

Halls Road Recreation Ground Management Plan 2024 – 2034



1. Foreword

This management plan seeks to recognise the importance of this recreation ground and how improvements at this site could be developed for the benefit of the residents, while considering opportunities for environmental and biodiversity improvements.

We have a commitment to care for the site, for the benefit of all users, by working with communities in identifying priorities and using available resources wisely. This management plan will recognise all the valuable work that has been done to date and focus on the future management and maintenance of the site. Considering sustainability, it will ensure that any developments or refurbishments are completed in a manner which are sensitive to local community needs and the nature of the site in terms of its historical, ecological, and environmental value.

2. Introduction

Halls Road Recreation Ground sits north-west of the centre of Biddulph, on the cusp of Gillow Heath. A welcoming green space enjoyed and widely used by the neighbouring communities; recent improvements here have seen the upgrade of the recreation facilities.

This plan will define the current and future management and maintenance of Halls Road Recreation Ground for a 10-year period from 2024 to 2034 with a review annually. In compiling the plan, we acknowledge the essential and valuable contribution from all key stakeholders, partners, councillors and community groups. Without their contribution, this plan would be severely limited.

3. The Purpose of the Management Plan

It is imperative that this management plan provides clear direction for the future management and maintenance of the green space, ensuring that the area is conserved and enhanced in its entirety whilst balancing the needs of visitors and residents alike.

This management plan seeks to: -

- Take a holistic approach to the future management of the green space, play development and supporting opportunities to be active by assessing professional and community needs and desires.
- To establish a shared vision and objectives for the green space.
- Ensure community involvement within the development and management of the space.
- Establish standards that are effective and accountable to ensure clear management and maintenance objectives are identified and implemented.
- Benchmark the green space and analyse the management regimes and policies against best practice.
- Prioritise resources and action to ensure effective management of the space and the success of any future developments.

4. Responsibility for the Plan

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is responsible for the overall management of all our parks and open spaces.

The Service Commissioning section of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, working in partnership with all stakeholders and the community, has compiled this plan. Implementation of the plan will also be led by the Service Commissioning section with specific project leads as shown in the Action Plan.

Likewise, the monitoring and review of the plan will be led by the Service Commissioning section. It is recognised that regular effective monitoring and review of the plan will ensure that the document evolves to meet changing priorities.

However, all key stakeholders and users of the park together with the wider local community will be engaged to ensure that future revisions reflect a combination of views, needs and aspirations.

5. Strategic Context of the Management Plan

The Green Spaces Strategy is the overarching document that sets out the strategic context which informs the management of all our parks and green spaces. For this strategy to focus on the future effectively, it is important to recognise the key influencing documents and evidence base which frame the provision and development of the green spaces. It is also equally important for people to understand the current context in which green spaces are managed and maintained, as this will play a part in decision making and delivery of future projects which aim to maintain and enhance these areas.

The purpose of our Green Spaces Strategy is to bring these key issues into focus and by doing so:-

- 1) Set the overarching context and direction for the management and development of our green spaces.
- 2) Outline the approach for managing, protecting and developing green spaces, which gives consideration to the council's resources, management and maintenance responsibilities, and the contributions from community and interest groups.
- 3) Highlight a set of principles which will guide future maintenance, investment, community engagement decisions and actions regarding our green spaces.
- 4) Agree a set of priorities which focus effort, resources and decision making, ensuring that our green spaces remain high quality spaces for everyone to enjoy.
- 5) Help secure additional investment and external funding towards enhancing infrastructure, facilities and opportunities for the benefit of the community.

6. Site Details

6.1 Site Address and Access

The site is an informal recreation area with sports pitches and a large area of open green space situated off Halls Road, within the west ward of Biddulph and runs between Halls Road, Brook Gardens, Mow Lane and the Biddulph Valley Way.

The postal address is as follows:

30 Halls Road, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent ST8 6DB

It should be noted, however, that postal correspondence relating to this space should be directed to:

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, C/O Service Commissioning, Moorlands House, Leek, Staffordshire. ST13 6HQ.

A plan of the site is shown below:



The main entrance and car park sit to the south of the site, off Halls Road. There are secondary (pedestrian) entrances off Sandsdown Close, the Biddulph Valley Way, Mow Lane and Brook Gardens.

