Milton Keynes Council

Leon Recreation Ground Management Plan 2009-2016

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/parks-and-open-space/
Management Plan
Leon Recreational Ground

Figure 1. Friends of Leon Recreation Ground celebrate raising the Green Flag.
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1. Forward
The Leon Recreation Ground Management and Development Plan has been produced in order to set out a vision for the grounds. The plan includes information about the local context, history, nature and make up of the site. It includes the current and desired landscape maintenance standards to be achieved and the regime required to manage the grounds and related issues as well as the future plans for the ongoing development of the grounds and its place within the community.

This plan has been prepared with the input of Milton Keynes Council staff, particularly in the Neighbourhood Management and Community Liaison departments as well as Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council, and local residents, both individually and through the local Neighbourhood Action Group. The plan is designed to ensure a coordinated approach so that future development is in line with Milton Keynes Council policies to preserve and enhance the flora and fauna and meets the aspirations of the local community. In addition, the plan informs the local community, user groups, contractors and any one else with an interest in the management, maintenance and future development issues.

The plan has been guided by both Green Flag advice and CABE Space (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) guidelines for excellence in design and management of parks.

2. Introduction
Leon Recreational Ground is a large formal area of just over 4.5 hectares. It is located within the Parish of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford. The area was originally parkland owned by the Diocese of Oxford.

Bletchley is not deficient in terms of the quantity of open space of recreational value and therefore it is important that facilities in the area compliment each other, rather than duplicate provision.

Leon Recreational Ground is a local park in the Milton Keynes hierarchy of parks and open space and provides a range of outdoor recreational pursuits which accommodate:

- A contribution to landscape structure.
- Sufficient mown grassed area to provide for informal recreational use.
- Equipped play provision including skate ramps.
- Some youth provision.
- Fitness Equipment
- Areas to promote wildlife.
- Mature woodland trees.

The grounds have links with the Fenny Stratford Cemetery, Knowles Schools and other neighbourhood open spaces within Bletchley. These are accessible by visitors along the neighbourhood and interlinking pathways.
3. History & Descriptions of the Local Area

Bletchley (including Fenny Stratford and Water Eaton)


"Fenny Stratford is an attractive old town whose later growth is due to road transport; first there were the coaches on Watling Street, then the barges on the Grand Junction Canal. It is now loud with Rugby-London lorries." [Murray's Buckinghamshire Architectural Guide. Pub 1948]

Leon Recreation Ground Early History

Leon Recreation ground was initiated as a joint project between the Urban District Council of Fenny Stratford and the local landowner, Samuel H. Leon in 1896, with (as he was then) Mr Leon contributing half the cost.

Figure 2 Leon Recreation Ground in 1900

A minute from Fenny Stratford Urban District Council for 22 February 1898 reads:— “a letter was read from Mr Henry P Cobb, Solicitor to Herbert Samuel Leon Esquire of Bletchley Park, enclosing deed of gift of a piece of land forming until recently part of the Glebe of the Rectory and Parish Church of Bletchley, situated in the parish of Fenny Stratford containing by admeasurement nine acres, two rods and twenty three perches, or thereabouts, together with a path way leading to Bletchley Road [now Queensway] for the purpose of a recreation ground”

The park was opened on the 7th August 1899 as “The Pleasure Ground” or Fenny Stratford Recreation Ground. The Fenny Stratford Town Council soon got to work following initial levelling installing a path from the NE to SW corner of the park, providing seats and planting over 50 Poplar, Lime and Chestnut trees. The Poplars were replaced some 12 years later with Sycamores due to an unknown disease. The recreation ground was used for sport from 1900 with cricket matches, football, hockey and athletics meetings. As at this time there
were no houses on Leon Avenue or Eaton Road and the ground was fenced around at a cost of £83. A cycle track is also mentioned in the council minutes from 1901, reserved for the exclusive use by cyclists on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, though there is no indication of its location in the park. A Tennis court and its associated planting was also an early addition.

1901 also saw the installation of swings on the recreation ground, an indication of how popular they were is shown in the council minutes as the ropes required renewal after only three months. They were replaced by chain the following year.

The recreation ground also experienced its share of problems during its early years. A urinal and screens installed in 1901 was burnt down by “young boys” in July 1902. The swings were removed each evening in the summer of 1902 due to “rough treatment by young men and women”. Damage to the tennis lawn by seven individuals, named in the council minutes, resulted in their summons, a written apology and the payment of costs for repairs.

Funds were raised in 1904 for the installation of a bandstand at a cost of £29 2 shillings. Local bands from Bletchley played regularly on Wednesdays and Sunday evenings. The bandstand and recreation ground also provided a site for political meetings and meetings of local union bodies such as the Amalgamated Society of Railway Workers.

Maintenance of the ground from its opening and up till 1929 was tendered annually to local sheep farmers for grazing with the provision that “the area around the swings and bandstand be kept clean”.

Due to the development for housing in Leon Avenue and Eaton Avenue and the extension to the cemetery in 1912, the boundaries were straightened and 7 small trees moved to allow for the installation of a new fence between the extended cemetery and the Rec.

