

27 Somerset Road/Catherine Street Open Space



Introduction

The site consists of mown grass verges with dense willow scrub to the north at the side of a basketball court. To the south of this is a steep slide, there are dense areas of bushes and trees surrounding benches, play equipment and a tarmac play area. There are some large weeping willows, cherries and silver maples planted around the site.

The area of dense willow woodland contains dense thickets of bramble and honeysuckle as well as firethorn and cotoneaster, these are good for cover and food for birds.

Site details

Site name

Somerset Road/Catherine Street Open Space

Location

Grid Reference: SK 358 887

Land owner

Sheffield City Council

Nearest road/street

Somerset Road to the south, Brackley Street to the west and Catherine Street to the north.

Adjacent land use

To the north/ north east of the playground area steep willow banks go down to Catherine Road and Burngreave Road. The rest of the site is surrounded by houses and gardens.

Size

The site covers an area of 1.01731 hectares

Present management

The amenity grassland is mown regularly. Burngreave New Deal for Communities and a team of architecture students from Sheffield University have linked up in a project aimed at making the park a safer, friendlier place. Following consultation the students will be drawing up plans for the park.

Burngreave Community Forestry Programme are going to open up the site by taking out lines of willow. Sheffield Wildlife Trust and Green City Action are planning on researching the feasibility of harvesting the willow on a coppice rotation and marketing the crop.

Burngreave Rangers are going to clear rubbish, needles and glass from the site, remove some of the shrubs from around the basketball court and repair existing play equipment.

UDP designations

Open Space Area, (Leisure and Recreation).

Location map



Ecology

Phase I ecological survey

Site description

From Brackley Street the site consists of mown grass verges with dense willow scrub to the north at the side of a basketball court. To the south of this is a steep slide, following the path up past bushes and trees are benches, play equipment and a tarmac play area.

There is a steep area of amenity grassland between the basketball court and the tarmac play area. There are extensive areas of cotoneaster, areas of bramble, ivy and rose beds around the site.

There are a variety of trees on the site, notably weeping willow (*Salix chrysocoma*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) and white poplar (*Populus alba*).

Habitats of interest

Although not a listed priority habitat, willow woodland is uncommon in the area and should be protected for its biodiversity, community and craft value, i.e. willow weaving and coppicing.

Species of interest

Local Red Data Book Species (Grade A)

