



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



Parks and Greenspaces Draft Strategy

Consultation Document
February 2026



Ambitious Stockport, creating opportunities *for everyone*

Stockport Parks and Greenspace Strategy: Accessible Parks and Greenspaces for Thriving Neighbourhoods

Introduction

This draft Parks and Greenspaces Strategy sets out Stockport's intentions for a green, sustainable borough where all our communities benefit from an accessible and resilient network of green and blue spaces.

Stockport is incredibly rich in green and blue spaces with expansive countryside parks, major parks with a range of play equipment, sporting offers and leisure opportunities alongside our neighbourhood parks and smaller green pockets. We are proud of our blue spaces with wildlife teeming around our riverbanks and canals, reservoirs and lakes. We know the benefits of spending time in greenspace is immeasurable for our wellbeing and as such is central to our Stockport Live Well approach.

This strategy aspires to realise our ambitions to ensure all those who live, work and visit the borough can easily access green and blue spaces. That these spaces are accessible to all and that we promote intergenerational play and recreation. That we nurture our wildlife, flora and fauna and to protect our Parks and Greenspaces for future generations so that everyone can benefit from the vast and well documented benefits of spending time amongst nature. It will sit in the centre of an interconnected set of policies and strategies covering climate and nature, development, formal sports, Live Well and beyond.

Most importantly the strategy will pick up maximising the usage of our many green and blue spaces, using our communication channels and networks to ensure everyone knows where they can go to enjoy our woodlands, wetlands, open fields and sports and play. Everyone should be aware of the amenities that are available in our greenspaces (or know where to find the information), which range from high quality playing pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, wheeled sports and skate ramps and BMX track to woodland or rewilded nature walks to quality food and drink offers. And everyone should feel welcome and safe to enjoy beautiful spaces that the borough has to offer.

The policy is being shared in draft form for consultation so that residents can comment, input and shape the development of the strategy. In addition, it has been shared directly with members of the greenspace community, friends of parks, cemeteries and railways groups, volunteers and VCFSE organisations with an interest or expertise in this area to listen to views of interested parties. Once we have gathered this input from stakeholders, the final document will be produced and shared.

Vision

A green, sustainable borough where all our communities benefit from resilient and accessible green and blue spaces. In turn this will support biodiversity and contribute to improved health and wellbeing making Stockport a greener, healthier and more inclusive place to play, live, work and thrive.

Strategic Alignment

This Greenspace Strategy aligns with and supports several existing corporate and thematic strategies across Stockport Council and partners such as the One Stockport Borough Plan, Stockport Council Plan, Climate and Nature Strategy and Stockport Live Well. These connections ensure that our parks and greenspaces complement wider ambitions on health, nature recovery, climate resilience, active travel and community development. The strategy therefore aligns with key policies including the Playing Pitch Strategy, Live Well Active Communities Strategy, Climate and Nature Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, emerging Local Plan, Access Strategy, S19 Flood Resilience work and other complementary plans.

Current Focus

The council remains committed to delivering environmental improvements through impactful means including meadow creation, orchard development and enhancing existing greenspaces, play and sport facilities, being inclusive for all. These efforts continue to support biodiversity, climate resilience and community health and wellbeing.

Strategic Objectives

1. Enhance and Connect Green Infrastructure
2. Support Nature Recovery and Biodiversity
3. Promote Health and Wellbeing
4. Build Climate Resilience
5. Empower Communities and Partnerships
6. Improve access to all age facilities
7. Improve access to sports
8. Improve access to play
9. Enhanced Events programme
10. Understand and reduce inequality in access to green space

Delivery Plan/Achieving our objectives

1. Enhance and Connect Green Infrastructure

This objective aligns with the development plan policy, Active Travel Strategy, Access Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Regen/Estates frameworks.

- Improving the quality and accessibility of existing parks and greenspaces.
- Developing green corridors linking neighbourhoods, schools and district centres where possible.
- Integrating green infrastructure into regeneration.