Following an accident in 1929, the swings were replaced and signs erected to advise that they were for the use of children only. At this time, an additional
entrance, now adjacent to the health centre was negotiated and purchased and the path from Eaton Avenue widened. A sand pit was extended in 1930 and then re-built in 1931 along with the installation of the drinking fountain, which was officially opened on 1st May.

Considerable damage was done to the Bandstand in March 1932 and it was resolved to demolish the structure. Following the demolition of the bandstand, an “Ocean Wave” play structure was installed, followed by its first accident a month later. Further play equipment was added in 1936 with a slide and whirling platform.

With the development of the Central Gardens, later to become the site for the Bletchley Leisure Centre, a way of distinguishing between the two recreation grounds was needed. It was therefore in 1937 that the area was formally named as Leon Recreation Ground.

During WWII, the Rec. was used again for band concerts, sports as well as the “Stay-at-Home” holiday programme, with activities through the summer months.

1950 saw the first Midsummer Fair on the site, which has recently been reinitiated by the town council.

Proposals in the late 1950’s to give the Rec. to the school for use as their playing fields was strongly opposed locally as this would have restricted local access and went against the spirit of the donation of the land from the Leon family.

As such, Leon Recreation Ground remained in the control of the Bletchley U.D.C. up until April 1974 when it came under the control of Milton Keynes council. This was celebrated with a large fireworks display on 31st March 1974 on the Recreation ground.

The grounds are used by the community on a number of occasions throughout the year. During the Easter and Summer school holidays Bletchley & Fenny
Stratford Town Council along with Milton Keynes Council Play Association set up activities for 5 to 13 year olds to enjoy.

Marshall M K Lions who are a professional basketball team based in Milton Keynes and who play in the British Basketball League hold coaching sessions within the grounds for local youngsters during the summer holidays.

A fete is held on the nearest Sunday to Midsummer Day on an annual basis where locals set up stalls and local groups put on displays.

The Fenny Stratford Poppers also use the Park annually on 11th November to celebrate St Martins Day (nothing to do with Armistice Day) with the firing of small cannon.

![Leon Recreation Ground 2009](image)

**Figure 5.** Aerial view of Leon Recreational Ground 2009.

In the above image, the grounds have the Cemetery to the east, 1930’s houses to the south and west and Knowles School with playing fields leading to the main shopping centre in the North. The homes surrounding the grounds are mainly owner-occupied. The main vehicular access is off Queensway with PCT owned premises on the east of the driveway. Queensway which runs east-west to the north of the park is a mixture of businesses, public houses and local offices opening into the main shopping complex which boasts a Saturday market.

4. Location of Leon Recreational Ground and Site Context

Leon Recreational Ground is within the Bletchley/Milton Keynes urban area. Milton Keynes is nearby with the main shopping centres only 5 miles away;
which Bletchley have recognised and recently revamped their main shopping area.

The site is the largest open space within walking distance of the shopping area. The site is bordered by Fenny Stratford Cemetery to the east, Eaton Avenue to the south and Leon Avenue to the west and is overlooked by residences and their back gardens, some of which have access via back gates into the park area. The public motor vehicle access is via Queensway, which also serves the PCT building. This access has bollards at the parks entrance only allowing authorised vehicles into the park. There are access pathways for pedestrians via footpaths at 5 locations around the perimeter.

![Figure 6. Layout of Leon Park (See Appendix 1)](image)

**Legend**
- Shrub bed
- Amenity grass
- Play areas
- Bench
- Tree

Milton Keynes Council now runs the parks and open spaces within the borough. Leon Recreational Ground is one of approximately 160 parks varying in size and location.
5. Leon Recreational Ground Vision Statement

In 2005 a service charter was created to outline Milton Keynes Council's commitment to parks and open spaces. The charter sets out the standards the public should expect and the services the council provides:

- Attractive open spaces that encourage pride in locality.
  - Provide information on and promote parks and open spaces as a community resource.
  - Assess parks and open spaces to ensure equal access for all members of the community.
  - Encourage the involvement of members of the community, who represent as many green space users as possible, in the service.

- Functional parks & open spaces that provide opportunities for recreation.
  - Manage and inspect parks and open spaces on a programmed basis, against national standards, to ensure that they are clean, well maintained, healthy, safe and secure places for all members of the public to use.

- Sustainable parks and open spaces for current and future generations in a modern growing city.
  - Conserve natural features, flora and fauna and structural features of merit.
  - Maintain the park to available resources, using environmentally sound methods, relying on best practises available to current knowledge.

6. Aims and Purposes of the Site

Milton Keynes Council recognises that parks and green spaces make a valuable contribution towards its priorities of economic generation and prosperity, social inclusion and environmental protection. These aspirations are borne out in:

- **The Community Strategy** “Our handbook for change” 2004 – 2034
  - Conserve the greenness of Milton Keynes
  - Well-designed green spaces, of a suitable size and in the right location
  - Local identity / sense of place

- **Waste Strategy (Approved 20/12/05)**
  - The Council will install recycling facilities in all Council buildings for the recycling of paper and other materials.
  - The Council will encourage and educate to minimise waste and continue to promote waste minimisation in its activities.

