

# 1 Abbeyfield Park



## Introduction

Abbeyfield Park is the site of the stately home Abbeyfield House which was built circa 1850 – 1875. An old Victorian print shows people boating on a lake within the park when it first opened to the public. The lake is long gone, but drainage problems now exist where it once was as a reminder of the past.

Abbeyfield Multicultural Festival takes place in the park every year.

The park is enclosed on all sides by high walls creating a sheltered habitat. The park's interior is compartmentalised by the planting of non-native conifers close together to form a screen and by the use of clipped hedges of privet and barberry. However in August 2003, fire caused unsightly damage to some of the *Chamaecyparis* Gold conifers and privet hedge near the bowling green. Then on November 6<sup>th</sup> as part of a Community Forest Project for the Burngreave Green Environment Programme, the central *Leylandii* hedge was cut down opening up the interior of the park.

Mature broad-leaved trees include sycamores, beech, silver birch, ash, common lime, rowan, horse chestnut, black poplar, and several varieties of flowering cherries. Mature coniferous trees include the native Yew as well as the non-native species *Leylandii* and *Chamaecyparis*.

Shrubbery in the park is varied and often well structured, with the best of the shrubberies spreading the flowering season over the whole year.

Recreational facilities include a bowling green which was reseeded in 2003, playing fields with goal posts for informal ball games and a fenced-in children's playground. Tennis courts at rear of park are disused.

The site includes several buildings, some of which are badly in need of repair. There are plans to renovate the horse stables and turn them into an education centre.

Near Burngreave Road there is a disused toilet block that is partially screened from view.

There is vehicular access to the park and Abbeyfield House via Barnsley Road. There is pedestrian only access via Abbeyfield Road and Barnsley Road.

## Site details

### Site name

Abbeyfield Park

### Location

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SK 357 893

### Land owner

Sheffield City Council

### Nearest road/street

Abbeydale Road forms the eastern boundary of the park. Holtwood Road runs off Abbeydale Road. Near the western boundary of the park three main roads and one minor road intersect: Burngreave Road, Barnsley Road, Pitsmoor Road and Shirecliffe Lane.

### Adjacent land use

A modern housing (flats) estate is situated along northern boundary of park, otherwise most of the housing on adjacent streets are old terraced houses. Abbeydale Road is primarily residential except for St Catherine's Nursing Home which is located on the corner of Abbeydale Road and Burngreave Road. On Burngreave Road Arnold Clark Car and Van Rental is the largest business establishment within view of the park. Pitsmoor Post Office is visible from the park as is the Church of God 7<sup>th</sup> Day. Just north of the park on Barnsley Road there are several small shops and a takeaway on the same side of the road as the park.

### Size

2.15275 hectares

### Present management

The site is currently managed as a (heritage) public park by Sheffield City Council.

Starting in April, the amenity grass is mowed approximately once a month until autumn so that the sward is kept uniformly short. The grassy bank behind the retaining wall on the Abbeyfield Road side of the disused tennis courts and grassy paths around courts are mown less frequently so that there is an area of taller grass here and flowering herbs.

The bowling green was reseeded in early July 2003. The upper layer of topsoil and grass was removed and dumped in piles along southeast edge of green and never removed. Fine grass seed was sown. The seed did not germinate well and the bowlers were unable to bowl in the summers of 2003 and 2004.

Flower beds are cleared out and replanted at least twice a year.

Spring: Tulips, daffodils and wallflowers

Summer: Salvias, snapdragons, ageratum, lobelia, Cineraria 'Dusty Miller'

Privet and barberry hedges are clipped.

Roses along Burngreave Road perimeter wall are straggly.

Shrubbery islands and rose islands in the centre of the park as well as the rectangular rose bed near tennis courts were pruned back hard in July 2003.

In October 2003 the Abbeyfield Road shrubbery nearest the tennis courts was pruned back hard. The foliage of the weeping Prunus tree in another Abbeyfield Road shrubbery was also expertly cut back and reshaped.

At the same time work was undertaken for a Community Forestry Project as part of the Burngreave Environmental Programme.

The *Leylandii* hedge in the middle of the park was cut down. Trees along Abbeyfield Road boundary were pruned to remove low branches, dead wood and to "provide clearance to street furniture". A dead cherry tree near the tennis courts was felled and removed.