Speckled wood & holly blue butterflies

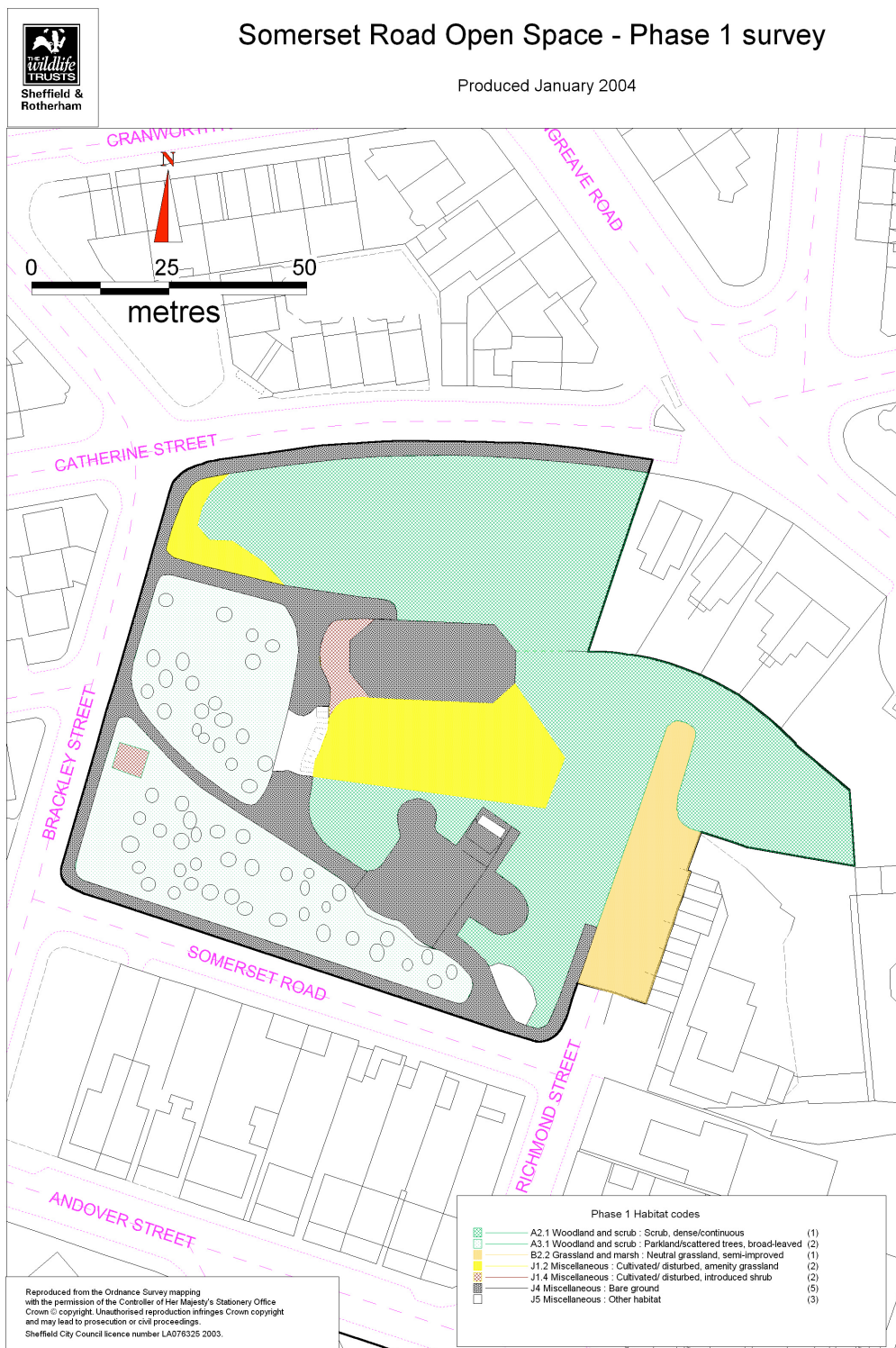
Sheffield LBAP Priority Species

Birds- Pied wagtail.

UK BAP Species of Conservation Concern

Birds- Chiffchaff and pied wagtail.

Phase 1 map



Invertebrate survey

A full invertebrate survey was not carried out on this site as, due to limited funding, only a few sites could be chosen; The sites that were surveyed are believed to hold greater invertebrate interest.

A full invertebrate survey is recommended in the future.

Species recorded include:

Butterflies:

Red admiral

Large white

Small white

Small skipper

Gatekeeper

Brimstone

Holly blue

Speckled wood

Vertebrate Survey

There were no mammals seen on site except for some feral cats. A full mammal survey was not carried out.

Bird survey

Species recorded on at least one occasion between May and August 2003	Possible Breeding Species ¹	Probable Breeding Species ²	Confirmed Breeding Species ³	Number of territories held by selected species
Chiffchaff ⁵ Pied wagtail ⁵ Blackbird Long tailed tit	Chiffchaff ⁵	Pied wagtail ⁵	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; eggshells found away from nest; recently fledged young.

⁴ Priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

⁵ Species of Conservation Concern in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

A more detailed bird survey is recommended for the site as there are more birds using the site than are listed above.

Evaluation

The dense willow woodland needs to remain, as it is extremely important for bird cover and food. It could be cut back to open up the site more to make it more attractive to people where it borders Catherine Road. The willow woodland has potential for coppicing and willow weaving classes and projects although care needs to be taken to ensure that bird cover and food sources are not decimated.

The site needs to be more attractive and safer to people, lowering the canopy slightly and thinning out small strips of the woodland would create sight lines through the park opening it up so it feels more safe.

The area is good for butterflies and the large patches of ivy and bramble need to be left to encourage this.

The basketball court on the site rarely, if ever, appears to be used; it is also prone to arson attacks. This could be replaced with robust play equipment, with the willow cut back slightly the site should appear more welcoming and safer.

There are some areas of tall grasses at the edge of the site near the Hindu Community Centre; these should be left, if possible, to encourage invertebrates.

The roses and shrub beds need to be maintained and would benefit from a diverse, attractive display of flowers to compliment them.

