

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to the Executive for Decision 07 October 2024

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Streetscene
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Seafield Park, Hill Head – Mini Forest Project</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Planning and Regeneration
<b>Corporate Priorities:</b>	<b>Respond to Climate Change and Protect the Environment</b> <b>Strong, Safe and Healthy Communities</b>

**Purpose:** To seek Executive approval for the planting of a Mini Forest on part of the existing public open space at Seafield Park.

**Executive summary:** The proposal is to create a mini forest on part of the Seafield Park open space in Hill Head. The carrying out of the project will be funded by the Coronation Living Heritage Fund through the Hampshire Forest Partnership (Hampshire County Council).

The project will involve undertaking the planting of native trees and shrubs with wildflower planting adjacent, on an existing area of mown grass. The project costs, including trees, materials and preparation will be met by the grant provided by Hampshire Forest Partnership. Fareham Borough Council will be responsible for providing the land, officer support and the long-term management of the Mini Forest.

The Mini Forest tree planting proposal accords with the Council's approach to strategic tree planting agreed by the Executive in September 2021 as part of the Council Trees Service Review.

**Recommendation:**

- a) That the Executive grant approval for the planting of a mini forest on part of the Seafield Park open space as shown on the plan attached at Appendix A; and
- b) That the Executive note that this Council will be responsible for the future upkeep, inspection and works to the mini forest following its planting.

**Reason:** The proposal brings forward a proposal for tree planting on public land. The Council recognises the multiple benefits of tree planting in urban environments and the biodiversity benefits they afford.

**Cost of proposals:**

The planting and materials needed to create the Mini Forest will be paid for from external grant funding accessed through the Hampshire Forest Partnership.

There will be some Officer time required in connection with project management and carrying out the works on site. This is likely to involve Members of the Streetscene and the Council's Tree Team and the Council's Countryside Rangers. These costs can be met through existing staff budgets.

Long term costs associated with the inspection and management of the trees will need to be met by the Council from its tree management and inspection budgets.

**Appendix A: Plan showing site of proposed Mini Forest**

**Reference papers:** [Report to the Executive 21 September 2021 \(item 9\(1\)\) – Council Trees Service Review](#)

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Executive Briefing Paper

<b>Date:</b>	07 October 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	Seafield Park, Hill Head – Mini Forest Project
<b>Briefing by:</b>	Director of Planning and Regeneration
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Streetscene

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The Coronation of King Charles III took place in May 2023. As part of the commemoration of the event, the Government opened a fund (known as the Coronation Living Heritage Fund) to support local tree planting initiatives across England.
2. Hampshire County Council applied for and were successful in securing funding from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund. Hampshire County Council is looking to use this funding to create 'Mini Forests' (essentially a woodland environment on a micro scale).
3. Hampshire Forest Partnership (which has been set up by Hampshire County Council) is responsible for the administration and spending of the grant and for finding suitable sites for mini forests with their partners. Each forest can be funded up to a maximum cost of £10,000.
4. The aim of the project is to fund Mini Forests across the entire county. A suitable site will ideally be in an urban/peri-urban area where members of the public use the site for recreation. This can be in a park, recreation ground, school, or any amenity space that has full or partial public access. This is because this method of planting trees is most suitable in areas where members of the public can engage with the process and enjoy the results of the planting.
5. In 2023 the Council delivered two community tree planting events at the Castle Street Portchester open space working with Hampshire Forest Partnership amongst others. Following the success of this scheme, Hampshire Forest Partnership have approached Fareham Borough Council again, looking to establish the delivery of a Mini Forest within the borough.
6. Seafield Park open space has been identified as a potential suitable site for a Mini Forest. The proposed planting area is accessed off Bulwark Road and currently managed as amenity grass for informal recreation. There is extensive existing native tree and shrub planting adjacent, that the mini forest would enhance and connect to.
7. The proposal is to plant around 1,600 native tree and shrub species covering approximately 800 square metres, with two wildflower meadow areas created

immediately adjacent to provide a mixed habitat. The approximate location of the Mini Forest and wildflower planting is shown on the plan attached at Appendix A to this report.