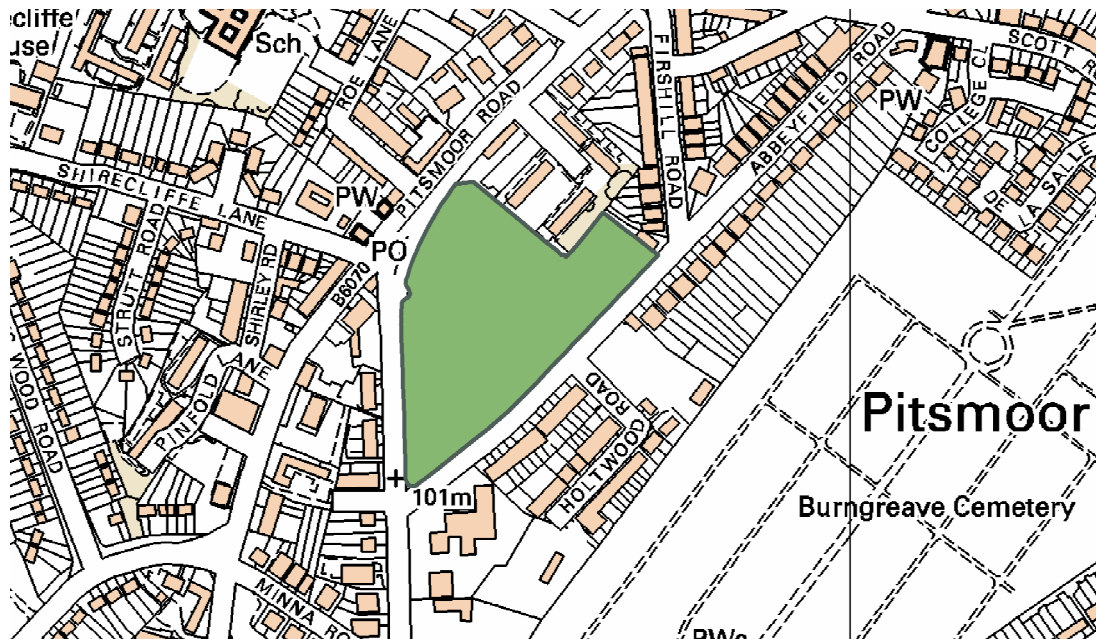
## UDP designations

Open space area (leisure and recreation).

Area of special character (built environment)



## Location map



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# Ecology

## Phase I ecological survey

### Site description

Parkland (amenity grassland and scattered trees) enclosed on all sides by high walls creating a sheltered habitat. Interior compartmentalised by the planting of non-native conifers close together to form a screen and by the use of clipped hedges of privet and barberry. However, the centre of the park has since been opened up by the removal of a *Leylandii* hedge. Shrubbery is varied and often well structured, with the best of the shrubberies spreading the flowering season over the whole year, providing interest as well as valuable nectar sources for invertebrates. Bramble is plentiful amongst the shrubbery that is primarily composed of cultivars typical of gardens and urban landscaping. Mature broad-leaved and coniferous trees, wall climbers, substantial shrubs, bramble and ground cover plants provide good nesting cover. There are ample food supplies for vertebrates – rose hips, cherries and a variety of berries (blackberries, raspberries & elder berries, and those of holly, ivy, cotoneaster, firethorn and rowan).

Soil appears to be acidic. Conifers grow well in all sections of the park. One of the shrubberies on the Abbeyfield Road side of park is characterised by acid loving plants (*Pieris japonica*, *Erica cinerea*, and *Rhododendron* species & hybrids). Hybrid *Rhododendrons* also grow near the disused toilet block on the opposite side of the park.. Other acid loving shrubs such as *Mahonia x Charity* and *Cytisus scoparius* succeed in a mixed shrubbery near bowling green. Grasses on site include common bent, *agrostis capillaris*.

### Habitats of interest

No habitats of high nature conservation importance were found within the site. However, there is a fair amount of scrub – introduced (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*, *Euonymus sp.* and *Lonicera sp.*) and native (*Rubus fruticosus*) in the shrubbery that provides food and shelter for vertebrates. The park attracts a large number of blackbirds and these birds are often seen disappearing into bramble and ground cover sub-shrubs. Bramble also attracts butterflies.

The perimeter walls help trap heat and create microhabitats that contrast with the more open aspects of the park, even more so now that the *Leylandii* hedge has been cut down. Butterflies were often seen basking on perimeter walls or flying along the corridors created by these walls.

