bollards, gates	Joel Gainsford
	25	Martins Wood		Path improvements	Malcolm
June	5	Hampson Park		General tidy up	Sue
	9	King George V Playing Field	Stevenage Day		
	16	Lanterns Lane Wood		Access improvements & dead trees	Cristian Pinta
	22	Martins Wood		Path improvements	Malcolm
	22	Hampson Park	Midsummer Music		Gordon Drake
July	4	Town Centre Gardens		Gardens Blitz	Joel Gainsford
	11	Town Centre Gardens		Gardens Blitz	Joel Gainsford
	14	Roebuck Wood		Access improvements	Cristian Pinta

	27	Martins Wood		Path improvements	Malcolm
	31	Hampson Park	Teddy Bears Picnic		Gordon Drake
August	4	Ridlins & Loves Wood		Access improvements	Cristian Pinta
	17	Martins Wood		Path improvements	Malcolm
	28	Hampson Park	Sport in the Park		Gordon Drake
September	14	Shackledell Grassland		Access & drainage improvements	Joel Gainsford
	21	Martins Wood		Path improvements	Malcolm

Every Monday morning there is a session in the Town Centre Gardens from 9am

Green Space Volunteers –Autumn / Winter 2019/20

Every Monday morning there is a session in the Town Centre Gardens from 9.30am

Date		Site	Activities	Lead Person	Contact
September	11	Weston Road Cemetery	Meadow maintenance	Claire Skeels	07917 265562
	14	Shackledell Grassland	Access & drainage improvements	Joel Gainsford	07810 154815
	18	St Nicholas Churchyard	Meadow maintenance	Claire Skeels	07917 265562
	22	Martins Wood	Path improvements	Malcolm	
	29	Sishes Wood	Clearance of invasive species	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
October	6	Lanterns Lane	Felling of dead pines	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
	12	Hampson Park	Hedgerow management	Gordon Drake	07825 385771
	19	Ascot Crescent Pond	Clearance of pond vegetation	Joel Gainsford	07810 154815
	26	Shackledell Grassland	Scrub management	Jenny & David	
November	2	Hampson Park	Sowing of wildflower meadow	Sue	
	10	Whomerley Wood	Coppicing	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
	16	Shephalbury Park	Installation of bird boxes, bee logs, sowing of wildflower meadow	Gordon Drake	07825 385771
	23	Fairlands Valley Park	Sowing of wildflower meadow + cascade vegetation works	Joel Gainsford	07810 154815

	30	Shackledell Grassland	Scrub management	Jenny & David	
December	8	Marymead Springs	Construction of leaky dams	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
January	12	Whomerley Wood	Coppicing	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
	18	Whomerley Wood	Ride Management	Malcolm	
	25	Hampson Park		Sue	
February	9	Marymead Springs	Construction of leaky dams	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
	22	Whomerley Wood	Coppicing	Malcolm	
	29	Shackledell Grassland	Scrub management	Jenny & David	
March	1	Whomerley Wood	Coppicing	Cristian Pinta	07766 440230
	7	Town Centre Gardens	Management of vegetation adjacent to the pond	Joel Gainsford	07810 154815
	14	Hampson Park		Sue	

6.2 GSV Welcome Description



Welcome to Volunteering

What will I do as a green spaces volunteer?

You will join a team of green spaces staff and other volunteers to help undertake improvements to community green spaces around the town. There will be a opportunities for activities to different types of green space including parks, woodlands, ponds undertaking a broad variety of tasks which may include woodland ride maintenance and coppicing, bulb planting, ecological surveys, improvements to ponds, and the installation of bird and bat boxes.

A list of things that volunteers may be invited to do is included in this pack under 'Volunteer Role Description'.

How much spare time do I need to have?

Volunteers are welcome to attend for as much, or as little, time as they can afford. Whether you have one hour or four hours to volunteer, everybody's help is welcomed and valued.

Sessions will normally take place at weekends, although there may also be some opportunity for mid-week volunteering.

What skills or experience do I need?

We encourage and welcome people from all sectors of our community to volunteer and no previous experience is required. You just need to enjoy working in the outdoors and want to make a difference to the town where you live.

However, if you have any skills/experience/knowledge that you think might be useful please let us know as we may be able to develop new volunteering opportunities on the back of this.

