



GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

2021-2024

Date approved: 27 July 2021

Approved by: People & Places Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Green Spaces Strategy is central to the delivery of our long-term vision of Thriving Communities, as set out in our Futures Strategy 2020 to 2025.
- 1.2 Thriving communities are places that people are proud of; neighbourhoods are safe, clean, green and sustainable, there is a sense of place and people of all ages can access what they need to have a healthy and fulfilled life.
- 1.3 Our green spaces are very important and are one of the unique selling points of our neighbourhoods. Over several years we have delivered improvements to make sure our green spaces are valued and make a positive contribution to the quality of our neighbourhoods.
- 1.4 The Trust has gained a reputation for our work, commitment and innovation in this area that we wish to maintain and build on.
- 1.5 This updated Strategy includes our public realm green spaces as well as private and communal gardens and sets our commitment to continue to promote and deliver our green objectives. Living through Covid has increased awareness of the health and wellbeing value of green spaces in urban areas; we will:
 - Maintain and continue to plant trees.
 - Make sure our green spaces are attractive and useful for local people. As well as making a positive contribution to the natural capital.
 - Increase activities and levels of engagement in local health and wellbeing projects.
 - Achieve Green Flag standards on more of our green spaces.
- 1.6 Urban green spaces can also deliver a wide range of environmental benefits, which are linked to government priorities and address Southway's own Zero Carbon Strategy. These include reducing air pollution and Co2, promoting biodiversity, mitigating flood risk, and regulating temperatures.
- 1.7 Southway's strategy has strong links to the [Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy](#) (blue spaces are waterways) and Southway Chairs the Manchester Housing Providers' working group. That Strategy highlights that, as well as public realm spaces, our private gardens will play a major role in our ability to adapt to climate change, be resilient as a City and create healthy places where people wish to live.

2. Context

- 2.1 National and Regional Priorities
- 2.2 In 2020, the UK Government set a target to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and create up to 250,000 green jobs in the process

- 2.3 In 2018 The Manchester Green Summit led to a Zero Carbon 2038 pledge, and the drafting of a Zero Carbon Manchester Plan 2020-38 by the Manchester Climate Change Board. Through its membership of the Manchester Housing Providers Partnership, Southway is aligned to the Climate Change Board and has pledged to become zero carbon by 2038
- 2.4 Manchester City Council and partner agencies have developed a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester which recognises and promotes the value of natural resources and the particular role of Green Spaces.

3. Southway Housing Trust Priorities

- 3.1 Southway Housing Trust currently owns 157 public realm green spaces, located in the heart of our communities as well as on major transport routes into the city centre. The Trust also owns 5,793 residential properties that have some form of garden space, whether communal or private. A significant number of these date from the first half of the twentieth century and have large gardens.
- 3.2 Southway's core area is located in the part of Manchester with the highest levels of open space and tree cover in the City. They form an important part of the aesthetic for the area and contribute to its desirability as a place to live.
- 3.3 Southway has adopted a Zero Carbon 2038 Strategy and action plan which recognises the role of "natural capital"; trees, open spaces and gardens and the part that they play in promoting biodiversity and carbon storage in addressing the climate change agenda.
- 3.4 Southway's STAR Resident Satisfaction Survey 2021 noted that satisfaction with Grounds Maintenance, at 73%, was slightly below that of general management of neighbourhood at 74%.
- 3.5 Concerns over untidy gardens are identified in the 2021 results and means to support those tenants struggling with garden maintenance ranked third in suggested neighbourhood improvements. Feelings of isolation and concerns over rubbish & litter are also issues that the Green Spaces strategy can address.

4. Vision and Aims

Vision

- 4.1 Our Green Spaces, collectively, will provide a "virtual urban park" across the area, which can bring people together, build stronger, healthier, communities and help deliver Southway's Zero Carbon Strategy.
- 4.2 The 2 key aims of this Strategy are to:

- Manage green spaces that are attractive, sustainable and safe for people to access and enjoy; *and*,
- To deliver well-designed and managed environmental activities

4.3 This is supported by 5 objectives:

- To provide public realm green spaces that are welcoming and safe.
- To use green spaces to engage with local residents, encourage community cohesion and promote physical and mental wellbeing.
- To make sure that public green spaces are well maintained and that inappropriate behaviour is tackled.
- To manage and maintain our green spaces in ways that are sustainable and promote conservation and biodiversity.
- To work with partners and stakeholders to maximise outcomes.

4.4 The way in which these objectives will be achieved are detailed in the section below.

5. Objectives

5.1 Provide public realm green spaces that are welcoming and safe

- i) Create public realm green spaces that are appealing, accessible and welcoming to all local residents.
- ii) Ensure that spaces and associated activities are enjoyable and contribute to a sense of place.
- iii) Consider the diverse needs, preferences and characteristics of local residents, to ensure no one feels excluded or unwelcome.
- iv) Ensure that grounds, facilities and equipment are well maintained and safe to use.
- v) Take health and safety seriously, ensuring the policy is properly implemented to minimise avoidable accidents or injuries.

