

Cheshire West and Chester

Service Standards: Green Spaces Ground Maintenance



Contents

Page

Introduction 3

Typologies 3

Zones 4

STANDARDS

Typology Type 1 – Formal Parks and Spaces 5

Typology Type 2 - Outdoor Sport 7

Typology Type 3 - Countryside Parks and Rural Spaces 9

Typology Type 4 – Grass Verges 10

Introduction

Grounds maintenance includes the care of public grassed areas, including verges, annual bedding displays and horticultural features, herbaceous borders, shrub and rose beds, hedges, ponds and outdoor sports. The standards aim to provide a pleasant environment for residents and visitors alike, ensuring the green spaces play a key role in achieving a 'clean, green and safe borough'.

Grassed areas

There are several different standards and frequencies of grass cutting throughout the borough, ranging from wild flower areas that are cut twice a year, to ornamental areas in formal parks that are mown weekly during the growing season.

Annual bedding, herbaceous, shrub and rose borders

Annual bedding is provided in formal parks and street areas. Weeding, watering, dead-heading keep the displays looking healthy and colourful. Shrub areas are normally pruned annually, usually during the winter months to keep growth under control. Rose borders are pruned and mulched to maintain floral displays and to suppress weed growth.

Hedges

Hedges are cut according to the plant species and their location. In formal parks, hedges are regularly trimmed to a neat finish and in natural and rural areas, hedges are maintained to cut back overgrowth. The cuts take place ensuring legislation is met in terms of the bird nesting season.

Outdoor Sport

There are a number of outdoor facilities in green spaces across the borough, including football pitches, cricket tables, croquet lawns, bowling greens, golf courses and tennis courts. All facilities are maintained in accordance with guidance from the various sporting bodies and regular maintenance programmes include, mowing, scarifying, aerating, fertilising, herbicide application and renovation works.

Ponds and formal waterways

Formal and natural ponds can be seen in a number of green spaces across the borough. Formal ponds are maintained to restrict weed growth and to allow wildlife, aquatic and marginal plants to flourish. Natural ponds are cleared annually, and regular litter removal encourages healthy pond life.

Typologies

All Council managed green spaces are divided into four typologies based on the broad land type and function. Maintenance standards are then set according to each typology based on a range of maintenance tasks. The main typologies are:

- Typology 1 - Formal Parks and Spaces
- Typology 2 - Outdoor Sport
- Typology 3 - Countryside Parks and Rural Open Spaces
- Typology 4 – Grass Verges and Urban Open Spaces

Formal Parks and Spaces

Formal parks range from major park sites to small pocket parks, the parks generally contain a large number of leisure/recreation features and a higher proportion of ornamental features. They are the most labour intensive and require a regular schedule of grounds maintenance tasks to maintain the standards.

Outdoor Sports

Outdoor sports are played at parks and recreation grounds, specific playing fields and sports grounds across the borough. Sports pitches are maintained to promote true, safe, even, free draining surfaces and to provide pitches which are presented in optimum condition for use.

Countryside Parks and Rural Spaces

The maintenance of countryside parks includes grass mowing, hedge cutting and natural pond clearance. These parks are maintained to a standard that encourages natural habitats and wildlife. Rural spaces include areas of woodlands, meadows and wetlands. Many of these spaces will be noted for their biodiversity and wildlife conservation value and will provide a valuable resource for environmental education and awareness.

Grass Verges and Urban Open Spaces

Most verges and urban spaces are cut regularly between April and October on a cut and drop basis. This is generally carried out on a fortnightly basis, although periods of inclement weather may delay operations. Extra cuts may be added before or after these dates as necessary. Grass clippings that encroach on paved areas adjacent to the verge are dispersed by the use of blower machines. Growth around obstacles in the grass such as road signs or fence lines, are controlled by strimming or selective use of herbicide spraying.

Zones

A set of three Zones have been selected to group maintenance standards under specific descriptions. They are as follows:

1 – High amenity (high maintenance)

Maintenance standard expected for high profile areas such as in formal parks and bowling greens. The tasks within this zoning include regular mowing of fine Turf areas, floral display maintenance including watering, dead-heading, pruning, weeding and fertilizing; and maintenance of formal water features.

2. – General/medium amenity (standard maintenance)

Maintenance standard expected in areas where there is a high level of general use/activity, sites such as recreation areas. The tasks within this zoning include regular mowing of park, grassland and sports playing fields, cricket tables; grass playing pitches, including, scarification, aeration, irrigation, renovation after play and season end. tennis court maintenance, informal hedge maintenance, informal shrub and non- ornamental seasonal bedding maintenance.

3. – Low amenity (low maintenance)

Maintenance standard expected in natural areas including countryside parks, rural spaces and grass verges. The tasks within this zoning include mowing of grass verges, highway gateways, roundabouts, meadows, natural ponds, rural and natural hedges.

