

MAIDSTONE GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

improving our parks
and open spaces

PARKS AND RECREATION GROUNDS

MANAGEMENT PLANS

GIDDYHORNE LANE RECREATION GROUND

WARD: ALLINGTON

MP 0610



MARCH 2006

CONTENTS:

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**
- 3. VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE SITE**
- 4. THE SITE AND ITS FACILITIES**
 - 4.1 Boundaries and entrances**
 - 4.2 Roads, paths, cycleways and car parks**
 - 4.3 Lighting**
 - 4.4 Grass areas**
 - 4.5 Trees and other vegetation**
 - 4.6 Biodiversity assessment**
 - 4.7 Provision of seats and bins**
 - 4.8 Signage**
 - 4.9 Provision of recreational and other facilities**
- 5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE**
 - 5.1 Cleanliness**
 - 5.2 Safety and security**
 - 5.3 Infrastructure maintenance**
 - 5.4 Horticultural management regimes**
- 6. FORTHCOMING IMPROVEMENTS**
- 7. FUNDING**
- 8. RESULTS OF QUALITY AUDITS**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Management Plan for Giddyhorn Lane Recreation Ground provides guidelines for its maintenance and the development over the next three years. It outlines the adopted maintenance regime and describes the further improvements to the site which will be carried out as part of the process of implementing the Green Spaces Strategy.

Giddyhorn Lane Recreation Ground is situated in the Allington area of Maidstone, south of London Road and approximately two kilometres north-west of the town centre. It lies within a private residential area. A footpath known as Giddyhorn Lane runs along its eastern boundary.

Its southern, upper, part lies on a gentle north-facing slope, with wide views of the North Downs. The lower part is flat. Trees and scrub form a narrow strip along Giddyhorn Lane.

The site serves mainly the local community. There is a play area, football pitches, tennis courts for use by a club only, a football pavilion now in use partially as a pre-school nursery.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There are a number of Council strategy and policy documents which are relevant to Giddyhorn Lane Recreation Ground:

- Green Spaces Strategy (2005)
- “Play for Today” Towards a Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2004-08 (2005)
- Sports and Play Facilities Strategy (2003)
- Maidstone Matters: Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough (2003)
- Best Value Review: A Clean and Tidy Borough (2002)
- The Local Cultural Strategy for Maidstone
- The Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidance (2005)

These documents recognise that public green open spaces are an important part of the environment in which we live. The quality and quantity of those open spaces have an effect on our quality of life. They are valuable and free resources for recreation and education. There is need in Maidstone to further improve the access, infrastructure, facilities and the biodiversity of public green spaces. The Green Spaces Strategy (2005) has set the way forward with a plan of improvements for years 2005-10.

3. VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE SITE

3.1 The overall vision for the Recreation Ground is:

“To create and maintain a recreation ground which provides opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, as well as quiet contemplation, for local residents.”

3.2 The key objectives for the Ground are to:

- Provide well-maintained sports and amenity facilities for local people.
- Ensure that the ground is clean and well-maintained.
- Ensure that it is safe to use at all times.
- Enhance the natural environment and the biodiversity value of the site.
- Develop and maintain links with the local community in order to consult on the management and maintenance of the Ground.

4. THE SITE AND ITS FACILITIES

4.1 Entrances and boundaries

The eastern boundary along Giddyhorn Lane consists of a narrow strip of trees and scrub with four gaps used as pedestrian entry points. The other boundaries are formed by fences of adjacent private gardens. There are several pedestrian entry points on both the eastern and western side of the Ground. One of them is a lockable double gate which gives vehicular access onto the site.

4.2 Roads, paths and car parks

There are no hard pathways or cycleways across the Ground.

There is a sizeable car park by the pavilion, with a crushed stone surface and speed bumps. A desire line leads from the car park down to a grass field lying at a lower level. A proper hard pedestrian path should be provided between the two.

4.3 Lighting

There is lighting in the car park.

4.4 Grass areas

The site is mainly amenity grass with some meadow areas, mainly in the upper, sloping part of the Ground.

4.5 Trees and other vegetation

Trees growing along Giddyhorn Lane probably are the remnants of a former field hedge and as such are of some historical value. The species are mainly hawthorn, ash and sycamore.

There is also a line of mature ash and sycamore trees running through the middle of the site.

A row of silver birches grows behind a ball-stopping net at the northern end of the site, providing screening and additional protection from flying footballs.

A *Cupressocyparis leylandii* hedgerow grows along two sides of the tennis courts.

4.6 Biodiversity assessment

The trees and scrub along Giddyhorn Lane are of considerable nature conservation value. From their composition and location it would appear that they are remnants of an old field boundary hedge. Both biodiversity and amenity value of the site could be enhanced by planting more trees, of native species, already present in the area, along Giddyhorne Lane and in other selected places.

The long grass areas have a potential to become floral meadows. The annual removal of grass cuttings off those areas will over the years result in the ground becoming poorer. This should encourage more non-grassy flowering plants to thrive and to provide more variety and colour in spring and summer. In turn, this would encourage more insects and other invertebrates to move into the meadow areas. This process could be speeded up by planting 'plugs' of meadow plants local to the area.

Snowdrops and native daffodils could be naturalised under the trees.

4.7 Provision of seating and bins

There are seats and a litter bin in the play area.

