

Southwell Town Council

Open Spaces strategy Nov 2020 - draft 201019

This paper examines the key priorities for the management of the Town's open spaces. Some of these are owned and managed by the Town, some by other organisations that are identified. For the latter, the Council will need to engage with their managements to align procedures etc but this is in another paper.

Key principles

The Town wishes to

- mow some open play spaces to a reasonable standard c 30-50mm to enable ball games and sports and picnics on short grass to be undertaken, but individual Clubs are free to improve upon these standards unless otherwise shown [eg Bowls Club]
- mow some grassed open spaces to about 50-120mm height and enable dog walking etc.
- mow some spaces twice a year and removing the arisings to allow wild flowers to grow. There will be special treatment for some 2m margins that are only mown on a four year cycle
- leave some open spaces completely and plant or allow self set deciduous trees and native shrubs to grow
- support and develop community orchards

In each of these cases residents should be engaged with to ensure the understanding of the benefits of the process and signs will be erected to inform residents and visitors of the mowing frequency etc. In a limited number of instances, the Town Council will encourage residents to alter these standards as volunteers, but cannot provide powered equipment to do so. Some of the land will be split into different categories identified above, but this will be explicit, albeit not signposted at the location.

This is not to 'save money' but to encourage increased diversity of habitat across the town, some of which are identified in the Town's Neighbourhood Plan of 2015 but some are new links as there does appear to be a greater interest in providing natural and green links across the town since the residents' survey in 2014.

Categories

open play spaces mown to a reasonable standard c 30-50mm

These areas will be mown once or twice a week, using a gang or rotary mower. Arisings are not removed but left as a mulch. Mowing begins around mid March and ends in around mid October. This operation is resource intensive and 0.4 hectare takes about 1.5 hrs of staff time twice a week. Some of these areas will require additional strimming around the base of equipment and trees at about 400m per hour. Typical areas for this treatment are

- WMRG pitches x 2
- Minster Field junior pitches x 2
- The Burgage east and west side
- Humberstone open space
- part of Riverside park
- small ballpark area of Norwood Gardens/Ridgeway play area
- 3 x CL spaces at Leisure Centre

grassed open spaces mown to about 50-120mm height

These areas will be mown once a week, using a rotary mower. Arisings are not removed but left as a mulch. Mowing begins around mid March and ends in around mid October. This operation is less resource intensive and 0.4 hectare takes about 1.5 hrs of staff time per week. A limited number of these areas will require additional strimming around the base of equipment and trees at about 400m per hour.

Care will be taken to trim back encroaching brambles, thistles and docks on an annual basis. Typical areas for this treatment are

- Norwood Gardens/Ridgeway play area
- paths across wilded areas on Minster, Harvey's and Froggats' Fields
- Dudley Doy, Adams' Row, Cedar Green and Brook Walk open spaces and Brook Walk bank
- part of Riverside park
- The Orchard
- non-pitch areas of WMRG and Minster Field
- Wakeling Close open space
- area around Skate Park
- Dumble bank across Minster/Harvey's Field
- Hillcrest park
- Beaumont Ave

spaces mown twice a year and arisings removed

These areas will be left as 'wilded areas'. There may be specific seeding to support this after taking advice from Notts Wildlife Trust [eg Froggats' Field]. Cutting will take place in mid September and again once in begins around mid March and ends in around mid October. Arisings will be removed by baling or raking and manual removal. This operation is much less resource intensive and 0.4 hectare takes about 1.5 hrs of staff time twice per annum. There will be no additional strimming however there will be a bi-annual trim back of encroaching brambles, thistles and docks. Ragwort will be identified when in flower and if there is a resale value in the hay from certain areas will be removed by hand [5hrs/pa]. Typical areas for this treatment are

- Froggats' Field [except crossing paths and margins - see above]
- Harvey's Field [except crossing paths and margins - see above]
- Farthingate Close [except crossing paths and margins - see above]
- east side of Minster Field [except crossing paths and margins - see above]
- part of Riverside

open spaces left for deciduous trees and native shrubs

These areas will be left completely as 'wilded areas'. No grass cutting will take place and there will be no strimming. However there will be some irregular check to ensure no significant encroachment by brambles and elder, so some strimming maybe required. Typical areas for this treatment are

- east of Lowes Wong footpath
- Ash Tree Close footpath
- Shady Lane
- Badger's Field

Other areas may be identified for this treatment on an annual basis

community orchards

These are currently 4 specific areas in the town designated as community orchards Their management is identified by a specific process agreed by the Council in Sept 2020. The Council is looking to add further sites with additional fruit species available to residents to pick and eat. The current orchards are at

- Riverside
- Landseer Close path
- Norwood Gardens/Southwell Trail
- Humberstone Road

Other issues

- Tree arisings

The treatment of felled and pruned tree trunks and branches will be the subject of a separate policy. Some of the larger trunks and branches will be left in situ to provide rotting vegetation for insects. Some - depending on species -

will be made available to local residents for carving or burning and some will be stacked to provide 'bug houses' at the margins of land around the town in a list of possible locations.

- Working with the staff

There should be quarterly meetings of the Chair, Vice-Chair of Town Environment Committee and Chair of Climate Change Working Group with the Clerk and ground staff. These will be noted and notes circulated. The meeting will consider inviting other representatives to the meeting to enable the smooth running of the Council and communications. This meeting will be in the day time. In between these meetings the Chair of the Town Environment Committee and the staff will meet informally to ensure that work plans are enabled, and the Clerk and the Chair of the Committee will meet at least fortnightly to monitor and review progress and agree prioritisation of work. These will be noted and circulated to all councillors'. If there are any issues to be raised at the meetings, councillors will be asked to send these to the Chair and Clerk in advance. Councillors will be reminded that all allocation of staffing must be through the Clerk who is the line manager of the groundstaff.