- **Council Priorities 2012-16**
  - Activities and Facilities for Younger People.
  - Neighbourhood Regeneration.
• Maintain protect and enhance the open spaces and Country parks.

**Capital Strategy 2010/11 – 2014/15**

o Contributes to the community vision, the community strategy and the council’s vision, values, strategic objectives and council priorities.

**Milton Keynes Local Area Agreement - Closing the Gap**

o Empower local people to have a greater influence over local decision-making.

o Increase the number of people volunteering.

**Milton Keynes Open Space Strategy 2007-2027**

o The Strategy’s vision is to achieve:  
  “The best possible standard of provision, integration and quality of accessible open space within the Borough of Milton Keynes, serving the needs of the growing Milton Keynes community, ensuring that local people are involved and that open space is valued by all and managed in a sustainable manner for future generations”.

**Public Art Strategy 2010-2014**

o To promote and build on the public arts collection, interpreting and caring for it for future generations.

o To empower and involve communities in public art development to enhance and celebrate sense of place.

**Local Plan**

o See appendix 7

6.1 Local Plan

The local plan sets out the requirements of planning to meet the needs of the community. The emphasis of Policy L3 and the standards outlined below is on meeting the specific local needs in a flexible manner, providing a wide range of quality facilities.

“A fixed proportion of development sites be reserved for open space.” They may need to fulfil more than just an area for recreation – e.g. on aesthetic or nature conservation grounds.

The strategic plan for provision identifies that Leon Recreational Ground should offer the following range of quality open space facilities to local households within an approximately a 500-metre radius:

• Large open area of grassland to accommodate informal recreation
• Form part of the wildlife corridor
• Children’s play area (Neighbourhood level provision)
• Fitness Equipment
• Teenage provision
• Community Events Area
• Areas of wildlife interest
Leon Recreational Ground provides the local community with an area of aesthetically pleasing naturalised open space; it offers free access with opportunities to pursue a range of outdoor leisure and social activities. There are provisions for local people of all ages and levels to have the ability to meet, walk, sit, play and enjoy.
7. Community

The 2012 Milton Keynes Social Atlas provides a comprehensive update of demographic information for Milton Keynes.

The grounds offer numerous health benefits to the local community. Trees act to absorb noise and pollution from the air. Open spaces provide locations for informal play and sport. The provision of modular play equipment allows younger members of the community to develop mobility and social skills, and the recent installation of the fitness equipment provides substantial health benefits to all users of the grounds. The peaceful surroundings provide an area which helps to reduce stress through interaction with the natural world. Many of the users from the locality are fortunate in that they can access the grounds without having to cross roads.

Figure 7. Fenny Stratford Social Atlas 2012 analysis. Part of the Social Atlas for Milton Keynes 2012

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Figure 8. Wild flower meadow.

7.1 Report a Problem?
The Council Web pages allow members of the public to report problems directly over the net. User-friendly interactive graphics allow the user to access information about council services and report problems in their area. Each scene contains a number of themed “hot spot” areas, which are “doorways” to service menus.

http://www.mkweb.co.uk/street-care/

The themes covered in the Street Scene interactive graphic include:

- Transport, Highway Repair, Pavement Maintenance, Waste and Recycling, Residential, Retail, Street Lighting, Drainage, Crossings and Road Safety, Trees and Shrub Maintenance and Animals on Highways,

Figure 9. Street Scene website graphic

The public are also able to report a problem via the Environmental Services Helpline on (01908) 252592. Calls are logged and reports are collated highlighting problem areas for particular landscape types, vandalism etc.

The Neighbourhood Engagement Officer receives a report of the enquiry via the Confirm system. The officer investigates each query, responds to the customer, instigates remedial action if required, and records the outcome on the system. Appendix 8 includes a sample report.

Confirm records details of all enquiries received and is the primary tool used for data gathering and trend analysis. The system records information from residents normally inputted by the Milton Keynes Council Help desk. Officers can then draw all the information out including customer details making it easier
to give customers/residents updates. This also provides an audit trail for all parties.

During 2010-11, six enquiries were received by Milton Keynes council in relation to this park, a reduction from the seven received in the period 2009-10. Two of these were related to the management of the play areas (reporting damaged equipment or litter). One concerned grass cutting. Four were regarding tree related management (trees obstructing satellite signals, fallen or damaged limbs). Policies regarding the management of trees in general in Milton Keynes can be found on the Parks and Open Spaces website

http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/parks-and-open-space/

7.2 Involvement
The council is committed to involving the local community and providing opportunities for local people to participate and feed in to the management decision-making process including:

- Members of the public are provided with opportunities to feedback through the Parish council and residents association.

7.3 Community Outreach
Although many local people already use the grounds, the aim of the various initiatives is to widen the appeal. Talks are offered to local groups, as are guided walks on ecological themes. By working with other agencies in the area it has been possible to engage young people through the holiday play schemes, Junior Rangers and schools.

Safer Communities wardens work in schools to build a dialogue with young people. This is just one aspect of helping youngsters in Milton Keynes understand how Environment services work, and more to the point how young people can be involved.

