

Woodford Park

Management Plan 2024



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Introduction

This management plan has been produced by Woodley Town Council and is intended as a living document that is accessible and easy to understand. It forms the basis for the ongoing management of Woodford Park and the Memorial Ground (referred to as Woodford Park in this document).

The purpose of the Management Plan is;

- To act as a 'blueprint' for how the site will be managed both now and in the future.
- To provide a reference document for those responsible for maintaining the park.
- To provide a benchmark for both the physical and social management of the park with standards that can be monitored and measured.
- To enable the Council to better manage the various operational and management activities in a coordinated way.
- To enable the park to be entered for a Green Flag Award, a national standard for quality parks and open spaces.

The plan includes an action plan outlining the aspirations for the park and how we aim to achieve these, both financially and through community engagement. The action plan will be updated, taking into account progress on specific areas and feedback from the Green Flag Award scheme.

Participating in the **Green Flag** Award scheme has already seen significant, measurable improvements and investment in Woodford Park. Woodford Park is the first and currently the only park in Wokingham Borough to have achieved this status and this is a great source of pride for the Council and residents.



History of the site

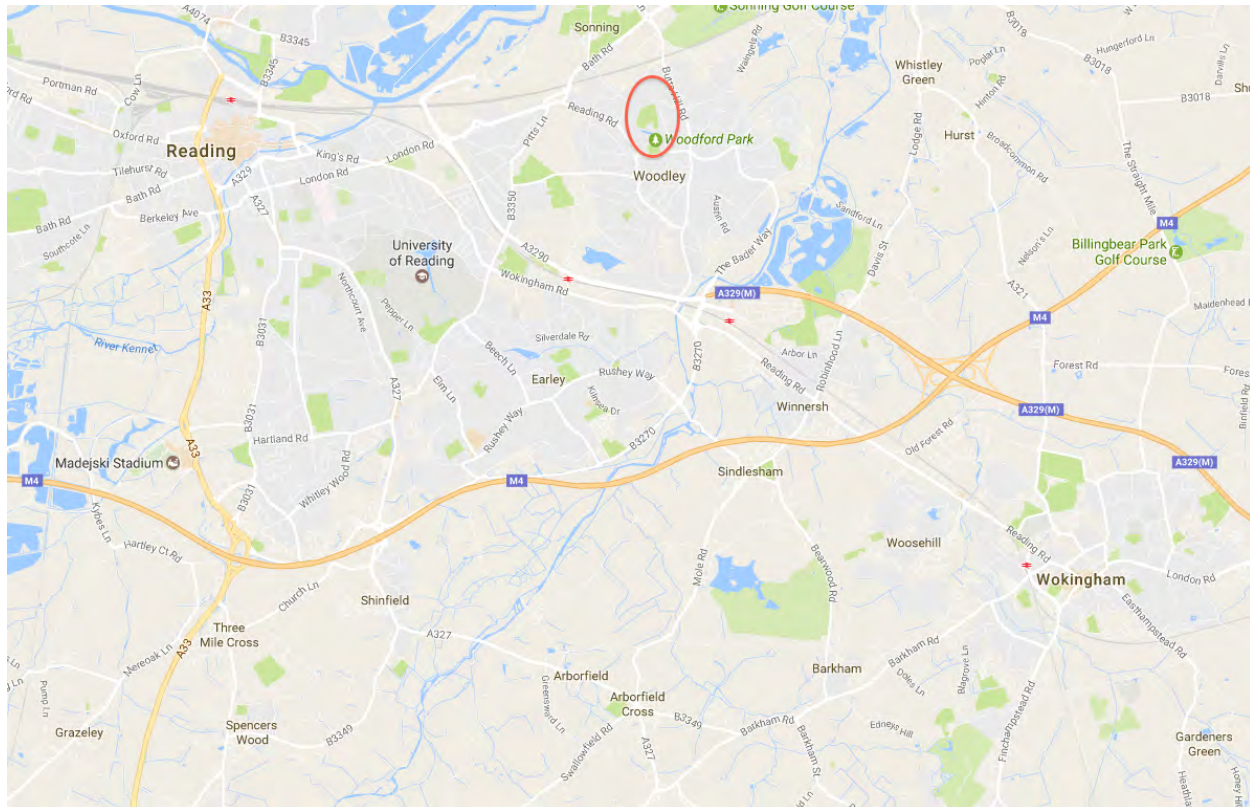
Woodford Park is a well-used public park owned and managed by Woodley Town Council as a local amenity. The Council recognises a need to enhance the park's character and sense of identity, and improve the quality of facilities for visitors and local residents and protect the park for future generations.

- Woodford Park originates from a 5 acre recreation ground, laid out in 1887 on farmland leased from the Rev. Goldring-Palmer. It was an example, on a very small scale, of the nineteenth century Public Parks Movement, developing public open space for the good of all;
- In 1918 the recreation ground became The Memorial Ground when the land was purchased by subscription from the community to commemorate the end of the First World War. An old army hut was erected two years later for the ex-servicemen's club. The Council is the trustee of the Woodley Memorial Recreation Ground Charity which has covenants on the use of the land.
- By 1956, the hut had been replaced by Coronation Hall, opened by the war hero Group Captain (later Sir) Douglas Bader, who learnt to fly at Woodley Aerodrome. The hall became a centre for community events and remains an essential venue for the people of Woodley to this day.
- Additional farmland adjacent to the Memorial Ground was purchased by the Council and formally named in 1964 by Lord Luke, Chairman of the National Playing Fields Association, a charity dedicated to the provision of open space for public recreation, essential for the growing, modern town of Woodley. For the purposes of this document reference to Woodford Park includes the Memorial Ground.
- The vision of town planners in the late 1960s and 1970s saw further changes to Woodley, such as the development of a pedestrian shopping centre and the M4 link road. At the same time, greater focus was placed on Woodford Park's value as an open space for passive recreation and a major landscape project took place, creating a distinctive modernist landscape of lake and sculpted landforms.
- Since its conception as a simple recreation ground, Woodford Park has remained at the centre of the community, providing a meeting space for a range of local societies, clubs and organisations; offering multi-purpose venues for sport, the arts and other social activities; and the home of the Town Council offices since the Council's inception.
- Woodford Park is the only public park in central Woodley, providing an essential green space in an extensive urban area.

1.2 Location

Woodford Park is located in the centre of Woodley with the town centre immediately to the south, and residential areas to the north, east and west.

Woodley itself is located between Reading and Wokingham and the nearby villages of Sonning, Twyford, Winnersh, Hurst and Charvil.



Woodford Park location map

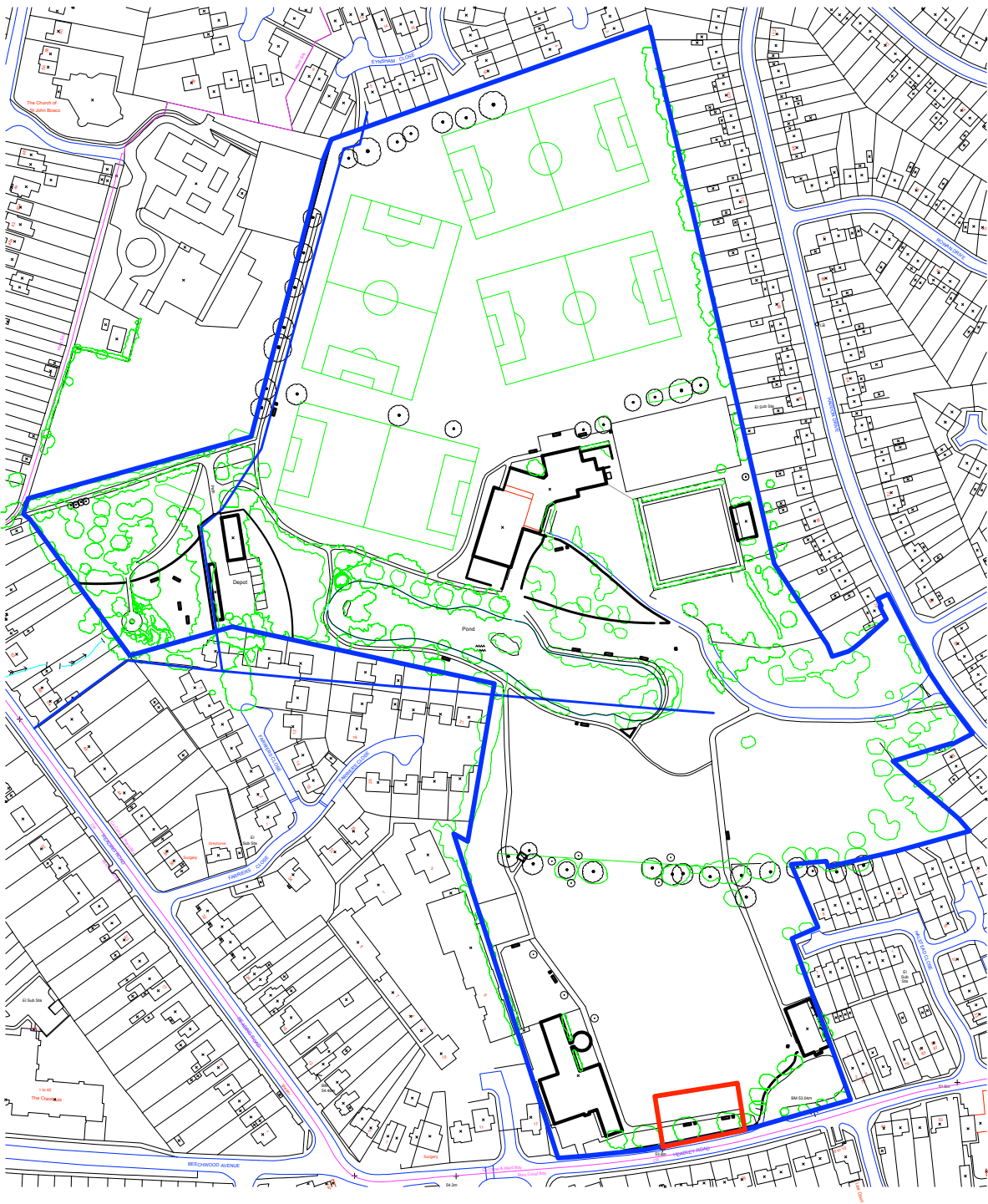
Woodford Park is home to:

- The Oakwood Centre – housing the Town Council offices, hireable rooms, theatre, coffee shop and public toilets.
- Coronation Hall – a busy community hall and operation centre for the local food bank.
- Woodford Park Leisure Centre – a multi-use leisure centre offering various indoor and outdoor sports activities and also home to Woodley Pre School, Woodley Bowls Club and Optalis care services.

Woodford Park has several access points from the surrounding residential areas and has free car parking at the leisure centre and Coronation Hall.

The park is a regular through route for pedestrians travelling to the town centre from the north side of the town and is serviced by the local bus routes with stops at Headley Road and Butts Hill Road.

Woodford Park location plan:



Woodley Town Council recognises Woodford Park as the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the services and facilities managed by the Council and as an essential open space for residents and visitors to the Town.

The Council is committed to providing;

- High quality grounds and infrastructure maintenance.
- Continued environmental improvements and reductions in carbon footprint of operations.
- A welcoming, attractive and safe place to visit.
- A diverse range of activities, stakeholders and park users.
- High quality play equipment for a range of ages.
- Activities for older children and young adults.
- A well maintained war memorial and civic space.
- A venue for community activities and events.
- A space for organised and casual recreation activities.
- High quality sports pitches for organised and casual use.
- Opportunities for residents to express their views and ensure that Woodford Park continues to meet their needs.
- The removal of barriers to the use and enjoyment of the park
- Responsible and effective stewardship of the park for future generations.
- Conservation and enhancement biodiversity through conservation of trees, restoration of the lake and provision of wild flower areas and natural borders.
- Reducing dog fouling the park through partnership working and campaigns.
- Involving people of all backgrounds and abilities in the improvements and enjoyment of the park.
- Improving the economical and environmental sustainability of Woodford Park as a whole and maintain a secure financial basis for the management of the park.
- Working in close partnership with local residents, particularly through the

Friends of Woodford Park group.

- Preserving the character of the Garden of Remembrance as a special place in the park.
- Continuing to work with partners e.g. Neighbourhood Police Team and youth support providers to engage with young people in the park.



At the Full Council Meeting on 1 October 2019 the following motion was adopted:

This Council notes that:

- 1. The impacts of climate breakdown are already causing serious damage around the world.*
- 2. Limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, October 2018) may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society and the private sector.*

This Council therefore:

- 1. Commits to a declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' with the aim of becoming a carbon neutral organization by 2030.*
- 2. Welcomes the declaration by Wokingham Borough Council of a 'Climate Emergency' and will actively participate in the creation of the Borough-wide climate change strategy to ensure Woodley Town Council is fully engaged in its creation for the benefit of its residents.*
- 3. Will explore, with all parts of the community, the development of a local action plan in support of, and to compliment, the Borough Council's climate change strategy plan for those parts relevant to Woodley Town."*

These principles will filter through all services provided by the Council and will influence buying decisions and methods of work relating to the management of our parks.

