



Environmental Maintenance and Management Policy

SER-POL-37

Version 2.0

Date approved: 29 July 2025

Approved by: People and Places Committee

1. Introduction and Aims

- 1.1 Southway Housing Trust owns over 6,500 homes in Greater Manchester and is a community-focused housing association with a vision to provide excellent customer service and quality homes, where communities thrive.
- 1.2 We have a large number of open spaces and trees included across our areas.
- 1.3 Our Policy aims are to:
 - Retain and manage spaces promoting biodiversity and conservation, as part of our pledge to support Manchester's aspiration to achieve net zero by 2038.
- 1.3.1 To provide green spaces that are welcoming, safe, and well maintained.
 - To use green spaces to engage with customers and communities and encourage community cohesion.
- 1.3.2 Fulfil our legal obligations to support Biodiversity Net Gain (on developments we will leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was).
- 1.4 Southway is also committed to working in collaboration with other housing providers to deliver the objectives set out the Green & Blue Infrastructure strategy for Manchester. This is about improving green spaces & waterways across the city.
- 1.5 There are also areas that we are legally obliged to inspect such as Playgrounds and Linkways. This is to ensure that these areas are hazard free and any equipment is safe to use.
- 1.6 Safety Inspections are designed to identify all defects that are likely to create danger or serious inconvenience to users of these areas or the wider community. The safety inspections regime forms a key aspect of Southway Housing Trusts' strategy for managing liability and risk.

2. Green Spaces

- 2.1 Southway is responsible for the various Green Spaces within our areas.

- 2.2 Maintenance of our green spaces is carried out through a ground's maintenance contract. Each space has its own specification that details how it will be maintained and managed.
- 2.3 These spaces are regularly inspected by Southway's Urban Rangers and volunteer Green Inspectors to ensure standards are maintained.

3. Communal Gardens

- 3.1 Communal Gardens are green spaces shared by several residents. The Grounds Maintenance contractor also maintains these.
- 3.2 An **annual** full health and safety inspection takes place at these spaces. These areas are also inspected quarterly.
- 3.3 At community buildings, inspections are carried out by the Facilities Management Team.
- 3.4 The team records any defects found, delivering any remedial work required and signing this work off as compliant.
- 3.5 Linkways (currently 21 in total) are a pathway or ginnel that links two roads used for public access. These are often hedged or fenced and therefore need to be accessible and hazard free. The maintenance of these areas is included in the Grounds Maintenance contract.
- 3.6 Linkways are inspected by the Southway Urban Rangers every 6 months.

4. Playgrounds

- 4.1 Southway has one playground and one outdoor fitness area.
- 4.2 A weekly visual inspection, a quarterly operational inspection (where equipment is tested) and a formal annual inspection takes place at these sites.

5. Tree Maintenance

- 5.1 Southway conducts a regular tree survey (at least every 3 years) to identify any potential issues that may present a risk. A database of our tree stock is maintained to ensure that any maintenance work is prioritised in accordance with any recommendations from the surveys.

- 5.2 The felling of trees will only be undertaken where a tree is clearly diseased or unstable, where there is evidence of it causing damage to property, or where future problems can be avoided by early intervention.
- 5.3 Work will not normally be undertaken to trees because they are blocking light, dropping leaves, affecting television or telephone reception.
- 5.4 Where a tree is felled, consideration will be given to replacement planting on the site or on a suitable location nearby, if this is possible.

6. Invasive Species

- 6.1 When Japanese Knotweed or any other invasive species is identified on land that Southway is responsible for, we will take responsibility for eradication through annual treatment by a specialist contractor. This includes the gardens of customer's homes.
- 6.2 This supports the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019.

7. Boundaries

- 7.1 Many of the homes that Southway manages have front, rear and/or side boundaries which comprise privet hedges rather than fences.
- 7.2 Southway will retain hedged boundaries wherever possible and will seek to avoid carrying out any work to hedges during the nesting season (March-September) and advise customers of the same requirement to prevent harm to wildlife.
- 7.3 When possible, we will utilise natural boundaries such as privet as an alternative to fencing. See the **Boundary Treatment Policy** for further information.

8. Carparks

- 8.1 Southway currently has 51 carparks which are maintained as part of the Ground's Maintenance contract. These are inspected at least annually by Southway officers and 100% compliance against this schedule is monitored.
- 8.2 The frequency of inspections may be changed where specific issues such as fly tipping are identified. See **section 10** for further information on fly tipping.