The wardens at Milton Keynes Council help enable groups at schools to:

- Identify problems like graffiti and vandalism in their area.
- Utilise the STREETCARE website so that youngsters and their families can report problems at any time.
- Shows how these problems are resolved.

This simple exercise not only helps youngsters to take control of their environment but also provides a vehicle for literacy, IT and citizenship within the schools’ programmes.

7.4 Parish Liaison
A close working relationship with the parish is fostered through regular meetings and the support of the Council’s own parish partnership department. The park is visited regularly by Landscape staff, contractors and members of the local Council to ensure the site meets the needs of the local community.
Through the Parish Liaison Team, grants are made available for the community to improve their localities. Other support such as wider funding advice and community development is also facilitated.

The landscape team also works closely with the Safer Communities team to deal with such issues as fly tipping and dog fouling and the parish project officer on other specific issues.

**Figure 10.** Pathways through mature trees.

**8. Management Objectives**

**8.1 Primary Objectives**

To provide a safe and non-intimidating recreational public open space accessible to all sections of the local community.

To provide a facility which gives the local community a better understanding of the environment and the natural world around them, through formal and informal education opportunities.

To protect, maintain and enhance the wildlife and habitat value of the grounds:

- *For visitors, this means more naturalistic treatment of vegetation:*
  - More sensitive treatment of “edges” which allows features to “flow into” one another, avoiding the sharp disjunction caused by, for example, spraying round shrub beds or tree bottoms.
  - Varying grass heights can reinforce the design of a park by linking features and be used to draw the eye.
• Isolated trees become a “copse” by allowing grass to grow beneath them, emphasising their location and position within the landscape or breaking up large expanses.

- **For visitors, a pleasant, safe-feeling, welcoming environment**
  - As maintenance is relaxed in some aspects, it is all the more important to create a welcoming environment and avoid any impression of neglect.
  - Paths should be unobstructed, with good sightlines. Allowing the sun into paths attracts wildlife such as butterflies and dragonflies, especially if there is room for wild flowers. It allows unmade paths to dry out and remain clear of debris.

### 8.2 Secondary Objectives

To maximise co-operation between different user groups and arrange compatible uses of the grounds e.g. hosting and promotion of local community events.

To encourage people to use the resources of the grounds by prompting and improving access links to the bordering estates and local community providing leisure facilities, walks, features of interest, and resting places around the grounds.

To provide opportunities for interested volunteer groups to involve themselves in practical management work and development of skills under appropriate supervision.

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**Figure 11** Leon Recreation Ground in the early 1900’s
8.3 Measuring Performance.

Milton Keynes council is independently inspected as part of the CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) and Communities and Local Government Place Survey, undertaken across all local authority areas.

Full details of Milton Keynes performance can be found on the Oneplace website at:

http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk

Related highlights from the 2009-10 Milton Keynes assessment include:

- **Percentage of residents who have used parks and open spaces at any time within the last six months** - In the top 5% nationally.

- **Percentage of residents who have used parks and open spaces at any time within the last year** – In the top 5 councils nationally.

- **N199 Children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas** – Above the national average.

- **Percentage of residents who identify parks and open spaces as something important in making somewhere a good place to live** – In the top 5% nationally.

- **Percentage of residents who think local public services are working to make the area cleaner and greener** - Above the national average.

- **NI 197 Improved local biodiversity - proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented** - Above the national average.

- **NI 195a Improved street and environmental cleanliness - levels of litter** – In the best third nationally.
9. Ecology

9.1 Existing Situation

9.1.1 Habitats within the Grounds

The existing habitat structure, shown in Appendix 1 is extremely simple, as follows:

a) Trees and shrubs

The grounds are well-endowed with mature trees (mainly Tilia) following the footpaths through the grounds mainly planted in the 1930’s

The trees have recently been crown pruned, allowing a less dark aspect for footpath users.

The shrub belts were planted using mainly formal shrubs, Ligustrum, various Shrub roses, Laurels etc. These are now encouraged to grow informally, with an annual trim

Along the driveway from the Queensway entrance are planted more Ligustrum (common and golden), and Laurel. These are planted between Lawsons Cypress (Chamaecyparis lawsoniana). The structure is generally open but with dense conifer foliage offering some nest cover to common birds e.g. Blackbird, Thrush, and Robin etc.

Ground-flora is largely absent, but occasional belts of Narcissus have recently been planted.

Throughout the grounds, there are odd trees with some more mature shrubs planted near by.

b) Amenity grass swards

The entire grass area is a fertile, sown amenity sward of mixed grasses and clover with few other herbs.

c) Soils

The Geological Survey shows the site having freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils.

9.1.2 Surrounding habitats

The grounds are surrounded by well established homes, mainly three to four bedroom houses mostly with long gardens and the Fenny Stratford cemetery, which gives the grounds a square/rectangular appearance. Leon Avenue has houses that directly back on to the grounds and the entrance roadway from Queensway; Eaton Avenue has back gardens abutting the grounds and the cemetery. The eastern boundary of the grounds runs along side the cemetery with a path and gateway for pedestrians to walk through, indeed many residents...
who live on the other side of Manor Road (a main road running North to South, connecting Fenny Stratford and Water Eaton) use this walkway to reach the Bletchley town centre and its abundance of shops.