5.2 Use green spaces to engage with local residents, encourage community cohesion and promote physical and mental wellbeing

- i) Involve residents in appropriate planning and management of public green spaces and their public use.
- ii) Use public realm green spaces as a focus for community events and activities, to bring people together and encourage them to care about the local green spaces and the wider environment.
- iii) Provide means for residents to report concerns regarding green spaces and respond to these appropriately.

- iv) Utilise public realm green spaces to promote the health and wellbeing of residents of communities where Southway is active, with a particular interest in developing more Age Friendly opportunities.
- v) Encourage local residents to see the value of their garden spaces and help equip them with the skills and confidence to maintain these spaces to full potential.
- vi) Provide support to tenants who are unable to maintain their gardens.
- vii) When building new homes, maximise environmental benefits, balancing this objective with value for money considerations, for the Trust and for tenants who will have to pay service charges.

5.3 Make sure that public green spaces are well maintained and that inappropriate behaviour is tackled.

- i) Maintain grounds and other features.
- ii) Have appropriate waste management arrangements for waste bins, litter collection and addressing fly tipping.
- iii) Ensure that ownership and appropriate use of public realm green spaces is clear to users, through signage and subtle cues.
- iv) Minimise littering, dog fouling and vandalism, and address such activities robustly where they do occur.
- v) For priority sites, have a clear management plan that is endorsed and championed by tenants, residents and other stakeholders.
- vi) Have robust procedures and well trained staff for the management and maintenance of our green infrastructure.
- vii) Engage with tenants where they fail to maintain their gardens appropriately, and, if necessary, take enforcement action.
- viii) When properties become void, address any issues arising from poor garden maintenance.

5.4 Manage and maintain our green spaces in ways that are sustainable and promote conservation and biodiversity

- i) Use environmentally sound methods in maintaining green spaces, including having minimal and justified pesticide use, minimising use of horticultural peat and recycling green waste. Ensure that litter is recycled.
- ii) Work with energy and resource conservation, pollution reduction and waste recycling at the forefront of our approach.

- iii) Continue to work with stakeholders sharing common environmental objectives.
- iv) Effectively manage landscapes, natural features, wildlife and fauna.
- v) Identify suitable end uses for landlocked sites.

5.5 Work with partners and stakeholders to maximise outcomes

- i) Continue to work in partnership, develop new opportunities and utilise external support, including funding and staff resources, to enhance the delivery of this Strategy.
- ii) Increase efficiency by sharing resources, expertise and good practice. Jointly procure goods and services, where appropriate. Align activities with local and national campaigns to utilise existing awareness and materials.
- iii) Work with local schools and community centres to deliver environmental education.
- iv) Work with local community groups to enhance neighbourhoods and encourage local people to appreciate the value of local green spaces.
- v) Be recognised for good practice with regard to Green and Blue Infrastructure and associated community activities.

6. **Targets**

6.1 Progress in delivering the strategy will be reviewed annually. The key outcomes are:

By 2024:

- i) There will be an increased footfall on our green spaces through events, community and educational activities and by volunteering opportunities. There will be high levels of satisfaction reported by participants.
- ii) At least 76% of our tenants will express satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service (3% increase from 2021) and there will be improved communication and feedback on grounds maintenance.
- iii) Green Flag status will be retained for Barlow Hall Green Space and an annual action plan will be agreed and delivered with the Neighbourhood Group. Opportunities to extend the green flag scheme principles to other areas will be progressed.
- iv) We will record examples of case studies to demonstrate the positive impact of our work.

And operationally: -

- v) A low level of successful insurance claims will be maintained, in relation to green spaces. We will retain the necessary inspection qualifications for our Urban Rangers to demonstrate competence in inspection of open spaces and play facilities.
- vi) A survey of tree stock will have been completed providing identification of potential hazards and enabling successional planting to be better planned.
- vii) We will continue to work in partnership and will identify additional resources to support delivery of the strategy each year.
- viii) Support for tenant gardens and gardening will have been reviewed and enhanced.
- ix) Litter and fly tipping responses will have been reviewed and enhanced.

7. Our Approach

- 7.1 The Strategy Objectives will be embedded in, and will require the support of, all areas of the Trust. In turn, the delivery of this Strategy must take into consideration the wider objectives of the organisation and support the work of other teams where possible, to ensure we are utilising our resources and promoting the wider aims of the organisation in a proactive and positive light.
- 7.2 The following will form key aspects of our approach to green spaces management and community activities on them:
 - i) Partnership work with local stakeholders and playing a lead role in the delivery of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
 - ii) Inter team working within the Trust.
 - iii) Tenants and residents fully involved in planning and delivering activities and enhancements to public realm green spaces in their neighbourhoods.
 - iv) Annual work plans set including budgets & targets.
 - v) Monitoring to assess the effectiveness of site management and activities.
- 7.3 A detailed delivery plan with target milestones will be put in place and used to monitor progress and achievements.
- 7.4 The delivery of the Strategy will be reported on an annual basis to Southway's People and Places Committee and to stakeholders.

8. Related Strategies

- Futures Strategy 2020 to 2025
- Community Investment Strategy
- Customer Involvement Strategy
- Age Friendly Strategy
- Community Investment Strategy
- Development Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Our Manchester, The Manchester Strategy (Manchester City Council)
- Manchester's Great Outdoors – A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester 2015-2025(Manchester City Council, 2015)