

# Stratton Park – Natural Green Space Improvement 2013-16

As a multi-use leisure space Stratton Park can be divided into its constituent parts :

1. Sports Facilities,
2. Children's play area,
3. Leisure activity buildings (Scout Hall, Model Railway hut)
4. Car Parking

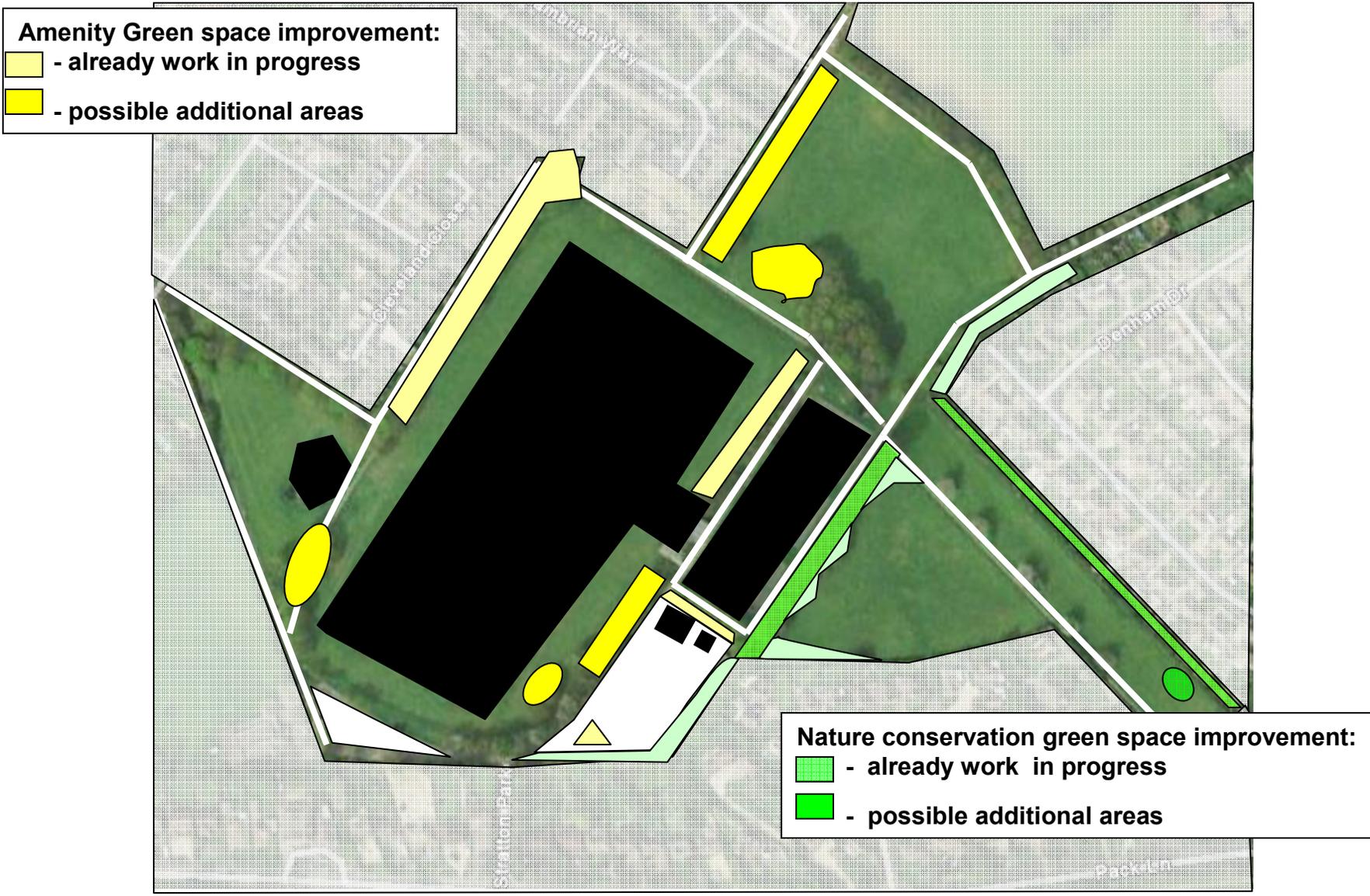
Everything else is :

5. General access paths & leisure amenity green space
6. Nature Conservation green space

These are designated on the following park view



# Category 5&6 – Amenity green space & nature conservation green space



## Notes on Improving the Quality of Amenity Spaces

Amenity green spaces are by definition easy access, 'garden' type areas, heavily used by people and dogs and requiring as little maintenance as can be achieved compatible with neatness.

The elements are trees, bushes, grass and flowers:

**Trees** - Most trees in Stratton Park are mature Norway Maple planted in great numbers 40 years ago. They are too dense, too near existing houses and present very little variety.

**Bushes** – there are very few flowering and berry bearing bushes other than the hedgerows, old and new. New hedges were planted next to trees 40 years ago and therefore suffer from over shading and are very poor quality.

**Grass** is the one element the council maintains effectively.

**Flowers**, either wild or cultivated, were not planted or were eliminated over the decades.

**First** priority has been getting some colour into the park – Spring bulbs have been introduced on a 3 year programme of planting at various points in the park as a low maintenance element - paid for and planted by the community. The question arises as to the continuation of this programme from year 4 and if so where.