The Northern boundary of the grounds is shared with the Knowles School, where hopefully opportunities will be found for the children to be involved with future voluntary activities within the grounds. Eg bulb, tree shrub planting etc.

9.1.3 **Protected or notable species**

Although not yet surveyed, the following animals may use the grounds or its surroundings. No protected plants occur in Milton Keynes.

   a) **Bats (all UK species and any roost sites protected)**

There are a many potential roost-sites within the grounds; most trees have the potential for roosts with suitable cavities. The nearby Cemetery Chapel is likely to be the home of Pipistrelle and Brown long eared bats.

![Figure 12. Chapel in nearby Fenny Stratford Cemetery.](image)
b) **Badger (animals and setts protected) and other mammals**

Although setts (burrows) are unlikely, badgers are still in the area and could be foraging in the grounds and adjacent cemetery.

Fox and Muntjac deer are likely to occur. Grey squirrel is abundant, and probably suppresses bird breeding.

c) **Reptiles (protected against deliberate killing or injuring)**

There is a small chance of grass snake or even common lizard, but suitable habitat hardly exists.

d) **Breeding birds (nests, eggs and young protected)**

Trees, hedges and shrub-beds offer nest-sites for e.g. Pigeons Blackbird, Tits Thrushes Robins etc.

Grey squirrels, cats, crows (incl. Jays & Magpie) and possibly Great Spotted Woodpecker are likely to seriously depress breeding by other birds.

Several common birds are “Red” or “Amber”-listed by the conservation bodies due to rapid declines, or are priority species in Biodiversity Action Plans¹. Those known or likely to occur here include House sparrow, Starling, Song Thrush, Bullfinch, Dunnock and Green Woodpecker.

e) **Insects**

The encapsulated hedgerows including a rare holly hedge around the cemetery along with a recently established wildflower meadow offer a diverse and beneficial environment. Minimisation of herbicide use to allow the growth of food sources for adult and larval stages (such as Stinging Nettles and Thistles). Adjoining gardens offer a source of non-native food plants. Allowing dead wood to lie where it is safe to do so provides habitat for woodlice.

9.1.4 **Summary evaluation**

The existing wildlife value of the grounds is probably moderate, and potentially only MODERATE for the following reasons:

- There are no woodland belts the mature trees are planted mainly adjacent to footpaths, there appears to be no exotic species.

- Grass is exclusively² fertile perennial rye-grass sward of no botanic interest

² Except 0.08 ha recently wild-flower seeded
• There are no ponds and ditches, although some adjoining household gardens have ornamental ponds so frogs, toads etc may well thrive in the grounds damper areas especially along fence lines and under shrubs hedges etc.

• The existing management regimes depends on close-mowing throughout and, after any spring bulbs or blossom have died down; nectar sources and floral colour are mainly non-existent.

• Pets and Grey squirrels are encouraged by nearby housing

• Public usage, e.g. for dog-walking or informal and formal play, causes heavy disturbance

More positively:

• Surrounding houses and gardens may provide nesting, roosting or feeding for birds or bats, and nectar sources for insects, complementing habitats in the grounds.

• The formally planted trees may provide some food for birds and sheltered foraging or commuting corridors for bats

• Existing deficiencies offer clear scope for enhancements with potential to engage local residents

• The large number of residents immediately surrounding the grounds and Knowles School provides a pool of potential enthusiasts.

9.2 Proposals

9.2.1 Management changes

- Diversify mowing regimes. With no existing sward diversity, the benefits would be largely aesthetic; breaking up large expanses of grass, pulling together fragmented islands of planting and providing a transition at woodland “edges”. However, at least two cuts per year are required to prevent the fertile perennial rye-grass sward looking merely unkempt. Further wild-flower seeding is a desirable alternative.

- Coppicing (“stooling”) rather than profile pruning where shrub growth hems in paths. Ideally all paths should have 1m mown or trimmed verges free of overhanging woody growth.

9.2.2 Wildlife enhancements

Possible enhancements include:

- Bulb-planting, in grassland or woodland, has great social value and can be used to justify reduced mowing frequencies. Cost/unit area can be high.
• Planting wildlife-friendly (flowering or fruiting) shrubs, either native species along woodland edges, or exotics e.g. Buddleias nearer houses.

• Bird or bat boxes, made in the community. The area could absorb many of these.

• Bird-feeding and observation area.

9.2.3 Wildlife surveys suitable for volunteers

• Visual monitoring of bird & bat-boxes.

• Recording birds at feeding area or bird-seeded strip. A pretext for public bird-walks or popular “garden bird” surveys may provide a lead in.

• Walking checks for bat roosts in adjacent housing and bat flight activity in the grounds (requires basic training and electronic bat detectors).

• Butterfly census to monitor benefits of wild-flower seeding and management changes (needs basic training).