The topography of the park also provides other miniature habitats. Small earthen banks escape the mower and it is here where flowering herbs can become established. Even shrubs can take root. *Cotoneaster horizonatalis* provides a brilliant backdrop of colour on the western bank of the bowling

green in autumn. The removal of the *Leylandii* hedge has created an even larger earthen bank in the centre of the park.

### Species of interest

No flora species of high nature conservation importance are found within the site. Yet there are many worthy species in the park. Some have wildlife value, others have aesthetic value, and some have both.

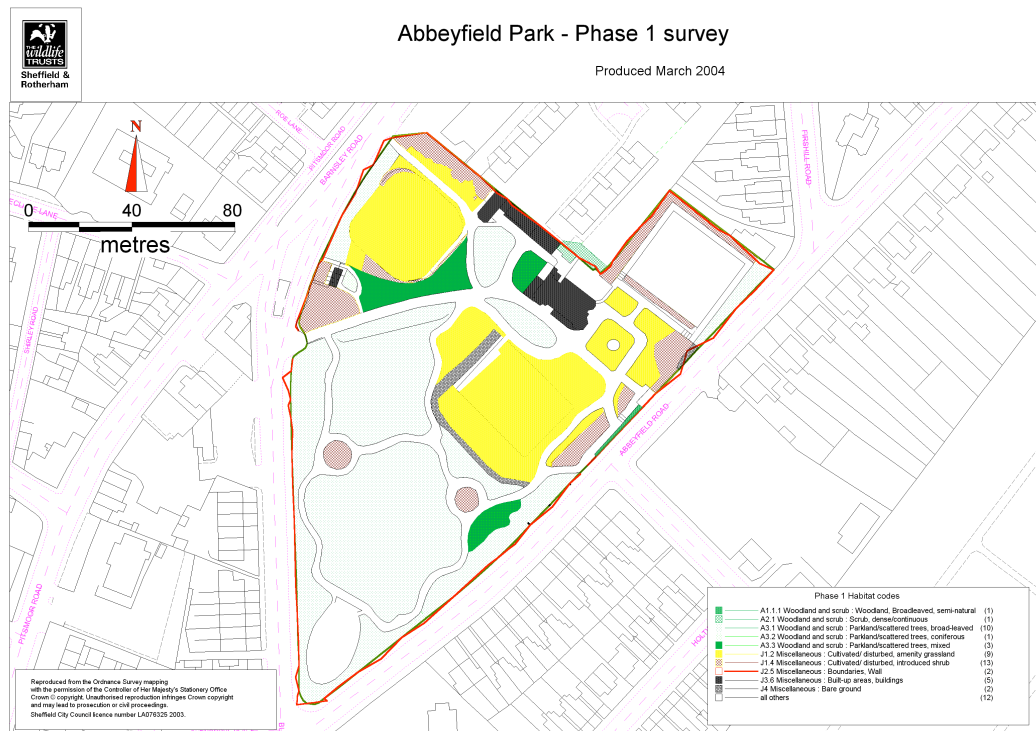
For wildlife value there are the flowers of the shrub *Pieris japonica* which attract a large number of bees. Butterfly bush, red valerian (before it was removed from wall in July), bramble and ivy attract butterflies.

There are many shrubs and trees that provide ample food supplies for vertebrates – rose hips, cherries and a variety of berries (blackberries, raspberries, & elder berries and those of holly, ivy, cotoneaster, firethorn and rowan).

Two butterflies – holly blue and speckled wood – found in the park are listed in the Local Red Data Book. However, this list is out of date. Speckled wood butterflies are one of Sheffield's success stories. In the past couple of years they have expanded their territory westwards and they are now fairly common in wooded habitats. In Abbeyfield Park one was even seen basking on a golden conifer. The holly blue butterfly is rarer and due to predation by a parasitic wasp is recorded less some years than others. Flowers of *Hedera helix* attract this little butterfly. Flowers are nectar rich providing food for adults, but females also lay their eggs in the flowerheads.

The mature trees, varied shrubbery and expanses of grassland attract a large variety of birds and many of them are species of conservation concern, while others are listed species of LBAP and UK Amber List. These species are all listed in the Appendix.