There are great opportunities to improve our services in a sustainable way, engage in environmental initiatives and encourage residents to contribute to this. The Council is developing a plan to deliver these improvements and achieve these targets.

2.1 Good and safe access

Part of our vision for Woodford Park is that it be accessible to all parts of our community and that we continue to identify and remove barriers to the use and enjoyment of the park. We now have an annual budget allocation for pathway repairs and have repaired many areas of pathway and potholes in the park. The pathways around the lake were also resurfaced as part of the regeneration project.

2.2 Announcing the park

Signage was identified as a key area for improvement from our first Green Flag application. We have now installed 'Welcome' notice board signs at each of the 4 main access points into the park. These signs include an interpretation map, contact information and updated information about the park.

Directional fingerpost signage has also been installed to guide pedestrians to various facilities and locations within the park from wherever they are.



New site map, notice board and way finding signage

2.3

Physical access

Woodford Park is centrally located and easy to get to by public transport, road or on foot. There is parking provision at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, Coronation Hall and the pay & display car park in Headley Road. Disabled parking is available close to the park at all of these car parks.

The Town Council has installed bike racks at the leisure centre and Oakwood Centre to encourage cycling.

In 2016 the old railings were removed from the access points from Eynsham Close and Keane Close to the north in order to provide access for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs. These may be reinstalled allowing the appropriate access width if required.

Access from Headley Road has been improved by removing the pedestrian gate from the redesigned entrance area.

Access issues remain at the entrance from Western Avenue due to the ownership of the access road being unknown. The Council has taken steps to try and identify the owner of this land through Land Registry, local solicitors and local residents but this has been unsuccessful. The Council does carry out periodic surface repairs to minimise issues for park visitors.

In 2012 the Council carried out significant repairs and improvements to the drainage in key areas of the park which had caused a problem for pedestrians and disabled visitors for many years during periods of very wet weather.

Significant improvements have been made over the last two years to the pathways around the park. The pathways around the lake, Garden of Remembrance and Rotary Garden have been resurfaced and a new path from the small car park to the pre-school has been installed to provide a safer route for parents and children.

A programme of pathway repairs has been implemented with several areas around the park repaired or re-laid in 2019. The Council now allocates a budget each year specifically for pathway improvements and repairs.

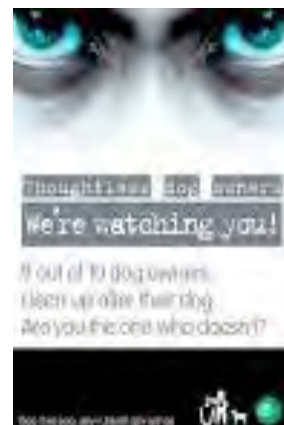


New paths around the lake

Accessibility and inclusivity were the key elements in the consultation and design work for the new destination play area in Woodford Park. From the initial concept discussions to the tender scoring and subsequent contract revisions, opportunities to maximise inclusivity were explored to ensure a truly integrated and stimulating play space for children of all ages and abilities. More information on this project is appended to this plan.

Dog fouling

A survey carried out by the Friends of Woodford Park (FOWP) group highlighted the issue of dog fouling in the park. Working with the FOWP the Council launched the 'We're Watching You' campaign run by Keep Britain Tidy to reduce instances of dog fouling. The campaign has seen a significant reduction in instances of dog fouling and we continue to replace signage as it deteriorates.

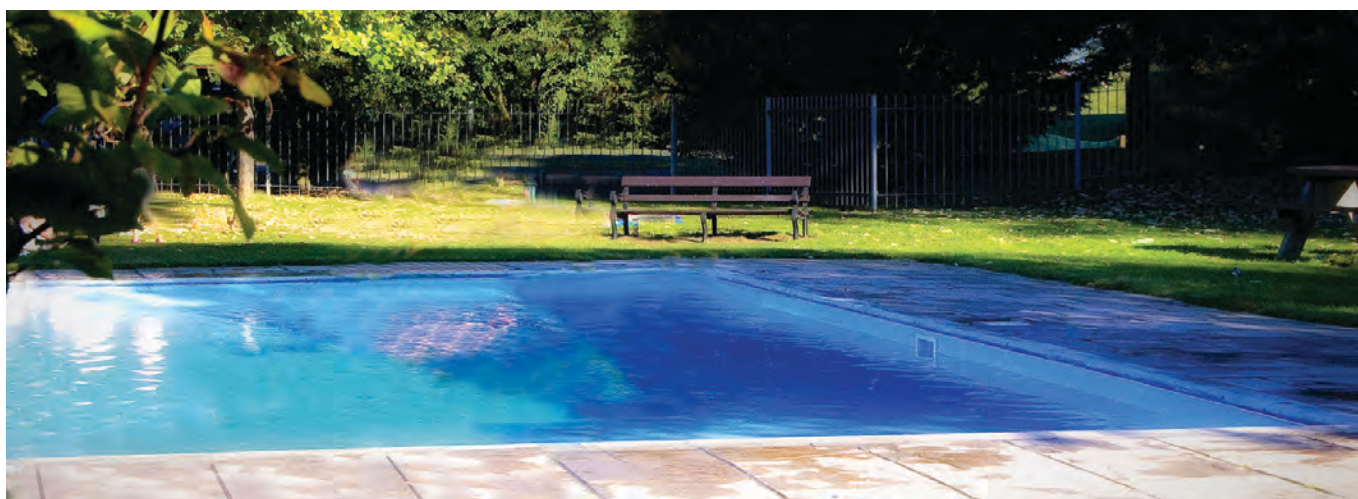


Social access

Woodford Park has a wide social usage in terms of age, ability, gender and heritage background. The location of facilities within the park is important in encouraging use while limiting impact on other facilities and areas of the park. This works very well and provides a wide range of activities for different groups without making others feel uncomfortable.

Play

The play area near the leisure centre was created in 2010 on the site of a seldom used mini golf course. The play area was added to in 2012 to provide play equipment for younger children adjacent to the paddling pool. The play area is very well used and we have made improvements to the surfacing and sand pit to accommodate the heavy usage. The paddling pool is extremely popular through the summer months and attracts families and groups who can have a picnic on the grass and dip in and out of the pool.



Woodford Park Paddling Pool

New Destination Play Area

June 2022 saw the delivery of a brand new, fully inclusive 'Destination' play area in Woodford Park, to replace the old equipment to the rear of the Oakwood Centre. This exciting project was funded from Section 106 developers contributions with additional funding from the Town Council. Inclusive play was a key requirement from the initial brief through to the tender scoring and selection of the final scheme. We carried out two full consultations to find out what people wanted to see and what their priorities were for the play space. We used these responses to inform the design decision making and to develop the final scheme. A copy of the consultation is attached at **APPENDIX 2**.

The new scheme provides an inclusive play space for children of all ages and abilities. The project also included widening of the pathway along the play area site to allow for increased footfall and avoid conflicts of use along the route.

The Council has also carried out an accessibility review of all its play areas and is currently developing a site by site plan to improve access and provide inclusive equipment. We are looking to implement these improvements over the next two years.



Grand Opening of the new 'Destination' play space for Woodford Park

2.5.2

Young people

The skate park was constructed in 2011 following a long consultation to find a suitable site in Woodley. The Town Council moved the project forward providing the site, securing the funding and consulting with local young people on the design. The skate park is located so

that it is clearly visible from the pathways around the park and from the Council Offices. This provides informal supervision while allowing users to express and enjoy themselves without feeling overlooked. The Town Council is continuing its commitment to young people in Woodley and developed a new Strategy for Youth Services in 2022. In 2023 the Council launched a youth grants programme to help organisations supporting young people in Woodley.

2.5.3

Sports

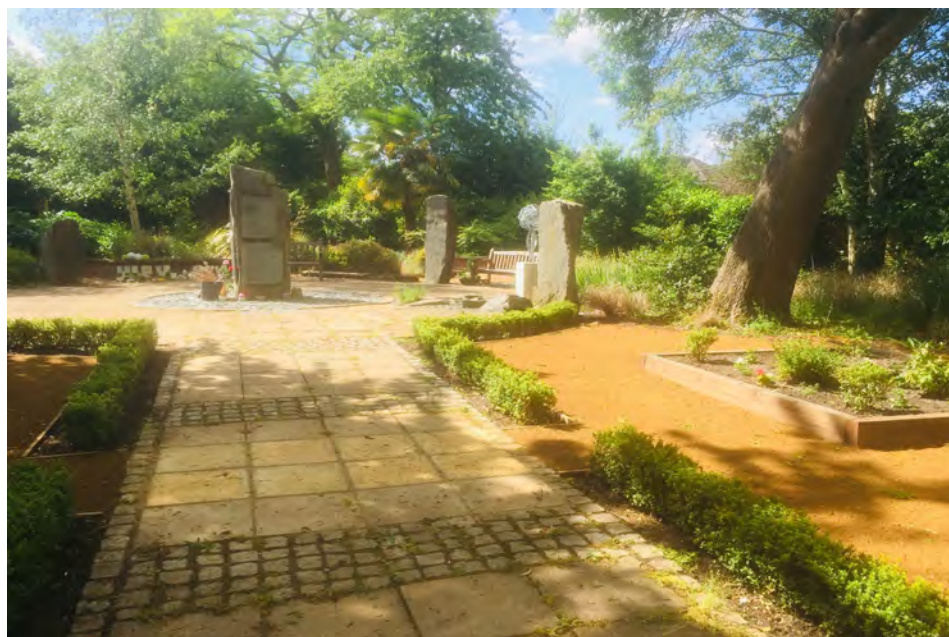
Woodford Park has a sporting legacy going back to the beginning of the 20th century and sports provision remains a key priority. A new 3G football pitch was installed in 2016 to complement the grass football pitches and cricket pitch in the park. The 3G pitch is used by local clubs, organisations and charities for organised sport, and is also made available for local people for turn up sessions. The Town Council runs a 'play for £2' scheme through the school holidays which provided hundreds of local children the experience of playing on a first class sports surface. The organised activities range from youth development football and coaching, adult football, walking football and rugby for the less mobile, wheelchair rugby and fitness and wellbeing classes for all ages and abilities.

The park is also home to Woodley Bowls Club with its county standard green – maintained by the Town Council Grounds Maintenance Team. Woodford Park also hosts the annual schools cross country, Cecil Trembath football tournament and Woodley Sports Week.

2.5.4

Quiet areas

The Rotary Garden, Garden of Remembrance, War Memorial and Queens Birthday Garden provide quite places to sit and enjoy the park. Benches are also located along all of the pathways. The Garden of Remembrance was improved in 2019 with re-laid pathways, new planting and box hedging. In 2021 the Rotary Garden saw the addition of a new bedding area for memorial roses and this has been extended in 2022. This offers residents an opportunity to purchase a rose bush and plaque and has enhanced this quiet space.



Garden of Remembrance

- 2.5.5** Toilets and first aid
Toilets including disabled and baby changing are provided for park users at both Woodford Park Leisure Centre and The Oakwood Centre. First aid facilities at each site include defibrillators and trained staff. Both buildings are also part of the 'Safer Places' scheme to provide assistance and reassurance to vulnerable people.
- 2.5.6** Events
The park hosts many annual events such as the Woodley Carnival, Woodley 10k Run, schools cross country, cricket and football tournaments, funfairs and circus events, gatherings of Remembrance as well as cultural events open to all including the Barbados Day celebration and the local Muslim group fun day. In 2019 we celebrated the 100th year of the Memorial Ground with a free event. In 2022/23 the park has also hosted the Queens Jubilee Beacon event and Kings Coronation events. These events were free, community events attracting many hundreds of residents to the park.
- 2.6** **Aspects of design**
Woodford Park consists of many 'character' areas worked together to create a pleasant place to be. The earth mounds create a landscape which is both interesting and functional. The mounds are a favourite for picnics and also for children to play on, particularly in the snow. They also provide a vantage point to view the rest of the park.
- 2.6.1** Entrances
The driveway entrance into the park from Haddon Drive is welcoming with spring daffodils, winter crocuses, log path borders and large Willow trees.
- The bespoke and artistic memorial gates from Headley Road provide an attractive and interesting entrance to the Civic Space, War Memorial, Remembrance Panels and flag poles on the Memorial Ground.
- 2.6.2** Seating
Seating is mostly of the same style with robust but attractive iron/timber seats. Residents can make a donation for a memorial seat in the park in memory of a loved one. Other seating includes reused trunks from felled trees.
- 2.6.3** Pathways
Pathways are well used and reflect the pedestrian routes from the residential areas in the north to the town centre to the south. There is a well used pedestrian route going north east across the Memorial Ground which does not have a formal path. This has been considered in the past and public opinion has been split as to whether a formal path across the middle of the Memorial Ground would be desirable or would impact on events and activities e.g. Woodley Carnival. The ground is well draining and does not flood or become boggy so this informal route does remain accessible all year round. The Town Council will be installing ground reinforcement in 2020 to reduce erosion and maintain the grass along this busy route.
- The pathways around the lake have been re-laid using a golden gravel tar & chip method as used in the Royal Parks. This work included eliminating numerous trip hazards from tree root damage and deterioration of the old tarmac paths.
- The paths in the Garden of Remembrance have been re-laid and several sections of tarmac footpath repaired and replaced around the park.

