

PROPOSAL: To support Thorpe Nature Network to work towards Level 1 accreditation to make Thorpe St Andrew a civic arboretum: 'A Tree Town'.

What is an arboretum?

An arboretum is a botanical collection composed of trees and shrubs of a variety of species.

So what is an arboretum town?

"An arboretum town is a place where trees and shrubs are cultivated to both enhance the local community and its biodiversity; and for scientific or educational purposes."

Essentially, this means we propose to make Thorpe St Andrew a 'Tree Town' where we are proud of our outside spaces; proud of the variety of trees we plant and protect; proud of the educational opportunities we can provide; and proud of the wellbeing we can offer the community because of the mental health benefits of walking trails and green, open spaces.

The benefits of trees: They provide shade, intercept pollutants, absorb and sequester carbon as well as slowing water flow to ease drainage systems. Trees also offer forage for bees and birds in addition to nesting for birds and bats. They help with local climate cooling in heatwaves and increase location desirability. One oak tree can support up to 500 different species.

In short: trees are incredible!

Across the world there are plenty of parks, nature reserves and small spaces that claim an arboretum status. These are all listed on the Morton Register: <https://arbnet.org/morton-register-arboreta>

The Morton Register lists both accredited and unaccredited Arboreta. Accreditation comes from the Arbnet Accreditation program and details can be found below or via the above link. There are 4 levels of accreditation. Globally there are 2549 *registered* arboreta across 38 countries of which 803 are accredited arboreta. There are other arboreta that are not on the register so it is not fully comprehensive. For example, Lynford Arboretum in Norfolk is not listed whereas Bradenham Hall is. We also have a lot of country parks and National Trust properties that actively plant and conserve trees and shrubs but there is a reliance on the organisations to put themselves forward.

There are currently 469 level 1 accredited arboreta across the world and 18 of those are in the UK.

- Ten at level 1
- Two at level 2
- Two at level 3
- Four at level 4

This proposal will look at how Thorpe St Andrew can try for Level 1 accreditation.

Who has awarded these places arboretum status?

The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program provides standards and guidelines for the establishment and development of an arboretum.

Why go for the additional accreditation?

Accredited arboreta show a long term commitment to the development and preservation of trees to improve and protect our environment with a focus on community and education. We have a skilled and committed community group who are keen to run this as a long-term project and are not asking for big investment of time or money from the council; just the opportunity to work in partnership to make Thorpe St Andrew a greener, healthier and happier place with additional opportunities for the outdoor education of our children.

The goals of the accreditation program are to:

- foster the establishment and professionalism of arboreta;
- identify arboreta capable of participating or collaborating in certain scientific, collections, or conservation activities; and
- advance the planting, study, and conservation of trees to improve the world.

The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is sponsored and supported by The Morton Arboretum, Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), and the American Public Gardens Association (APGA).

Benefits of accreditation

- To be recognised for the achievement of specified levels of professional practice.
- To work toward higher levels of professional standards once accredited.
- Identify other organisations at similar or higher levels of accreditation to provide comparative benchmarks and models for further achievement.
- Earn distinction within the community.
- Exert leadership and influence by serving as a model to encourage professional development in other organisations.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration with other arboreta for scientific, collections, or conservation activities.

What does a level 1 accredited arboretum look like?

We know that there are only 10 level 1 *accredited* arboreta in the UK. These include a wide range of urban and rural locations with some examples being Brunswick Park in Wednesbury, Dartmouth Park, Meanwhile Gardens in London, Rosemount Park in Scotland, Sleaford Town Cemetery and Staunton Country Park. There are also two towns in the UK that have Arboretum status: Lewes and Sidmouth.

We believe that, with its large open spaces and diversity of wildlife, Thorpe St Andrew could easily achieve similar, level 1 accreditation and potentially achieve a level 2 in the future.

If we achieve accreditation, we may be the first arboretum in East Anglia to do so! This would be a wonderful flag for our fantastic town to fly.

How do we achieve accreditation?

The most basic level of accreditation requires achievement of the following standards:

An arboretum plan. This is documentation of some sort, such as an organisational plan, strategic plan, master plan, or other, that defines the purpose of the arboretum, its audience(s), the types of plants that are to be grown to achieve that purpose and serve those audiences, provisions for the maintenance and care of the plants, and provisions for the continuing operation of the organization through time with a clear succession plan.

An arboretum organizational group. This is a group of people or governing board or authority that is dedicated to the arboretum plan and its continuation beyond the efforts of a single individual. Such an organizational group can affirm fulfilment of standards and authorize participation as an accredited arboretum.