There is a good-sized car parking area available on-site, with 40 parking spaces available. The site is easily accessible by foot for the surrounding community and neighbouring housing estates who can access it directly from their homes.

6.2 Ownership and Designations

The site sits within the Biddulph west ward of the Staffordshire Moorlands and is owned and managed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The town of Biddulph lies within the Staffordshire Moorlands area of Staffordshire with a resident population of approximately 17,488 (2021).

There are no public rights of way across the site, but one does run on the west edge linking Sandsdown Close to Mow Lane. There is a path that runs around and across the recreation ground which improves accessibility through this natural environment, while encouraging physical activity.

7. Physical Assets

It is essential to fully understand the physical assets of the green space, including both natural and manmade features. This will assist in determining the strengths and weaknesses in the information base for the site. This in turn will provide a better understanding of the context of the site and inform how we might develop and effectively manage it for the future.

Halls Road Recreation Ground provides excellent opportunities for informal recreation to the local population which it serves. There is a good, hard surfaced car park providing spaces for more than 40 vehicles, including two disabled marked bays. A perimeter path runs around the site with a linking path through the centre of the green space to encourage users to walk freely within the site. There is easy access onto the Biddulph Valley Way providing the ability to utilise this green corridor for wider walking and cycling activities for the local community.

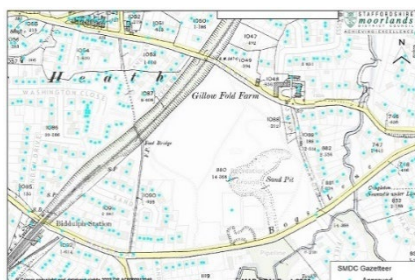
It is currently used primarily for recreation, informal free play and sport, as it also has a football pitch, tennis courts and a Multi-Use Games Area. It is regularly used for walking and dog walking, and many residents appreciate the beauty of the natural space and wildlife.

A small pavilion building sits just off the main car park. The building has been used more recently for storage of equipment and the main changing, toilet and shower units are not in good condition. We will review the use of this building and understand the options that may exist for it to be improved, managed and maintained into the future, which makes best use of the facility.

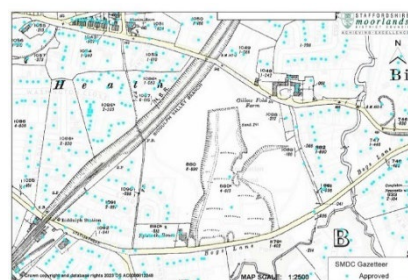
Although surrounded by housing, the natural environment of this green space brings benefits to the locality, not only for the residents of the housing estates around it but also in terms of ecological value. Priority species, including bees, have the potential to thrive within the area. We aim to work together with the local community and the Wildlife Trust to ensure that we can mitigate climate change with the help of our natural environments and increase biodiversity within this area.

8. Historical Heritage

Sand extraction pits of nineteenth century date. The purpose of the pits was to supply silica sand to the iron foundry industry, where it was used for making casting moulds.



Historic map 1899 – 1901



Historic map 1922 – 1925

9. Value Assessments

9.1 Educational Value

The site provides a valuable educational resource for schools/nurseries and other community organisations, such as Brownies, Beavers and Cubs, to encourage outdoor activities and learning experiences.

9.2 Recreational and Amenity Value

The site is a valuable recreational and amenity resource. It is a well-placed green space on the outskirts of the town centre and could easily be linked into walks around the town and much further with access to the Biddulph Valley Way, opening much wider walks. Having a green space near to where we live improves our quality of life and is known to help reduce the risk of physical inactivity.

The site incorporates a large play area serving all ages groups which was installed in 2016.

There is also a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and two tennis courts. The site also has a perimeter gravel-bound surfaced path, with outdoor fitness equipment positioned around the site.

Part of the site is managed as grass football pitches and in recent years these have been predominately for mini and youth age groups. There is a small pavilion building.

The site also has a historic kick wall which is now showing signs of deterioration and may need investment or removal at some point in the future.

9.3 Ecological Value

Having green spaces helps to contribute to a wide range of ecosystem services that improve urban space and enhance the lives of the residents, particularly their health and wellbeing. In addition to the benefits of climate change mitigation, green spaces can improve air quality, with trees in particular serving as natural air filters and helping to reduce the risk of respiratory problems. Providing an opportunity to reconnect with the natural environment can help to reduce stress, lower blood pressure and improve overall mood. Natural environments have also been proven to stimulate the mind and promote relaxation, reducing stress and fatigue.