The pathway along adjacent to the new play area will be widened as part of the project to avoid conflicts of use in this area and improve access generally.



Rotary Garden Path

2.6.4

The Queen's Birthday Community Garden

This community garden adjacent to the war memorial was designed by a local garden designer created by the Friends of Woodford Park. It provides formal planting with year round colour. The garden has been added to by the volunteers over the last few years and has transformed this area of the park. More beds were added in 2018/19 and provide a very special feel to this area of the park, with a wide range of plants, textures and colour.

The work carried out by the volunteers is crucial as this would not be possible to achieve with the resources currently available to the Council. It also provides an important opportunity for residents to be involved in their park in a very positive way.



Queen's Birthday Community Garden

War memorial / memorial gates

The appropriate location and design of the new war memorial and Civic Space was essential to the success of this project. The historic and planned use of the area was taken into consideration to create a setting that, although on a busy pedestrian route, provides a pleasant place to sit and enjoy the park, as well as a venue for formal gatherings of remembrance. Bespoke gates were commissioned with symbolism to reflect Woodley, Woodford Park and the Memorial Ground. Gatherings of Remembrance have grown in numbers year on year since the monument was installed. The Centenary gathering in 2018 attracted many hundreds of people.

The gates were refurbished in 2018 and updated with additional sculpture detail to commemorate the 100 years since the end of the First World War.

The Remembrance Panels and flagpoles were also added to create a truly special area in the park. The Council installed a third flagpole in 2023 to accommodate the celebration and marking of national events.

The Remembrance Panels tell stories of Woodley families who lost loved ones in the war and provide a poignant reminder of the cost of war on real people.

Remembrance

The Town Council hosts an Armistice event on 11 November at the memorial, attracting hundreds of residents. Since 2022 we have also supported a new community led event on Remembrance Sunday.



Memorial Gates and Remembrance Panels

Safe

3.1 Safe working practices

The Council maintains an up to date health & safety policy along with appropriate training for all staff. Tasks and potential hazards are considered and addressed through formal risk assessments. Council staff are issued with and required to use and wear appropriate safety equipment and carry out all tasks in a safe way. The Council has a partnership arrangement with Worknest - health & safety professionals for advice and assistance on safety matters. This includes regular audit of practices and documentation. The Council approves a risk strategy and risk register each year to ensure that risks are managed effectively.

3.1.1 Play areas

The play areas in the park are inspected and cleared of all litter 3 times per week by the Council's maintenance team. Three monthly recorded inspections of the equipment are also carried out by the team who have received ROSPA approved training for play area safety inspections. The Maintenance Manager has been trained and is now a qualified ROSPA play area assessor. The sites are also inspected annually by an independent ROSPA approved inspector.

3.1.2 Dogs

Dogs are excluded from the play areas and the signage reflects this. The Council is continuing to work in partnership with the Friends of Woodford Park and the Borough Animal Warden to reduce instances of dog fouling in the park. The 'We're Watching You' campaign was launched in September 2016. Dog waste bins are provided on all pedestrian routes through the park and are regularly emptied.

3.1.3 Water testing

The paddling pool water quality is tested daily through the summer period when it is open to ensure the safety of the water for all users. Regular water testing is carried out on all water supplies both in the park buildings and external equipment e.g. bowls green irrigation system.

3.1.4 Lighting

Lighting columns in the park are regularly inspected and subject to a maintenance contract. We aim to repair lamp outages as soon as possible through the contractor. All columns were replaced in 2018 with hinged columns and LED lanterns to dramatically improve reliability and quality of light, and dramatically reduce energy consumption. We are looking at opportunities to improve lighting throughout the park, in response to comments from residents. The exterior lighting at Woodford Park Leisure Centre was improved in 2022 as part of a larger project to rewire the entire building.

3.1.5 Hirers / events

All hirers of the park are required to provide insurance details, risk assessments and safety certificates as appropriate to ensure the safety of visitors.

3.1.6 Ground works
Risk assessments are carried out and reviewed at least annually for all ground works in the park. This includes the use of all machines, herbicides and tools. All works and activities are carried out in accordance with the Council's health & safety policy and procedures.

All contractors are required to provide the appropriate evidence of competence and insurance to carry out the activity. No contractors are permitted to carry out works on site without the express permission of the Council.

3.1.7 Needles/syringes
We have a policy for collecting needles/syringes immediately and safely. The grounds team, maintenance team and staff teams at the Oakwood Centre and Woodford Park Leisure Centre have appropriate equipment and the procedures for this. We also report any instances where needles or syringes are found to the police.

3.1.8 Fly tipping
Fly tipping is removed immediately by the Council's grounds and maintenance teams. Hirers of the park are required to remove all rubbish from the site under the terms and conditions of hire. Both teams are based in the park, as are the Council offices which means issues are reported and responded to quickly.

3.2 **Secure**

3.2.1 Staff presence
The Council's maintenance and grounds teams are both based in the park which results in a strong staff presence during working hours. The Oakwood Centre, Woodford Park Leisure Centre and Coronation Hall are also in the park and help to provide an informal supervision over much of the site. The increased numbers of people using the park for a wide variety of purposes also makes for a safer feeling environment. Antisocial behavior has decreased in recent years as the park has maintained to a higher standard.

3.2.2 Youth Support
The Council has provided youth support through a contracted provider for many years and in 2021 the Council adopted a new Strategy for Youth Services. We will be partnering with a professional provider of youth services under a new service level agreement to continue providing outreach support to young people in Woodley.

The Council is currently working with partners to develop a new support service for young people.



Outreach workers in Woodford Park

- 3.2.3
- Policing

The Woodley Neighbourhood Police Team is based in the Oakwood Centre, within the park. This enables the team to respond in a very effective way to issues within the park and also to build relationships with park users. Woodford Park is also the venue for the annual Emergency Services open day with police horses and vehicles and a visit from the Thames Valley Police helicopter.



Neighbourhood Police Team with young people in Woodford Park

- 3.2.4
- Buildings in the park

The Oakwood Centre and Woodford Park Leisure Centre are part of the 'Safer Places' scheme, providing a safe place for vulnerable people to get assistance if they are concerned, worried or frightened.

Both buildings are also equipped with a defibrillator, first aid kits and trained staff as well as providing accessible toilets including disabled and baby changing facilities. Our public buildings are welcoming and both the building staff and grounds/maintenance staff have a good relationship with many park users. This encourages people to report concerns or issues and also promotes a feeling of community within the park.



3.3 **Healthy**

3.3.1 Quiet areas

Woodford Park has several quiet areas – Garden of Remembrance, Queen’s Birthday Garden, War Memorial, Rotary Garden and lake where visitors can sit and enjoy the surroundings. Areas for quiet contemplation are as important as those for other activities and can help combat stress and anxiety. All of these areas have been improved and enhanced over the last 2 years and will continue to be a key part of the our programme of continuous improvement.



Goslings by Woodford Park lake

3.3.2 Community orchard

The community orchard was planted in 2014 in partnership with Transition Reading. The orchard of 20 fruit trees was planted by local families and volunteers, providing free fruit for the community as well as food and habitat for birds and insects. The project trains volunteers in tree planting and grafting in order to expand the project to other areas in a sustainable way while promoting the benefits of healthy eating and physical exercise.

3.4

Fitness

3.4.1

Park Run

Park Run and Junior Park Run continue to be a tremendous success with 200 – 500 participants each week.

The Oakwood Centre provides the meeting point for runners before and after the run and the Council works in partnership with Park Run organisers to ensure that the event runs smoothly and considers the needs of other park users and neighbours.

The route runs through the entire park and provides local people with a free, fun, community based, healthy activity in the surroundings of their local park.



Park Run



Junior Park Run

Sports development

Woodley Town Council has an important role in fitness and sports development in the town and Woodford Park Leisure Centre and the park's sports pitches are central to this provision.

Woodford Park is home to the Berkshire Youth Development football league, with a busy programme of fixtures and training on both grass and artificial pitches.

The new 3G artificial grass pitch was opened in June 2016. The project was made possible through funding from the Town Council along with a grant from the Football Foundation FA Premier League Facilities Fund. This £500,000 project includes a 9 a-side, all weather artificial grass pitch which can also be split for 5 a-side training and fixtures.

The Town Council has engaged with partner clubs to produce a football development plan for the facility and has also engaged with local and national organisations to maximize opportunities for use. The facility provides a first class sports pitch for organised sport, courses and training, and turn up sessions. Sports offered include football, walking football and rugby for the less mobile and boot camp fitness.



Tournament football on the 3G pitch

Every year since 2012 Woodford Park Leisure Centre has teamed up with local schools to host the increasingly popular and ever impressive **Woodley Sports Week**. The week-long event is designed to promote physical activity and the benefits of sport and exercise to our younger population.

Approximately **2,750** local primary school children are given an opportunity to compete against rival schools in a wide variety of sporting contests, ranging all the way from the opening ceremony dance festival to Paralympic sports and kwik cricket tournaments. As well as being a simply great spectacle, children are given the chance throughout the week to demonstrate and celebrate their passion and love for sport as well as showcase their ability and skill in a competitive and healthy environment.



Woodley Sports Week in Woodford Park

3.6

Gym on the park

The Gym on the Park at Woodford Park Leisure Centre was opened in 2017. The gym offers a friendly, welcoming fitness option that has been very popular with parents and older clients. The gym further enhances Woodford Park Leisure Centre and the wider park as an important community and health hub in the town.



Other activities

Woodford park is the venue for many other health and fitness activities organised by local groups and individuals including new parents 'Buggy Fit' boot camp, personal training, casual fitness –walking, running etc.



Buggy Fit in Woodford Park

Woodford Park is very popular and well used for a wide range of activities, which presents challenges in maintaining standards of upkeep.

Pandemic

The pandemic showed the importance of public open spaces with visitor numbers soaring through that period. This brought with it challenges in terms of litter and general upkeep, but highlighted the fundamental importance of a high quality, well kept open space in the heart of the town.

4.1

Grounds team

The Council's grounds team is based in the park which enables a quicker response to issues of littering, fly tipping, vandalism and damage. The presence within the park also helps to reduce instances during working hours.

The small team increased from three to four staff members in 2018. Two have been in post for more than 20 years, which provides a great deal of site-specific experience and a good relationship with park users. The benefits of the in-house team include greater ownership of issues and genuine pride in how the park looks and operates.

The Grounds Maintenance Officer completed a level 3 NVQ in horticulture in 2019 and has already put these skills to good use in redesigning the planting in the Garden of Remembrance.

Since 2017 the Council has invested in a chipper/shredder to recycle green waste on site, a utility vehicle specifically for the park, a ride on rotary mower to reduce manual handling and improve cutting in difficult to access areas, modern white lining machine and new grass seed spreaders for the sports pitches.



*Woodley Town Council Grounds Team the
Chairman of the Friends of Woodford Park*

4.1.1

Litter, waste management and ground works

Woodford Park is very popular and accessible to all – 24 hours a day. This means that a large quantity of litter and waste is generated and collected, particularly in the summer months. There are litter bins and dog waste bins positioned along all the pedestrian routes in the park. These are emptied daily by the Council's grounds team with waste deposited in skip waste containers in the grounds yard. The yard is out of sight of the main park and locked when unmanned.

The park is litter picked six days per week by the grounds team with additional litter picking as required. Needles and syringes are not commonly found but are disposed of appropriately using the correct equipment and procedure.

All Council staff are encouraged to pick up litter wherever they may find it. This is also a specific activity that is carried out during quiet work periods – e.g. the Oakwood Centre staff litter pick the areas around the building and the skate park through the day.

4.1.2

Green waste

Green waste from the site is transported to the grounds yard and stored until it can be chipped and reused as mulch on the shrub beds around the park. The Council purchased a chipper/shredder in 2017 to enable the recycling of green waste on site.

4.1.3

Tree works

Major tree works are carried out by an approved arboriculture contractor. The Council identifies maintenance works on an annual basis in order to maintain a healthy tree stock and address issues that may arise with trees in close proximity to the park's neighbours.

4.1.4

Grass cutting

The grass cutting regime varies across different areas of the park, depending on usage and activities. Most of the large areas are cut approximately 8-10 times during the growing season or as required. Additional cuts are sometimes carried out in advance of specific events e.g. Woodley Carnival. The in-house grounds team is able to work flexibly and respond quickly to changing requirements and circumstances.