What support will I get?

You will be supported and guided by staff working for the Councils Environmental Services or our partners. You will receive support and supervision from the member of staff with whom you are working. There will also be opportunities for you to talk about any great ideas you might have for volunteering tasks in other parts of the town.



6.3 Lead Volunteer Role Description



Role Description

Role	Lead Volunteer – Green Spaces Volunteer
SDU	Environmental Services
Accountable To (<i>Line Manager</i>):	Environmental Performance & Development Manager

1. Role Purpose

The Council is committed to providing and maintaining a high quality environment throughout the town.

Stevenage has some fantastic green spaces and associated facilities in Stevenage, and the Council is committed to encouraging and supporting people to look after them, enjoy them and feel safe in them. The Green Space Volunteers are a dedicated group of individuals who add value to what the Council is able to achieve in the green spaces.

As a Lead Volunteer you will be involved in leading volunteer activities which make a valuable contribution to community green spaces in Stevenage. Lead Volunteers may be involved in a range of tasks, although personal preferences and abilities will be taken into account.

2. Key Tasks and Duties of the Role

- To liaise with Council officers to agree the nature and extent of any proposed works
- To assist with the production and review of risk assessments
- To undertake any training identified as being appropriate or necessary by the Council
- To assist with the promotion of Green Space Volunteers
- To supervise and lead other Green Space Volunteers in the delivery of a range of practical conservation and habitat management
- To undertake a safety talk prior to each volunteering session to ensure that all volunteers:
 - understand what works they are undertaking and why
 - understand how to use the tools safely
 - are aware of potential site risks
 - wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - sign in and out for the activity
 - understand the opportunities for taking a break
- To wear the volunteer identification provided at all times while volunteering in the green spaces

- To ensure that all tools and equipment are returned in a clean and safe condition
- Report any concerns / issues to Council officers

P e r s o n S p e c i f i c a t i o n

Role: Lead Volunteer – Green Space Volunteers

	Required Attributes	Essential	Desirable	How to be Assessed
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities	Excellent communication skills	√		Application / Interview
	Ability to work as part of a team	√		Application / Interview
	Good interpersonal skills	√		Application / Interview
	Knowledge of the safe use of tools and equipment		√	Application / Interview
	Ability to develop risk assessments		√	Application
	Emergency First Aid certificate		√	Application
	Knowledge of practical conservation and habitat management		√	Application / Interview
	Ability to motivate volunteers		√	Application / Interview
	Ability to represent the Council and Green	√		Application

	Space Volunteers professionally in a range of circumstances			on / Interview
	Good literacy skills	√		Application / Interview
Experience	Experience of working within the Green Space Volunteers	√		Application
	Experience of supervising, supporting and leading volunteers.		√	Application / Interview

Appendix 7: Premises Licence

Environmental Health and Licensing

Head of Environmental Health and Licensing: Emma Rose

Licensing Act 2003

Premises Licence

SBCR0035

Part 1 - Premises Details

POSTAL ADDRESS OF PREMISES, OR IF NONE, ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP REFERENCE OR DESCRIPTION			
Town Centre Gardens			
St Georges Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1.			
WHERE THE LICENCE IS TIME LIMITED THE DATES			
Not applicable			
LICENSABLE ACTIVITIES AUTHORISED BY THE LICENCE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a performance of a play - an exhibition of a film - a performance of live music - any playing of recorded music - a performance of dance - entertainment of a similar description to that falling within a performance of live music, any playing of recorded music or a performance of dance - entertainment facilities for making music - entertainment facilities for dancing - entertainment of a similar description to that falling within entertainment facilities for making music or dancing 			
THE TIMES THE LICENCE AUTHORISES THE CARRYING OUT OF LICENSABLE ACTIVITIES			
Activity (and Area if applicable) Description	Time From	Time To	
A. Performance of a play \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
B. Exhibition of films \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
E. Performance of live music \ (Indoors & Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
F. Playing of recorded music \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
G. Performance of dance \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
H. Entertainment of a similar description to that falling within E, F, or G \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
I. Provision of facilities for making music \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
J. Provision of facilities for dancing \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	
K. Provision of facilities for entertainment of a similar description to that falling within I or J \ (Outdoors) Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm	