9.2.4 Public events

The foregoing projects suggest a range of public events including:

• Bird and bat box making
• Tree and shrub planting
• Bulb-planting in grass.
• Bird feeding station construction
• Bird walk or observation training
• Bat walk or observation training
• Bug or “minibeast” hunts
• Trails, quizzes and games to include a wildlife element
• Longer walks, trails or “health walks”

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3 Opening bat-boxes (once used) needs a Natural England licence for which substantial training is required. For bird-boxes in particular annual cleaning or maintenance is desirable. Both these activities require ladder work which may be unsuited to volunteers.
10. Facility and Visitor Management

10.1 Fitness Equipment
Living near parks and open spaces improves people’s health and can have a positive effect on blood pressure and cuts the harmful effects of stress. Milton Keynes Council has recognised that improving fitness levels has become more important in people’s lives and has recently installed fitness equipment at Leon Recreational Ground designed for the over twelve’s - adult to use. This is a range of equipment for users to become more active and healthier. Each piece of equipment has been chosen for its effectiveness on upper and lower body strength, toning and cardiovascular fitness etc.

![Fitness Equipment](image1)

Figure 15 Fitness Equipment

10.2 Health and Safety
All operations carried out at Leon Recreational Ground have been risk assessed, and are reviewed on a regular basis, whenever any operations or activities are planned. Details of contractor’s responsibilities are covered in the General Service Requirements which are available on request.

Children access the grounds to use the play areas which are self contained within the grounds and are used by residents from within the vicinity.

The play areas in the grounds are subject to a weekly inspection to cleanse and inspect the operation of the equipment. All maintenance and cleansing staff are trained to undertake these inspections and have followed a relevant course e.g. the ILAM Playground Inspecting and Reporting Course. An annual independent inspection is also carried out to ensure adherence to R.O.S.P.A standards.

The grounds have three play areas and fitness equipment that provide for a range of abilities and ages. Improvements in the grounds have taken place in the last few years in partnership with the parish.

We are in the process of installing new signage in our play areas (see Appendix 2). As part of this process we are replacing all existing signage in order to ensure that all members of the public have one point of contact in the event that
they need to make a report. The new signs have been produced using the MK Council branding guidelines with an anti-graffiti coating. The new signs display the general rules of play areas in Milton Keynes, using both words and symbols in a positive, non-prohibitive way.

An annual independent inspection is also carried out to ensure the council standard is maintained. In 2009 a more complete survey was commissioned to include play value of the range and quality of the equipment in addition to a brief development programme. The sites are considered to offer basic play value and to be in generally good condition. Recommendations have been followed where budget has allowed with future improvements planned (Appendix 2).

10.3 Community safety
The public can contact Milton Keynes Council through the web page or the environmental services help desk number, both of these are widely advertised on council publicity, vehicles and signage. Council staff are often at the grounds and they can easily be identified through liveried vehicles and uniforms. This presence, although not formally used as a deterrent to antisocial behaviour, can have a positive effect on safety in the grounds.

The Parish Community Wardens patrol the grounds on a regular basis and provide feedback from the community to the grounds Supervisor. The Wardens play a key role in networking with local people, dealing with local issues or acting as a conduit to other agencies. They are also additionally supported by the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) based at the parish offices in Queensway Bletchley. The environmental enforcement team can be called upon to issue penalties for actions that undermine park management, such as fly tipping and dog waste that can lead to a feeling of neglect and loss of security.

11. Interpretation and Publicity
At present there are several ways the Neighbourhood Management staff seek to interpret Leon Recreational Ground. These are as follows:

11.1 Community survey
At the Midsummer Madness event in June 2012 which is the largest annual event for the local community we carried out another survey of the park with help and support of the ‘friends of the park’ and the Town Council. A summary of the feedback from the 52 responses received is contained in Appendix 11.1. This was twice the response we received from the last survey two years ago.

11.2 Events Programme
The Neighbourhood Management department runs events in the parks and grounds it manages for a variety of reasons:

- A way of communicating with public, what are their thoughts about the parks, what would they like to see?
- A chance to put a face to a name and open up channels of communication.
- A method to involve the public in the management of their parks, to start or encourage friends groups.
- Broaden the knowledge or skills of the community in using open space.
- Show the range of uses or activities that can take place in open space.
• Strengthen and act as a focus for the community.
• Provide a wide range of activities for different age groups.
• Provide activities for the whole family.
• Offer opportunities of leisure at low or no cost.

These are advertised in an events leaflet which is distributed to parish offices, council reception areas, schools and parks notice boards.

**Creatures of the Night**

**Leon Recreation Ground, Bletchley**

Friday 30th July 8.15pm start

Have you ever wondered what a bat sounds like or wanted to learn more about the nocturnal creatures that are wide awake whilst you sleep? Join us to hunt bats and moths in the park using bat detectors and moth trapping equipment we will explore the land surrounding the lake, and discover more about these creatures of the night.

Suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
Bat detectors and sugaring solution supplied.