How

- Review green spaces to assess quality, accessibility and connectivity and remove barriers to access and inclusion.
- Seek investment opportunities to enhance and improve areas with low green space provision or poor-quality environments such as habitat banks on council land.
- Create green corridors by linking our parks, woodlands, and waterways using existing tree-lined streets, hedgerows, riverbank and canal paths and pollinator routes where possible.
- Green roofs, walls, and sustainable landscaping where possible.
- Improve signage and wayfinding to encourage exploration and active travel between green spaces.
- Improve access to community buildings in parks to enhance community offer and meet identified needs through the Live Well Programme.
- Create a green walking and cycling route along the river Mersey through Town Centre West development programme

2. Support Nature Recovery and Biodiversity

This supports delivery of the Climate & Nature Strategy, Borough Biodiversity Plans, BNG policy frameworks and LNRS requirements.

- Maintaining and where possible expanding meadows, orchards and managed grasslands.
- Promoting habitat creation in underused or reclaimed spaces including private gardens, alleyways and businesses.
- Promoting pollinator-friendly planting and wildlife corridors.
- Identifying and creating spaces for rewilding or differential mowing.
- Maximising Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) opportunities arising from investment in buildings and infrastructure in the borough.

- Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity on council owned land to actively address the biodiversity crisis wherever possible, so that residents can access nature rich spaces to relax, socialise and play.
- Increasing and improving natural spaces in our urban areas, maximising opportunities from regeneration to develop new and enhanced nature-rich environments. This will build greener, more biodiverse, accessible and climate-adapted places.
- Working with partners, stakeholders and communities to grow understanding of the health, wellbeing and resilience benefits that nature-rich, accessible spaces can bring for wildlife and people.
- We will enhance and promote wetland (sponge) areas that provide vital biodiversity and climate change functions. They help and provide ecosystems, water filtration and flood control.

How

- Increase use of machinery/training of staff to undertake small scale grassland management – cut and clear mower.
- Support installation of rain gardens along highways, replacing standard verges.
- Continue to reduce the use of weedkillers and develop less invasive methods including working with communities to trial new approaches to management of grass verges.
- Review Forest School Policy for greenspace sites, to protect sites from overuse/impacts on ground flora and fauna.
- Maintain and enhance current areas with Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Site of Biological Importance (SBI) and Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation.
- Identify sites for enhancement/habitat banks for BNG.

3. Promote Health and Wellbeing

Aligned with One Stockport Live Well / Active Communities Strategy, Green Social Prescribing model and Public Health priorities.

- Ensure equitable access to green spaces across all communities.
- Design inclusive, safe, and welcoming spaces for all ages and abilities.
- Encourage active lifestyles through walking, cycling and outdoor play.
- Develop community understanding of food and diet through growing fruit, vegetables and grains

How

- Seek to ensure every resident lives within a 15-minute walk of a quality green space.

- Design inclusive spaces with accessible paths, seating, sensory planting, and play areas for all ages and abilities.
- Deliver green social prescribing by working with health partners to connect people to nature-based activities.
- Promote active travel through green walking/cycling routes.
- Host community events such as nature walks and gardening clubs.
- Scope possibilities for expanded events programme in parks and greenspaces.
- Look to create designated dog walking areas to keep parks clean of dog fouling (PSPO - consideration).
- Identify areas for community growing spaces and allotments and programmes to activate and maximise the benefit of these facilities

4. Build Climate Resilience

Supports the CAN strategy, SUDS/Water Management frameworks, the Flood Resilience (S19) Report and wider climate action plans.

- Use nature-based solutions to manage flood risk and urban heat.
- Increase tree canopy cover where appropriate, maximising opportunities from partnerships and external funding.
- Promote sustainable drainage systems and green roofs.

How

- Use green infrastructure to manage surface water and reduce flood risk through SuDS, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces.
- Increase canopy cover in targeted areas to reduce urban heat.
- Retrofit green features into grey infrastructure (e.g. green roofs on public buildings, living walls on car parks).
- Support community climate action through education and volunteering in green space projects, working with the CAN team.
- Monitor environmental performance using tools.

5. Empower Communities and Partnerships

Supports Live Well and Climate and Nature Strategies.

