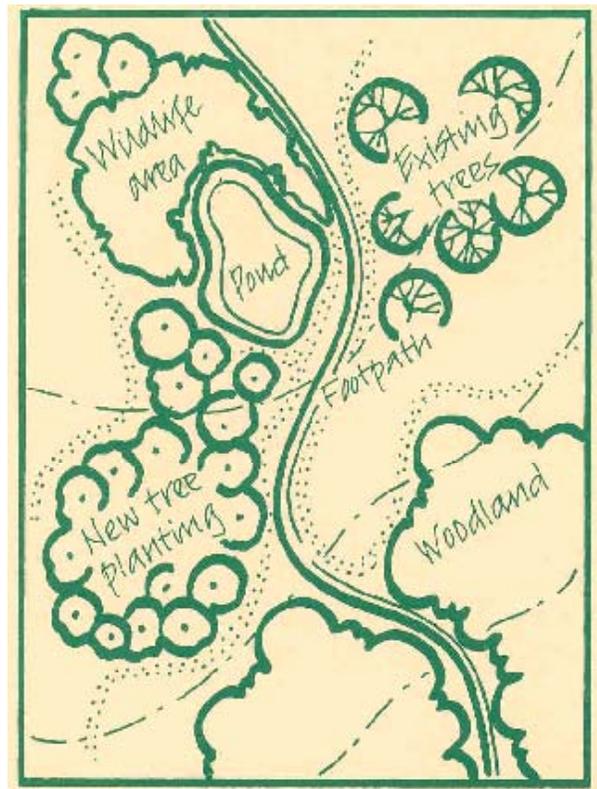


# Landscape Design Guide

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## Addendum



**South Somerset District Council**

Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT



## **Introduction**

This document has been prepared as an addendum to 'Landscape Design – a guide to good practice', which is supplementary planning guidance adopted by South Somerset District Council. **The prime purpose of this addendum is to set out additional guidance for developers involved in the preparation of the layout and design of land that will be passed to South Somerset District for adoption as open space.**

This addendum sets out specific requirements of the adopting authority in relation to open space, and is presented in two parts:

**Part 1** details general guidance that will assist the use and practicable management of open space, and;

**Part 2** updates specific design guidance, by selective amendment of the main design guide, which is applicable to all adopted open space.

It is not intended that the addendum will supersede dialogue between the site developer and local planning authority on design matters, which shall continue prior to the submission of a detailed scheme: This additional information simply intends to clarify what standard of provision the adopting authority is seeking, consistent with the initial design vision, and to facilitate practicable and sustainable management of open space and structural landscape areas.

## **A vision for open spaces**

Urban parks and green spaces are now the subject of a government initiative to raise the profile of open space in our towns and cities: CABE Space ([www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)) was launched in May 2003 as part of the government's sustainable communities initiative, with an intent to become a national champion of urban parks and green spaces, and to enable these places to contribute to improving the quality of life.

SSDC subscribes to the CABE Space Vision, and similarly seeks to raise the quality and provision of open space in ways that will generate a pride in the quality of the district's green spaces. Alongside this is an intention to meet people's needs – for places that are attractive, safe and accessible - whilst underlying the whole approach is a drive for design quality and environmental integrity.

This aspiration is indicative of the quality of open space that will be sought by this authority.

## **Local plan policy requirements**

The adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006) sets out its requirements for the provision of informal play and amenity space in new developments, in chapter 11 – 'Recreation and Community facilities', policies CR2-4.

In addition to the general amenity and informal recreational space that will result from application of the above policies, land may also be passed to the authority for adoption that has been designed to satisfy policies relating to the quality of development (chapter 2, policies ST6-7) and to mitigate landscape and wildlife impacts (chapter 3, policies EC3, 6-8).

Many mitigation areas may require individual or specialist treatment as determined by environmental impact assessment, or in response to specific site impacts, and such treatments may lay outside the scope of this addendum. However, a range of planting, grassland, and soft and hard landscape treatments will contribute to the overall open space package, and it is primarily these elements that the following pages address.

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**Part 1:**  
**Specific requirements that will assist use and management of amenity open space.**

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**Design criteria -**

Amenity open space adopted by this authority needs to be **usable**, i.e.; accessible, safe, durable, and fit for the purpose for which it is designed. It also has to be provided in a condition that can be effectively managed, and maintained in accordance with accepted good working practice.

Generally, the authority is unwilling to adopt small, awkward areas that have arisen as 'space left over after planning'. All areas contributing to the open space calculation should make a meaningful contribution to the overall design, and aim to create a coherent space.