## Phase I habitat map



## Invertebrates

Fairly common species noted in the park:

- *Coleoptera* beetles: seven-spot ladybird)
- *Diptera* flies: greenbottle and flesh fly plus hoverfly species)
- *Hymenoptera* bees, bumblebees, wasp
- *Odonata* dragonfly: brown hawker

## Specialist butterfly survey

Species recorded:

- Large white
- Small white
- Green-veined white
- Orange tip
- Holly blue

- Red admiral
- Painted lady
- Small tortoiseshell
- Peacock
- Speckled wood
- Meadow brown



## Vertebrates

### Bird survey

SPECIES RECORDED ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION DURING THE BREEDING SEASON	<u>POSSIBLE</u> BREEDING SPECIES1	<u>PROBABLE</u> BREEDING SPECIES 2	<u>CONFIRMED</u> BREEDING SPECIES3	NUMBER OF TERRITORIES HELD BY SELECTED SPECIES
Blackbird Blackcap Chaffinch Crow, Carrion Dunnock Goldfinch Greenfinch Magpie Pigeon, Feral Pigeon, Wood Sparrow, House Starling Thrush, Mistle Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Wren	Blackcap Goldfinch Pigeon, Wood Sparrow, House	Crow, Carrion Dunnock Greenfinch Starling Thrush, Mistle Tit, Blue Tit, Great Wren	Blackbird	

1 Evidence: present on more than one occasion in suitable breeding habitat.

2 Evidence: singing/displaying male in suitable breeding habitat on more than one occasion ; pair in suitable habitat showing courtship or territorial behaviour; bird visiting probable nest site; nest building; anxiety calls; recently used nest.

3 Evidence: Adult carrying food or faecal sac; adult sitting on nest; nest with eggs/young; egg shells found away from nest; recently fledged young.

## Mammal survey

Rat

Squirrel

Pipistrelle bats were seen flying over the park the night the hedge was cut down. (06/11/03).

## Evaluation

Abbeyfield Park deserves conservation. Present management policies should be reviewed as the park could benefit greatly from a few simple changes. Most of all, it should be better protected from abuse. Fires like the one that occurred this summer damaging the golden conifers should not be allowed to happen again.

The perimeter walls should be considered an asset to be exploited. Their great potential for creating microclimates should be recognised. The walls around the disused tennis courts, in particular, could be used to better effect. The planting of conifers along any of these walls should be avoided. Conifers already in place along these walls should be removed.

There is far too much *Cotoneaster horizontalis*. Planted along the bank of the bowling green it provides a superb display of autumn colour, but it need not be grown all along perimeter wall of Burngreave Road as well and could be replaced with species of higher wildlife interest.

The shrubberies on the whole are excellent despite the number of cultivars. Bramble cascades over some of the shrubberies. It needs to be kept in check, but not removed, as it provides shelter and food for wildlife.

The area around the disused toilet block should be considered a priority for renovation. The current planting is not desirable. The young *Leylandii* trees should be removed as should the cherry laurels along Burngreave Road. If the toilet block is to remain because there are no funds to pay for its removal, there are more desirable ways of screening it from view.

The number of roses grown in the park could be reduced. The ones growing along the boundary wall of Burngreave Road are straggly. They need to be pruned properly in order to flower better or they should be removed and replaced with shrubs that could thrive in the growing conditions available there. Many of the roses growing along the brick wall behind the disused tennis courts are gorgeous, but growing cultivar roses along this perimeter wall may not be the best use of this valuable habitat. The rectangular rose bed needs to be managed better. Many of the roses have had all their stems pruned back to their crowns; this is not recommended horticultural procedure. Roses should also be pruned at the correct time of the year. The bed should be mulched to conserve water and to reduce the ground flora that sprouts all over competing with the roses for nutrients and making the rose bed look neglected.

The islands of roses and shrubs within the park are features that should be reconsidered, especially if it is common management practice to prune them back hard in mid summer in advance of a festival date.

In summer the current ones have little to offer either to people or wildlife, whereas in such sunbaked conditions many shrubs and flowers attractive to bees and butterflies would thrive. There are many from which to select and most are visually attractive.

The flower beds are rather ordinary. A heritage park deserves better.

The golden conifers provide a lovely backdrop for the bowling green and help compartmentalise that part of the park. Unfortunately a fire in August 2003 caused unsightly damage to two of these conifers. An expert is probably required to assess the damage and determine whether these trees will recover in time or will have to be felled.



The *Leylandii* hedge was removed in November 2003. This has opened up the interior of the park.

The hedge may have been an effective windscreen. The effects of its loss will have to be monitored, as will the possibility of erosion on the earthen bank on which it stood. In the future if another hedge is planted to take its place, the hedge should be a combination of native trees and shrubs typical of English hedgerows.

The mowing regime of the grassland should be reconsidered. Although mowing grass sward uniformly short may appeal to people, it is not good for invertebrates. The area near disused tennis courts provided the only area of tall grass until it was mowed in July. Surely there can be a compromise.