- Support community-led greening projects and Friends of Parks groups.
- Work with schools, businesses and voluntary organisations to co-design and co-manage spaces.

- Celebrate local heritage and culture through greenspace design and programming.
- Listen to our communities and engage with their ambitions - enlist their support to fund improvements in existing Parks and Greenspaces, support their activities and events in greenspaces.

How

- Support Friends of Parks groups with looking for funding, training, and co-design opportunities.
- Launch a Green Space Champions programme to involve residents in stewardship and advocacy.
- Work with schools to develop outdoor classrooms, forest schools and biodiversity projects.
- Partner with local businesses to sponsor greenspaces or contribute to greening initiatives.
- Celebrate local identity through art, storytelling and heritage trails in green spaces.
- Investigate opportunities for Corporate Volunteer Days to support on sites in need of management like annual meadow raking or invasive species control – Himalayan Balsam.
- Reach out to stakeholders, friends of and other interested groups to shape a finished version of this strategy

6. Improve access to all age facilities

Supports Playing Pitch Strategy, Local Football Facilities Plan, Padel & Tennis Strategy, SEND Strategy (community communication boards).

- Work with local communities and partners to identify gaps in the current provision for all.
- Identify opportunities to provide intergenerational facilities and spaces.
- Improve all age offer throughout greenspaces.
- Identify opportunities to re-purpose under used facilities.

How

- Audit existing green spaces to assess current offer, quality, accessibility and connectivity to other facilities.
- Work with local communities and partners to develop and deliver activities for all life stages.
- Identify opportunities and prioritise investment to improve an all age offer throughout greenspaces.

7. Improve access to sports facilities

- Enhance the quality and accessibility of existing facilities to ensure they meet community needs and promote inclusive use.

How

- Collate a set of locally agreed priority projects for investment, informed by a detailed analysis of supply and demand to support allocation of Section 106 Formal Sports contributions as part of the progression of the local plan.
- Identify opportunities to provide new facilities to meet demand and gaps in current provision identified through the Playing Pitch Strategy, Local Football Facilities Plan, Padel and Tennis Strategy.
- Work with National Governing Bodies from all sports to identify opportunities and funding streams.
- Prioritise need using data and analysis in the Playing Pitch Strategy, Local Football Facilities Plan, Padel and Tennis Strategy.
- Maximise Formal Sports Commuted Sum allocations through match funding grant opportunities in liaison with NGBs and Partners.
- Identify opportunities to provide new facilities to meet demand and gaps in current provision through Planning and Development opportunities.
- Build on existing relationships with National Governing Bodies from all sports to identify potential opportunities and funding streams.
- Support under-represented groups to increase participation through partnership work with Governing Bodies.

8. Improve access to play

- Improve play-based opportunities in line with Play England Strategy 2035 'it all starts with play'.
- Enhance and improve accessible play opportunities.
- Identify potential play on the way opportunities to link greenspaces, schools and district centres.
- Introduce Community Communication Boards in play areas.
- Work with Friends of Groups and support grant funding applications to enhance and improve play opportunities.

How

- Map and review existing provision to identify opportunities
- Use the Play England Strategy 2035 'it all starts with play'.
- Enhance and improve accessible play opportunities.

- Identify potential play on the way opportunities to link greenspaces, schools and district centres.
- Liaise with the SEND Team to identify priority areas for Community Communication Boards.
- Link with Partners to identify funding opportunities to support Friends of Groups aspirations to enhance and improve play.
- Use allocated Section 106 allocations contributions to maximise and enhance improved play opportunities.

9. Enhanced Events programme

In line with the aspirations of our Stockport Live Well approach we will utilise our Parks and Greenspaces as Spaces and Places in which to deliver a programme of offers aiming to promote wellbeing. We will seek out opportunities to expand the range of activities and events for everyone who uses the park.

10. Understand and reduce inequality in access to green space

Stockport Council is committed to reducing inequality in our borough. Using the data in our Neighbourhood Profiles and working closely with our Greenspace volunteers, our network of Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations and internal stakeholders we will actively and continuously seek opportunities to offer accessible and inclusive parks and green spaces.