Environmental Health and Licensing

Head of Environmental Health and Licensing: Emma Rose

Licensing Act 2003

Premises Licence

SBCR0035

THE OPENING HOURS OF THE PREMISES

Description	Time From	Time To
Monday - Sunday	Midnight	11:59pm

WHERE THE LICENCE AUTHORISES SUPPLIES OF ALCOHOL WHETHER THESE ARE ON AND / OR OFF SUPPLIES

Part 2

NAME, (REGISTERED) ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL (WHERE RELEVANT) OF HOLDER OF PREMISES LICENCE

Stevenage Borough Council

Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 1HN.
Telephone 01438 242670

REGISTERED NUMBER OF HOLDER, FOR EXAMPLE COMPANY NUMBER, CHARITY NUMBER (WHERE APPLICABLE)

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 - MANDATORY CONDITIONS

Not applicable.

ANNEX 2 - CONDITIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE OPERATING SCHEDULE

- 1) A Risk Assessment will be carried out prior to each event within the grounds of the Town Centre Gardens to address, in particular, the licensing objectives.
- 2) The Risk Assessment will consider the safety of all staff, members of the public, visitors and persons at specific risk in case of fire or emergency. The findings will determine the Emergency Plan.
- 3) The Event Safety Guide: ISBN 0 7176-2453-6 will be used to assist the risk evaluations including the Emergency Plan, depending on the size and nature of each event. Other guidance documents may be used if agreed with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 4) Emergency Vehicle Access and Egress must be maintained for all events, and a Fire Appliance must be capable to get within 50 metres of any temporary structure (on a hard standing capable of taking the weight of a Fire Appliance in all weathers).
- 5) For larger events, a copy of the Risk Assessment and the Emergency Plan will be forwarded, a minimum of 2 calendar months prior to the event, to:
 - a) Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Fire Safety Department, for comment, and;
 - b) Station Commander, Stevenage Fire Station, for consultation and station familiarisation.
- 6) The Licence Holder will give written notice to the Licensing Authority, Police, Fire Authority and Environmental Health at least 2 calendar months prior to each event. That notice shall include an Operating Plan that addresses any risks identified, and a copy of the risk assessment for the event.
- 7) In the event that a Responsible Authority are of the opinion that the operating plan and associated Risk Assessment do not meet the Licensing Objectives of Public Safety and/or Prevention of Public Nuisance, written

Environmental Health and Licensing

Head of Environmental Health and Licensing: Emma Rose

Licensing Act 2003

Premises Licence

SBCR0035

ANNEXES continued ...

notice will be given to the Licence Holder by that Responsible Authority prior to the event date stating that the event shall not proceed. Once the Responsible Authority is satisfied that the Licensing Objectives have been met, the notice will be withdrawn.

- 8) The applicant will have regard to any recommendations or requirements of, in particular the Stevenage Borough Council - Safety Advisory Team and/or Licensing Officer(s), the Police and/or such other Responsible Authorities as make any comments, in relation to any individual licensable event or activity.
- 9) In addition to the consideration of the Prevention of Crime and Disorder within the Risk Assessment process and subsequent operating plan, adequate ratios of Security Industry Authority licensed staff to numbers of persons attending will be employed and deployed at any licensable event or activity.
- 10) Police recommendations and current guidance and best practice will be followed in relation to ratios and use of security staff.
- 11) Risk assessments will be provided, which include fire and evacuation procedures; stewarding and crowd control arrangements.
- 12) Conditions of hire for other organisations require confirmation that: -
 - a) Rides and sideshows receive an annual safety inspection;
 - b) Rides and sideshows are erected by experienced and trained crew;
 - c) Risk Assessments are provided for all rides and sideshows, which include fire and evacuation procedures, arrangements for emergency lighting in the event of a power failure, stewarding and crowd control arrangements;
 - d) Periodic checks conducted to identify and remove hazards that could cause slips, trips and falls.
- 13) All performances will end at 21.00 hours.
- 14) If identified through the Risk Assessment process, a noise management plan will be agreed with the Environmental Health Officer.
- 15) The Risk Assessment process will include arrangements for the location and re-uniting of children with their parent (s) or designated guardian(s), with particular regard to family or other events likely to attract children.
- 16) All staff employed in the arrangements for locating and re-uniting children will have received an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

ANNEX 3 - CONDITIONS ATTACHED AFTER A HEARING BY THE LICENSING AUTHORITY
The site will only be used for low key events that might attract a maximum of 150 people.

