

Climate Change, Leisure and Housing Committee
Wednesday, 16 October 2024

PART I

South Oxhey Playing Fields Management Plan 2024-2029

ADE

1 Summary

- 1.1 New five-year management plan has been developed for South Oxhey Playing Fields in South Oxhey.
- 1.2 The new plan contains management actions over the next five years from financial year 2024/25 until 2028/29. The detailed actions relate to grassland, wildflower and woodland improvements for biodiversity and improvements to public access and signage.
- 1.3 Officers are recommending that these plans are approved by the Climate Change, Leisure and Housing committee and adopted by the Council. Should the plans be approved, Officers will seek to implement the actions within the plans over the next five years. Work will be completed within existing budgets or subject to external funding.

2 Details

2.1 Plan development process

- 2.1.1 The plans were developed and produced by Countryside Management Service (CMS) part of Hertfordshire County Council, who are commissioned by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) to assist with the management of TRDC Open Spaces.
- 2.1.2 Public consultation on the management plans was carried out in two stages. An initial period of consultation was held to encourage residents, site users, Councillors and other interested parties to share ideas and thoughts on the management of the woodlands over the next five years.
- 2.1.3 Once draft plans had been completed, a second period of consultation was held to enable stakeholders to comment on draft versions of the plans. Minor amendments were made to the plans to produce the final version.

2.2 Consultation Process

- 2.2.1 The initial consultation was held for 4 weeks in October and November 2023. During this period a guided walk was held by CMS on the 27 October 2023.
- 2.2.2 Public and stakeholder consultation, on the draft management plan, took place in May 2024.
- 2.2.3 A total of 10 responses were received as feedback to the public consultation process. These included residents, Herts & Middlesex Butterfly Conservation, Councillors and Park Run. Some of the feedback received included;

- The improvements promoting a healthy and diverse woodland and grassland habitats are welcomed and will have a beneficial impact on the biodiversity of the area, in particular thinning the dense tree stands and re-introducing coppicing will improve the number of woodland species.
- Establishment of wild flower meadow areas and the wildflower maze will also be beneficial for pollinators and caterpillar food plants.
- The lower section of the playing field should be kept for pitch sports, as this is the flattest part and keeps them one area.
- Some of waymarker signs need replacing/maintenance.

2.3 Aim and Objectives

2.3.1 The aim and objective of the management plan is to conserve and enhance the semi-natural character of the site – promoting healthy and diverse woodland and grassland habitats – and maintain the site as a safe and enjoyable place to visit for all members of the local community.

2.3.2 The key detailed actions relate to grassland, wildflower and woodland improvements for biodiversity and improvements to public access and signage, these include;

- Removal/replacement of the main welcome sign to the site from Green Lane
- Design and establish a wildflower maze
- Woodland thinning, coppicing and planting
- Rough and Conservation Grassland management as per the specifications

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The officer recommendation is that the management plan for South Oxhey Playing Fields is formally adopted by the Council.

3.2 Officers will then begin to implement the actions within the plans, subject to available funding where necessary.

3.3 The Management Plan is based on the current management prescriptions for South Oxhey Playing Fields. Further changes may need to be made following the determination of the Council's application to award South Oxhey Playing Fields Village Green Status.

3.4 If the plans are not approved by the committee, maintenance of the site will continue at a minimum level, but no additional improvements for biodiversity or public access will be undertaken.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policies are the Tree Strategy agreed in 2022 and Nature Recovery Strategy agreed in 2023.

4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following objectives within the Corporate Framework 2023 – 2026:

- Expand our position as a great place to do business
- Support and enable sustainable communities

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan includes an annual budget to maintain 13 sites with management plans, including the management of South Oxhey Playing Fields. This is not sufficient to deliver the actions planned within the Management Plan as such the delivery of projects will be dependent on securing external funding which will need to be obtained in advance of projects proceeding.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 All proposed works and equipment will be tendered within the Council's constitution and Contract Procedure Rules, where required.

6.2 The preparation of this plan is being undertaken in order to support compliance with the Council's statutory obligations and its Corporate Framework and Priorities.

6.3 The Council has a duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity under S40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This does not mean that the duty must be given greater weight than other matters and the Management Plan recommendations that are being presented within this report satisfy the duty, which is for the Council to 'have regard' when it exercises its functions.

6.4 Subject to the receipt of external funding, under the Council Constitution (as outlined in part 3, section 4.1.3 of the Council Constitution), Committee approval is required to enter into any contract above the value of £25,000.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

7.1 An Impact Assessment has been completed for these Management Plans.

7.2 Overall the new Management plan should have a positive impact on the accessibility of the site.

7.3 Funding will need to be sourced in order to make these improvements.

8 Staffing Implications

8.1 Delivering the Management Plan project and objectives as well as securing external funding in order to deliver these will be led by the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service.

8.2 In particular, it will require the time of the Leisure Assets Manager and the Principal Trees and Woodlands Officer.

8.3 Officers will also be working collaboratively and will require support and input from Officers in other services, including Regulatory Services, Property Services, Environmental Protection, Community Partnerships, Finance and Legal.

9 Environmental Implications

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.00
Travel	3.50
Goods and Consumption	4.00
Ecology	4.00
Adaptation	3.50
Engagement and Influence	4.00
Total Overall Average Score	3.7

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 None Specific.

11 Public Health implications

11.1 Accessible, well-maintained parks and open spaces have never been more vital to the health and wellbeing of individuals. Being able to connect with wildlife has a positive impact on both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals.

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

12.1 None specific.

13 Communications and Website Implications

13.1 The website will be kept updated with any relevant changes to the site, following the adoption and ongoing delivery of the Management Plan.

13.2 Good news stories will be circulated and shared via the Communications team, including across a range of social media channels.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

14.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Leisure & Natural Infrastructure service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Actions within the Management Plans are not implemented	Reputational damage to the Council	Implementation of the plans is monitored and reported	* Tolerate	4

due to a lack of resources		to hi-light any issues at an early stage		
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14.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- ▼ Remote	Low	High	Very High	Very High
	4	8	12	16
	Low	Medium	High	Very High
	3	6	9	12
	Low	Low	Medium	High
	2	4	6	8
	Low	Low	Low	Low
	1	2	3	4
	Impact			
	Low	-----▶		Unacceptable

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

14.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

15 Recommendation

15.1 That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee:

15.2 Adopt the new five year Management Plan for South Oxhey Playing Fields.

- 15.3 Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans.

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Data Quality

Data sources:

Public Consultation

Data checked by:

Andrew Taylor – Projects Officer, Countryside Management Service (CMS)

Data rating: Tick

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: South Oxhey Playing Fields Greenspace Action Plan 2024 - 2029