Species found

A (tree or shrub)

<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway maple
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	sycamore
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	silver maple
<i>Berberis x stenophylla</i>	barberry
<i>Betula pendula</i>	silver birch
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	dogwood
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	wall-spray
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	hawthorn
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	ash
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	holly
<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>	garden privet
<i>Populus alba</i>	white poplar
<i>Prunus avium</i>	wild cherry
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	cherry laural
<i>Prunus sp.</i>	cherry
<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	firethorn
<i>Quercus petraea</i>	sessile oak
<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	flowering currant
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	dog rose
<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Japanese rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	bramble
<i>Salix capraea</i>	goat willow
<i>Salix 'Chrysocoma'</i>	weeping willow
<i>Salix fragilis</i>	crack willow
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elder
<i>Sorbus aria</i> agg.	common whitebeam
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	rowan
<i>Sorbus intermedia</i> agg.	Swedish whitebeam
<i>Tilia x vulgaris</i>	lime

B (herb)

<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	garlic mustard
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	cow parsley
<i>Arctium minus</i>	lesser burdock
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	mugwort

<i>Aster tripolium</i>	sea Aster
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy
<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	hairy bitter-cress
<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	cornflower
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	rosebay willowherb
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	creeping thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	spear thistle
<i>Convolvulus sp.</i>	bindweed
<i>Cotoneaster frigidus</i>	tree cotoneaster
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	great willowherb
<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Japanese knotweed
<i>Galium aparine</i>	cleavers
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	cut-leaved cranesbill
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	herb-robert
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	wood avens
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	hogweed
<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>	tutsan
<i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i>	square-stalked St John'swort
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	cat's-ear
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	black medick
<i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i>	cultivated daffodil
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	common poppy
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain
<i>Plantago major</i>	greater plantain
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	knotgrass
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	creeping cinquefoil
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	meadow buttercup
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup
<i>Reseda luteola</i>	weld
<i>rosa sp.</i>	rose
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	common sorrel
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	broad-leaved dock
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	common ragwort
<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford ragwort
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	bittersweet
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	hedge woundwort
<i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>	feverfew
<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	dandelion
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	red clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	colt's-foot
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	common nettle
<i>Veronica filiformis</i>	slender speedwell
<i>Veronica persica</i>	common field-speedwell
C (grass)	
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	false oat-grass
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	cock's-foot
<i>Festuca sp.</i>	fescue
<i>Lolium multiflorum</i>	Italian rye-grass
<i>Poa annua</i>	annual meadow-grass

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

Pied wagtail

UK BAP Species of Conservation Concern

Chifchaff

Pied wagtail

UK Red List Birds

None

UK Amber List Birds

None

Local Red Data Book Species

Lepidoptera Grade A Species

Holly blue

Speckled wood

Previous Surveys

Author./Recorder	Date	Coverage	Location
J.Fox	10/9/87	Sheffield Inner City Phase 1 Habitat Survey	Sheffield Wildlife Trust & Sheffield City Council Ecology Unit File# 270

History and Geology

Geological survey

To the east of the site on the eastern side of Kilton Hill are 2 outcrops. The largest, (25m long, 10 m high), is near vertical forming a natural wall to the side of “Bradley & Foulds Vehicle Repair Garage on Kilton Hill. Access is restricted as the outcrop is on private property, there is an insufficient view from the road. A smaller outcrop, (10m long and 6m high), occurs on the same side of Kilton Hill about 10m south of Bradley & Foulds. It is partway up a steep roadside bank and is overgrown. Thinly bedded fine grey sandstone interbedded with thicker beds of coarser yellow, brown sandstone.

Stratigraphy: Westphalian A. Parkgate Rock. *Petrology:* Sandstone *Structure:* Bedding.

Archaeological survey

No archaeological or historical features were identified within Somerset Road Open Space in the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service SMR, English Heritage National Monuments Record. However, one feature was identified within the limits of the site on historic Ordnance Survey maps. A sandstone quarry (OS 18) is shown on Burngreave Road towards the eastern extent of Somerset Road Open Space on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6” map (1855). This quarry was no longer shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25” (1905) and was presumably back filled when the adjacent terraced housing was constructed during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

Historical survey

Somerset Road Open Space is not shown on any of the Ordnance Survey maps consulted as part of the historical survey. The site of the open space is formerly shown as agricultural land on Harrison’s survey of Southall Soake (1637) and corresponds to part of two plots of land, one of which was labelled as *Spittle Fields*. It remained largely unchanged until the construction of terraced housing on Brackley Street, Catherine Street, Richmond Street, Somerset Road and Somerset Street, first shown on the 2nd edition 25” Ordnance Survey map (1905).

Recommendations

Somerset Road Open Space is of limited archaeological or historical significance. It would appear to have been used for housing during the early to mid twentieth century. Following the demolition of the housing, the site remained undeveloped and has since become one of the many open or green spaces in the Burngreave NDfC area. Consultation of census records will help identify former residents of Brackley Street, Catherine Street, Richmond Street, Somerset Road and Somerset Street. This information may help improve understanding of local social history.