Not applicable.

ANNEX 4 - PLANS

Environmental Health and Licensing

Head of Environmental Health and Licensing: Emma Rose

Licensing Act 2003
Premises Licence **SBCR0035**

ANNEXES continued ...
See one attached plan: Stevenage Town Centre Gardens

16/12/08

Signed:
Licensing Manager

Environmental Health and Licensing

Head of Environmental Health and Licensing: Emma Rose

Licensing Act 2003

Premises Licence Summary

SBCR0035

Premises Details

POSTAL ADDRESS OF PREMISES, OR IF NONE, ORDANCE SURVEY MAP REFERENCE OR DESCRIPTION

Town Centre Gardens

St Georges Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1.

WHERE THE LICENCE IS TIME LIMITED THE DATES

Not applicable

LICENSABLE ACTIVITIES AUTHORISED BY THE LICENCE

- a performance of a play
- an exhibition of a film
- a performance of live music
- any playing of recorded music
- a performance of dance
- entertainment of a similar description to that falling within a performance of live music, any playing of recorded music or a performance of dance
- entertainment facilities for making music
- entertainment facilities for dancing
- entertainment of a similar description to that falling within entertainment facilities for making music or dancing

THE TIMES THE LICENCE AUTHORISES THE CARRYING OUT OF LICENSABLE ACTIVITIES

Activity (and Area if applicable)	Description	Time From	Time To
A. Performance of a play \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
B. Exhibition of films \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
E. Performance of live music \((Indoors & Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
F. Playing of recorded music \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
G. Performance of dance \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
H. Entertainment of a similar description to that falling within E, F, or G \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
I. Provision of facilities for making music \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
J. Provision of facilities for dancing \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm
K. Provision of facilities for entertainment of a similar description to that falling within I or J \((Outdoors)\)	Monday - Sunday	9:00am	9:00pm

Environmental Health and Licensing

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THE OPENING HOURS OF THE PREMISES		
Description	Time From	Time To
Monday - Sunday	Midnight	11:59pm

WHERE THE LICENCE AUTHORISES SUPPLIES OF ALCOHOL WHETHER THESE ARE ON AND / OR OFF SUPPLIES	

NAME, (REGISTERED) ADDRESS OF HOLDER OF PREMISES LICENCE	
Stevenage Borough Council	Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 1HN.

REGISTERED NUMBER OF HOLDER, FOR EXAMPLE COMPANY NUMBER, CHARITY NUMBER (WHERE APPLICABLE)

STATE WHETHER ACCESS TO THE PREMISES BY CHILDREN IS RESTRICTED OR PROHIBITED
Not restricted

16/12/08

Signed:
Licensing Manager

Appendix 8: Summary of Maintenance Operations for Town Centre Gardens

Grass: General Responsibilities

The primary grass cutting season is between March and October inclusive.

Immediately before grass cutting, visible litter is to be cleared from the grassed areas about to be cut. Any rubbish shredded during grass cutting operations shall be picked up immediately after cutting. More oversized items that cannot be moved by hand shall be left in situ, and the grass cut around as near as possible.

Immediately after grass cutting, all associated and adjacent hard surfaces are to be kept free and clear of grass cuttings, mud and other debris resulting from the grass cutting operations.

Cutting is to be carried out around all obstructions such as trees, lamp columns, benches, signs, fence lines, walls, litter bins, etc. Where cutting operations occur against obstacles likely to be damaged, proper care must be taken.

All grass edges around the shrub beds, rose beds, annual flower beds, and channels shall be strimmed on each occasion and at the same time as mowing of adjacent grass areas.

Grass cutting operations shall be delayed in the immediate area(s) where bulbs and corms have been planted/naturalised to allow them to grow, flower and die back for up to six weeks after flowering. After that, bulb areas shall be cut as directed by the Supervising Officer.

Adverse Weather / Ground Conditions – Grass cutting operations will cease during wet weather/ground conditions to minimise damage.

Dry Conditions – When the conditions do not allow grass to grow, the grass cuts will be stopped until grass growth resumes.