Consequently, developers are encouraged to meet certain criteria when designing and delegating amenity open space. These are:

- Individual plots of amenity open space should be greater than 250m<sup>2</sup> in area, unless there is justifiable reason to the contrary arising from the urban design process.
- To facilitate maintenance of open space, the space should not be less than 7m wide at any point, unless determined otherwise by related urban design factors that contribute to the use and/or amenity value of the space.
- All designated amenity open space must have adequate vehicular access of at least 3.5m (to allow for emergency services)
- Stream corridors shall aim to have a minimum of a 10m buffer from the top of the bank where abutting open space, to facilitate a safe environment (see page 6 also).
- Where retained within the open space allocation, hedgerows shall have sufficient open space alongside to facilitate the access and operation of a tractor flail.
- Open space should be relatively level. Any general gradients should be no steeper than 1 in 4, and any embankments or retaining gradients should be no greater than 1 in 2 to the horizontal. Cultivated slopes should not drain onto surfaced areas, to thus avoid wash down of silt.
- Areas designated as "service strips" or land that carries a high ratio of underground services shall not be included within the calculation of amenity open space if it impedes use or maintenance of that space, or is likely to erode its quality.

- Open areas of recreational land should be well drained and not subject to water retention (Ideally having the drainage of a sand loam root zone)
- Any other land or landscape feature that is not included within the calculation of open space, but is likely to be passed to the LA for adoption, must be identified at the earliest opportunity, to ensure practicable access for maintenance purposes is built into the layout.

### **Safety considerations**

The developer must ensure that all land that is to be adopted by the local authority is “risk assessed” and that copies of these are submitted to the authority at the earliest opportunity.

Safety measures must be included to minimise the risk of road-related accidents near “amenity open spaces” and special consideration should be given to the proximity of;

- Sub stations
- Electricity cables
- Watercourses
- Railway lines

The developer is also asked to provide details of their management and disposal procedure for any hazardous or noxious weeds that may be present on site e.g. Giant Hogweed. Details of identified weeds can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

### **Access**

All amenity open space should generally adhere to the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act 2005. Specific attention should be given to;

- Avoid the use of steps wherever possible, unless a convenient alternative access route is also provided.
- Construct footpaths in accordance with Disability and Discrimination Act 2005, which requires: -
  - Hard non-slip surface with no loose surface material
  - 2,000mm wide, or 1500mm with passing places.
  - Max gradient 1:20
  - Cross slope of no more than 1:50

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**Part 2:**  
**Selective amendment of 'Landscape Design'.**

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These amendments are to be read in conjunction with the design guide and the alterations refer to specific pages and items.

- **P16/17 - Use of native species.**

**Add text** – The use of native species is advocated to assist the perpetuation of local landscape character and woody habitat composition. The district council now has an adopted Species Guide, which provides detailed information of which native species grow naturally within South Somerset; where those species occur; and in what proportion. In relation to urban open space, the species guide is applicable to plantings that will be bounding the countryside; supplementing natural features within the site; or forming part of a wildlife corridor.

**Delete** – the list of native trees and shrubs.  
This is superseded by the species guide, go to;  
[www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/4/j/SPECIES\\_GUIDE.pdf](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/4/j/SPECIES_GUIDE.pdf)

- **P18/19 – Water features**

**Add to – Slow moving streams, drainage ditches and ponds**

Where the above features are designed or incorporated in to the development, suitable access should be provided for maintenance purposes (removal of silt etc.)

**Add – Health and safety implications**

The safety implication of public access to water features is a major factor affecting the design relationship of public open space to water. The prime options to consider are those of either;

- i) opening up the stream corridor to ensure good visibility and gentle gradients with no hidden hazards, ecological value permitting, or;
- ii) limit the points of public access.

Where it is considered necessary to limit public access to water features, consideration may be given to;

- separation by suitable and context-appropriate fencing, and/or;
- buffering with additional planting;

**Add- Attenuation ponds**

Attenuation ponds cannot be classed as usable open space, nor included in the open space calculation. Within the public realm there will be a preference for these facilities to be designed as underground storage. However, where an attenuation pond is the most appropriate form of water attenuation, they can be considered for site management as part of the adoption process.

- **P26 – Hedges**

***Add to – management of existing hedgerows***

Existing hedgerows that are retained as part of the development must be incorporated as an integral part of the design, in an arrangement that can enable ease of maintenance. Prior to adoption, all hedges shall undergo management works to ensure a robust structure and healthy condition, appropriate to its landscape purpose and wildlife value.

- **P30 Choice of species – practical aspects**

***Add – Fruiting species***

Species of ornamental trees that are characterized by copious or large fruit bodies (such as crab apples & fruiting cherries) should not be placed near footpaths (i.e. the distance of estimated mature crown-spread) to ensure avoidance of a footfall hazard.

***Add – Feature trees***

In highlight locations, or where immediate effect is required, trees should be of sufficient size to create a visual statement. Such trees should be of a “heavy standard” size, with a girth of no less than 14-16cm.