## **BACKGROUND TO MINI FORESTS**

8. The mini forest is planted based on a method to improve degraded land and use nature-based solutions to re-establish natural woodland. The method aims to cultivate compacted soils (soils are often compacted in areas of high public use), by digging down to between 50-100cm depth. This would typically be in a small area, usually on average the size of a tennis court, but in practice, anywhere between 150m<sup>2</sup> to 400m<sup>2</sup>. The shape of the mini forest is flexible and can be designed to create interest at the site chosen, for example by incorporating paths, glades, or making the mini forest into shapes that can be visible from the air.
9. Before the soil is cultivated to the designed shape, the grass is removed to reduce competition from weeds. The soil is then improved by adding organic matter, materials to improve soil nutrients, water percolation and moisture retention (depending on soil type). The aim is to improve the soil base to create a medium that will encourage vigorous root growth, which in turn creates rapid establishment of the trees. The species chosen will be based on what is present naturally in the area and will be planted to represent the 3 different layers of a natural woodland. Wildflower seed for the areas around the mini forest can also be provided to further enhance biodiversity.
10. The preparation and cultivation method has significant advantages. The trees establish very quickly and require less input in terms of watering due to the improved soil quality. They are more resilient to vandalism and studies have shown them to be advantageous over traditional woodland creation methods in terms of the biodiversity after a few years.
11. Mini forests help to cool the air around them, provide educational opportunities and help to engage local communities in the positive benefits of tree planting, enhanced biodiversity and climate change mitigation. They require less maintenance than other tree planting, as they form a micro wood – and so the aim is that after the first 3 years, the trees are left to develop naturally.
12. In the first three years periodic weeding and mulching will be necessary to give the trees the best start. Support may be available for this via existing Hampshire Forest Partnership and local Fareham volunteers.

## **DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT**

13. Hampshire Forest Partnership acts locally to facilitate the delivery of the project. The support offered in addition to the funding is help with design, the methodology and ongoing support during the project development.
14. The grant funding will pay for the removal of the grass turf, soil preparation (undertaken by a specialist contractor), soil improvers, supply of trees, mulching, perimeter fencing of the Mini Forest, access gates and an information panel for the public. Wildflower seed for the area immediately adjacent to the mini forest can also be provided. On site support for overseeing the works is provided, with the Council procuring the contractor and then invoicing Hampshire County Council.
15. The Council will be responsible for keeping the site secured from the public whilst the

works are taking place, by way of temporary fencing and signage to explain what is going on and the purpose of the project.

16. The project timescale from ground preparation through to planting is estimated to commence in December 2024 and be completed by March 2025. Watering and weed control will be necessary in the first year, with watering dependent on rainfall. Within 3 – 5 years the mini forest will be sufficiently established, and maintenance will become an annual intervention, as required and assisted by local volunteers.
17. There will be some officer time required from the Council's Tree Team, Countryside Rangers and Grounds Maintenance Team to support the delivery of the project both in terms of pre-planning, the delivery and community engagement.

### **TREE PLANTING WITHIN FAREHAM BOROUGH**

18. During the review of the Council Trees Service in 2021, the approach to future tree planting was considered in depth. The Review concluded that additional tree planting in the Borough should take place on strategic tree sites, where there is capacity for additional areas of large-scale planting.
19. The Review also recognised the value of undertaking planting schemes in conjunction with schools, community and volunteer groups, thereby increasing the awareness and interest in the Borough of the improvements that can be collectively achieved.
20. In 2021, a small community orchard was established at Barry's Meadow in Titchfield, using trees provided for by the Titchfield Village Trust. In 2022 the Countryside Ranger service delivered the Queens Copse and Platinum Copse at Abbey Meadows, Titchfield, a commemorative planting project where residents funded and adopted a tree.
21. This Council worked with Hampshire Forest Partnership and a local community group to deliver successful tree planting schemes at Castle Street in Portchester in 2023. The proposed Mini Forest project would continue the Council's approach to strategic tree planting, working with external partners and the local community to deliver tree planting for the benefit of the Borough and future generations.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

22. Fareham Borough Council will be responsible for the local community engagement. Hampshire Forest Partnership can help with providing county wide assistance from their volunteer base, or corporate volunteers to help with the tree planting. Ideally the trees will be planted by volunteers to have that level of public engagement and if a local group were available, that would be preferable, along with local school children.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS/CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

23. Although there is an argument that soil disturbance releases carbon, this is more than mitigated by the rapid growth of the trees. Any carbon initially released will build back into the soil.
24. The project will result in improvements to water infiltration and percolation, enhancements to biodiversity, and longer-term soil improvements, both through the

organic matter from the leaves and roots, but also from the wildflower areas around the mini forest.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

25. The change of a small part of the open space from being grassed to planted with trees / shrubs will not conflict with the existing site context, its current management, nor will it interfere with the use of the existing sports pitches or play area. There will be no increase in maintenance costs in the short term.
26. The medium to long term implications of inspecting and maintaining the trees will not be significant given the Mini Forest's location within the open space away from public footpaths, car parks and buildings. Future inspection and maintenance costs of the trees will need to be met from the Council's tree inspection and maintenance budgets.