9. Fly Tipping

- 9.1 Responses to fly tipping incidents follow the fly tipping process.
- 9.2 If the fly tipping is on Southway land, we will approach the local community to try and establish who the perpetrator(s) are. This approach sometimes results in the perpetrator(s) being identified and/or them removing the rubbish themselves.
- 9.3 Where perpetrators are identified Southway will seek enforcement action working with Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Police.
- 9.4 If we have been unable to identify the perpetrators, we will arrange for its removal. If the fly tipping is not on our own land, we will work with local enforcement agencies to try and identify the perpetrators.
- 9.5 If the fly tipping is deemed hazardous i.e. presents a health and safety risk, it will be removed immediately (i.e. within 24 hours of its being reported)
- 9.6 If the fly tipping is non-hazardous, the maximum length of time we will leave it before removal is 7 days.

10. Landlocks

- 10.1 There are approximately 500 landlock areas spread across our neighbourhoods. These are 'spare' pieces of land (of varying sizes) between properties. They are often difficult to access and therefore also difficult to maintain.
- 10.2 We closely monitor the number of enquiries about landlock sites to gauge the impact these are causing. Where landlocks are not causing an issue, these will generally be left as wild areas to encourage local wildlife and biodiversity.
- 10.3 Southway, as the landlord is responsible for maintenance of any trees and vegetation within landlocked areas. However, we are not obliged to carry out works to address trees or plants becoming overgrown unless a health and safety risk develops.
- 10.4 Any issues raised by residents relating to a landlock are investigated by the environment team and considered on a case-by-case basis.

11. Carbon Impact and Biodiversity

- 11.1 Southway has made a pledge to become a zero-carbon organisation by 2038. We are fully committed to creating sustainable communities, reducing emissions and bills, and increasing education around the critical issues of greener energy and 'low carbon' living. The environment team, and the approach we take to managing our green spaces contributes to this agenda in the following ways:

12. Maintenance of Tree Stock

- 12.1 Southway manage some of the greenest areas in the city, which include a high number of trees. Some of these have a tree protection order in place.
- 12.2 Our trees are regularly inspected by a team of specialist arboriculturists to ensure that our tree stock remains healthy and well maintained. On the rare occasions that we do need to remove a tree; efforts are made to plant a replacement.
- 12.3 We also support the City of Trees scheme which enables us to plant trees outside of our areas in other locations in Greater Manchester.

13. Green Activities

- 13.1 The Environment Team delivers a variety of activities based around our green spaces which are aimed at both promoting health and wellbeing, as well as educating tenants and residents about the plants and wildlife that are contained within these.

14. Natural Areas

- 14.1 Where possible, we create natural areas that promote and sustain biodiversity and help absorb carbon emissions. This is commonly achieved by the planting of native species and creating environments that encourage and support local wildlife.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 15.1 Open spaces are maintained either by our Urban Rangers or external contractors. Most of our open spaces are maintained via our Grounds Maintenance contract. Southway has regular contractor meetings to ensure

standards are maintained. The frequency of these visits depends on each specific space and a schedule is provided at the start of each year. A suite of performance indicators is also used including:

- Inspections carried out by our Urban Rangers – 100% within required timescales.
- Customer Satisfaction with the service provided by the external contractors used.
- Complaints or issues raised by our customers.
- A small team of tenant volunteers who carry out quarterly face to face surveys about the maintenance of the Green Spaces

15.2 Customer consultation and engagement takes place to ensure that views on the work we do are considered. This includes feeding back on the quality of the services received.

15.3 We measure our performance using two of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that are relevant to communal spaces and survey a percentage of our tenants on a quarterly basis which includes the following questions:

- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Southway Housing Trust keeps these communal areas clean and well maintained?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Southway Housing Trust makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?

16. Staff Training

17.1 Officers will receive appropriate training for highway, playground and outdoor exercise area inspections and maintain accurate records of all inspections. They also receive regular training on other health and safety matters including the use of tools and products.

18. Equality and Diversity

16.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy. This identified some potential negative impacts to residents who may have mobility issues including older residents, disabled residents, families with young children who may use prams etc. particularly if areas such as linkways are not adequately maintained and regularly inspected.

16.2 An EIA Action Plan is in place to mitigate these.

17. Related Policies & Strategies

- Tenancy Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Equalities Scheme
- Fly tipping process
- Site inspection procedure
- Boundary Treatment Policy

18. Policy Review

18.1 The policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if a change in legislation means this is required.

POLICY REVIEW HISTORY	
<i>To be completed during each review</i>	
Previous versions Green Spaces Maintenance Policy v2 – November 2019 Environmental Enforcement Policy v1 – December 2016 Environmental Maintenance and Management Policy v1 – November 2021	
Date of last EIA:	April 2025
Review lead by:	Head of Customer Access
Main points or amendments made and reasons 1. Reference to untidy gardens has been removed as this forms part of the Tenancy Agreement. 2. Reference to carparking removed. 3. Sections on landlocked areas, playgrounds and communal gardens added to ensure that we evidence what we will do and how to comply with any requirements. 4. Reference to the TSMs and Green & Blue strategy added to the policy.	
Next review due:	Q4 2027/28
Approval level:	People and Places Committee