**Second** priority is flowering and berry bearing bushes – the first area of which is on the south side of Holy Ghost Field. The question of where else these can be introduced is partly dependent on resolution of the issues with trees.

**The third** element – which raises the most issues - is the tree population. It is all of one age and largely one species and is now in inappropriate locations. A review of the tree stock suggests a minimum of 87 trees should be felled and replaced with younger trees of a wide variety of species - a project which is estimated to require £25,000 of funding to achieve. The impact of the tree stock is the most important issue for residents living around the park. The council offers no solution at the moment.

# Notes on Improving the Quality of Nature Conservation Green Spaces

## **Why Nature conservation Green Spaces**

The entire ecology system – with humans sitting at the top of the tree – is interdependent – lose one major element and the quality of the environment for all other creatures deteriorates. Why are there so few butterflies or bees in the park? – because there are no flowers to feed on, why are there so few birds in the park? – because it only accommodates and feeds birds that forage in short mown grass.

## **How are nature conservation green spaces defined in a multi-use park?**

- existing long established wildlife areas, old hedgerows, old trees (70+ yrs old)
- green corridors linking these existing green spaces to each other or to green spaces outside the park
- other spaces which could provide nature conservation features without detriment to other functions or elements of the park.

## **What nature conservation green spaces are there in Stratton Park?**

- the old hedgerow on the north side of Holy Ghost Field
- the mature hedgerow bordering the Berg estate by the Dellwood Path.  
both of these have been neglected and fragmented over 1970 – 2010 and a 5 year programme to restore integrity and quality has begun. Further details are given below.

## **Nature conservation corridors**

It is highly desirable that existing nature conservation areas are linked into a network of natural corridors wherever possible. A nature corridor needs to function at three levels – Ground cover, tree canopy and a middle level usually represented by flowering and berry bearing bushes and small trees (as in a hedgerow). The wider the corridor the better, of course. Existing maturing trees in amenity spaces provide a high level corridor but fail to provide anything at the other two levels.

Thought needs to be given to expanding and connecting the existing nature conservation space – the diagram shows some possible developments – round the main car park, extending the Holy Ghost Hedgerow and following the Dellwood hedgerow round towards the school tree and bushes area.

Little of this proposed development is located on the north side of the park - pending resolution of the issues with trees.

## **Other nature conservation spaces**

The habitat type which is not represented in the park at the moment is wildflower meadow.

There is ample flat grass area to convert this to meadow away from formal paths and informal walking routes. Consideration needs to be given to desirable areas for this – and to demonstrate to the general public the effect looked for by completing the meadow patch experiment by the Dellwood Walk. – due for completion by summer 2015.

# Notes on Development Plans for Holy Ghost Field & Dellwood Walk

- **Dellwood Walk:**

**Tree walk** Scheduled removal of 1 leaning cherry tree and a disfigured cherry which has lost its normal structure and become a bush (has given the opportunity to add 3 new specimen trees – 2 planted Autumn 2012 and 1 to be planted Autumn 2013).

**Dellwood Hedgerow** is potentially the richest hedgerow in the park, but has been allowed to get fragmented and poorly maintained in the period 1970 -2010. Better management of the hedge as a complete feature started 2012, old and undesirable tree features are being removed and gaps in the hedge are being filled.

**Potential meadow areas.** [M] At the southern end of this walk is an experimental area to see what was the result if municipal grass cutting ceased and to establish what species exist within the current sward.

The species yield has not been great as the oval patch was rotavated in error rather than just left. Reseeding will take place in Autumn 2013.

- **Holy Ghost Field:**

**Enrichment of the old hedgerow** - poor state hedge structure with many gaps temporarily assisted by dead hedging the gaps. The proposals are to a) close all but 3 gaps with dead hedging and maximise the linear restoration of the hedge on the original line where possible, b) add flowering/berrying bushes on the south side of the hedge line, c) add patches of wild flower development in front of the bushes to a distance from the hedgerow line of approximately 5-6 meters. This is proceeding - 2013-4 will see introduction of perennial wild flower plugs and seed.

In 2014-15 some hedge laying should be possible.

**Development of mixed tree and shrub area** [white blocks] on south side of Holy Ghost Field. Emphasis is on variety of material and benefit to birds and insects with flowering and berry bearing species.

Trees will be of medium height and will provide an opportunity to remedy the lack of Mountain Ash and Midland Hawthorn in the park.

# Stratton Park – Development Plans: Holy Ghost Field & Dellwood Walk



# Future Projects

## **1. Upgrade of the Children's Playground**

with better quality and more imaginative wood and rope climbing and balancing equipment. The cost is several thousands and therefore has to wait for funding to become available - to be pursued with Buckskin Community planning group.

## **2. Community Orchard**

Again a project to be kept in mind for the long term - either sited within the park, or jointly with Park View Schools, or within Buckskin itself. Space needed – approx 50m. X 75m.

## **3 'Meadowfication' of some amenity green areas**

Conversion of areas of amenity grass to meadow grass – short grass with introduced wild flowers. Test patch is in Dellwood - with conversion starting Autumn 2013.