Grass: Parks – Main Oval Area

- The grass shall be cut to achieve an even length of approximately 25mm across the site. The frequency of cuts will vary according to weather and growing conditions; however, it is anticipated that between 8 – 10 cuts per season could be required.
- All clippings should be evenly dispersed across the sward immediately after cutting

Grass: Formal / Prestigious Areas

- The grass shall be cut to achieve an even length of approximately 25mm across the site. The frequency of cuts will vary according to the weather and growing conditions; however, it is

anticipated that the grass shall be cut once every two weeks during the peak growing season to maintain an attractive lawn.

- All grass clippings must be collected and removed from the site during each grass cutting operation.

Grass: Meadow Cutting

- Meadow areas are to be cut and cleared between September-October on one occasion. The exact timing is dependent on weather conditions and flowering times. There may be a requirement to cut and clear some areas twice a year as directed.
- The grass shall be cut evenly and cleanly to a height of 75mm.
- Within 48 hours of cutting, all arisings shall be cleared from the whole area and removed from the site.

Shrub Beds: General Responsibilities

All litter, debris, and vegetative rubbish shall be removed from the bed at every visit. In addition, all arisings are to be removed for disposal by the end of each working day.

All arisings from pruning and shrub bed maintenance shall be removed from the area by the end of each working day, and at no time should any arisings obstruct footways, cycle routes or highways.

The site/plot, including the surrounding areas such as paths and grass paths, shall be left clean and tidy on completion of each visit.

Shrub Bed: Maintenance

Summer / Winter Prune: all shrubs shall be pruned on two occasions per year to achieve the following:

- Removal of all dead, diseased and damaged material
- Removal of any material obstructing vehicle, cycle and pedestrian sightlines
- Removal of any material encroaching and/or obstructing roads, paths, cycle routes, walkways, other hard surfaces and grass areas
- Removal of any material encroaching and/or obstructing light to windows, doors, vents, metre housings, gates and street furniture
- To encourage healthy growth and/or flowering and maintain the shrubs in good shape and order.

There may be occasions where there will be a requirement to control and curtail the growth of vigorous weed species. In such instances, the bed shall firstly be weeded by hand and/or dug over. The herbicide application shall only be considered when it is impossible to keep on top of proliferous weed growth.

Hedges: General Maintenance

Hedge cutting is to be undertaken to maintain the hedge at constant dimensions unless otherwise directed. It will be carried out in such a manner to promote healthy growth, well-furnished from ground level to its full height. The top should be level, following the ground contours.

Respect for wildlife, particularly birds nesting, will be expected. Where birds are nesting, ensure utmost care not to disturb the nest of birds, even if it means leaving, in part or whole, the cutting of a particular hedge until the nest has become unoccupied.

The first operation will be to remove all litter debris and any other deleterious material from within the hedge and hedge base at every maintenance visit. All arisings are to be removed for disposal.

The site/plot, including the surrounding area, such as paths and grass areas, are to be left clean and tidy on completion of each maintenance visit.

Where hedges borders a private property, only the Council's side, top and ends of the hedge, including the hedge base, shall be maintained.

Hedge Maintenance

The hedges will be maintained on two occasions each year, once in June – August and again between November – March.

All hedges are to be cut back to the previous year's growth along the top, ends and sides to retain a good shape. Care must be taken to avoid the bottom of the hedge from becoming narrower than the top.

All hedges shall be pruned to achieve the following:

- Removal of dead, diseased and damaged material
- Removal of any material obstructing vehicle, cycle, or pedestrian sightlines
- Remove any material encroaching upon and/or obstructing roads, paths, cycle routes, walkways, other hard surfaces, and grass areas.
- Remove any material encroaching upon and/or obstructing light to windows, doors, vents, metre housings, gates, and street furniture. All arisings must be removed from the site at the end of each working day.
- The hedge, hedge base and surrounding area must be left clean and tidy.

Tree Works: General Maintenance

Every five years, all trees across the town undergo a full condition survey to identify any works or hazards that might need urgent attention.