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/Parks

**Figure 13. A typical seasonal event poster.**

Events interpret nature and promote a greater interest, in this case bats and moths. These events are suitable for novices as well as experienced individuals and groups. For this event an introduction to the species and the detection methods to be used was given by the council’s wildlife officer.
11.3 Notice Boards for public information:
As a focus for visitors, informing them of current initiatives and events by the department. It also allows for seasonal variations, interpretation of features, wildlife or particular plants to be highlighted. It is hoped that the local community will use the board to convey messages and therefore contribute to the ground’s function as a means of facilitation.

11.4 Internet
Articles are added to the Milton Keynes Council web site and the web address promoted in all other advertisement and promotion. Sections on the web page include descriptions of the parks/grounds, “What’s on?” And who to contact if there are issues.

http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/parks-and-open-space/home.asp

News and events information is also uploaded to the Green Flag Website page for Leon Recreation Ground.


11.5 Media
Media coverage is sought for most high profile activities, articles are written for the Parish newsletter, Residents Association Newsletter and events are advertised in the local newspapers (MK News and Citizen).

11.6 Friends group
The Leon Recreation Ground Residents group has yet to be formalised, consultation with the local Town Council will hopefully enhance this project. There is much room for potential as there are a total of 43 gardens backing on to the grounds.

11.7 Marketing
Events are set out at the start of each year following a review of the previous year’s take-up.

An events calendar is linked to an Event Delivery Plan for each event which details the responsible officer, requirements, partner organisations and delivery timeline (see Appendix 4)

To promote the park, Milton Keynes Council Neighbourhood Management utilises the expertise of the council communications team to develop press releases for print and broadcast media. Events are also promoted in house via the council’s parks website.

Notice boards at each of the parks offer an opportunity to advertise the events for the year ahead with more prominent posters nearer the event date.

Local schools are supplied with advertising materials for events to encourage participation, as are community centres, libraries, residents groups and sheltered housing sites.
Primary contacts for Leon Recreation ground event promotion:

MKC Communications Team
- LiveMK
- Heart Radio
- MK News
- MK Citizen
- MK Web

MKC Parks website
Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town council
Knowles Nursery School
Knowles Infant School
Knowles Junior School
Saplings Childrens Centre
Previous Event Attendees (letter or e-mail)

Partner organisations also play a big part in delivering events and drawing in residents to Milton Keynes parks. These include:

BTCV
MK Play Association
MK Play Rangers
MK Lions (Basketball)
MK Dons (Football)

Partner organisations offer expertise and event experience as well as acting as a “draw” to encourage participation.

Additional signage has been installed on footways and linking redways to direct people to the facility.

12. Budgets and Resources

12.1 Landscape Management
Leon Recreational Ground is managed as part of the South Milton Keynes Landscape Contract. This contract covers the Town Council of Bletchley & Fenny Stratford and the Parish Council of West Bletchley.

The grounds workforce is managed by the Contract Supervisor (Landscape Operations) who is the primary contact for the budget holder. A Team Leader coordinates the teams on site. During the winter pruning season the whole team works in unison. In summer they split with one group taking responsibility for grass cutting and the other concentrating on other tasks including encroachment pruning and weed control.
13. Neighbourhood Management

Environment has recently undergone a restructuring to move from “service” orientated management to “area” based working. This is partly as a cost saving measure but the ultimate aim is to improve service delivery on a local level based on community participatory budgeting.

Six Neighbourhood Managers have budgetary responsibility for services areas such as Landscaping, Cleansing, Highways and “Fix-It” (a wide ranging team with responsibility for maintenance and inspection of play areas, street furniture etc) as well as an area of the city, based on the existing Thames Valley Police sectors to ensure continuity and to facilitate partnership working.

Work is currently underway to identify priorities within the six areas. This may indicate higher priorities in differing service streams across the city and as such may require a redistribution of resources to match.

Neighbourhood wardens who have a front-line role in identifying and challenging behaviours and issues at a street level, through schools and with resident associations are backed up by Engagement Officers with responsibility for engaging with communities to provide solutions and developing links to forward the development of participation. Engagement Officers have specialist skills across the service areas and although based in one of the six areas, work across the borough.

Further information on Neighbourhood Management is included in Appendix 0.
14. The Development of Leon Recreation Ground

Over the past 4 years, Leon Recreation Ground has undergone changes to improve the facilities, environment and community involvement.

- **A Welcoming Place**
  - Direction signs indicating the location of the park form the main road Queensway and from Leon Avenue and Eaton Avenue.
  - Signs at major entrances to the park indicating facilities, ownership, who to contact and how.
  - Vehicular access restricted to council vehicles.
  - Benches installed through the park to provide rest spots (DDA compliant).
  - Seasonal information displayed on the notice board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signage in and to the park.</td>
<td>Limited interpretation of ecological benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residential areas.</td>
<td>Walking route times and benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to the Redway network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access away from roads.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDA Assessed site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to the Town Centre and School.</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Work Plan delivery:**

