

MAIDSTONE GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

improving our parks
and open spaces

PARKS AND RECREATION GROUNDS

MANAGEMENT PLANS

STEVENSWOOD OPEN SPACE

WARD: SHEPWAY SOUTH

MP 0621

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 Stevenswood Open Space 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.

Stevenswood Open Space is situated in the Shepway South area of Maidstone, close to the corner of Sutton Road and Willington Street. It is a relatively small triangular piece of land surrounded by the back gardens of private properties.

This is a quiet local open space with a small play area, also used for dog exercising and informal games.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCIL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There are a number of Council strategy and policy documents which are relevant to Stevenswood Open Space.

- 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 Stevenswood Open Space is:

“To create and maintain a green open space which provides opportunities for recreation and quiet contemplation for local residents.”

3.2 The key objectives for the site are to:

- Ensure that the site and its facilities are clean and well-maintained.

- Ensure that it is safe to use at all times.
- Develop and maintain links with the local community in order to consult on the management and maintenance of the site.

4. THE SITE AND ITS FACILITIES

4.1 Entrances and boundaries

The fences of the properties to the north of the site form its northern boundary.

The south side has a uniform solid fence which is made up of slatted concrete sheets between concrete posts.

Two gaps between the properties are used as entrances to the site from the streets. The Sutton Road entrance has a defunct gate which should be removed and the entrance refurbished. This entrance gets very muddy in winter and would benefit from a hard path.

4.2 Roads, paths, cycleways and car parks

There are no paths on the site and no parking related to this site.

4.3 Lighting

There is no lighting on the site.

4.4 Grass areas

The whole of the area has is a uniform cover of amenity grass.

4.5 Trees and other vegetation

There is a small group of medium size trees at the western end of the site.

4.6 Biodiversity assessment

The site itself is of fairly low value with regards to natural habitats, except for the few medium size trees. There is a variety of trees, shrubs etc. in the surrounding gardens and the site itself could be enhanced by planting a small number of native trees near the play area.

4.7 Provision of seats and bins

There are seats and litter bins in the play area only.

4.8 Signage

There are no directional and information signs on the site. An information board should be provided giving the council contact details and stating the bylaws.

4.9 Provision of recreational and other facilities

The only recreational facility on this site is a small play area. It is the only facility in the neighbourhood and it is scheduled for improvement in 2007/08.

There is some space for informal games on the grass.

5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Stevenswood Open Space 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 emptied weekly. During the grass-cutting season litter is collected from the site prior to each cut.

Dog litter bins are emptied twice a week by a specialist contractor.

5.2 Safety and security

The site is quite secluded and difficult to see from the nearby streets.

A degree of surveillance is provided from the surrounding 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.

5.4 Horticultural management regimes

The grass area is mown following the amenity regime, i.e. 15 cuts a year, the frequency of cuts depending on the weather and the speed of grass growth.

6. PLANNED FURTHER 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:

- Provide a hard path from Sutton Road.
- Refurbish the Sutton Road entrance.
- Upgrade the play area.
- Plant a small number of trees.
- Provide information boards by the entrances..

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.

STEVENSWOOD OPEN SPACE					
ATTRIBUTE	AUDIT DATE AND SCORE				
	2004	Spring 2005	2008	2010	
Main entrance	-	-			
Boundaries including hedges, gates etc	-	4			
Roads, paths, cycleways and access points	-	-			
Parking	-	1			
Availability of public transport	-	-			
Lighting	-	-			
Cleanliness	2	2			
Planted areas (trees, shrubs, floral displays)	-	-			
Grass areas	3	2			
Litter and dog litter bins	4	1			
Seats	4	3			
Toilets	-	-			
Health and safety	-	4			
Nature conservation value	-	-			
Access for disabled	-	-			
Information	-	-			
Sustainability	-	-			