Good quality and biodiverse green spaces can help act as stepping stones for species moving between habitats and help contribute to nature's recovery. With the current nature crisis including many species threatened with extinction, it has never been more important to improve biodiversity in our local green spaces and help contribute towards 'bigger, better, more, and joined-up' habitats so that wildlife can flourish. Implementing changes in management and maintenance of green spaces will support the recovery of nature across the Staffordshire Moorlands in line with the aims and ambitions of the Council's Plan for Nature.

The Plan for Nature makes suggestions to increase carbon sequestration at the site by managing parts of the site as an urban meadow and increasing the amount of low-density woodland. Wider Nature Recovery Network mapping indicates that the location of the site could provide an important 'stepping stone' for woodland and wetland habitat.

Several parts of the site are suitable for reduced mowing regimes, resulting in improved grassland habitats. Changing to an annual 'cut and collect' meadow mowing regime in these identified areas

will lower nutrient levels in the soil and encourage grass and flower diversity. Framing strips will be cut next to footpaths where these border with areas of longer grass to ensure access is maintained.

To the southeast of the site is an area of waterlogged ground. There is potential for 'wet woodland' planting here, including species such as willow, alder and birch. This could help reduce surface water issues in the longer term.

Elsewhere around the site, additional strategic tree planting could be beneficial. The Arboriculture Officer would be consulted regarding suitable species for the site.

Central to the site is an area of varied and sloped terrain, which has started to naturally re-vegetate over recent years. Soil sampling was undertaken which confirmed that the nutrient levels and pH were high in this area. Although the area may not be suitable for e.g. creation of a heathland habitat or initial wildflower seeding, discussions with the Wildlife Trust suggested that the area has the potential for some small-scale plug planting (e.g. heathers) to test how they establish over time. Work will be done to reduce the nutrient level in this area, via an annual cut and collect regime.

Any improvements to the ecological value of the site will be carefully considered in the context of the amenity value of the site, including maintaining access via footpaths and desire lines.

10. Management Responsibilities

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council will be responsible for the overall management of the green space. Working with partners, the community, and other interest groups to develop and deliver projects that improve the green space.

Alliance Environmental Services (AES) are the Council's delivery partner and, as such, would be responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the site and also hold the budgetary responsibility regarding maintenance. A schedule for the associated standards of maintenance is defined by the contract with AES, and the site has a specific maintenance schedule.

Community and interest groups are a vital and valued support network and play an important role in assisting with maintenance and development projects. These groups can also provide additional capacity, undertake selected maintenance tasks, and could attract additional funding to improve the site.

11. Health and Safety

Health and safety is of primary concern to the Council. AES will be responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and management of the site, and this includes keeping the area safe for the public to use. Regular site inspections, six monthly in-depth surveys and regular tree inspections are all part of the suite of checks and procedures which are in place. These will ensure that all issues, repairs, and replacements are identified quickly and scheduled into the work programmes as necessary.

The park has a site-specific risk assessment which is reviewed and updated annually by the Operations Service Lead (AES). All AES staff are given specific training to ensure they are always operating in a safe manner. Any work on our parks and open spaces which is carried out by external contractors, partners or community groups/volunteers is governed by the Council's health and safety policies, which they must abide by and follow.

12. Involving Communities

It is well recognised that for any park or public open space to be successfully managed it must respond to the needs of the local community and users. Actively engaging and encouraging community participation and involvement is essential in the continued development of the site.

The establishment of a community group in this area would help to achieve the following:

- Provide a community focus for the site
- Take practical action to improve the area
- Raise the profile of the space
- Help to raise funds to improve the site
- Sustain and enhance the flora and fauna of the green space and its habitats.
- Preserve public access into and throughout the space in perpetuity.

13. Marketing and Communications

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is responsible for managing Halls Road Recreation Ground and has a variety of communication mechanisms that can be utilised to give feedback on the performance and continued relevance of this Management Plan. As the Council is committed to reducing the need for paperwork, there is an increased reliance on the use of the relevant sections of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council website and social media platforms.