- **P32 Designing with shrubs**

***Add to - Practical uses of shrub planting***

Where shrub beds are located alongside areas of public thoroughfare, the design should ensure that thorny species, or plants that could similarly represent a hazard, are neither placed alongside paths, nor around the face of the planted area.

Such plants can be used to form a physical barrier if there is a security issue, by incorporating a frontage of non-hazardous planting. Alternatively, ‘barrier species’ can be planted away from public access areas, at a minimum distance of 2.5 metres.

- **P35/36 - Ground cover**

**Add – Grass species**

Appropriate grass seed mixes should be identified for use that will suit;

- the local soil-type;
- the drainage profile;
- the prime intended site-use, and;
- site ecology.

**Remove – from species list**

Rubus tricolor

Vinca major / minor

- **P40 – Existing trees on development sites - Protection**

**Amend** – BS 5837:1991 is now updated by the 2005 revision.

**Add** – The protection of trees during the construction phase shall be as determined by BS 5837:2005 – trees in relation to construction. A tree protection plan should be submitted that;

- i) demonstrates the method of tree protection;
- ii) indicates the root protection area (RPA) as determined by BS 5837;
- iii) details a work method-statement where working under existing trees; and;
- iv) details appropriate surface and construction treatments where hard finishes fall within the RPA.

- **P48 - Planting and aftercare**

**Add - Management plans**

On major development sites, the developer will be required to supply a management plan for the whole site. The prime aim of this plan is to set-out and establish an appropriate regime of maintenance operations that will ensure the long-term care and development of the site consistent with; i) the design concept; ii) landscape, habitat and species requirements arising from the EIA, and; iii) best practice, as set out by the appropriate British Standards for landscape operations.

The management plan shall provide management prescriptions for all landscape elements and vegetation types identified on the landscape masterplan - including works to existing vegetation and landscape features. The plan is to include standard specifications that will apply to all landscape work, and benchmark standards that will determine suitability for adoption. The plan will be expected to cover initial

maintenance to adoption in detail, thereafter with ongoing prescriptions for management over 25 years.

The plan is to provide information in the following stages –

### **1) Specification**

Specifications for all landscape material shall be provided, inclusive of site operations leading up to practical completion. These specifications will be deemed to cover all landscape works to be undertaken at the different stages of site construction.

### **2) Initial establishment (pre-adoption)**

Initial maintenance works to establish the scheme shall be detailed. This information is to be presented per vegetation type (or feature). For each vegetation type, the objectives of maintenance, and the principal operations to achieve those objectives, shall be set-out against a time scale. Note that some vegetation types will need to be sub-divided (e.g; grasslands) according to their intended use or conservation value.

The plan shall include works to existing vegetation and landscape features, e.g; trees, hedges, ponds etc. arising from a condition survey. Prescriptions for these initial management works by the developer are to ensure;

- i) the vegetation is in optimum condition on adoption, and;
- ii) in a suitable state for subsequent ease of maintenance.

### **3) Post-adoption**

The developer shall provide;

- a) detail of ongoing maintenance operations to year 10, per type/feature as above.
- b) General management prescriptions that set a broad framework for long-term maintenance regime (to year 25).

Note that a review of the plan will be necessary at year 10.

### ***Add – maintenance***

The standard of maintenance shall be assessed annually by a joint inspection between representatives of the developer, the local planning authority, and the adopting organisation.

Assessment will be based upon the approved specifications set out in the management plan, which will also be applicable to the detailed landscape design. Where SSDC is the adopting authority, if the level of maintenance is deemed to be unacceptable, either the land will not be adopted until it reaches the approved standard; the pre-adoption period may be extended; or any bond held by the District Council may be used to rectify any issues.

At all times during the maintenance period the developer will be expected to: -

- i) Keep the whole site free of litter and weed growth
- ii) Keep all plant growth looking fresh and healthy to encourage establishment.
- iii) Keep all grass neatly mown to encourage a dense sward at a frequency agreed in the management plan.
- iv) Empty litterbins on a weekly basis
- v) Remove any graffiti.

- **P52 – Street furniture**

**Add** - Street furniture provision shall be sought that is durable; fit for purpose; offer design standards of consistent quality; and enable ease of maintenance. The design of street furniture shall correspond to its surroundings, as set out by the urban design vision.

- **P54 - Boundaries**

**Add** - The boundary ownership of all public open space is to be clearly identified on the adoption maps.

All fencing both defining and within public space, is to be strong; suitably finished to ensue there is no ongoing maintenance requirement; and hazard-free. The fencing shall be of a material and appearance consistent with the urban design of its surrounds.

**Note** that where there are British standards for street furniture and hard landscape elements, these shall apply.