Sheffield City Council usually leaves grass cuttings where they fall. Grass cuttings should be raked up and taken away. They can then be composted.

Resist any temptation to plant daffodil bulbs in grassland. Crocuses are a better choice as long as they are not sterile hybrids.

Before the bowling green was reseeded, the topsoil was dumped in piles along edge. The soil is still there although no longer in piles. If the soil was not put there for a definite purpose, it should not be left on top of the grass.

Fronks of the bracken growing near bowling green have an unnatural texture. A possible cause of this is that it has been sprayed intentionally or accidentally with herbicide. Herbicide use should be discouraged and eliminated whenever possible.

Autumn leaves are pretty, but when left on pavements to decompose they pose a health and safety risk to pedestrians. Leaves should be removed before they become wet. They can then be composted.

When the park first opened there was a boating lake. Now there is no water feature at all. In April many birds were attracted to seepage of water from near hedge. A small water feature that would allow birds to drink and bathe but pose no health and safety risk to children is highly recommended.

### Protective actions:

- Leave grassy bank near tennis courts unmowed.
- Prune bramble to keep it from cascading too far over other shrubs
- Encourage composting of grass cuttings and autumn leaves
- Refrain from using herbicides
- Refrain from introducing any more conifers

### Potential improvements:

- Removal of planting around disused toilet blocks (*Leylandii* and cherry laurels).
- Replace island rose beds with sun-loving, nectar-rich flowers instead.
- Install a small water feature that would allow birds to drink and bathe but would pose no health and safety risk to children.
- Use native species for hedges to compartmentalise park

### Species present

#### A (tree or shrub)

<i>Acer palmatum</i>	Japanese maple
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	sycamore
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	horse-chestnut
<i>Alnus cordata</i>	Italian alder
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	alder
<i>Berberis darwinii</i>	barberry
<i>Berberis julianae</i>	barberry
<i>Berberis sp.</i>	Barberry
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	barberry
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> 'Aurea'	barberry
<i>Brachyglottis</i> 'Sunshine'	Dunedin hybrids
<i>Buddleja alternifolia</i>	
<i>Buddleja davidii</i> 'Empire Blue'	
<i>Chamaecyparis Gold</i>	
<i>Chamaecyparis sp.</i>	
<i>Choisya ternata</i>	Mexican orange blossom
<i>Cornus alba</i>	dogwood (white berries)
<i>Cornus alba</i> 'Elegantissima'	variegated dogwood
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	dogwood
<i>Cotoneaster divaricatus</i>	
<i>Cotoneaster franchetii</i>	
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	wall spray
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	hawthorn
<i>Cupressocyparis leylandii</i>	Leyland cypress

<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	broom
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	bell heather
<i>Euonymus</i> 'Emerald Gaiety'	
<i>Euonymus</i> 'Emerald 'n' Gold'	
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	beech
<i>Forsythia x intermedia</i>	forsythia
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	ash
<i>Genista hispanica</i>	Spanish gorse
<i>Hebe topiaria</i>	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy
<i>Hedera helix variegata</i>	ivy, variegated hybrid
<i>Hydrangea petiolaris</i>	climbing hydrangea
<i>Hypericum calycinum</i>	rose of Sharon
<i>Hypericum calycinum</i> sp.	
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	holly
<i>Ilex x altaclerensis</i>	holly hybrid
<i>Kerria japonica</i> 'Pleniflora'	Jew's mantle
<i>Laburnum anagyroides</i>	laburnum
<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>	garden privet
<i>Lonicera pileata</i>	
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	oregon-grape
<i>Mahonia x Charity</i>	
<i>Parthenocissus tricuspidata</i>	Virginia creeper
<i>Pieris japonica</i>	
<i>Populus nigra</i>	black poplar
<i>Prunus avium</i>	wild cherry
<i>Prunus</i> 'Kanzan'	
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	cherry laurel
<i>Prunus</i> 'Pink Perfection'	
<i>Prunus sargentii</i>	Sargeant's cherry
<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	firethorn (red berries)
<i>Pyracantha rogersiana</i>	firethorn (orange berries)
<i>Quercus petraea</i>	sessile oak
<i>Rhododendron</i> hybrid	
<i>Rhododendron</i> sp.	
<i>Rhus typhina</i>	stags horn sumach
<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	flowering currant
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	dog rose
<i>Rosa glauca</i>	
<i>Rosa</i> sp.	rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	bramble
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	raspberry
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elder
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> 'Aureomarginata'	variegated elder
<i>Skimmia japonica</i>	
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	rowan
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	yew
<i>Tilia x vulgaris</i>	lime
<i>Ulmus</i> sp.	elm sp.