The Council has both a Facebook page and an X account:

- Facebook - <https://m.facebook.com/staffsMoorlands>
- X (Formally Twitter) - <https://x.com/StaffMoorlandDC>

For anything specific to Halls Road Recreation Ground, the link below gives several options for how you might get in touch.

- <https://www.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/article/900/Halls-Road-Recreation-Ground>

The Council can also be contacted by writing to:

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, c/o Service Commissioning, Moorlands House, Stockwell Street, Leek, ST13 6HQ.

14. Action Plan

The Green Spaces Strategy provides the guiding principles and headline priorities for the management and development of our green spaces and following on from this, we can develop specific site action plans. These plans identify our priorities, linked to the Strategy, and ensure they are appropriate, relevant, resourced and provide a flexible and realistic approach to realising the aims of the Management Plan.

Green Spaces Strategy Objectives

We will:

1. Review maintenance regimes to ensure that our green spaces are maintained to a high standard, in an affordable and sustainable way, and make improvements to increase and enhance biodiversity. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 & 5)
2. Ensure that infrastructure and heritage features are protected and well maintained, in accordance with the resources available to the council. (Addresses priorities 1 & 2)
3. Encourage and enable positive physical and mental well-being by developing strong partnerships with community groups, sports clubs and other stakeholder groups. Ensuring that our green spaces fulfil their potential for enabling healthy lifestyles for all ages, encouraging all residents to move more. (Addresses priorities 1, 2, 4 & 5)
4. Plant more trees within our green spaces to help combat climate change (carbon storage) and increase canopy cover, providing future new habitats for wildlife and additional shade for our communities in periods of extreme heat. (Addresses priorities 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)
5. Ensure our green spaces are safe, welcoming, and accessible places for all of our communities and that the highest possible standards of health and safety are maintained by our service providers, event organisers and when engaging the community in projects. (Addresses priorities 2, 4 & 5)
6. Actively encourage community engagement and involvement in the protection, maintenance, development and positive environmental impacts of our green spaces. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 and 5)
7. Effectively manage internal budgets and attract external funding wherever possible towards the ongoing maintenance and the future development of our green spaces. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 and 5)
8. Review management plans and their associated action plans annually to ensure these objectives are being delivered effectively. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 and 5)
9. Create a green spaces development fund to make improvements to our green spaces. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4, and 5)

Action Plan 2024/25 & 2025/26

Objective 1: To protect and enhance biodiversity, address the effects of climate change and ensure the park is sustained for the future

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|--|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Identify opportunities to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site. | Summer 2024 | N/A | SMDC | Existing budget / External Funds | SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Other industry recognised professional bodies | Signage on site / PR / social media | Complete |
| Explore opportunities for creating naturalised areas across the site. | Summer 2024 | N/A | SMDC | Existing budget / External funds | SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust / community groups | Signage on site / PR / social media | In – progress |
| Review current maintenance regimes to identify best practice that reflects emerging principles which address climate change. | Summer 2024 | N/A | SMDC | Existing budget / External funds | SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Recognised industry professionals in this field | Signage on site / PR / social media | In - progress |
| Implement mowing regime changes. | April 2025 | Unknown | SMDC / AES | Existing budget (whole project may require extra capital funding) | SMDC / AES | Signage on site / PR / social media | In - progress |
| Explore the opportunity to establish a heathland type area. | Autumn / winter 2025/26 | Unknown | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust / Biddulph Town Council | Signage on site / PR / social media | Not started |

Objective 2: Ensure that infrastructure and heritage features are protected and well maintained

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|---|----------------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Ensure that any heritage significance of the park is protected and conserved for the future. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC | Existing | SMDC / AES | | Ongoing |
| Ensure the infrastructure of the site is maintained. All infrastructure to be monitored on regular site checks. | Ongoing | Individual repair and maintenance issues covered by AES | AES | Existing | SMDC / AES | PR / social media if appropriate | Ongoing |
| Ensure that the football pitches are maintained to a high standard and improved as appropriate. | Ongoing | Unknown | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | AES / MyActive / Staffs FA | PR / social media if appropriate | Ongoing |
| Keep Pitch Power updated and regular checks to monitor the condition of the pitches. | Annually (September) | N/A | SMDC / AES | N/A | AES / Staffs FA | PR / social media if appropriate | Ongoing |
| Review the condition and usage of the pavilion building. | Summer / Autumn 2025 | Unknown | SMDC / MyActive | Existing budget | SMDC / MyActive / User groups / Stakeholders | | Not started |
| Inspect the 'kick-wall' and ensure it is safe. Open up conversations with the community and stakeholders over possible removal. | Summer / Autumn 2025 | Unknown | SMDC | Existing budget | SMDC (Assets) / Biddulph Town Council / User groups | PR / social media as required | Not started |