View from the 'Big Mound'

Buildings

The buildings in the park are an important link and are kept in good condition and maintained by the Council's maintenance team. The buildings are integral to the park with many activities making use of both indoor and outdoor spaces. The park is an essential ingredient in the success of the buildings in terms of renting the rooms out for business and community use.

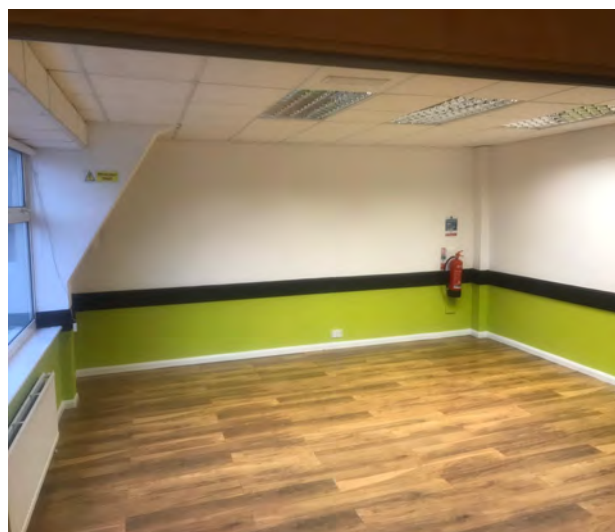


The Oakwood Centre

The Oakwood Centre was opened in 2004 and has become a key part of how the park is used. The centre provides good quality public toilet facilities, a coffee shop, council offices, theatre, meeting spaces for businesses and community groups, public access wifi and access to town council and some borough council services. The toilets in the centre are scheduled for refurbishment in summer 2022.

Woodford Park Leisure Centre was refurbished in 2019 with a new reception and office area, flooring, ceilings and décor and exterior signage. Both the leisure centre and the Oakwood Centre were fitted with solar panels in 2019 through a 20 year contract with Reading Community Energy Society.

The whole building was completely re-wired and fitted with LED replacement lighting in 2022.



Refurbishment at Woodford Park Leisure Centre

Coronation Hall was also refurbished in 2019 to a very high standard - with new ceiling, energy efficient lighting, new energy efficient boiler, furniture, new toilets and decoration.

Grounds Depot

Several improvements were made to the depot area in 2021, including a new electrical supply, new concrete hard standing, storage, toilets, rainwater harvesting tank, workshop and office space to support the teams in their work and provide appropriate welfare facilities. This project has made a huge difference to teams carrying out the work in the park.

4.3

Seating

The Council allocates funding each year for seating, litter bins and dog waste bins in the Council owned parks. Newer seats are of a similar design with cast ends and substantial timber slats. These seats are attractive and extremely robust. All seats in the park are maintained by the Council's grounds and maintenance teams. There are some older style seats in the park, including the bespoke seats in the Rotary Garden.



Wild flowers and seating in the Rotary Garden

4.4

Dog fouling

The Council launched the 'We're Watching You' campaign in Autumn 2016 which saw a marked reduction in the amount of dog fouling in the park. The Council continues to work with the Friends of Woodford Park on this issue and is recruiting Volunteer Park Wardens to help raise the profile of the issue, talk to park users and report offenders to the Council.

4.5

Lighting

Lighting along footpaths and car park areas is subject to a maintenance contract which includes scouting to spot outages and required repairs. All columns were replaced in 2018 with mid-hinged columns for easy maintenance and energy efficient LED lanterns. Additional lighting was installed along the side of Coronation Hall in January 2020 in response to residents comments about this footpath in the park. We are looking at the potential to improve lighting around the park, in response to comments from residents.

Graffiti

We aim to remove graffiti as quickly as possible. Offensive graffiti is removed immediately. This has not been a significant problem in the park, but can be a challenge to remove, particularly from the concrete skate park. The war memorial is coated with a protective wax to aid in the removal of graffiti should it occur.

Friends of Woodford Park

The friends group (FOWP) are assisting with the maintenance of key areas in the park, in addition to the Queen's Memorial Garden which was created by the group in 2016. The group continues to grow and has extended the beautiful planted beds on the Memorial Ground over last two years. The group volunteers meet regularly with Officers of the Council and representatives from other stakeholders e.g. Rotary.



Queen's Birthday Garden

Typical Maintenance Schedule

January

- Machinery repairs & servicing
- Football pitch repair / preparation
- Spiking of cricket pitch & bowling green
- Check fine turf cricket & bowling green for diseases – treat if required
- Obtain quotes for grass seeds etc
- Cut back trees and undergrowth around the lake
- Tidy yard & depot
- Take down Christmas tree from town centre
- Snow clearance if required

February

- Football pitch repair / preparation
- Machinery repairs & servicing
- Start topping grass – weather permitting
- Spiking of cricket pitch & bowling green
- Check fine turf cricket & bowling green for diseases – treat if required
- Woodchip shrub beds

March

- Apply lawn sand to bowling green and cricket pitch
- Football pitch repair / preparation
- Reseed mini pitches
- Reseed cricket boundary
- Check and repair cricket sight screens as required
- Roll cricket square
- Clean out bowling green gullies
- Rotovate wild flower areas
- Spray soil conditioner – fine turf cricket & bowling green
- Spiking of cricket pitch & bowling green
- Scarify cricket & bowling green

April

- Reseed adult football pitches
- Take down goals
- Measure and mark out cricket boundary
- Set up bowling green irrigation system
- Begin cutting all areas
- Fertilize cricket square
- Measure out wild flower areas
- Spray soil conditioner – fine turf cricket & bowling green
- Spiking of cricket pitch & bowling green
- Scarify cricket & bowling green
- Pre season roll of bowling green

May

- Bowling and cricket season in full flow
- Spray soil conditioner – fine turf cricket & bowling green
- Grass cutting – all areas
- Grass cutting – Allotment site
- Weed spray – selected car park and paths
- Planting out – Garden of Remembrance
- Sow wild flower areas
- Spike bowling green
- Scarify bowling green
- Weeding around Oakwood Centre

June

- Prepare football pitches for Woodley Carnival tournament
- Tidy up and repair following Carnival day
- Spike bowling green
- Scarify bowling green
- Grass cutting – all areas
- Maintenance – Garden of Remembrance

July

- Bowling and cricket green general maintenance
- Spike bowling green
- Scarify bowling green
- Grass cutting – all areas
- Maintenance – Garden of Remembrance
- Fertilize bowling green
- Spray soil conditioner – fine turf bowling green
- Additional watering on bowling green if required

August

- Bowling and cricket green general maintenance
- Measure and mark out x2 adult football pitches and x4 mini pitches
- Set up goals
- Grass cutting – all areas
- Spray soil conditioner – fine turf bowling green
- Spike bowling green
- Scarify bowling green
- Organise end of season work on bowling and cricket greens
- Hedge trimming

September

- Football season starts
- Repair and reseed cricket square
- Top dress and overseed boundary
- Spray soil conditioner – fine turf bowling green
- Spike bowling green
- Scarify bowling green
- Hedge trimming
- Cut allotments
- Maintenance – Garden of Remembrance
- Cut down wild flower areas

October

- Bowling season ends
- Bowling green preparation works for next season – cutting, scarifying, spiking, reseeding, x4tonne top dressing, remove & clean gully pips, close down irrigation system, spray soile conditioner, fertilize green, treat diseases if required.
- Final grass cutting – all areas
- Remove bedding plants – Garden of Remembrance

November

- Put up Christmas tree in town centre
- Occasional grass cut if required
- Tidy willows and hedging
- Tidy war memorial area
- Leaf clearing
- Football pitch maintenance

December

- Football pitch maintenance
- Leaf collecting
- Path clearance
- Prepare machinery – spare parts list
- Tidy up yard and depot
- Spike bowling and cricket green
- Apply woodchip to shrub beds

Year round daily tasks include

- Litter picking
- Fly tipping removal
- Empty bins
- Empty dog waste bins (twice per week)
- Brush dew off bowling green
- Removal of rubbish from lake

5.1

Environmental Policy & Climate Emergency

The Town Council has adopted an Environmental Policy to consider activities across the organisation and to pull together the good management practices already in place. This policy covers energy use, waste, ethical procurement and once adopted will form part of the Council's core operating procedures with individual and organisational responsibilities clearly stated.

A copy of the policy is appended to this plan (**APPENDIX 2**).



At the Full Council Meeting on 1 October the following motion was adopted:

This Council notes that:

1. *The impacts of climate breakdown are already causing serious damage around the world.*
2. *Limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, October 2018) may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society and the private sector.*

This Council therefore:

1. *Commits to a declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' with the aim of becoming a carbon neutral organization by 2030.*
2. *Welcomes the declaration by Wokingham Borough Council of a 'Climate Emergency' and will actively participate in the creation of the Borough-wide climate change strategy to ensure Woodley Town Council is fully engaged in its creation for the benefit of its residents.*
3. *Will explore, with all parts of the community, the development of a local action plan in support of, and to compliment, the Borough Council's climate change strategy plan for those parts relevant to Woodley Town."*

These principles will filter through all services provided by the Council and will influence buying decisions and methods of work relating to the management of our parks.

There are great opportunities to improve our services in a sustainable way, engage in environmental initiatives and encourage residents to contribute to this. The Council is developing a plan to deliver these improvements and achieve these targets.

5.2

Procurement

Practices already in place include procurement from ethical sources where possible and practical and ensuring where possible that suppliers and contractors have an appropriate environmental policy e.g. ensuring that seat manufacturers use sustainably sourced timbers. All purchasing and procurement will be considered in the context of climate emergency and opportunities to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and reduce waste.

No peat containing products are purchased for use on any Council sites.

5.3

Green waste

Green waste is chipped and reused on site where possible. Leaves, wood and brush from tree works and grounds maintenance is chipped on site and used as natural mulch for the shrub beds in and around the park. We are continuing to look at ways to further reduce green waste removed from site.

5.3.1

General Waste

General waste from litter bins and fly-tipping is currently placed in waste skips located at the grounds yard and removed from site as required. Paper, card and plastic recycling was introduced at the leisure centre, Oakwood Centre and Coronation Hall in 2015. We are continuing to look at ways to further reduce waste removed from site and will be reviewing our waste contracts in 2022.

5.4

Energy

The Oakwood Centre and Woodford Park Leisure Centre have been kitted out with solar panels through a 20 year partnership programme with Reading Community Energy Society. The society operates as a community interest company, supported by Energy4All, and provides a low unit rate cost for daytime electricity – fixed for the 20 year duration of the contract, and at no cost to the Council. This reduces costs to the Council while offsetting our carbon footprint by providing renewable energy back to the grid. Any financial surplus is put back in to sustainability projects in the local area.

The leisure centre installation has saved more than 7 tonnes of carbon in the first year since installation. The Oakwood Centre installation was carried out in December 2019 and we are expecting to see a similar level of energy generation from this building.



Solar panels on Woodford Park Leisure Centre

Lighting columns and bulkheads were upgraded with energy efficient LED lamps in 2017. This significantly reduced energy consumption and light pollution. Flood lighting of the 3G pitch and car park is also LED. This was part of the Council's LED replacement programme for all its street and footway lights in the town. Procurement was through the Wokingham Borough Council supply contract which also means a considerable saving.

The Oakwood Centre, Woodford Park Leisure Centre and Coronation Hall have Display Energy Certificates and energy reports - providing information on energy consumption and potential areas for improvement.

Lighting at Woodford Park Leisure Centre, Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall is now all LED. Work to convert the Oakwood Centre lighting to LED is in progress.

5.4.1

Water

The use of water on the site is limited to the bowls green fine turf lawn – through use of an irrigation system, the cricket wicket and the shrubs and roses in the Queen's Birthday Garden. Plant selection elsewhere in the park includes shrubs, grasses and wild flowers that require little or no watering.

In 2021 we installed two rainwater harvesting tanks, one at the Oakwood Centre, and one in the grounds yard. These are operational and are being used to provide recycled water for watering the shrub beds in the park, as well as washing down vehicles and general use at the grounds yard. An additional tank was installed at the Bowls Green in 2022 to further reduce reliance on mains water.



Rainwater harvesting in Woodford Park

5.5

Pesticide/herbicide use

Pesticides/herbicides are used only on limited, specific areas where persistent weeds are prevalent and for the maintenance of the fine turf on the bowls green. All staff are qualified in their use and follow specific working procedures to ensure safety and minimise environmental impact.

5.6

Tree planting

The Council continues to consider opportunities for appropriate tree planting in the park. Where it is necessary to remove or fell trees we ensure that at the least that number of new trees is replanted within the park.

We obtained a number of trees through the Woodland Trust 'Free Trees for Communities' scheme, in November 2020 and these have been planted at various locations in the park and other open spaces.

The Council has planted several specimen trees over the last few years and we now offer residents the opportunity to plant a memorial tree in the park. Although space for planting is limited we are looking at potential locations for planting more trees both in Woodford Park and the Council's other open spaces.

A community orchard of 20 fruit trees was planted in 2014 in partnership with Transition Reading charity.