Typology 1 – Formal Parks and Spaces

Zoned Tasks	Zone	Definition	General Standard	Example
Grass maintenance	1 – High amenity Weekly April-October	Fine quality turf areas in high profile sites, often adjacent to ornamental features e.g. flowerbeds	Grass no longer than approx. 35mm cut uniform cut and collect basis with a striped finish, cuttings collected	
	2 – General/ medium amenity 10- 15 day schedule April-October	Reasonable quality grass areas in non-ornamental areas of formal parks and urban spaces	Grass no longer than approx. 65mm cut uniform with a consistent finish where appropriate	
	3 – Low amenity March - October	Meadow grass and wildflower areas usually situated in areas of amenity grass in formal parks	1 – 3 cuts per year dependant on area, arising usually removed	
Hedge maintenance	1– High amenity July - October	Hedges pruned to a specific form in high profile areas often adjacent to ornamental features	2 cuts per year July cut dependant on meeting legislation in relation to bird nesting season	
	2 - General/ medium amenity October onwards	Good quality informal hedge features sometimes forming boundaries in formal parks and urban spaces	1 cut per year during the winter programme	

Zoned Tasks	Zone	Definition	General Standard	Example
	3 – Low amenity October onwards	Informal hedges bordering urban spaces and cut so as not to cause obstruction	1 cut per year during the winter programme	
Shrub and Rose Border Maintenance	1 – High amenity Annual ongoing programme	Formal shrub and rose beds in high profile areas of formal parks, often used to complement floral planting and bedding	Winter pruning once per year, define edge to border, spot treat weeds up to three times per year. Roses pruned twice per year	
	2 – General/medium amenity November onwards	Shrub borders providing backdrops to non-ornamental areas in formal parks and green spaces	Winter cultivation, pruning once per year, spot treat weeds up to three times per year	
Annual Bedding Maintenance	1 – High amenity June & October	Seasonal bedding and floral planting in high profile areas, usually formal parks	Bed preparation and planting twice per year, fortnightly hand weed/deadhead, irrigation, if required	

Zoned Tasks	Zone Operational Timing	Definition	General Standard	Example
	<p>2 – General/ medium amenity</p> <p>June & October</p>	<p>Seasonal bedding in informal areas of parks and open spaces</p>	<p>Bed preparation and planting twice per year, monthly hand weed/ dead head, irrigation if required</p>	
<p>Planters, boxes, floral displays & baskets</p>	<p>1 – High amenity</p> <p>June & October</p>	<p>All floral displays in parks and urban spaces will be maintained to Zone 1 standards</p>	<p>Following supply and installation, features will be irrigated and dead headed regularly</p>	
<p>Pond maintenance</p>	<p>1 – High amenity</p> <p>Year round operation</p>	<p>All ponds in a formal park setting</p>	<p>Regular clearance of litter and bi- annual pond clear out to maintain healthy aquatic environment</p>	

Typology 2 - Outdoor Sport

Zoned Tasks	Zone Operational Timing	Definition	General Standard	Example
Football	2 – General/ medium amenity August through to May	All football pitches including soccer, rugby, etc	Football pitches will be accurately set out and lines fully marked and clearly visible	
	2 – General/ medium amenity August through to May	All football pitches in parks, recreation and sports grounds	Grass no longer than approx. 35mm cut to allow for optimum playing conditions	
Bowling	1 – High amenity April through to October	All bowling greens with fine quality turf	Grass no longer than approx. 15mm no shorter than 5 mm cut uniform, and cuttings collected allowing for optimum playing conditions	

Cricket	<p>2 – General/ medium amenity</p> <p>April through to October</p>	All cricket tables	<p>Grass no longer than approx. 25mm outfield and 15mm table cut to allow for optimum playing conditions, and boundary line fully marked and visible for play</p>	
	<p>2 – General/ medium amenity</p> <p>April through to October</p>	All cricket wickets	<p>All cricket wickets will be accurately set out and lines fully marked and clearly visible for play</p>	
Croquet	<p>1 – High amenity</p> <p>April through to October</p>	All croquet lawns	<p>Grass no longer than approx. 25mm no lower than 8 mm cut uniform, and cuttings collected allowing for optimum playing conditions and boundary lines marked and clearly visible</p>	
Tennis	<p>2 – General/ medium amenity</p> <p>Year round operation</p>	All hard tennis courts	<p>Courts brushed, clear of moss and lines marked and clearly visible for optimum playing conditions</p>	

Typology Type 3 - Countryside Parks and Rural Spaces

Zoned Tasks	Zone Operational Timing	Definition	General Standard	Example
Grass cutting	3 – Low amenity March, July and October	General grass areas that define pathways and are accessible and suitable for recreational use	Grass no longer than approx. 150mm, free of unsightly clumps of clippings	
	3 – Low amenity October	Meadows and areas of long grass that run alongside general grassed areas	1 or 2 cuts per year, timed according to species with arising removed at the correct time	
Hedge Cutting	3 – Low amenity October onwards	Rural hedge	1 cut per year during the winter programme	

Natural Pond maintenance	<p>3 – Low amenity</p> <p>January/ February</p>	<p>Pond in a natural setting in a countryside park</p>	<p>Regular clearance of litter and annual pond clear out to maintain healthy aquatic environment</p>	
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Typology 4 – Grass Verges

Zoned Tasks	Zone Operational Timing	Definition	General Standard	Example
Grass Verges	<p>3 – Low amenity</p> <p>April through to September</p>	<p>Rural verge</p>	<p>Visibility splays and a single swath width (1.2m) from the carriageway are cut</p>	
	<p>3 – Low amenity</p> <p>April through to October</p>	<p>Urban verge</p>	<p>The height of the grass is kept between 12mm and 75mm</p>	
	<p>2 – General/ medium amenity</p> <p>April through to October</p>	<p>Highway ornamental gateway</p>	<p>The height of the grass is kept between 12mm and 75mm</p>	

	<p>3 – Low amenity</p> <p>April through to September</p>	Traffic Junction sight line	Grass no longer than approx. 150mm	
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Zoned Tasks	Zone Operational Timing	Definition	General Standard	Example
Grass steep embankments	<p>3 – Low amenity</p> <p>April through to September</p>	Steep embankments	Grass no longer than approx. 150mm cut 3-4 annually.	