Objective 3: Ensuring that our green spaces fulfil their potential for enabling healthy lifestyles for all ages, encouraging all residents to move more

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|---|-------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Continue to promote and maximise the opportunities for physical activity within the park. | Ongoing | Unknown | SMDC | SMDC / Together Active/ Public Health | Public Health / Together Active / Move More Partnership / MyActive | Signage on site / PR / social media | Ongoing |
| Review the existing outdoor fitness equipment. | Winter 2024 | N/A | SMDC | Move More funding | AES / Community groups | | Not started |
| Inspect the metal goal posts at the bottom of the site. | Spring 2025 | N/A | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | AES / MyActive | | Not started |

Objective 4: Plant more trees within our green spaces to help combat climate change (carbon storage) and increase canopy cover, providing future new habitats for wildlife and additional shade for our communities

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Plant trees in identified areas. | Winter 2024/25 & 2025/26 | £500 | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | AES / Community groups | Signage on site / PR / social media | Not started |
| Plant new hedge. | Winter 2024/25 & 2025/26 | £500 | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | AES / Community groups | Signage on site / PR / social media | Not started |
| Gap up existing hedge. | Winter 2024/25 | £150 | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | AES / Community groups | Social media | Not started |

Objective 5: To ensure our parks are safe, welcoming and accessible for the communities they serve

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------|-------------------|-------------|
| Improve path surface to enable increased accessibility. | Winter 2024/25 | Unknown | SMDC | Existing budget | AES | PR / social media | Ongoing |
| Review entrance points for barriers to accessibility. | Winter 2024/25 | N/A | SMDC | | AES | | Not started |
| New entrance signage to include 'welcoming' message and important contact details. | Spring 2025 | Unknown | SMDC | Existing budget | AES | PR / social media | Not started |
| Ensure that (hedge) gap to Halls Road is blocked. | Winter 2024/25 | Unknown | SMDC / AES | Existing budget | AES | | Not started |

Objective 6: Actively encourage community engagement and involvement

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|--|---------|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---|-------------------|-------------|
| Invest time to encourage better community links and potential for a Friends of the park group to be established. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC | Unknown | AES / Biddulph Town Council / other organisations | PR / social media | Not started |
| Continue to engage with key stakeholders in the park. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC | Unknown | AES / Biddulph Town Council / other organisations | | Ongoing |
| Explore opportunities to increase educational activities in the park. | Ongoing | Unknown | SMDC/Move More Partners/SSP | Unknown | Local schools / children and youth services | | Not started |

Objective 7: To ensure effective financial management of resources

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|---|---------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--|-------|---------|
| Ensure that the existing budgets are used to gain best value and maximise opportunities. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC / AES | | AES | | Ongoing |
| Review and investigate opportunities to apply for external funding, where appropriate. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC | | Community groups / Biddulph Town Council | | Ongoing |
| Work in partnership with both internal and external colleagues to expand the impact of relevant projects. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC | | AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust / Public Health / Move More Partners / Biddulph Town Council / Community groups | | Ongoing |

Objective 8: Review and Monitoring

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|--|-------|---------|
| Annual condition review of park infrastructure including seating, bins, paths and built structures. | Annual (April) | N/A | SMDC / AES | SMDC / AES | AES | | Ongoing |
| Annual review of action plan for the park. | Annual (January) | N/A | SMDC | Existing | AES / Community groups / Biddulph Town Council / wider community | | Ongoing |
| Ensure that all health & safety aspects are annually reviewed. | Annual (April) | N/A | SMDC / AES | Existing | AES | | Ongoing |

Objective 9: Green Spaces Development Fund

| Action | When | Estimated Cost | Responsibility | Resources | Partners | Comms | Status |
|---|---------|----------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|-------|---------|
| Continue to look at opportunities where the GSDF could be used to improve the site. | Ongoing | N/A | SMDC | SMDC | All stakeholders | | Ongoing |