A specimen English Oak tree was planted in the park as part of the Borough wide Diamond Jubilee Tree Planting Project in 2012.

A line of Cherry Trees and 8 specimen trees were donated and planted in the park through the 'Communitrees' volunteer scheme in 2017. Children from neighbouring St Dominic's School assisted with the planting.

We planted a commemorative tree in Woodford Park to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee in 2022 along with a number of memorial trees.



Planting of the Platinum Jubilee Tree

5.7

Reuse of materials

The bin store near the leisure centre was constructed by the Council's maintenance team using timber from pallets left on site during the construction of the 3G pitch. This removed the need for a large vehicle to remove the pallets which may not have been recycled.

Road planings from the work on the new car park and driveway were reused on site to

resurface the entrance area at Western Avenue. The remainder of the material was reused to reinforce the roadways at the nearby allotment site.

Where it has been necessary to fell trees in the park we have utilised the trunks as natural seating, creating a very natural feel while reusing waste on site.

Silt from the lake restoration works was reused on site to create reed beds and reform the lake edges. Timber used to create the boardwalk was from sustainable sources.

5.8 **Vehicles and equipment**

Vehicles and equipment are serviced regularly to ensure they are working safely and efficiently. We are looking at the potential for using electric vehicles on the parks in future and installing charging points at the Grounds depot and leisure centre.

5.9 **Cycling**

Cycle racks are provided at the Oakwood Centre, leisure centre and the play area to encourage cycling to the destinations in the park.

In 2019 the Council set up a Cycling Working Party to look at improving cycle ways and provision through the town and the surrounding areas – linking in to the other local initiatives like 'My Journey' Wokingham.

Woodford Park is now also home to a 'Bike Hub' as part of the My Journey scheme. The hub offers a location for storage of bicycles and equipment and a venue for cycling lessons and other initiatives such as 'Balance Bike Club'.

Cycling lessons at Woodford Park Bike Hub



6 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

Woodford Park's landscape is predominantly a creation of the 1960's and early 1970's with a distinctive landscape of sculpted hills and a lake. It is an example of a mid-twentieth century public park development contemporary with the 'new' town of Woodley.

The Park with its many mature trees and lake provides a wildlife habitat in an otherwise entirely built environment.

6.1

Wild flowers

Wild flower borders have been introduced in various areas of the park, providing a habitat for bees and insects, cover for birds and an attractive flowering display. Different flower mixes are used each year to provide variety and interest.



Wild flowers in Woodford Park

6.2

Natural margins

Several of the margin areas around the edge of the park are left to grow longer to provide habitat for insects, birds and small mammals.

6.3

Trees

Programmed tree works are supplemented by emergency works as required. All major works are carried out by the Council's contractor. The trees in the park are a fundamental part of its identity and new tree planting is planned in several areas during the next few seasons. Felled trees are also used as seats where possible, or left to rot to provide habitat for beetles etc. The Council's policy is to plant more trees than are felled or die in the park each year. The Council received a number of tree/hedging whips of various kinds in November 2020, which were planted in Woodford Park and the Council's other open spaces.

Crocus planting

Each year since 2016 approximately 2,500 crocus bulbs have been planted in various areas of the park. These bulbs were donated by local Rotary Club with planting coordinated by Friends of Woodford Park volunteers. This was part of a worldwide Rotary campaign to raise the profile of the End Polio Now campaign. In 2019 the local Beavers and cubs also took part in the planting under the supervision of the Friends group volunteers. The friends group continues this annual event. This work continues with around 2,500 bulbs planted in 2022 and 2023.



Volunteer crocus planting in Woodford Park

Social heritage

Woodford Park has been an important feature in the lives of Woodley residents over many years. The mounds, lake, sports pitches and community activities are much loved and we want them to continue to provide lasting memories for residents in Woodley. The 'Big Mound' has been used for many years as a great site for tobogganing in winter and picnicking and water sliding in summer.



Tobogganing and water sliding on the Big Mound in Woodford Park

Lake restoration project

The main elements of this project are now complete and have transformed the lake and it's surrounds with a nature area, native planting, water lilies, boardwalk, dipping ponds, new paths, de-silting and reshaped banks. Works were completed in March 2019. The ecology report is appended to this plan. **(APPENDIX 3)**

The project aimed to increase the numbers and variety of invertebrates while continuing to provide a habitat for wildfowl and improving the amenity value of the area. The new hogging path along the north bank will be extended and this area sown with wildflowers.

The lake is home to many native ducks, Canada Geese, Egyptian Geese, Coots and Moorhens with occasional visits from Heron and even Cormorant, and is a highly valued feature in the park. The regeneration project followed a public consultation and extensive environmental and topographic surveys to develop a plan to enhance habitat as well as amenity value.

The project was a significant investment in the future of the park and has been very well received by residents. The project is also providing opportunities to develop knowledge and skills within our grounds maintenance team in enhancing and managing the lake environment.



De-silting and boardwalk construction



Completed boardwalk

Memorial Ground Board – restoration

The Memorial Ground Board was in very poor condition and had not been on display for many years. In January 2020 the Buildings Maintenance Team repaired and restored the board to its original condition – ready to be reinstalled on the Memorial Ground.

The board will now be regularly maintained and is an important part of the retained heritage of the park.



7 Community Involvement

7.1

Friends of Woodford Park



The Friends of Woodford Park group began in 2016 with a small group of local residents contacting the Council to discuss how they might assist in the upkeep of the Park. The Council has supported the group by providing free meeting spaces, attending monthly group meetings and encouraging the group to develop. The Council awards the group a community grant each year which goes toward the purchase of plants, tools and equipment.

The group's first project was the Queen's Birthday Garden, to celebrate Queen's 90th birthday. The garden was formally opened by the Rt. Honorable Theresa May in June 2016 and received a level 4 'Thriving' award in the Britain In Bloom community garden category in September 2016. The group has carried out extensive work in the Rotary Garden and continues to add great value to the park.



Official opening of the Queens Birthday Garden



Shrub planting in the Rotary Garden



Shrub planting by the Friends of Woodford Park volunteers

The friends group is now well established with a core of regular volunteers. The group has engaged with a large local company (SAGE) to make use of their corporate volunteering programme – with staff groups working alongside the friends group volunteers.

The Friends of Woodford Park is a constituted with an elected committee. In 2019 an elected member of the Council was invited and appointed to committee to further strengthen the partnership and link between the group and the Council.

The group has also forged links with other local groups e.g. Rotary, Beavers and local companies and suppliers. They have a stall at the Woodley Carnival each year and sell postcards and calendars showcasing the groups work in the park. In December 2019 the group received a donation of crocuses from the local WI along with various other bulbs donated by a local plant nursery.



Friends of Woodford Park - Recruiting volunteers

Consultation

Woodley Town Council seeks to consult with users and stakeholders on a regular basis and also during the early stages of specific projects. We consulted with local parents and children on specific items of play equipment for inclusion in the play areas, with over 100 responses.

We held consultation days and ran an online questionnaire consultation as part of the skate park project. We also involved local young people in the design of the skate park through our youth charity partner – Just Around The Corner. We also held on site consultation days regarding the lake restoration project which provided great feedback on the proposals and comments on other things to consider.

As part of the 'Destination' play area project we carried out two public consultations, one to profile frequency of visits, age of children, methods of transport and general preferences in terms of play equipment style and materials. A second consultation was carried out on the shortlisted play area designs so that park users could input directly into the scheme that will eventually be delivered. We had over 700 responses to this consultation, providing invaluable information to inform the project, while enabling us to engage with park users. We also consulted with other stakeholders including Addington School – who provided input on the inclusive elements of the designs. A copy of the consultation is attached at **APPENDIX 1**.

Residents survey

A Residents Survey is carried out periodically and shows us that usage of the park across the community is high - 85% in the 2018 survey (80% in 2015), as is the percentage of residents who regard the standard of the park as good or excellent – 84% in 2018 survey (72% - 2015 survey). Relevant information from the 2018 Residents Survey is appended to this plan. The survey suggests an increase in usage and standard of upkeep since the Council embarked on its Green Flag programme. **(APPENDIX 4)**

Woodley Carnival

Woodford Park has been home to Woodley Carnival since it began in 1960. The Carnival includes a week full of community activities raising money for local good causes. The Carnival Committee contributed £233,000 toward the building of the Oakwood Centre in the park and the Council maintains close links with the Carnival project.

Carnival day sees thousands of visitors from across the community come to Woodford Park each year with stalls, entertainers, carnival float parade, live music, vintage car show, children's activities, funfair and firework display. Woodford Park is the ideal venue for Carnival, and hosted it's 60 year anniversary carnival in 2022.



Woodley Carnival in Woodford Park

7.5

Remembrance

In 2013 the Woodley War Memorial group was set up by residents with the aim of raising funds and finding a site for a war memorial in Woodley. The Town Council supported the project from the outset and worked closely with the group to achieve this. Funding was raised through donations from local people and organisations, along with Section 106 developers contributions secured by the Town Council. The project was a huge success in terms of the partnership working, community engagement, the delivered project and ongoing use. The memorial was unveiled in May 2014 and provides the venue for the annual Gathering of Remembrance. The gathering is very well attended including around 200 children from the local schools.



2018 Gathering of Remembrance at Woodford Park Memorial

In 2018 the Council held a special Remembrance event to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The event on the Memorial Ground and in the Oakwood Centre drew thousands of local people to the park to take part in a solemn gathering of Remembrance followed by a light hearted community event in the Oakwood Centre with tea & cake served by the local WI, live music from the period, poetry readings from local young people and a film showing in the theatre.



2018 Commemoration event in the Oakwood Centre

Every household in Woodley received a postcard invitation to the event. Events such as this serve to strengthen the community's bond with the park, and demonstrate its original and ongoing purpose as an important community space. The location of the Oakwood Centre and its facilities within the park enables us to successfully stage such events and link the park with the other community services provided by the Council.

In 2018 the civic space around the memorial was enhanced with the addition of memorial story panels, wreath laying area and flagpoles as well as the refurbishment of the Memorial Gates to the park.

In 2022 the Council supported a community led Remembrance Sunday event which was very successful and will be continued in future years.

7.6

Social media

The Council employs a Communications Officer to manage the social media and marketing output of the Council, as well as managing events and identifying opportunities to link up with partners. The Council's social media and website output has improved significantly over the last few years and this is particularly effective in communicating with residents regarding activities and works in the park.

Woodford Park Leisure Centre and the Oakwood Centre use Facebook and Twitter for marketing and information purposes. These channels have enabled us to reach many more people than would otherwise be possible. This has been particularly useful in answering questions about issues or providing up to date public information. A recent example of this was the temporary closure of the paddling pool due to poor water quality as a result of extremely heavy use during the summer. We were able to notify a large number of users about the temporary closure, the reasons for it and when the facility would be reopened. This generated a very positive response. We were also able to provide updates on the lake regeneration project and advise of pathway closures as the work was carried out.

7.7

Memorial seats, trees and plaques

Residents can apply for a memorial seat or tree in the park, or a memorial plaque in the Garden of Remembrance. This provides another important link with residents and helps to encourage ownership and community involvement in the park. Most of the old seating in the park has now been replaced with new memorial seats.

7.8

Community orchard

The community orchard was planted in 2014 in partnership with Transition Reading. The orchard of 20 fruit trees was planted by local families and volunteers, providing free fruit for the community as well as food and habitat for birds and insects. The project trains volunteers in tree planting and grafting in order to expand the project to other areas in a sustainable way while promoting the benefits of healthy eating and physical exercise. The orchard has since been added to with additional fruit trees.



Volunteers planting the Community Orchard

7.9

Events and community

Woodford Park is home to a number of community events throughout the year and the Town Council works closely with these community groups.

Regular events list

- Park Run / Junior Park Run (Weekly)
- Woodley 10k Run (May)
- Schools Cross Country (October)
- Sports Week (May)
- Woodley Carnival (June)
- Circus Starr (October)
- Funfairs (May, June, October)
- Gathering of Remembrance (November)
- Wokingham schools orienteering event (May)
- Picnic in the Park (August)



Picnic in the Park Fun day

Community links and partnerships

Woodford Park Leisure Centre, situated in the centre of the park is home to Optalis – providing care and support to older people, people with dementia, learning and/or physical disabilities. The park provides a perfect location for outdoor sessions and means that clients can interact with local people in the park and the centre.

Woodley Pre-School is located within the park. This provides a real benefit for the school and another link between the Council, the community and the healthy activities on offer at the leisure centre and in the park.

Woodley Town Council works with partners including Wokingham Borough Council and Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative to achieve strategic goals for Woodley as a whole. Current partnership projects include the regeneration of the north end of Woodley town centre, the provision of new public toilets and plans for a new play area in the park. Woodley is developing into a destination town with the arrival of new restaurants, coffee shops and businesses. Woodford Park is a key part of this change due to its location and range of facilities.



Woodford Park is the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the services provided by Woodley Town Council.

It's central location in the town and it's link between two sites owned and managed by the Council means that it is well known in the area and regularly used by residents both young and old.

