



COMMITTEE TITLE – Clean and Green Committee

DATE: 11 September 2023

REPORT TITLE:	Clean and Green Rewilding Options and Trial Sites
REPORT OF:	Marcus Hotten, Director of Environment

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides options for sites bought forward by Clean and Green Committee for the trial of “rewilding” areas of parks and verges.

RECOMMENDATION

R1 - To agree the trial sites detailed below for rewilding and the changes in management for these areas during the trial period.

R2 - To agree the additional planting of up to 80 standard avenue trees at Hutton Recreation Ground, fully funded through Thames Chase Trust partnership.

SUPPORT ING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 Officers have reviewed the sites bought to the committee by its members and have assessed the suitability of each site.
- 1.2 The below information sets out what is achievable at minimal cost with little impact on resource for the Green Spaces operational teams.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 A briefing paper was presented to the Clean and Green Committee on the 26th June 2023 to consider relaxed mowing in certain areas within the borough. The management options for these sites included relaxed mowing, natural regeneration, tree planting and establishment of wildflowers.
- 2.2 To define the management type of each area, the table below provides some detail on how each management option will be implemented:

Management Option	Detail	Implementation Period
Relaxed Mowing	<p>Area will be left to form a natural meadow.</p> <p>Area will receive a “mower width” perimeter cut as part of routine maintenance to ensure the area is presentable and intentional. This will include a regular cut of a “mower width” around and footpath, desire line, obstacles or hard surfaced area.</p> <p>Naturalised area will be cut once per annum with a “cut and collect” machine or a flail machine where collection is not possible.</p>	<p>Immediate Implementation</p> <p>Establishment 1 year</p>
Tree Planting (Whips)	<p>A whip is an unbranched young tree approximately 50cm to 1m in size. These are low maintenance and would not require additional watering. Whips would be sourced from a sustainable source and be of a native variety.</p>	<p>Whip Planting November – February</p> <p>10 Years Establishment</p>
Tree Planting (Standards)	<p>A standard tree is an established tree of a size greater than 2m in height. These would provide an “instant impact” but would require regular watering.</p>	<p>Standard Planting November – February</p> <p>Immediate Establishment</p> <p>3 Year Watering Program</p>
Wild Flower Meadow	<p>An area will be cultivated in the Autumn months with a perennial wildflower mix</p>	<p>September – October Implementation</p> <p>1-3 Year Establishment Period</p>
Bulb Planting		<p>October Implementation</p> <p>Bulbs will flower each spring.</p>

2.1 Officers have considered the practicality of the areas put forward by ward members and have made recommendation for each area in the table below. Appendix 1 to this document is a list of maps detailing each area.

- 2.2** A further opportunity has arisen for the planting of up to 80 standard trees at Hutton Recreation Ground, fully funded through Thames Chase this season. Although not directly part of the “re-wilding” scheme, the recommendation is that the Council should take this opportunity to further green up and soften the parks edges by planting these trees.
- 2.3** There are currently no areas planned for Wild Flower Meadow or Whip planting as these areas would not be easily reverted during a trial period. Wild Flower meadow creation come at a high cost and labour, and we would want to be sure that these areas are to be managed long term before implementing.

<u>Site Location</u>	<u>Preferred Management Option</u>	<u>Map Reference</u>
Hutton Recreation Ground	Relaxed Mowing Tree Planting (Standards) – to commence in 2024 planting season if trial considered a success. Tree Planting (Standards) - If agreed, avenue of 80 trees to be planted this season (locations and species TBC)	Map 1
Greensward Elizabeth Road	Relaxed Mowing	Map 2
Greensward Harewood Road	Relaxed Mowing	Map 3
Elizabeth Road/Doddinghurst Road Junction	Tree Planting (Standards) Bulb Planting Relaxed Mowing	Map 4
Green Area between Days Lane, Crow Green and Ashwells Lane	Relaxed Mowing	Map 5
Greensward in Ongar Road	Relaxed Mowing	Map 6
Iris Close Community Green	Area not suitable due to public use of green. There would be difficulty maintaining this area as anything other than amenity grass.	N/A
Chelmsford Road	Verges would not be suitable due to small size. Area would be perceived as unkept as opposed to rewilded.	N/A

- 2.5** It should be noted that whilst relaxed mowing areas will be relatively simple to revert to maintained grass in the first year, areas that are planted with trees are not easily

reverted without potential reputational damage to the Council as this would involve the destruction of newly planted trees.

- 2.6 Areas left for rewilding for longer than one year, may require additional resource for cultivation, overseeding and watering if they were to revert to amenity grass after this period.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 To continue to maintain the identified areas as amenity grassland.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 4.1 Public perception of these areas may be seen as a “cost cutting” exercise and not that of improving biodiversity. It is recommended that Communications undertake targeted social media releases to the areas affected to educate residents.
- 4.2 It is recommended that signage is created for these areas to educate residents. Appendix 2 of this document are example signs used in Rochford to promote areas of biodiversity.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Members of this committee have provided a low-key consultation with residents of affected areas. The general feedback is positive and in favour of re wilding these areas.
- 5.2 If these sites were perceived to be a success, it is the recommendation that a wider consultation process is created to understand the commitment of our residents for a wider rollout, borough wide.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email : 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

Any financial commitment will be met within existing budgets.

7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Acting Joint Director – People & Governance & Monitoring Officer
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- 7.1 There are not any direct legal implications within this report.

8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health
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- 8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

8.3 The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on anybody with a protected characteristic.

10.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place

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10.1 None Identified.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Hutton Recreation Map

Appendix B – Greensward Elizabeth Road Map

Appendix C – Greensward Harewood Road Map

Appendix D – Doddinghurst Road Junction Map

Appendix E – Crow Green Map

Appendix F – Greensward Ongar Road Map

Appendix G – Example Biodiversity signage

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date