Statutory Tree Works

1. Dangerous or unstable trees and branches likely to cause injury to persons
2. Trees causing or likely to cause damage to property
3. Trees obstructing the highway or footpaths
4. Trees obstructing streetlights or CCTV cameras
5. Other risk-related works

Arboricultural teams shall undertake general maintenance of the trees in the Gardens on a three-year cyclical regime. Any works from the survey, or identified when the team is in the area are then rectified.

Play Area

Weekly Inspection Reporting and Repairs are carried out by a competent person with recognised engineering experience and knowledge of the current British Standard 1176 and 1177 recommendations and play equipment design and performance.

A complete inspection of all equipment within the play area and all findings recorded at weekly intervals shall be undertaken.

The play area shall be inspected, and necessary remedial action shall be carried out on the following items, under the British Standards, once a week:

- Clean all graffiti from all surfaces within the play area using approved cleaning materials
- Maintain notices in good condition
- Ensure fencing and gates are secure
- Maintain seating and bins in good repair
- Report any health or safety hazards adjacent to play areas to the Supervising Officer
- Ensure fittings or fixings are in position and secure
- Check for any protrusions or sharp edges
- Ensure that all moving parts are working freely and quietly, by design
- Check that the paintwork or other finishes are in good condition
- Check that all safety measures are in good repair
- Check all surfaces for damage or wear
- Check for any damaged woodwork

The play area will be swept weekly, and all arisings removed for disposal.

Should an item of play equipment be found, on inspection, to have suffered vandalism or incurred a fault, thus rendering it unsafe or likely to fail, it shall be immediately repaired. If repairs cannot be made immediately because the required parts are not readily available, or the damage/fault is of a significant nature. In that case, such measures shall be taken to prevent the item from further use of any access until repairs can be made. All acts of vandalism affecting equipment and any significant faults discovered shall be immediately notified to the appropriate council officer.

Lubrication:

Lubricate all bearing surfaces, brushes, rollers, and thrust surfaces throughout the year to help prolong equipment life and help eliminate noise.

Weed Treatment:

Allowances shall be made to treat hard surfaces to help control weed growth around safety surfacing and allow inspections of the play area.

Litter

A Cleansing Operative is on-site every day of the week. They undertake emptying litter bins, sweeping glass/debris from hard surfaces, and litter picking within the whole park. At least every three months, or as required, the operative will also remove litter and debris from the watercourse.

Building Maintenance

The Council's Property Services section carries out:

- Compliance related inspections to all buildings – water hygiene, fire/smoke alarms, etc.
- Maintenance of the boiler and heating systems to achieve maximum efficiency
- Maintain double glazing
- Maintain insulation to plumbing pipework
- The fabric of the building

Reactionary Works

Graffiti

Council Operatives will arrange for the removal of the graffiti in a timescale determined by the content:

- Offensive within one working day, i.e. graffiti, which is offensive
- Inoffensive within two working days

Pest Control

Pest control is carried out as required by an external contractor. Areas treated will have signage in place during the treatment process.

Trees

Any trees that are reported as dangerous shall be made safe as quickly as possible.

Accident Reporting

All reports of accidents occurring within the park will be investigated within two working days. Appropriate remedial works will be carried out accordingly.

Complaints and Reports of Problems

Play Area: Any report received of broken glass or damaged equipment will be inspected and rectified within 24 working hours.

Landscape: the teams will revisit within five working days.

General: any report will be inspected in a timescale determined by the nature of the report:

H&S related: within 24 working hours

Non-urgent: within five working days

N.B. The Council has dedicated teams able to respond to a variety of environmental issues. For example:

- Issues such as broken glass in play areas, fallen trees, etc
- Clearance of glass from cycle tracks, but will also respond to reports of glass on footpaths and in open spaces
- Reports of dog fouling on footpaths, cycle tracks and in open spaces.
- The Council's Community Safety Team is responsible for tackling enviro-crime and other matters such as antisocial behaviour. Under the Community Safety Partnership, they work closely with the Police.

Appendix 9: Health & Safety and Risk Management

11.1 Health & Safety Management Framework

Organisations have a legal duty to make suitable arrangements to manage health and safety. Formal management systems or frameworks help organisations effectively structure their Health and Safety responsibilities.

This document, implemented in 2018, is a formal extension of Stevenage Borough Council's Health and Safety Policy Statement.