The Council has recently appointed a Communications Manager, whose objectives include promotion of Woodford Park and its facilities.

The marketing of the park is a mix of stand-alone and joint marketing with other Council services.

8.1

Objectives:

- To promote the park and its facilities to Woodley residents
- To ensure residents are kept up to date with any changes within the park
- To engage local residents and organisations within Woodley in joint projects
- To promote events /activities within the park across the borough
- To use feedback from residents to shape future projects and marketing activity

8.2

Marketing activity:

8.2.1

Woodley residents survey

We use feedback from our annual residents survey to shape park projects and understand the key uses, issues, and elements of the park that people relate to. Residents are asked to rate the facility, which enables us to focus our efforts.

8.2.2

Press releases

Park information and events are regularly included in our weekly press releases to the traditional press and online media.

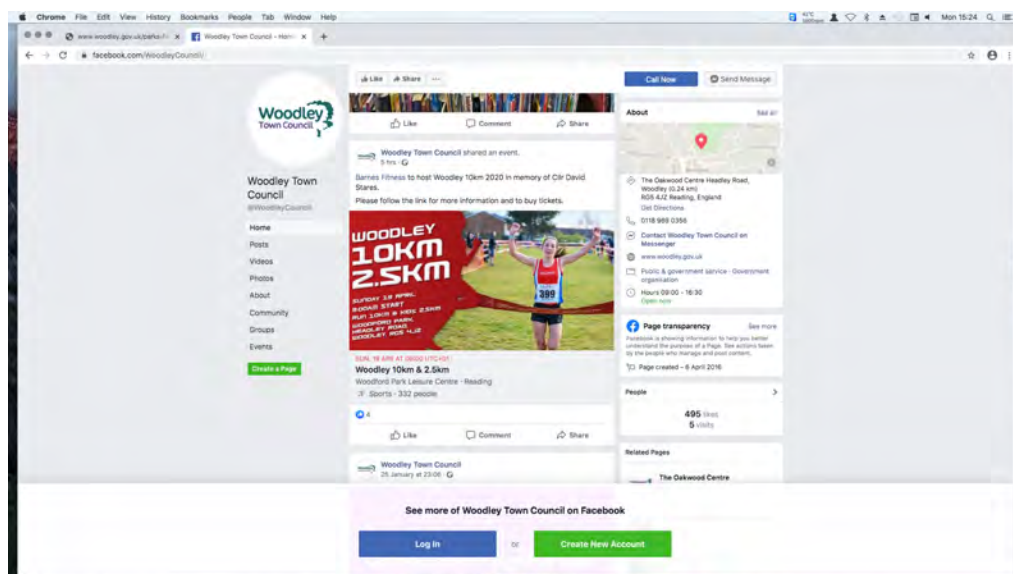


Local press article following residents survey

8.2.3

Social media

Woodley Town Council and Woodford Park Leisure Centre are very active on facebook and twitter. We use this medium to communicate plans, activities and events held within the park, our park partnerships, as well as interact with park users. This comes with its own challenges and Council has adopted an social media policy to manage its output and responses.



Woodley Town Council on Facebook

8.2.4

Woodley Town Council newsletter - Woodley Herald

The newsletter is produced 3 times a year, and includes information on new initiatives, facility updates, and promotion of activities and events within the park. **(APPENDIX 5)**

8.2.5

Events

Having an effective social media presence means that we can reach large numbers of people in a very short space of time. The leisure centre facebook page in particular has a large number of followers and we are able to reach several thousand people in a matter of hours. Events and activities are also publicised on the notice boards around the park, the Council website and through our good relationship with the local press.



Picnic in the Park poster

8.2.6

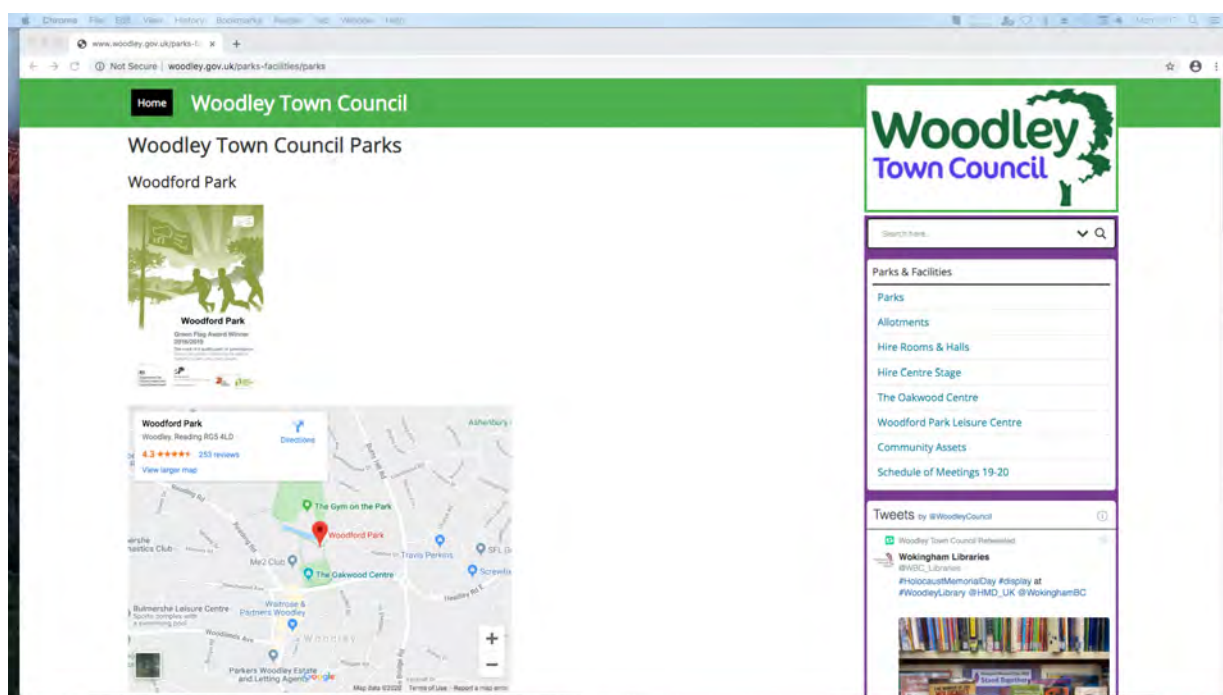
Open days / consultation

Residents are consulted on all projects within the park either directly or through partnership organisations or a combination of methods. Open days/ consultations are planned and communicated across the traditional press, social media and through marketing activities. The Town Council has a stall at the annual Woodley Carnival in Woodford Park and uses this opportunity to consult with residents and visitors about park projects.

8.2.7

Website

Woodley Town Council's website was re-launched in 2018 with specific pages for parks and open spaces. It also has a regularly updated newsfeed and links to our social media channels. We monitor the page views across the website and aim to continually improve the content.

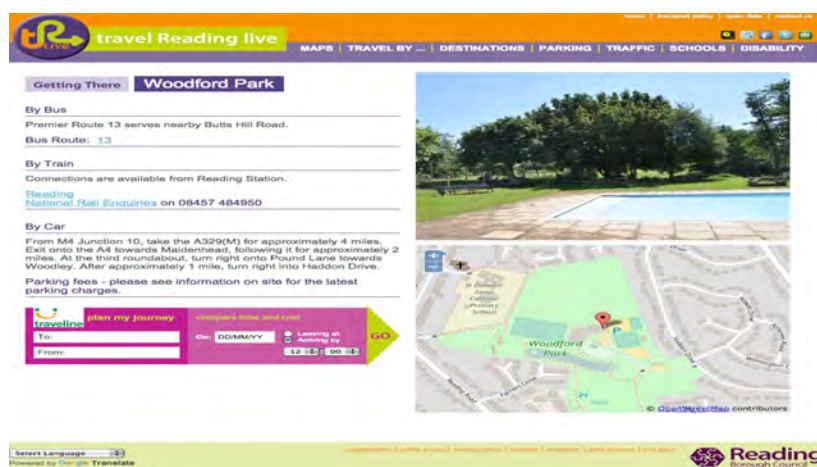


Woodley Town Council website

8.2.8

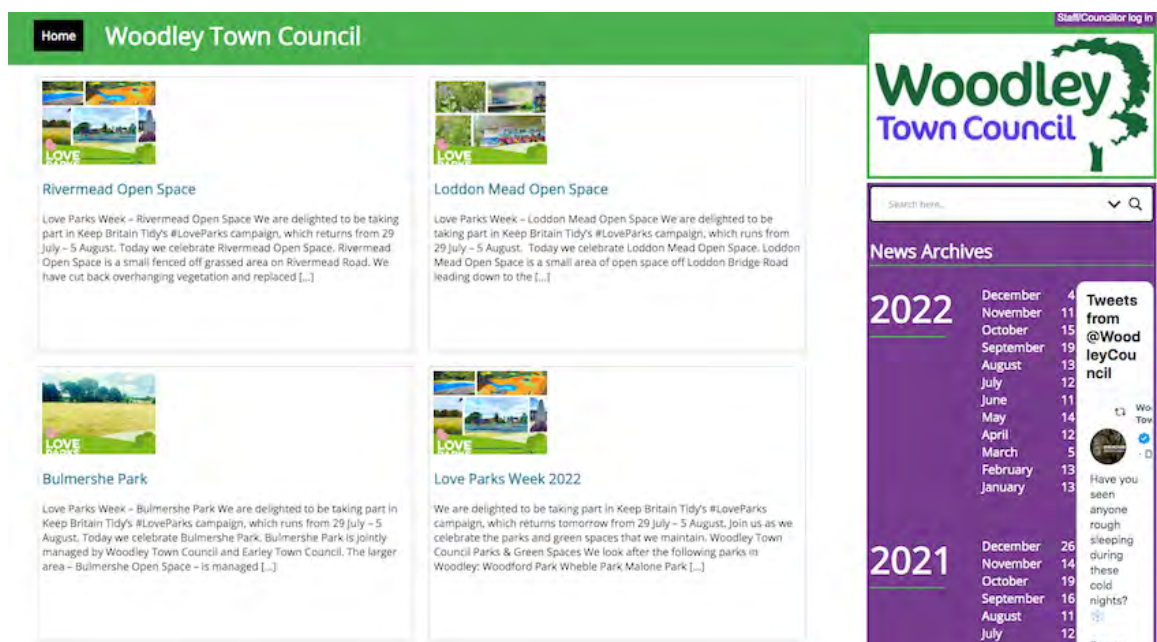
Local listings

Listed on Travel Reading Live website - listing facilities, directions, bus routes etc. <http://www.reading-travelinfo.co.uk/parks/woodford-park.aspx>. We are working to increase local listings and market Woodford Park as a destination.



Love Parks Week

In 2022 we ran a series of press articles to publicise Love Parks Week – focussing on a different park/open space each day. In 2023 we ran a biodiversity quiz to encourage people to get out into the park and see what wildlife, flora and fauna they could find.



9 Management

9.1 Structure and process

The Council's Leisure Services Committee oversees the management and resourcing of the parks and leisure facilities. Officers report to each meeting of the committee with issues, achievements, initiatives and activities in the park. Woodford Park is recognised by the Council as being a key facility serving the entire town.

The Council's management team is responsible for identifying issues and reporting to the Leisure Services Committee.

The Council has specific budgets for the park, tree works, play area etc in addition to an annual capital programme fund for larger works and projects.

The Council applied for a Heritage Lottery Grant in 2008 which was unsuccessful. As part of the process the Council did receive a project planning grant which identified several key projects and a number of areas for improvement. The Council has used this as a framework for achieving these projects and improvements through other funding streams. Projects achieved since 2008 include the skate park, war memorial and civic space, new play area, new paddling pool liner, new car park area and resurfacing of old car park, improved access to the leisure centre and new 3G artificial grass pitch, regeneration of the lake and new 'Destination' play area coming in 2022.

9.1.1 Policies

The Council's policies are set out in its standing orders and the terms of reference of the individual committees and working groups. These procedures, coupled with a culture of transparency and public inclusion, ensure a responsible and appropriate mechanism for the management of resources and assets.

9.1.2 Challenges

The diversity of activities and high numbers of park users create many challenges in terms of maintenance and potential conflict between park users. We aim to continue providing as wide a range of activities as possible while consulting with park users and measuring satisfaction. There are also increasing strains on resources in the sector which highlight the need for an effective and realistic management plan to ensure adequate resourcing in the future.

9.1.3 Green Flag Award

We are using the Green Flag criteria as a framework for continuous improvement and a measure of achievement in these key areas. Achieving Green Flag status has provided a benchmark for standards and assist the Council in allocating appropriate resources to maintain those standards.

9.2 Budget and resourcing

The Council sets the budgets annually for each area of expenditure and income. In addition, the Council operates an annual Capital Programme fund for projects and capital investment. Project items can also be added to the programme during the year if circumstances require.