	<i>Weigela 'Briant Rubidor'</i>	
	<i>Wisteria floribunda 'Alba'</i>	
B (herb)		
	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	yarrow
	<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>	
	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	snapdragon
	<i>Aster novi-belgii</i>	michaelmas daisy
	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy
	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	shepherd's-purse
	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	red valerian
	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	common mouse-ear
	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	rosebay willowherb
	<i>Cineraria 'Dusty Miller'</i>	
	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	creeping thistle
	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	spear thistle
	<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	smooth hawk's-beard
	<i>Daucus carota</i>	wild carrot
	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	foxglove
	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	wild teasel
	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	great willowherb
	<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	broad-leaved willowherb
	<i>Erysimum sp.</i>	wallflowers
	<i>Galium aparine</i>	cleavers
	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	herb-robert
	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	wood avens
	<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy
	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish bluebell
	<i>Hypericum sp.</i>	a St. John's wort
	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	cat's-ear
	<i>Iberis amara</i>	wild candytuft
	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	red dead-nettle
	<i>Lapsana communis</i>	nipplewort
	<i>Lobelia erinus</i>	
	<i>Matricaria matricarioides</i>	pinappleweed
	<i>Narcissus</i> Division 2	daffodil cultivars
	<i>Origanum vulgare 'Aureum'</i>	golden wild marjoram
	<i>Persicaria bistorta</i>	common bistort
	<i>Pilosella aurantiacum</i>	orange hawkweed
	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain
	<i>Plantago major</i>	greater plantain
	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	knotgrass
	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	selfheal
	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	lesser celandine
	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup
	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	broad-leaved dock
	<i>Salvia coccinea</i>	
	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	common ragwort
	<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford ragwort
	<i>Solanum crispum 'Glasnevin'</i>	

	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	smooth sow-thistle
	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	hedge woundwort
	<i>Stellaria media</i>	common chickweed
	<i>Symphytum officinale</i>	common comfrey
	<i>Taraxacum officianale</i> agg.	dandelion
	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover
	<i>Tulipa</i> sp.	tulips
	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	common nettle
C (grass)		
	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	common bent
	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	meadow foxtail
	<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	barren brome
	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	perennial rye-grass
	<i>Poa annua</i>	annual meadow-grass
E (Pteridophyte)		
	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken

## Habitats/species of nature conservation importance

### UK BAP priority habitats

None

### Sheffield LBAP priority habitats

None

### UK BAP priority species

None

### Sheffield LBAP priority species

House sparrow

Starling

### UK BAP species of conservation concern

Birds

Blackcap

Blue tit

Dunnock

Goldfinch

Great tit

Greenfinch

Wren

UK red list birds

House sparrow

Starling

UK amber list birds

Dunnock

Mistle thrush

Local red data book species

Lepidoptera Grade A Species

Holly blue

Speckled wood

Previous surveys

None found.

## History & Geology

### Geological survey

The solid geology of Abbeyfield Park lies within the Lower Coal Measures of the Upper Carboniferous period and is characterised by mudstone.

### Archaeological survey

No archaeological or historical features were identified within Abbeyfield Park in the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service SMR or the English Heritage NMR. However, two features were shown within the limits of the site on historic Ordnance Survey maps.

Archaeological and Historical Features within Abbeyfield Park

Site	NGR	Description	Date	Status/Class
OS 1	SK 357 894	Abbeyfield House	Industrial	LBII
OS 2	SK 357 893	Lake	Industrial	3

#### OS 1

Abbeyfield House lies towards the northern extent of Abbeyfield Park. It was built by a local pit owner (Pass) in the late eighteenth century and is designated as a Grade II Listed Building. The present house is first shown on Tayler's map of the Town and Environs of Sheffield (1832). An earlier building is possibly shown on the site of the house on Fairbank's maps of the Parish of Sheffield 1795, however the definition of the map is poor. On the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 6" map (1855) the house is labelled as Pitsmoor Abbey.

