

MAIDSTONE GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

improving our parks
and open spaces

PARKS AND RECREATION GROUNDS **MANAGEMENT PLANS**

PARK WOOD RECREATION GROUND

WARD: PARK WOOD

MP 0615



MARCH 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Management Plan for Park Wood Recreation Ground provides guidelines for the maintenance and the development of the site 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.

Park Wood Recreation Ground is located in the Park Wood area of Maidstone, approximately four and a half kilometres south of the town centre. It is situated on the edge of a built-up, mainly residential, area that has a high proportion of properties belonging to the Maidstone Housing Trust.

Because of its location, the ground can be used as an entrance point into the countryside and to the network of public footpaths available there.

Parkwood Recreation Ground is flat and has a fairly regular, nearly rectangular shape. It appears to have been part of parkland belonging to a former country estate. It contains a large number of mature trees, most of them English oaks.

The facilities include a play area, a sports wall and football pitches with a pavilion and a car park.

Disused bowling green occupies the north-east corner and a community hall (Heather House) is situated in the eastern part of the Ground.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There are a number of strategy and policy documents which are relevant to Park Wood 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 Park Wood 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, in pleasant surroundings, 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 the Ground as a gateway into the countryside through good signage, publicity and literature about the Ground and the countryside beyond.
- 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 shape of the site is approximately rectangular. The northern boundary abuts a housing estate of low apartment blocks and parking areas. The remaining boundaries run mainly along relatively quiet roads: Brishing Lane, Brishing Road and Bicknor Road.

The boundary line is demarcated by fences of residential properties and by tubular metal railing, with gaps for pedestrian access. It runs along the remaining boundary and around two sides of the car park.

The railing is badly damaged, or even missing, in some places and should be repaired and replaced where missing. The worn out ground where access gaps are provided should be repaired with concrete ‘pads’ or paving slabs.

The main vehicular access onto the ground is from the car park by the pavilion, through a lockable double gate.

4.2 Roads, paths, cycleways and parking

There is a path along Brishing Lane with a dead end at the boundary of the Recreation Ground. This path should be continued all the way to the junction with Brishing Road. It will form a pedestrian link between the residential area north of the Recreation Ground and the future housing development in Fairfield Quarry.

There are no footpaths or roads across the Recreation Ground.

Parking for the Recreation Ground is in the car park by the pavilion and in the surrounding residential streets.

4.3 Lighting

There is no lighting on the site.

4.4 Grass areas

The site is mainly amenity grass with meadow areas in the northern part and long grass allowed to grow amongst the trees in the south-western part.

4.5 Trees and other vegetation

There is a sizeable grove of mature trees, mainly English oak, growing in the southern part of the site.

A number of other mature trees, mainly English oak, are scattered throughout the rest of the site.

There are some mixed deciduous hedges on the boundary with Heather House and a mixture of native and ornamental shrubs survive around the disused bowling green.

4.6 Biodiversity assessment

The mature native trees are an excellent natural resource. Oak trees support a great variety of flora and fauna, from lichens and mosses to insects, birds and mammals.

There are opportunities to further enhance the woodland area with snowdrops and native daffodils, and maybe even native bluebells, if possible.

Long grass areas were introduced in 2006 in order to increase the number of plant and animal species. Meadow plants like white clover, meadow cranesbill, yarrow, plantain and scabious have already been recorded there.

The rest of the site is of fairly low value with regards to biodiversity. The annual removal of grass cuttings off the meadow 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.

4.7 Provision of seating and bins

There are some seats in the play area. More seats are needed around the rest of the site.

There are some litter bins in the play area. The litter bins elsewhere on the site may be sufficient in number but some of them are in need of repair or replacement.

There are several dog litter bins on the site.

4.8 Signage

There is a yellow MBC information board by the car park. This should be replaced with a more appropriate 'welcome' sign giving information about the Ground and stating the council contact details and the relevant bylaws.

4.9 Provision of recreational facilities

There is one junior and two senior football pitches, with goal posts, in regular use by local clubs from beginning of September till the end of April.

The play area, consisting of a large multiplay unit and several smaller pieces of apparatus is located near Bicknor Road. It is scheduled for enhancement after 2007.

An old tarmac tennis court nearby has been converted to a ball games area. A sports wall has been installed there. It currently has no ball-stop netting as the old one has been removed following vandalism. The tarmac surface is crumbling away in places, especially where small weeds are allowed to grow through it.

The bowling facilities ceased to be used following arson; the small bowling pavilion has been removed, except for its concrete base. The chainlink fence around the facility has been badly damaged and should be removed. The bowling ground remains in MBC's ownership and it may be developed into a sensory garden.

5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Park Wood Recreation Ground is owned and managed by Maidstone Borough Council. The day-to-day maintenance is undertaken by the grounds contractor Glendale.

5.1 Cleanliness

Litter bins in the play area are inspected and emptied at weekly intervals. 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 a week.

5.2 Safety and security

The site is quite open and visible from the adjoining streets. A degree of surveillance is also provided by the adjoining 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 regularly inspected by the grounds contractor and any damage is made safe and rectified at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, the play equipment is checked annually by an insurance company.

The wooden goal-posts are provided for the football season by MBC 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 open grass area is 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.

6. FORTHCOMING 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:

- Enhance the play area (work in 2008+)
- Remove remains of the fence around the disused bowling green.
- Develop the bowling green site into a sensory garden (possible community project).
- Repair the metal railing, and replace where necessary.
- Fit and/or repair the gates.

- Improve all the entrances.
- Provide more seats and bins.
- Install information signs.
- Build a hard path along Brishing Lane (if not in the Highways' plans).
- Consider planting a low linear shrubbery along the new path, on the side of the park.
- Plant trees of native species in the meadow areas.
- Introduce clumps of native daffodils and snowdrops for spring colour.
- There is potential for adding more meadow flowers in the form of 'plugs' to be planted in the autumn.

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.

PARK WOOD RECREATION GROUND					
ATTRIBUTE	AUDIT DATE AND SCORE				
	Mid 2004	November 2004	2008	2010	
Main entrance	2	3			
Boundaries including hedges, gates etc	5	4			
Roads, paths, cycleways and access points	-	2			
Parking	-	3			
Availability of public transport	-	-			
Lighting	-	none			
Cleanliness	3	4			
Planted areas (trees, shrubs, floral displays)	1	1			
Grass areas	3	4			
Litter and dog litter bins	5	3			
Seats	1	2			
Toilets	-	none			
Health and safety	-	3			
Nature conservation value	-	4			
Access for disabled	-	-			
Information	2	-			
Sustainability	-	-			