9.2.1

External funding

The Council maintains a list of projects requiring significant external funding. This list is reviewed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The new play area for Woodford Park was identified as a priority project on this list and was allocated £200,000 funding from Section 106 developers contributions along with additional funding from the Town Council. Several park projects have been delivered through this mechanism including the play area near the leisure centre, the war memorial and the skate park.

9.3

Staff team

The Grounds and Maintenance Teams have many years of experience – specific to the Council’s parks and open spaces. This experience and knowledge is extremely valuable and we added a new trainee position to the team in 2018. This was in recognition of the raised standard at which we wish to maintain the park and the additional resources required to do this. We are currently restructuring the team to further improve working between the two teams and ensure a cohesive approach to projects, health & safety and day-to-day operations.

Powers and Duties of the Leisure Services Committee

9.4

1. To provide, manage and promote informal and formal sports and recreational facilities within the parks and open spaces for individuals, groups and clubs.
2. To provide, manage and promote the use of Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall by the general public.
3. To provide, manage and promote the use of Bulmershe Leisure Centre and Woodford Park Leisure Centre by the general public.
4. To recommend the fees and charges for the use of the facilities within the Committee's remit.
5. To approve terms and conditions for the use of any of the facilities within the Committee's remit.
6. To have authority to agree one-off applications for free use of facilities, and to approve exclusive use of agreed areas or facilities by other local authorities or voluntary organisations.
7. To identify areas for the development of leisure and recreational facilities and activities and make any recommendations to the Council.
8. To provide and manage children's play equipment in the parks and open spaces managed or leased by the Council.
9. To provide and promote sports and leisure courses and activities, both in-house and through agencies, to residents and the general public.
10. To provide, manage and maintain the Council's parks, recreation grounds and open spaces, encompassing all fixed and loose fixtures and fittings.
11. To promote arts and culture in Woodley through the work of the Committee and act as an enabler to develop and provide art and cultural activities.
12. To co-operate and liaise with Wokingham Borough Council on recreational and associated matters.
13. To co-operate and liaise with other local authorities and organisations on the promotion and development of recreational facilities, which are to the benefit of Woodley residents.
14. To develop new leisure and recreational facilities in the Council's ownership or jointly with other statutory or voluntary bodies.
15. To liaise and co-operate with other bodies who are developing leisure or recreational facilities of benefit to the people of Woodley.
16. To seek grant or other funding towards the costs of new developments or activities within the Committee's remit and make any recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee or Council, where appropriate.
17. To recommend to the Strategy and Resources Committee the committee's requirements for revenue estimates, in accordance with the policies and format required by the Strategy Resources Committee.
18. To be authorised to appoint sub-committees and/or working parties to deal with matters delegated to the committee, and to delegate such powers as vested in the committee.
19. To manage the committee's budgets and be authorised to transfer funds between each head within a location to meet unexpected expenditure within the powers delegated to the committee.
20. To consider, where appropriate, the environmental impact on decisions being made by the committee.

LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE - BUDGET SUMMARY 2023/24					
Expenditure		Actual	Estimate	Revised Est	Estimate
		2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24
Code	Description				
	Woodford Park Leisure Centre	326195	379532	394836	438869
	Grounds Maintenance-Depot	37934	40878	45762	48323
	Football	19278	22473	21352	22710
	Cricket	12043	13039	13473	14655
	Bowling Green	15019	17672	16941	17989
	Woodford Park	47386	40902	46691	48540
	Memorial Ground		10213		
	Garden of Remembrance	6728	7431	7634	8403
	Play Areas /Open Spaces	23643	14035	13653	15975
	Coronation Hall	25709	29907	28726	36032
	Chapel Hall	19615	24483	24154	26838
	Allotments	18339	20265	21349	22550
	Amenities	4704	5108	5744	5891
	Events	2444	16785	16166	15655
	Public toilet	4394	6023	5343	4221
	Youth services	0	34000	0	35000
Total		563431	682746	661824	761651
Income		Actual	Estimate	Revised Est	Estimate
		2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24
Code	Description				
	Woodford Park Leisure Centre	366578	356824	368804	373329
	Grounds Maintenance-Depot	501	300	430	430
	Football	8705	9500	9790	9390
	Cricket	4505	4600	5871	5900
	Bowling Green	7534	8016	7932	7966
	Woodford Park	2998	2150	6609	6756
	Memorial Ground		7650		
	Garden of Remembrance	1348	1150	1300	1300
	Play Areas /Open Spaces	0	0	0	0
	Coronation Hall	20122	15000	35000	35000
	Chapel Hall	32505	25500	30000	30000
	Allotments	13180	14180	14280	14665
	Amenities	0	0	0	0
	Events	0	0	0	0
	Public toilet	649	600	500	500
	Youth services	0	0	0	0
Total		458625	445470	480516	485236
	HMRC JRS funding	29195		0	0
	Tier 4 LRSG Lockdown funding	0			
Net		104806	237276	181308	276415

Assessment

The Town Council aims to continually improve Woodford Park and the facilities offered while being mindful of the needs of a very diverse range of user groups.

This assessment outlines the strengths and areas for improvement against each of the Green Flag Criteria.

CRITERIA	STRENGTHS	IMPROVEMENTS/ OPPORTUNITIES/ISSUES
A welcoming place	• Good access • Diverse range of facilities • Good and appropriate seating • Signage within the park – installed 2018 • New, inclusive play area on Memorial Ground	• Signage on approaches to the park. • Reinforce desire line pathway across the Memorial Ground (scheduled summer 2024)
Healthy, safe, secure	• Safe facilities • Inspection regime • Neighbourhood Police Team on site • Council Offices and Leisure Centre on site • Active anti-dog fouling campaign • Safer Places Scheme • Youth outreach work • Sporting and fitness facilities and activities	• Recruit volunteer Park Wardens • Continue to monitor and address dog fouling • Improve lighting
Well maintained and clean	• Litter & dog bins provided and replaced • Good standard of grounds maintenance • Additional staff member in Grounds Team - 2018	• Continue and build on volunteer participation (FOWP)
Sustainability	• Green waste reused on site • Limited use of herbicide • Ethical suppliers • Reuse of felled trees on site • Community Orchard • Climate Emergency declared – this will filter through to all Council activities.	• Eliminate use of herbicide • Staff training • Develop Climate Emergency initiatives.

	• Solar Panel project. • Rainwater harvesting in place.	
Conservation and heritage	• Tree planting • Fruit orchard • Wild Flowers • Lake restoration /Nature trail	• More Bat/bird nest boxes
Community Involvement	• Friends group • Links with community organisations • Consultation • Wide range of activities	• Potential conflicts between user groups • Development of Friends Group • Volunteer Park Wardens
Marketing	• Council website • Friends group social media sites • Council Communications Manager in post • Woodley Herald newsletter • Residents survey • New signage/notice boards installed 2018. • Improved website and social media output.	• Directional road signage • Published events list • Increased public information listings
Management	• Management Plan • Grounds team and Council offices based in the park • Committee process and Council commitment to improvement	• On-going resources to improve and maintain • Maintain Green Flag standards • Reduced opportunity for external funding e.g S106

Woodford Park Action Plan 2024

9.7

ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
A welcoming place			
Install way finding signage and notice boards throughout the park and approaches to the park.	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk /	Feb 2017	COMPLETE
New, inclusive play area on Memorial Ground	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk /	May 2022	COMPLETE
Replace play area signage, building signage, skate park signage.	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk / Communications Manager	Feb 2023	COMPLETE
Pathway across the Memorial Ground	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk / Committee		Scheduled summer 2024
Healthy, safe, secure			
Full Tree Survey	Town Clerk	Aug 2022	COMPLETE
Recruit volunteer Park Wardens	Town Clerk	Ongoing	Under review
Continue to monitor and address dog fouling	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Campaign launched Sept 2016. Signage to be renewed and publicity campaign Spring 2022
Improve lighting	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk /	2017	COMPLETE All columns replaced and lanterns upgraded to LED

Improve lake pathway	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk /		COMPLETE Pathways repaired and resurfaced as part of lake regeneration project.
Well maintained and clean			
Replace timber planters in Garden of Remembrance	Amenities Manager	Oct 2022	COMPLETE
Take on a trainee/apprentice in Grounds Team	Amenities Manager	2017	COMPLETE New staff member in post
Replace knee rail fencing	Amenities Manager	Sept 2024	Works started. Will continue through 2024.
Continue and build on volunteer participation (FOWP)	Town Clerk	Ongoing	Attendance and support at FOWP meetings. Meeting space made available free of charge. Recruiting Volunteer Park Wardens.
Sustainability			
Council to adopt organisational environmental & energy policy	Town Clerk	2017	COMPLETE Council adopted environmental policy and subsequently declared Climate Emergency.
Develop Climate Emergency policies and procedures – implement changes to achieve carbon zero by 2030	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk / Committee	Ongoing	Working party appointed to develop climate change initiatives and achieve carbon Zero by 2030.
Staff training	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Grounds Officer achieved level 3 NVQ Horticulture January 2020. Consider

			ongoing training opportunities for team.
Install rainwater harvesting tanks at grounds depot and Oakwood Centre	Amenities Manager		COMPLETE
Conservation and heritage			
Lake restoration	Town Clerk		COMPLETE
Install tree/building mounted bat nesting boxes	Amenities Manager	Mar 2024	
Improve habitat diversity	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Wildlife/habitat report goes to each Leisure Services Committee meeting for consideration and input.
Potential conflicts between user groups	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Regular consultation days in the park - surveys of park users to understand needs and potential conflicts. Attendance and support at FOWP meetings. Meeting space made available free of charge. Explore volunteer opportunities as part of lake restoration project. Recruit and support Volunteer Park Wardens. Engagement with schools on nature trail as part of lake restoration project.
Raise profile of the park. Engage more with	Amenities Manager /	Ongoing	Regular articles and updates

the public through press, social media.	Town Clerk / Comms Manager		in Woodley Herald, website, press releases, social media regarding activities, events & initiatives in the park.
On-going resources to improve and maintain facilities. Maintain Green Flag standards.	Amenities Manager / Town Clerk / Committee	Ongoing	Management Plan will provide framework for standards and inform resource requirements.

Targets will be added to this action plan as policies and initiatives associated with the Climate Emergency develop, and as improvement opportunities are identified.

Woodford Park has seen a significant investment in recent years on specific projects to widen the range of activities and create a diverse yet cohesive public space. We have also worked with local community partners to introduce new features for all to enjoy. Investment values are approximate.

PLAY AREA

2010 £60,000

2012 £28,000

The play area was funded from a combination of government Play Builder funding and Section 106 developers contributions. This play area is located on the site of an old and little used mini golf course. We consulted with local children and parents to ensure that the equipment was appropriate and exciting. The result is a hugely popular play area catering for a wide age range.

SKATE PARK

2011

£43,000

The skate park project involved a great deal of consultation, both with local young people regarding the design, and with residents living next to the park who had concerns about noise and antisocial behavior. The project was funded from Section 106 developers contributions (£25,000) and a youth capital fund grant (£18,000) and has been a huge success. The skate park offers a focus for young people to engage in physical activity and reduced skateboarding in local car parks which was becoming an issue. Our local youth charity partners JAC and the neighborhood police team use the skate park as a location for engaging with young people and this has been a huge benefit in addressing antisocial behaviour in the park and other areas of the town.



Skate Park opening

JUBILEE OAK TREE

2012

Woodford Park is home to one of two specimen English oak trees, planted by the Council as part of the Diamond Jubilee Tree Planting Project. The project was run in partnership with the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association.

CIVIC SPACE & WAR MEMORIAL

2014

£95,000

The civic space and war memorial project was a true community project with the Council working in close partnership with local volunteers and fundraisers. Local people raised £27,000 toward the cost of the war memorial, with £68,000 received from Section 106 developers contributions for the civic space in which the memorial is located. The war memorial was formally unveiled by HRH The Duke of York in July 2014 and now provides a fitting venue for Gatherings of Remembrance and also an attractive area to sit and enjoy the park.

HERITAGE MEMORIAL TRAIL

2014

Woodley Town Council worked with neighbouring town and parish councils to produce a Heritage Memorial Trail. The new memorial in Woodford Park was listed as a site of interest on the trail and information boards on Woodley's WW1 history were produced and located in the Oakwood Centre, viewable from the park.

MEMORIAL GATES

2014

£6,500

The entrance gates onto the Memorial Ground were commissioned to coincide with the war memorial and civic space project. These unique gates were created by a local blacksmith and are a piece of art, representing the spirit of remembrance and the history of the Memorial Ground. It is intended that the gates be the first piece of an art trail in the park which will reflect Woodley's history and community.



Memorial gates and war memorial

COMMUNITY ORCHARD

2014

We worked with a local voluntary partner - Transition Reading to plant a community orchard in Woodford Park. The orchard was planted by a group of local families and volunteers and provides 20 fruit trees entirely available to the community and also provide food for birds and insects.

