

MAIDSTONE GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

improving our parks
and open spaces

PARKS AND RECREATION GROUNDS

MANAGEMENT PLANS

SHEPWAY GREEN (CUMBERLAND GREEN)

WARD: SHEPWAY NORTH

MP 0618

MARCH 2006



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Management Plan for Shepway Green 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.

Shepway Green is situated in the Shepway area of Maidstone, approximately two and a half kilometres south-east of the town centre. It is surrounded by residential areas, with properties both in private ownership and owned by the Maidstone Housing Trust. The Green was created as a centrally placed, integral part of the Shepway estate.

Shepway Green serves mainly the local community. It contains a play area, two football pitches, a football pavilion, a car park and a community hall with a fenced outdoor space.

A row of trees and areas of meadow add variety to the landscape.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There are a number of Council strategy and policy documents which are relevant to Shepway Green:

- 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 Shepway Green 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 Green 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 boundaries of the Green are marked by a row of terrace houses and by Cumberland Avenue which runs in an arching way around most of the site.

The Green can be accessed at nearly any point on its perimeter.

4.2 Roads, paths, cycleways and parking

There are no footpaths or roads across the Green.

There is a sizeable car park near the pavilion, with a surface of broken stone and edged with concrete kerbing. This has a neglected look and visually lets the area down. Considering its urban setting, the car park should be resurfaced in tarmac.

4.3 Lighting

There is no lighting on the site.

4.4 Grass areas

The site is mainly amenity grass with meadow areas along the periphery.

4.5 Trees and other vegetation

A row of trees grows along the north-east sides of the Green. These are mainly horse chestnut with some rowan.

4.6 Biodiversity assessment

The existing trees are of some biodiversity value, providing food and shelter to birds and insects. The long grass areas may be attracting more birds, butterfly, grasshoppers etc.

The annual removal of grass cuttings off these areas of the site 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 introducing indigenous meadow flowers as well as snowdrops and native daffodils for their amenity value.

4.7 Provision of seats and bins

There are three seats in the play area. Three other seats have been placed along the boundary; their positions should be reviewed.

There are only two dog litter bins on the site.

4.8 Signage

In the car park there is a yellow board stating the Council ownership of the Green.

4.9 Provision of recreational facilities

The Green contains a pavilion with changing rooms. There are two full-size football pitches, with goal posts, in regular use by local clubs from beginning of September till the end of April.

Near the pavilion there is a building of the Shepway Youth and Community Centre.

A small play area with swings and springers has been placed at the other end of the Green, near the houses. It is scheduled for enhancement after 2007.

5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Shepway Green 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 weekly. 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 by a specialist contractor.

5.2 Safety and security

The site has very open character and it is overlooked by many residential 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.

Two CCTV cameras overlook the Green.

5.3 Infrastructure maintenance

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

Annual inspections are carried out 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.

The maintenance of the pavilion is the responsibility of the Property Services Section of the MBC.

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.

The trees on the Green were inspected in 2004 and the maintenance work identified as high priority has been carried out. Additionally, in response to complaints from the public, trees are assessed by a Tree Officer and work is scheduled as required. In the autumn 2006 a Tree Management Plan will be published, with the adopted routines and methods of response to call-outs.

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:

- Resurface the car park with tarmac and mark parking bays.
- Provide more seats and bins in suitable places.
- Install information signs.
- Enhance the play area (year 2008+)
- Plant native and semi-native trees along the periphery of the Green.
- Introduce clumps of native daffodils and snowdrops for spring colour.

- Consider adding more meadow flowers in the form of 'plugs'.

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.

Esme 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.

SHEPWAY GREEN

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