An arboretum collection with a minimum number of 25 species, varieties or cultivars of trees or woody plants that have been planted and are growing in accordance with the arboretum plan. Plants in the arboretum collection must be labeled in some way as to identify them taxonomically, including scientific name and cultivar if applicable, and is **available for public access**.

Arboretum staff or volunteers who ensure fulfilment of the arboretum plan and provide for the basic needs of the arboretum collection and functions of the arboretum.

An arboretum public dimension that includes some level of public access, and at least one public event or educational program each year focused on trees or arboretum purposes

What actions do we need to take to fulfil the above criteria?

1 Set up a community group to manage and lead this.

The core group has been established: drawing on the Thorpe Nature Network, the Friends of Thorpe Parks and local, skilled residents who have experience including tree wardens, gardeners and nature enthusiasts. The group are committed to lead a long-term project to achieve and maintain arboretum status.

2 Staff and volunteers. The current community group are happy to volunteer their time and do not feel that any paid staff are required. Once the project is established then we will be recruiting a wider pool of local volunteers and will hold a roster of helpers.

3 Set up an Arboretum Plan.

We will carry out a tree mapping project to find out exactly what/how many trees, shrubs and hedges we have in Thorpe. This will take the group sometime to complete but will draw on existing mapping documents. There will be a programme of areas to map and these will be surveyed over a period of several years.

The Plantation Garden has a wide range of trees already and will be relatively quick to map. The George Morse has a good woodland area at the bottom and also a capacity for further planting around the

recreation ground. Mapping can only take place over the summer months when trees are in leaf to allow for identification.

Other areas to map in the future will include: Fitzmaurice Park, Belmore Plantation, River Green, the Pinebanks area, Street trees across Thorpe St Andrew, Hillside Allotments, TSA1 footpath (the public path linking Pound Lane to the Cottage), Broadland District Council land, Thorpe Parish Church churchyard, Thorpe Marshes, local schools and Housing Association open spaces.

4 Programme of planting

The planting programme will follow the mapping as we see gaps for certain varieties. It will consider successional planting, heritage varieties and impact on supporting climate and wildlife. We are sure that we already have the 25 varieties required for Level 1 accreditation but if not, this will be the first phase of planting. Each time an area is mapped, we will be able to update the long-term planting programme.

An initial planting programme would like to focus on the George Morse Park. We need more trees to create shade in the children's play area; we also need to start successional planting as the Oak trees are old. New trees need to have time to establish themselves before the older trees start to pass their prime and eventually die. Where the kick rail is, we could establish a hedgerow which will provide shade and support with drainage.

A further area for hedging is at the Fitzmaurice, in the lower area behind the MUGA, again to support with drainage.

To support with planting we will need a watering programme and the addition of publicly accessible water butts could be put in next to existing public building to collect rain water.

5 Public dimension

To fulfil the criteria, the trees that form part of our 25 varieties need to be labelled. We will link this to the community engagement criteria by creating labelled nature walks that could run through the Plantation Garden and the Gargle Hill woods.

We have already approached schools to discuss whether they would be interested in getting involved and using the walks and being involved in planting. We have had a positive response.

We have been advised that a community survey is useful for people to nominate favourite trees and they can be fed into the Mapping Document. This also encourages community involvement in the planting programme.

The original proposal was to research more benches around the pathways of the George Morse alongside new trees to create better shade. We have some funding that will hopefully be donated from the Friends of Thorpe Parks for benches.

We are also considering a low-cost, inclusive sponsorship or adoption scheme of new trees and benches for community members which, if feasible, would help to cover the costs of planting and maintenance.

Suggested Community activities

To fulfil the criteria for community engagement, we need to hold an annual event. At the moment we are considering a planting day or a tree festival day which would be more educational. We would make sure that the date didn't clash with other events and would bring a full proposal to council in advance.

Below are a few examples to demonstrate how many National Days there are that we can link an event to. We can be flexible to make sure that the dates work for us locally.

- National Tree week runs from November 23rd to December the 1st as it marks the start of the tree planting season but summer is the best time to hold nature trails and identification sessions.
- 21st March is the International Day of Forests.
- Earth Day is April 22nd.
- World environment Day is June 5th.
- 'Love Parks' week is usually the end of July.
- World Nature Conservation Day is the 28th July.