Abbeyfield House was redesigned and the grounds extended between 1850 and 1890, during which period it was owned by the Wake family. The stone built house with its pillared portico and octagonal bays was extended and a coach house, conservatory and sundial were added. Between 1918 and 1926 Abbeyfield House was used by Firth Park Grammar School, after which it reverted to use as a park. More recently, the house was used by Leisure Services Department and Family Services Department of Sheffield City Council. The building is currently being used by Green City Action

#### OS 2

An ornamental lake is shown in the grounds of Abbeyfield Park on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 25" map. The lake is irregular in plan and contains a small island. It is probably associated with the landscaping of the grounds of Abbeyfield House by the Wake family during the late nineteenth century. Examination of successive Ordnance Survey maps would appear to suggest that the lake was back filled between 1948 and 1955.

A further ten features were identified from archive records within the immediate vicinity (i.e. 500m) of the site. These included a Roman coin hoard (SMR 888), evidence for Romano-British metal working (SMR 894), the site of Shirecliffe Hall (SMR 250), find spots of worked flint (SMR 3193) and an Iron Age quernstone (SMR 882).

## Historical survey

No oblique or vertical aerial photographs relating to Abbeyfield Park were identified in the National Monuments Record.

Abbeyfield Park is first shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1905). The site of the park is previously shown as agricultural land and corresponds to two plots of land shown as Keys Croft and Leas on Harrison's map of Southall Soake (1637). These plots – one arable land, the other pasture – were subsequently truncated by Burngreave Road, which now defines the western boundary of Abbeyfield Park. Burngreave Road is not shown on Fairbank's map of the Parish of Sheffield (1795) but can clearly be seen on Tayler's map of the Town and Environs of Sheffield (1832).

The park was established in the grounds of Abbeyfield House. Although Abbeyfield House is shown on Tayler's map, it is labelled as Pitsmoor Abbey on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 6" map (1855). The layout of the Abbeyfield Park is shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1905). It was approached through a formal entrance off Burngreave Road, from which a broad driveway led to the house, an adjacent block of stables and a walled garden. The southern margins of the park were fringed with trees. A network of curving pathways can be seen within the interior of the park, leading to an artificial mound and an ornamental lake or pond with a small island.

The site was acquired with contributions from Sheffield Town Trust and H.J. Wilson Esq in 1909 with the intention of creating much needed recreational space in an 'area of poor provision' (Sewell 1996). Examination of subsequent editions of the Ordnance Survey 25" maps shows the gradual provision of associated facilities. By 1923 a bowling green had been built on the site of the artificial mound and urinals had been constructed at the northern extent of the site. A second bowling green was later created on the site of the walled garden and tennis courts were built to the east of Abbeyfield House (1935). Finally, by 1955 the lake had been back filled and a playground had been created at the southern extent of the park.

## Recommendations

Abbeyfield Park is one of the most impressive sites within the study area and is currently well maintained. Although few archaeological or historical features were identified within the limits of the site, the park itself is of significance as an historic designed landscape. Renovation of Abbeyfield House and the stables should be in keeping with both the house and its surroundings. Interpretative notice boards should be considered to detail the history of the house and illustrate the development of the associated planned landscape. Reinstatement of the ornamental lake and associated landscape



features would enrich the character of the site, returning the park to the state intended during the restoration of the late nineteenth century.

### Notes from the ecologists

On the 1850 map Pitsmoor Abbey is marked on the edge of the present Abbeyfield Park. Abbeyfield House was erected c.1850 – 1875 as a large stately private house. On the 1880 map Abbeyfield is clearly marked and there is no sign of the old abbey. On the 1880 map the parkland, trees and pond are all visible. After the park was first opened as a public park there was a pond at its southern edge where the playground is today; old Victorian postcards show people boating.

## Community

Abbeyfield Park received the highest number of visitors of any green space or park in Burngreave area and it received by far the highest response to the community questionnaire throughout the community consultation period. Not the biggest park in Burngreave people enjoy a feeling of spaciousness and agree it is a pleasant environment. Its, playground wildlife and trees make it very popular with all ages. There are however a number of problems with the site which visitors feel quite strongly about.

## User Survey Results

The user survey showed that the most popular activities taking place on the site were dog walking, taking a short cut and visiting the playground. Other activities included cycling, visiting Abbeyfield House, football, driving, picking flowers, sitting, walking, walking with a pushchair and taking shelter with Monday being the most popular day. The majority of visitors during the daily AM surveys were children with children and adults being the most popular visitors during the MD and Pm surveys. There were levels of elderly, teen and infant visitors recorded also.

## Site Problems

### Safety.

People do not feel too safe in the park, particularly at night. It is poorly lit, and gangs of youths that use the park at night are intimidating.

