

Commentary from Southampton Commons & Parks Protection Society (SCAPPS)

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[Environment | Your City Your Say Southampton](#) - existing open space and green infrastructure

SCAPPS has been campaigning to protect Southampton's parks and green spaces for over a century. So we come at the issues you'll be discussing from a slightly different approach to many of you. We share concerns about climate action but our priority is promotion and protection of green space.

Access to green space (and alongside water) important for recreation, health and mental well-being. Commons, parks and the Itchen give character and identity. Much of Southampton has a 'green' appearance and character because of street trees and verges and house gardens. All that 'green' contributes to tackling air quality, sustainable drainage and carbon capture.

We'll be looking to make representations covering:

- 1 Continuation of the policy SCAPPS fought hard to secure, an unequivocal statement if green space is taken for built development replacement equal in area and quality shall be provided elsewhere. ('Green space' doesn't just mean parks and public open space, it includes school and club playing fields and undeveloped green areas and woodland.)
- 2 The Plan is for more homes. More homes must be matched by commensurate provision of nearby public open space and children's play areas. Major growth in city centre but few opportunities; importance of Albion Place, include major POS in plans for Mayflower Quarter, look at repurposing surface car parks.
- 3 Protection of parks and their setting. Provide for updating/changing patterns of use but protect from damage to character. Conflict over strategic cycle routes on paths in parks (and use by e-scooters). Stronger policy wording to prevent continuous walls of tall buildings next to historic Central Parks.
- 4 Character of many parts of Southampton is 'green'; that's vulnerable to increasing density and to removal of street and garden trees and paving over of gardens.
- 5 Improving how people can access and enjoy being by water. Improve and increase extent of river front paths. River front redevelopment to include public access to waterfront. Remove 'planning blight' on Mayflower Park.
- 6 Support for Green Grid, but not yet had time to assess definition and delineation and detail of policy wording.

I was asked about standards for access to public open space. This is discussed in the City Council's Green Space Strategy but no firm standards set. Broadly, intention is some sort of small amenity space close to homes (in many parts of the City, homes have gardens, but in city centre and other places with a high proportion of flats achieving that standard requires neighbourhood play areas/green amenity space). Then, a local park within 5 minutes walk and a bigger park, with broader range of facilities, within a 10 minutes walk. A map of Southampton quickly shows inequality of access to nearby parks and green space.

The main 'destination parks' (ie ones people travel some distance to use) are The Common, the Central Parks, the Outdoor Sports Centre, Mayflower Park, Riverside Park, Mayfield Park, Weston Shore, Mansel Park/Green Park, Veracity Ground and St James's

Park. There are then some 40+ other parks, ranging in size. Some are of sufficient size and laid out in a way that gives a sense of separation from surroundings (Redbridge Wharf, Cedar Lodge, Portswood Rec, Bitterne Manor, Peartree Green, Frogs Copse). Others are tiny, but still used and appreciated by their local communities. There are also the Greenways. Graham Linecar