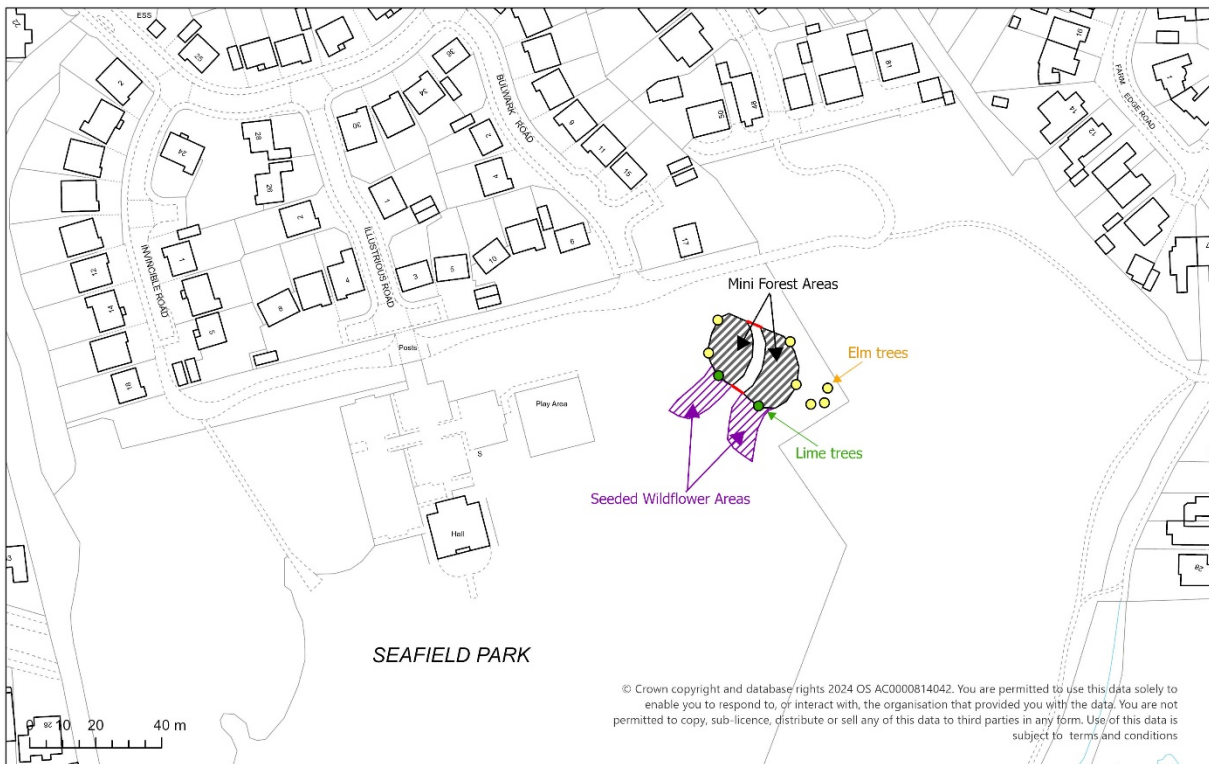
## **CONCLUSION**

27. The proposed Mini Forest project would continue the Council's successful approach to the provision of new tree planting within the Borough through working with other partners and volunteer/ community groups.
28. The creation of Mini Forests help to cool the air around them, provide educational opportunities and help to engage local communities in the positive benefits of tree planting, enhanced biodiversity and climate change mitigation
29. The size and location of the Mini Forest has been carefully considered to provide public benefit whilst avoiding impacts upon the recreational use of Seafeld Park, or future impacts upon public footpaths, car parks or other property.

### **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact: Lee Smith, Head of Planning  
01329 824427/ email: lsmith@fareham.gov.uk.

# Appendix A: Plan showing site of proposed Mini Forest



<p>MINI FOREST DESIGN AT SEAFIELD PARK, HILL HEAD HAMPSHIRE FOREST PARTNERSHIP 2024</p>	<p><b>FAREHAM</b> BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p>Title: Plan 1 (BW) October 2024</p>	<p>Ref: 1 Scale 1:1,250</p>	<p>© Crown copyright and database rights 2024 OS AC0000814042. You are permitted to use this data solely to enable you to respond to, or interact with, the organisation that provided you with the data. You are not permitted to copy, sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.</p>	
---	---	--	---------------------------------	---	--



MINI FOREST DESIGN AT SEAFIELD PARK, HLL HEAD – HAMPSHIRE FOREST PARTNERSHIP 2024