There are also a lot of ways that the wider community can be involved throughout the year. This is a list of events and programs suggested by ArbNet that can be considered in the future. It certainly isn't exhaustive and other ideas can be added that are more tailored to Thorpe and the expertise we have here.

Recurring public programming

- Guided walking/ trail tours
- Self-guided walking tours
- Community/citizen science programs
- Children's Garden
- School programs
-

Extensive / enhanced educational programming

- Plant selection, care, and/or pest/disease consultation & support
- Educational and outreach publications
- Digital content - podcasts, online courses, social media outreach, etc
- Ethnobotanical engagement (indigenous knowledge content & co-creation with community partners)

Urban & community forestry

- Urban and community agricultural and food forest programs and projects
- Urban and community greening efforts
- Supporting the creation of new accredited arboreta

Final Proposal updated on Thursday 29th May 2025

Costs of the project

There are no costs for setting up the community group or recruiting volunteers.

We will use social media for communication and can print leaflets if needed as a group so do not need any council funding.

Mapping needs to be publicly available and on a website. It seems sensible to link to the town council website for this. There may be some costs for web design but these can be covered by the Community group as design work can be mostly done in house, then we can add a link to the TSA Town Council page.

Friends of Thorpe Parks may contribute between £1,500 and £3000 for benches.

Funds to cover tree purchasing and planting can be sought by the Broadland Tree Warden Networks representative & Tree Warden for Thorpe St Andrew. The Broadland Tree Warden Network's annual grant scheme is undersubscribed, so the chances of funding are very good.

Costs of labelling trees can vary significantly.

The most cost effective way is to tag the trees with numbers (that correspond to our Tree Map) and QR codes. The public can then scan a code to find out information about the trees and a bit about their history and we can give more information this way without needing large and expensive labels or plaques. This has been used successfully at Sidmouth. (Picture A)

For example, did you know the story that the four Redwoods in the Plantation garden were supposedly planted by Mr Brian Fitzmaurice; one for each of his daughters? We have a lot of history in Thorpe and some of our trees have stories to tell!

We would like to put in some additional signage about the project and the nature walks. (Picture B) These could take the form of solid boards with details of a trail on it but we would only need a couple. See example in picture.

Cllr Bailey will be donating her Member Grant contribution towards the signage.

PICTURE A



PICTURE B **example only



Fixing: For mature trees it is usual to use a kew/spring fixing with a nail. This is a standard and approved method of tagging trees that doesn't cause damage and allows the tree to grow with the spring adjusting accordingly. Young trees are normally tagged with a standard tying/hanging tag.

Final Proposal updated on Thursday 29th May 2025

Involvement from TSA Town Council

To achieve arboretum status, we will be working on public land and need consent to do so.

We do not expect the Parks and Estates team to do the planting and maintenance of trees but understand that we will need to gain permission before planting and that Parks and Estates may prefer or need to be involved in the planting on public land.

We would like to install water butts that can be accessed by volunteers to water any new plants and it would make sense to join these to existing Town Council buildings at George Morse and the Fitzmaurice

We would like to work with the contracted tree surveyor and share information that we could use for mapping.

We would also like to use any historical tree mapping data that TSA Town Council holds.

We would like to design labelled nature walks and are also happy to do the work necessary to clear any paths and install signs but again, understand that we will need permission first and that this may need to be done with the supervision of the Parks and Estates Team.

Any updates or new proposals for projects will be brought to the council for consideration.

The community group will endeavour to do as much as possible ourselves alongside the council so as not to increase workloads.

This will also need consent from council for an annual event but wouldn't need stalls, marquees or external suppliers therefore it shouldn't present additional costs to the council.

Currently the project is fully funded through community funds and start-up grants from Broadland District Council so there is no financial commitment required from Thorpe St Andrew Town Council to achieve level 1 accreditation.

The group would request access to a communal piece of land in which to have a shed and store any tools/equipment for the project. We would like council to consider the space behind the bowling/tennis courts which currently appears to be unused. The space is fenced and accessible via a locked gate making it perfect for our needs. The Parks & Estates team do not currently use this space.

We have the full support of Broadland District Council. Their Community Capacity Team are giving the support to the group to setup and explore funding opportunities. They have also offered to support with Community Engagement projects. Their Community Asset Team welcomes the opportunity to include their public spaces and trees in the Arboretum and will cover any costs relating to their land.

We also have the full help and support of the Broadland Tree Warden Network.

Proposal

To support Thorpe Nature Network to work towards Level 1 accreditation to make Thorpe St Andrew a civic arboretum.