Stevenage Borough Council's Health and Safety Framework follows the model outlined in the Health & Safety Executive's publication HSG65, "Managing for health and safety". The Framework describes the roles and responsibilities to be discharged by all staff members to maintain an effective safety management system that delivers our Health and Safety policy commitments and legal compliance.

The combination of the Council's Health and Safety Policies and this Health and Safety Framework, form Stevenage Borough Council's overall Health and Safety Management System.

Stevenage Direct Services has its own health & safety subgroup that meets every month. Each service area collates and reports monthly updates on action plans, KPI's, risk assessments, accident / near miss reports etc. These are then reported to the Corporate Risk Group that meets quarterly.

11.2 Risk Assessments Relevant to Town Centre Gardens

	Description	Owner
1	Lead volunteers	SBC
2	TCG's Volunteer Activities	SBC
3	Community Litter Pick	SBC
4	Butterfly Survey	SBC
5	Woodland Work by GSV	SBC
6	Bulb Planting	SBC
7	Rotary Mowers	SBC
8	Manual Handling	SBC
9	Use of Polesaw	SBC
10	Tractor Driving	SBC
11	Tractor Mounted Cylinder Cutter	SBC
12	Application of Pesticides	SBC
13	Use of Chainsaws	SBC
14	Arboricultural Works	SBC
15	Mobile Elevated Work Platform	SBC
16	Aerial Tree Work	SBC

17	Mechanical Tree Stump Removal	SBC
18	Shredding Green Waste	SBC
19	Arc Welding	SBC
20	Graffiti Removal	SBC
21	Kanga Skid Steer Loader	SBC
22	Water Course Maintenance	SBC
23	Tractor Mounted Rotary and Flail	SBC
24	Blowing Grass Debris	SBC
25	Leaf Collection	SBC
26	Ride-On Grass Cutting Machines	SBC
27	Amazone Flail Mower	SBC
28	Pedestrian Mowing Flail or Reciprocating	SBC
29	Banks Cutting	SBC
30	Hedge Cutter (Hand Held)	SBC
31	Mechanical Wood chipping	SBC
32	Mechanical Tree Stump Removal	SBC
33	Tractor Mounted Rotary Cutter	SBC
34	Environmental Cleansing General	SBC

Appendix 10: Promotional Material

CONTACT
news@hertfordshirelife.co.uk
@hertslife

COUNTRYSIDE

Rural news and inspiration
in the county



DON'T OVERFEED GORDON

A booklet warning people about the dangers of feeding wildfowl has been launched by Stevenage Borough Council.

Gordon the Goose follows the adventures of a bird being overfed on bread – junk food to birds – until he can no longer fly. Overfeeding can cause angel wing, a disease that can prevent birds flying, can make geese more aggressive and increases bird droppings.

‘Our geese don’t go hungry and while it’s fun to feed them people shouldn’t go overboard,’ said John Gardner, the council’s executive member for environment.

The book was written by the authority’s green spaces development officer, Joel Gainsford and illustrated by Katie Duffett. Copies are available at the café in Fairlands Valley Park or online at stevenage.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces

HERTS ORCHARD PROJECT

Volunteers are wanted for a major project researching Hertfordshire’s orchards. The Landscape Group, a collective of academics and postgraduate students at the University of East Anglia, has been awarded £477,700 by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the three-year study, entitled *Orchard’s East*.

Tom Williamson, professor of history at the UEA, said, ‘We’ll examine traditional orchards’ environmental and cultural impact by identifying surviving sites, researching the history of fruit growing, surveying wildlife in orchards, as well as restoring important old orchards and creating new community ones.

‘We’re hoping that people will volunteer to work with us on the project to help us discover more about Hertfordshire’s rich history of fruit cultivation.’

Volunteers can undertake map surveys and online and record office research into orchards as well as helping to capture oral histories. Opportunities to help create new orchards are also on offer. To get involved, email g.broad@uea.ac.uk

(ED HUTCHINGS' BIRD OF THE MONTH)

Jack of all trades

THE thieving habits of the jackdaw were celebrated by the early 19th century humorous poet Richard Harris Barham in *The Jackdaw of Rheims*. In the poem, the bird – the most notorious robber in the crow family – steals the ring of the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims. ‘The Devil’, wrote Barham, ‘must be in that little Jackdaw.’ Apart from snatching and hiding such inedible objects, the bird occasionally steals young birds and eggs which it adds to its diet of carrion, fruit, insects and seeds.