### Drug and solvent abuse.

Some drug and solvent abuse occurs in the Park, mainly in the area adjacent to the tennis courts, where overgrown shrubs provide privacy for users.

The Abbeyfield Rd entrance to the Park is a well-known landmark and is used as a meeting place for drug dealing.

### Litter and vermin

There is a litter problem in the park, which encourages rats.

Glass and used needles are also found in the park, posing a great threat to health, safe play and enjoyment of the park.

The overgrown bushes, particularly the ivy along the boundary wall adjacent to Burngreave Rd is a well-used rat run.

## Dogs

There is a general problem on Abbeyfield Park with dog mess and loose dogs running around the park.

## Facilities

There is a general dissatisfaction with the quality of playground facilities within the park and levels of playground maintenance.

There is a problem with the degradation of the Bowling Green due to it being used by young people in the park as a football pitch.

The tennis courts are in a bad state of disrepair with a broken up surface, unsuitable for play.

The bowling green, opposite Abbeyfield Park House, used, as a football pitch is uneven and difficult to play football on.

The other football facilities adjacent to the playground are very wet underfoot and unsuitable in wet weather.

## Landscape and access

The footpaths are broken up and make wheelchair access difficult in places.

The playground is very isolated in one corner of the park with no direct access.

Shrubs are very dense and overgrown in places.

The Leylandii hedge is too tall and dominates the park and is often subjected to burning.

There is a lack of suitable seating within the park.

## Site Solutions

- Improvement and extension of existing play facilities which are low maintenance and sustainable.
- Improvement and restoration of all games facilities.
- Trim back/ remove shrubs and replace with alternative planting.
- Cut back or remove the Leylandii hedge.
- Remove rat runs.
- Provide lighting.
- Provide direct access to the playground (heritage status allowing).
- Improve footpaths.
- Create a safe environment for the bowlers.

- Dog walking and dog only areas.
- Perennial formal beds, which are visually attractive but easy to manage

## Community Suggestions

From the options provided within the questionnaire the most popular suggestions to improve Abbeyfield Park were:

- Toddlers play equipment
- Stopping dog mess
- More events and activities
- Litter control
- More places to sit down

Community suggestions for changes to improve the site focused mainly on improving the sites safety and its facilities. The following responses were most popular:

- Create a basketball court
- Improve the football pitch
- Better maintenance
- A café
- Dog free area
- Drinking fountain
- Gates locked at night
- Improve and increase the play equipment
- Lighting
- More benches
- More dog bins
- More litter bins
- More play equipment
- Nothing
- Paddling pool

- Picnic tables
- Repair the tennis courts
- Site warden
- Tidy up the site
- Toilets
- Youth clubs
- A nature / sensory garden
- More music events
- Install CCTV
- Involve young people in management of the park
- Have a sheltered area
- Be given free dog mess bags
- More children's activities

Question 7 provided an insight as to what people would ideally like to be able to do at Abbeyfield Park. The response was both extensive and varied. The main responses were:

#### Visit a café

A place to get drinks snacks and meet friends.

#### Play basket ball

Improve the basketball court so that games can be played on it.

#### Feel safe

Improve the site in general so that visitors feel safer visiting the park alone.

#### Get some fresh air

Many people want the site to be open and safe so they can get away fro the smog and congestion of the city.

#### More events and activities for children

There are a high number of children visitors so feel there should be more activities for children to get involved with.



## Have picnics

Many people expressed a desire to have somewhere to picnic on the site. Somewhere sheltered from the sun and with litterbins to leave rubbish.

There were many other responses to what the community would like to be able to do at Abbeyfield Park. The following suggestions are a shortened summary of the full list.

## Plant fruit trees

Plant a small orchard of fruit trees managed by the local community.

## Enjoy peace and quiet

Keep the park quiet and tranquil, not having too much going on that disturbs people.

## Get local people involved with the maintenance

Get people involved with litter picks, and tidy up days.

## Get rid of the graffiti and litter

Clean up the sites and maintain their appearance

## Have the keepers back

It is felt that park keepers on the site would deter those from doing harm.

## More sports clubs

Specific reference to starting up hockey, basketball and football teams were made.

## Locked at night

People feel that the park will be safer and better maintained if it is locked at night.

## Enjoy more wildlife

Create more wildlife events, encourage more wildlife into the park and look after what already exists.

## No more developing

Just make the best of what there is already.

## Play in safety

Not worry about children having accidents, hurting themselves or falling into dog mess and also be able to leave the playground quickly if something did happen.