Dog litter bins are present on the site.

4.8 Signage

One sign pointing to tennis club facilities is visible in Poplar Grove but there are no signs related to the Recreation Ground. This should be rectified with an appropriate 'welcome' sign or information board giving information about the Ground and stating the council contact details and the relevant bylaws.

4.9 Provision of recreational facilities

The football pavilion has been partially converted to use as a pre-school nursery and has no public access.

On the flat lower field there is one full-size football pitch, with goal posts, in regular use by local clubs from beginning of September till the end of April. Ball-stopping net protects the neighbouring gardens.

The tennis courts with an accompanying wooden hut are leased from the council and maintained by a tennis club. Access to this facility is restricted to the club members.

A small play area contains a multiframe unit and 2 other pieces of apparatus. It is due for enhancement in 2006/07. Its location within the Ground may be changed.

5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Giddyhorne Lane Recreation Ground is owned and managed by Maidstone Borough Council. It is maintained on a day-to-day basis by the grounds contractor Maidstone Borough Services.

5.1 Cleanliness

Litter bins in the play area are inspected and emptied regularly. During the grass-cutting season litter is collected from the site prior to each cut. This includes the meadow areas.

Dog litter bins are emptied twice every week.

5.2 Safety and security

The site is fairly secluded although it is overlooked by private properties.

Visitors can report problems:

- general – to MBC parks hotline on 01622 602747
- anti-social behaviour – to the park's staff or to Community Safety Officer on 01622 602598
- any crime should be reported to the police.

5.3 Infrastructure maintenance

The play area is inspected by the grounds contractor regularly and any damage is made safe and rectified at the earliest opportunity.

The wooden goal-posts are provided for the football season by the Council and maintained by the grounds contractor. The ground in front of the goals is renovated each spring by cultivating and re-seeding with grass seed.

5.4 Horticultural management regimes

The grass areas are cut following the amenity regime, i.e. 15 cuts a year, the frequency of cuts depending on the weather and the speed of grass growth.

The meadow areas are cut each year in late summer and the cuttings are removed from the site.

The conifer hedge by the tennis courts is a responsibility of the Tennis Club and is trimmed once a year in late summer.

6. PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

Following site audits and a public consultation in summer 2005, a list of improvements has been drawn up. Most of this work will be carried out by a specialist landscape contractor between autumn 2006 and spring 2008. This is part of the Green Spaces Strategy work aimed at enhancing the quality of public green spaces.

The following projects are planned:

- Enlarge the play area and refurbish with better equipment.
- Build steps and/or ramped access from the car park to the lower field.
- Improve access from Giddyhorn Lane to the lower field following a 'desire line'.
- Provide seating and litter bins on upper field.
- Plant native trees and shrubs.
- Introduce clumps of native daffodils and snowdrops for spring colour.
- Install new information signs.

7. FUNDING

There are a number of sources of funding, both internal and external, for further improvements to the facilities and the maintenance regimes, which can be considered for this site.

Green Spaces Strategy – improvements to the value of £500,000 are being implemented in Maidstone's main green open spaces during 2005-2008.

Play Areas Strategy – funds have been allocated to improve the play facilities for children and teenagers within the council's parks and open spaces. The work commenced in 2005 and it includes refurbishment of existing play areas as well as new provision, mainly multi-use games areas and teen shelters.

Planning obligations – Section 106 agreements on new residential developments can generate funds to improve existing public green spaces directly related to those developments.

Big Lottery Breathing Spaces Programme – starting in summer 2006, aimed at community groups involved in creating and maintaining wildlife-friendly green spaces in their local area. Grants of £300-10,000 available to voluntary groups and to parish/town councils.

Awards for All – give grants towards projects aimed at improving quality of life of local communities. Grants of £500-5,000 are available to community groups, parish/town councils, schools and health bodies.

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (Environment Programme) – promotes environmental improvements which balance the needs of people and wildlife, especially those aiming to conserve 'hard-to-fund', or lower profile, UK native species and habitats under demonstrable threat of loss or decline in urban, rural or marine areas.

Safer and Stronger Communities government funding stream – is aimed at tackling crime and anti-social behaviour through improving the condition of streets and other public spaces.

Landfill Tax Credit Scheme – for projects within 10 miles of a landfill or extraction site, aimed at provision and maintenance of public amenities. Grants £250- 25,000.

9. RESULTS OF QUALITY AUDITS

Quality audits are carried out in parks and open spaces at regular intervals. Various attributes of each site are given points between 1 and 5, where 5 is the maximum score.

GIDDYHORN LANE RECREATION GROUND					
ATTRIBUTE	AUDIT DATE AND SCORE				
	January 2004	Mid 2004	2008	2010	
Main entrance	4	-			
Boundaries including hedges, gates etc	4	3			
Roads, paths, cycleways and access points	3	-			
Parking	3	3			
Availability of public transport	-	-			
Lighting	3	-			
Cleanliness	3	3			
Planted areas (trees, shrubs, floral displays)	2	2			
Grass areas	3	3			
Litter and dog litter bins	2	2			
Seats	5	2			
Toilets	none	-			
Health and safety	4	-			
Nature conservation value	3	-			
Access for disabled	-	-			
Information	-	-			
Sustainability	-	-			