Community

Sommerset Rd Rec received the one of the lowest responses to the survey due to its almost complete lack of visitors. The site has suffered severe neglect and contains no usable play or recreational facilities and in parts is extremely overgrown and secluded. Subjected to high levels of drug abuse the site is still used by people as a short-cut or to play on the slide. Local residents are alarmed at how quickly the site declined to its current unusable and undesirable situation.

User Survey Results

The user survey indicates that the most popular activity on the site during the survey was taking a shortcut. Other activities showed people dog walking and playing. The most popular day was Friday with the daily AM survey showing most visitors were elderly. The MD survey indicated again high levels of elderly visitors with some adults and the PM survey showing mostly children visiting with some adults. There were low numbers of teenagers recorded but no infants.

Site Problems

Safety

There is a great sense of feeling unsafe at this site. The area is secluded and quiet with very low numbers of people even just passing through.

Visibility is obscured by overgrown areas of scrub and bushes making the area dark and compressed in the day and made worse at night by lack of lighting.

Drug and solvent abuse

There is a high level of drug abuse on this site both during the day and at night mainly taking place in the area around the overgrown and concealed basketball court.

Litter

There is great deal of litter on the site blown in from the roads and left by people.

The area next to and inside the basketball court is full of used needles and broken glass bottles.

The embankment running parallel to Catherine St and Brackley St is covered with fly tipping and household rubbish.

The playground area also contains a lot of household rubbish, broken glass and the burnt remains of all manner of rubbish.

Landscape and access

The area is very overgrown particularly where willow trees and scrub have grown around the basketball court.

There is dense, tall overgrowth surrounding the playground and the entrance point at Somerset Rd.

There are a number of desire lines worked into the embankment on Brackley St which cut into the site.

Surfacing in the playground area is broken and uneven.

A slide and two swings are all that remains of the playground.

Facilities

Where a piece of equipment has become damaged it has simply been removed and not replaced leaving just a tarmac scar.

The basketball courts are undesirable and impossible to play on and so have declined further.

There is no seating provided on the site apart from two damaged benches next to the playground.

Maintenance

There is no evidence of ongoing maintenance on this site and no signs of recent attention.

Site Solutions

- Intensively cut back and maintain overgrowth of the entire site, Increase visibility by opening up the site.
- Thin willow trees with felling around the basketball court, opening up the area leaving a few standards.
- Clear the site regularly of broken glass, litter and fly tipping.
- Restore and repair the basketball court or replace with an alternative.
- Install new, modern and sustainable play equipment, soft flooring and seating to the playground.
- Improve footpaths and surfacing.
- Install lighting, litter bins and dog bins.

Community Suggestions

From the options provided within the questionnaire the most popular suggestions to improve Somerset Rd Rec were;

- Low colourfull planting

- More wildlife
- Entrance ways improved
- More city council rangers
- Litter control
- Disabled facilities
- 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;

- Fix up the basketball court
- Cut back the hedges
- A new playground
- More maintenance
- More seating
- Stop vandalism
- Improve the security

Question 7 provided an insight as to what people would ideally like to be able to do on Somerset Rd Rec. The response was centred around site safety. The main responses were;

Feel safer

Improve the site and make the site feel safer to visit.

Gardening

Turn the site into allotments and garden on the site.

Sit and relax

Create a pleasant and relaxing environment with seating, and open landscaping to sit and relax.

Create a community garden

Have no play equipment just an open landscaped garden with seats to relax on and for it to be locked at night.

Dog walk

Open up the site and have more grassy space to walk the dog.

Enjoy the area

Create a space that is a pleasure to visit, that is safe and that people will respect.

Footfall survey

Summary of the total number of visitors in the week

	Elderly	Adult	Teenager	Child	Baby	Total
Day1	3	1	0	0	0	4
Day2	3	4	1	1	0	9
Day3	3	1	0	3	0	7
Day4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	6	1	4	0	20

Conclusions

- The open space is very unpopular among the people living next to it
- The elderly residents formed the highest number of visitors
- Despite having a playground it has been neglected and that is evident in the very small number of young visitors

Observed uses

Dog walking and walking formed the most popular uses of this space. Others included:

- Walking through
- Playing

Suggestions from the BGEP Roadshow

Comments/ Suggestions	Number
Do it up	1
Fun fair	1

Go-Karts	1
I don't feel safe here	2
Problem: drug dealing	1
Problem: solvent abuse	1
Remove shrubs	1
Security lights	1
Trim back shrubs	1