**Seasonal Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>MKC Neighbourhood Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Seasonally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Posters, flyers and local press (RA and Parish news)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Information detailing seasonal activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Biodiversity Interpretation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Neighbourhood Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>by Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Provision of signage and seasonal information on species and lifecycles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Information boards for habitats detailing importance of habitat and lifecycles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Healthy, Safe and Secure**
  - Provision of an outdoor fitness gym,
  - Redesign of planting along walkways and entrances to provide better sightlines and remove potential obstructions.
  - Footways resurfaced - ongoing.
  - Refurbish entrance gates.
  - Improvements to safer surfacing in play sites.
  - Night-time bat walks help to reduce perception of the site as a no-go area at night.
  - Provision of football goals as response to survey feedback.
  - Provision of fitness circuit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk assessments undertaken.</td>
<td>No full time on-site staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern play facilities regularly inspected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog fouling enforcement undertaken.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of water fountain.</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education and enforcement on waste</td>
<td>Vandalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues.</td>
<td>Fly-tipping of garden waste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents of dog fouling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Work Plan delivery:**

**Dog Fouling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>MKC Environmental Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>On-site education and enforcement activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Reduction in incidents of fouling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Footpaths**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>MKC Neighbourhood Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Funding from Section 106.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Reconstruction and repair of all park footways as surveyed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- **Well Maintained and Clean**
  - Provision of waste separating bins.
  - Restriction of herbicide use to hard surfaces only.
  - Footpath reconstruction underway.
  - Replanting of degraded areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dog and litter/recycling bins in prominent locations.</td>
<td>Footway degradation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brash chipped on-site and used as mulch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber re-used as benches or habitat piles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Strengths**
  - Dog and litter/recycling bins in prominent locations.
  - Brash chipped on-site and used as mulch.
  - Timber re-used as benches or habitat piles.

- **Weaknesses**
  - Footway degradation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education on waste and litter issues.</td>
<td>Fly tipping of garden waste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Litter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Work Plan delivery:**

- **Paths reconstruction**
  - **Who**: MK Council
  - **When**: Pending securing of funding
  - **How**: 106 funding from local house building
  - **Outputs**: Better safer quality paths

- **Sustainability**
  - Timber left as habitat piles.
  - Development of transitional woodland edge meadows and perennial flower meadows.
  - Woodland tree stock thinned or coppiced and diversified with new planting – ongoing.
  - Bird and bat box installation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meadows establishing new habitat.</td>
<td>Lack of diversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase biodiversity in transitional meadows.</td>
<td>Pressure from recreational use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community planting days.</td>
<td>Fly tipping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation walks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community led species surveys.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Work Plan delivery:

#### Meadows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>MKC Neighbourhood Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Increase in diverse broadleaved perennials though seeding and plug planting (as appropriate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Increase in plant biodiversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Conservation and Heritage**
  - Improvements to the management of meadow areas and grassland.
  - Bulb planting on ‘mound’ for Spring colour
  - Development of perennial meadow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Meadows providing an increase in local biodiversity. | Slow take up of wildlife surveying by users.  
|                                                  | Low diversity in transitional grassland. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of local ecology.</td>
<td>Fly tipping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School use as outdoor classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass bulb planting for spring colour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird feeding stations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plug planting wildflowers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Work Plan delivery:

#### Meadow diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>MKC Neighbourhood Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing series of planting events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Increase in diverse broadleaved perennials through seeding and plug planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Increase in plant biodiversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Wildlife Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Use of iSpot and other wildlife reporting methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Identify species indicators within the park.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Community Involvement**
  - Involved Knowles School in projects such as, planting of bulbs and native flowers.
  - Developed links with the Town Council, NAG group and users.
  - Identified opportunities for improvement through user survey.
  - Encouraged conservation activities with bird/bat box making and planting days.
  - Development of funding bids for additional recreational activities.
  - Summer fun days arranged by Bletchley Town Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents surveyed to inform decision making. Town Council actively involved in decision making. Active and passive leisure activities.</td>
<td>Low take up of volunteering opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow up on 2010 survey to gauge changes in use/perception or issues. Funding for future projects. Survey carried out 2012.</td>
<td>Competition from other leisure activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Work Plan delivery:**

**User / Resident survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>MKC Neighbourhood Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Bi-annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Through school and residents association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Identify needs, challenges, issues and identify barriers to use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Marketing**
  - Dedicated website for management information.
  - Event delivery procedure implemented.
  - Positive publicity gained through local media.
  - “What’s On” guide in local newspapers and on council website.
  - Promotion of events through on site notices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to a broad range of media. Events organised with parish and resident involvement.</td>
<td>Officer time to organise events due to work load.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the range of activities available. Promote the park through the School.</td>
<td>Limited MKC budget to arrange events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work Plan delivery:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>MKC Neighbourhood Management, Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Community focused events as a response to need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Community engagement in Bio-diversity, Recreation and Social networks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Management**
  - Develop Green Flag management practices.
  - Closer working within the council to remove barriers between departments.
  - Restructuring of Environmental Services to an area based service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reorganisation of services to remove service silo barriers.</td>
<td>Specialist officer knowledge needs development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More customer focused service provision.</td>
<td>Reduction in revenue funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-working, shadowing and knowledge sharing to increase officer skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Plan delivery:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood Engagement Officer Development</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>MKC Neighbourhood Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>In-house training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Increase skill set of the officers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 16 Plan showing footpath improvement priorities