As well as nesting in holes and chimneys,

jackdaw sometimes take over the old nests of other birds and occasionally even makes its nest in a rabbit burrow. The amount



of nest material used depends very much on the site. A large, exposed nest is usually lined with fur, grass, hair and wool – which the jackdaw sometimes plucks from the backs of sheep. Late April sees the start of the breeding season when three to seven eggs with black and grey speckles are laid. Incubation is by the female who is fed on the nest by the male. The young hatch in 17–18 days and are ready to fledge when about a month old.

Usually, the jackdaw’s call is a loud, explosive ‘tchack’, occasionally this is expanded into a ‘tchackertchack’.

Pollinators in the park

Wednesday 31 May, 11am – 3pm
Town Centre Gardens

Come and learn
about bees, butterflies
and other pollinators.

Fun activities include:

- Come and see a real bee hive!
- Seed sowing for pollinators
- Face painting (£2)
- Badge making
- Make a bug rock
- Local stalls



For more information please call 01438 242323
or email parksandamenites@stevenage.gov.uk





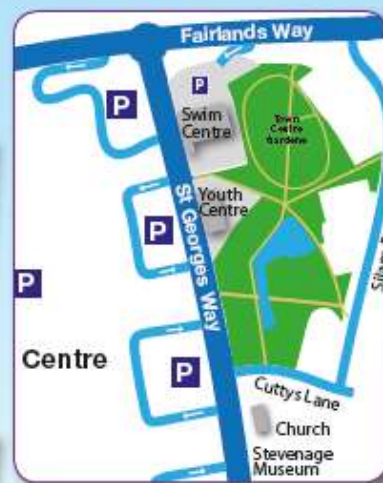
FREE EVENT

Family Fun Day



Town Centre Gardens

Wednesday 30 August 2017
11am to 3pm

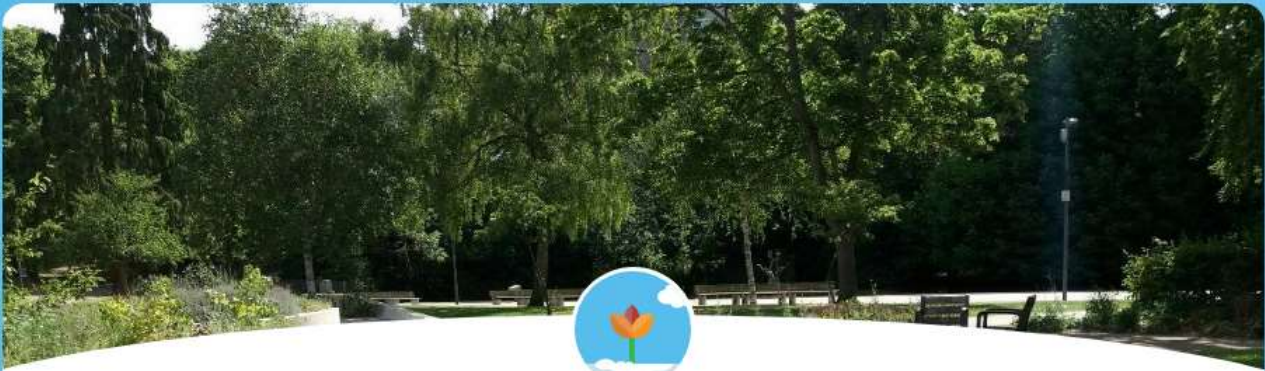


A fun packed afternoon of activities for all the family including:

- Childrens Entertainment
- Face painting (£2)
- Reptiles
- Crafts
- Community Stalls
- And much much more

For more information call
01438 242323 or email
parksandamenities@stevenage.gov.uk





Town Centre Gardens

0 Miles away open all year

A beautiful formal garden in the centre of Stevenage. 8 points of interest



Outdoor Gym Trail



Play area



Pond



Rose Beds



Sensory Garden

Park Information

Offering an oasis of tranquility in the centre of Stevenage, the Town Centre Gardens were developed in the mid-1960's, and are the primary formal and ornamental public gardens in

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On Site Facilities

Disabled Access