3G PITCH

2016

£513,000

This project saw the delivery of a new 3rd Generation floodlit artificial grass pitch, new car park and new tennis court surface. The Town Council obtained a grant of £277,200 from the Football Foundation FA Premier League Facilities Fund toward the project, designed to further develop football in Woodley and provide a first class facility in Woodford Park for many years to come. The Council has developed a football development plan and is working closely with partners and local clubs to provide an inclusive, value for money facility with a wide range of users. The Council has a 21 year partner arrangement with the Football Foundation to ensure the success and sustainability of the facility.



Aerial view of 3G pitch in Woodford Park

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY GARDEN

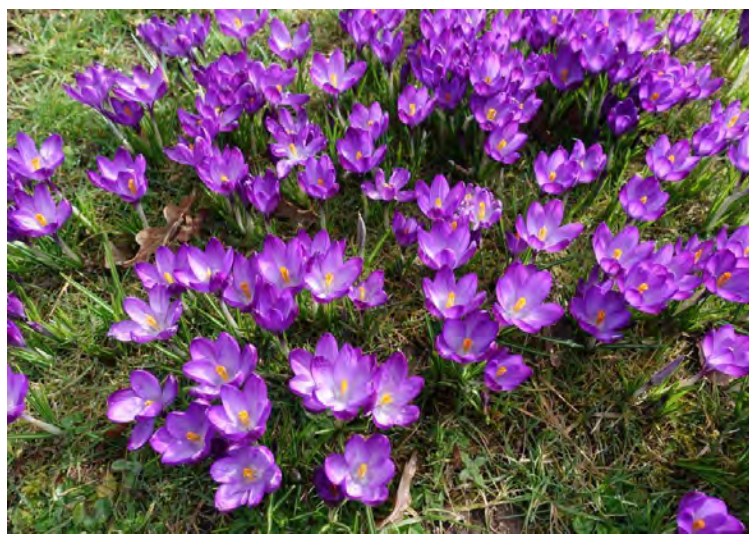
2016

The Friends of Woodford Park group came together in early 2016. With support from the Council and local sponsors the group has created the Queen's Birthday Garden in the park. The work was carried out by volunteers with support from the Council's grounds team and the result is a wonderful trio of flower beds adjacent to the war memorial.

CROCUS BEDS

Annual

The Friends of Woodford Park group obtained 2,500 crocus bulbs through a project run by the local Rotary Club. These were planted near the entrance into the park from Haddon Drive.



Crocuses in Woodford Park

SIGNAGE

2018

£12,000

Notice board and way finding signage installed across the park. This project has been a great success and was a key item in the initial Green Flag Award Assessment in 2016.



Noticeboard and way finding signage

MEMORIAL STORY PANELS & FLAGPOLES

2018

£12,000

The Memorial Story Panels were installed as part of the centenary commemoration in 2018. The panels contain stories of Woodley families affected by the conflict and continue to generate a great deal of interest. The flag poles were included to complete this very special area of the park.



Memorial Story Panels

LAKE REGENERATION

2018

£150,000

The lake habitat was in desperate need of intervention to create a more diverse ecosystem and also improve the amenity value. This project has had a massive impact and will continue to develop as the growing seasons progress. We have introduced various native plants which have already seen an increase in amphibians and dragonfly on the lake. We have also introduced several areas of water lilies – in protective cages until sufficiently established.

The new pathways and boardwalk are very popular and make the lake a very special area to visit and spend time. There are purpose built dipping ponds and a nature path along the north bank, which will have reeds and marginal planting on one side and wild flowers on the other – once established.



Boardwalk across the lake

DESTINATION PLAY AREA

June 2022

£257,000

This exciting project provides a brand new, first class play space with a focus on inclusivity. Funded from Section 106 developers funds with additional funding from the Town Council, this play area is a true 'Destination' and is attracting visitors from all over Woodley and beyond. This project is a major addition to Woodford Park and is one of the best play areas in area.

Inclusivity was designed in to the scheme from the outset to ensure a stimulating and fun play experience for children of all ages and abilities. The tender brief, public consultation and scheme designs are included in the Management Plan.



Woodford Park Play Area 2022

New Investment – 2023/24

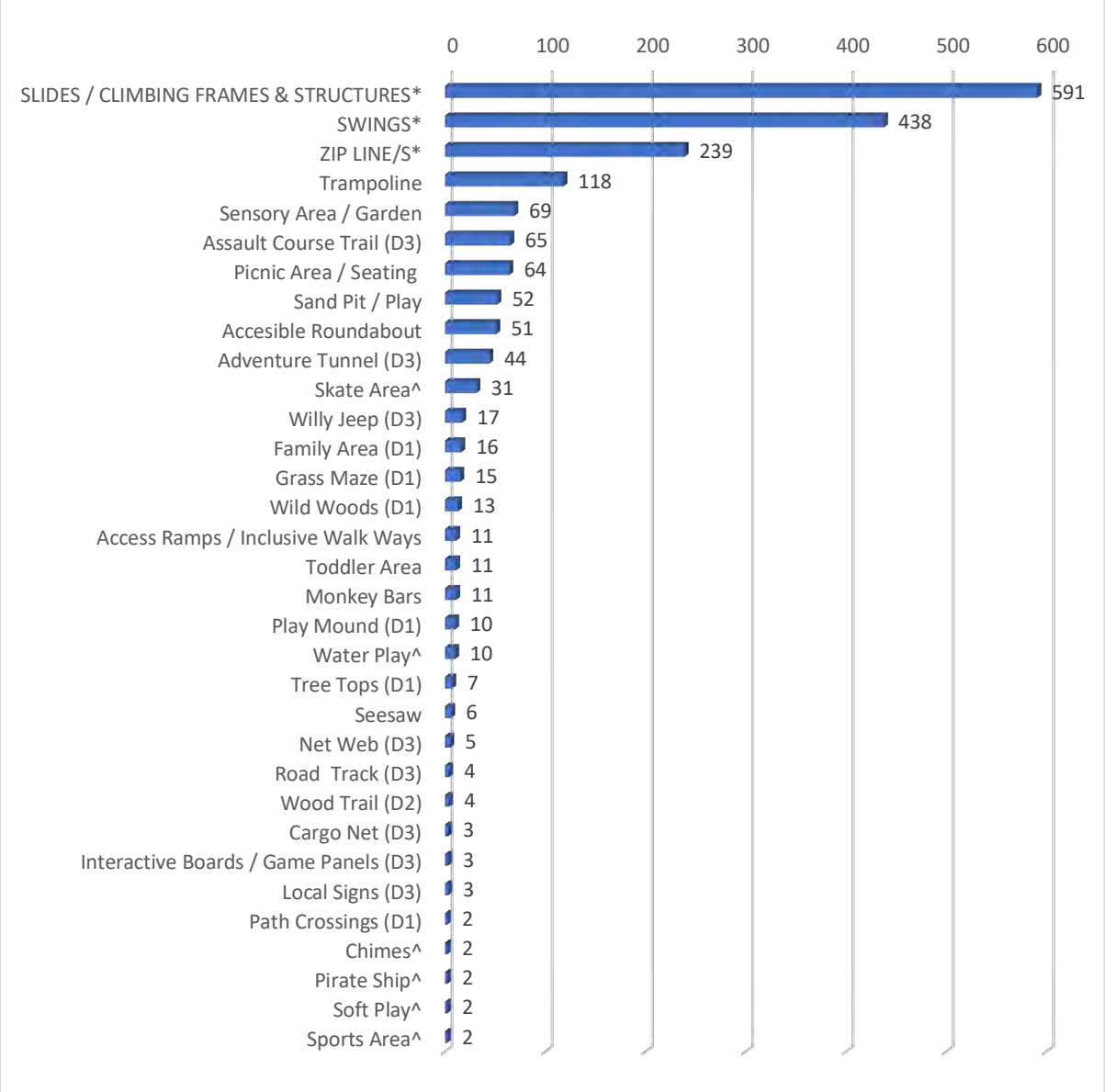
- Replacement of knee rail fencing throughout the park
- New signage
- Additional tree planting
- New pathways
- Pathway across Memorial Ground

WOODLEY TOWN COUNCIL PLAY PARK CONSULTATION RESPONSES

In total **733** responses were received to the consultation; **645 online** (88%) and **88 paper (12%)**. The preferred overall design was **Design 1 (Proludic)** with 445 votes (60.7%). The preferred option was to **partially enclose** the play area with 344 votes (46.9%).

Design Preference	Enclosed	Partially Enclosed	Open Plan	None	Grand Total	
Design 1 (Proludic)	85	202	155	3	445	60.7%
Design 2 (Jupiter)	33	51	34	0	118	16.1%
Design 3 (Hags)	38	91	37	2	168	22.9%
None				2	2	0.3%
Grand Total	156	344	226	7	733	
	21.3%	46.9%	30.8%	1.0%		

The chart below reflects the preferred equipment highlighted in the responses. Where specific items were identifiable, a reference to the design is included ((D1)(D2)(D3)).



Key: * = grouped items – further breakdown below
 ^ = items of equipment not included in original designs



ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 2017

Policy Statement

Woodley Town Council recognises its environmental responsibilities in its many roles including;

- Consumer of goods and services
- Employer
- Service provider
- Landowner and manager
- Custodian of community assets
- Public body

The environmental objectives of the Council are:

- a) To conserve energy and other resources
- b) To reduce the amount of waste generated by the Council
- c) To increase the amount of Council waste that is recycled
- d) To provide information to the public on environmental issues and promote environmental initiatives
- e) To work with partners e.g. Wokingham Borough Council in delivering environmental improvements and initiatives
- f) To encourage environmental best practice amongst contractors, employees and the community

These objectives will be met by:

- Operating within all appropriate legislation and regulatory requirements
- Considering environmental impacts and sustainability in procurement and operational decisions
- Developing and maintaining links with partner organisations e.g. Wokingham Borough Council
- Regularly reviewing energy and water consumption, waste generation and use of pesticides and seeking alternatives to limit environmental impact
- Using only licensed waste contractors for waste disposal
- Reusing and recycling materials on site wherever possible and practical to do so
- Minimising the potential for release of pollutants into the environment through review of the risk register / risk assessments and working practices
- Using drought resistant planting alternatives where appropriate
- Encouraging reuse of rain water at the allotment site
- Considering and prioritising biodiversity and ecosystem health in park projects operations e.g. lake restoration, wild flower planting

Five Rivers

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRACTING

Meadow Barn, Lower Woodford, Salisbury SP4 6NQ
01722 783041 office@five-rivers.com www.five-rivers.com

Registered Office: 35 Chequers Court, Brown Street, Salisbury SP1 2AS. Limited Company Registration No: 5084974

Woodley Lake Restoration

Feasibility Study

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1 Executive Summary

- The aquatic habitat at Woodley Lake is poor due to the lack of submerged, marginal, floating and emergent macrophyte species. Aquatic invertebrates are reliant on an abundant and diverse macrophyte community. Invertebrates are an essential element of all ecosystems, an improved community would benefit aquatic and terrestrial fauna that this standing water habitat has the potential to support (i.e. fish, foraging bat species, birds, reptiles and amphibians).
- The fish population at Woodley Lake consisted of one native species rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus* and two non-native species, carp *Cyprinus carpio* and channel catfish *Ictalurus punctatus*.
- The profile of Woodley lake banks has restricted the presence of shallow marginal habitat, an essential and ecologically diverse area of standing water habitat. The lake would significantly benefit from creation of habitat of this type. Marginal habitat planted with native flowering marginal species would significantly improve the aesthetics of Woodley Lake.
- The preferred option for management of the silt in the areas of concern is to accelerate the natural process of succession for creation of valuable wetland habitat. The actions described in Chapter 6 will greatly improve the ecological status of the lake, amenity value and stakeholder engagement.
- The laboratory analysis of the silt sample collected from Woodley lake shows all contaminants are within the guideline values for residential and allotment use and can therefore be disposed of on-site if required.
- The silt volume estimate showed that there is ~538m³ of silt across the bed of Woodley Lake.
- Removal of silt by dredging is deemed disproportionate to the benefits provided to the ecology and amenity value of Woodley Lake.

2 Introduction

In April 2016 Five Rivers Environmental Contracting Ltd were contracted by Helen Palmer, Landscape Director, Land Shape Ltd to provide a feasibility study for the restoration of Woodley Lake, Woodley, Reading. The feasibility study is required for funding application for the restoration of the lake.

2.1 Site Location and Description

Woodley Lake is located in Woodley Park, Reading and is owned / managed by Woodley Town Council. The pond is managed as a duck feeding pond for local residents and there is no angling permitted on the pond. The pond has footpath around its perimeter which provides access to the park entering the site from the west. The west corner of the lake has accumulation of silt that produces foul smelling odour during the summer months when the water levels are low; the same is occurring in the eastern corner of Woodley lake. Both these areas of sediment deposition are shaded by surrounding trees, including those on the islands. The anaerobic conditions in these areas have led to comments from park users regarding the impact this noxious gases have on the amenity value of Woodley Lake. The pond has three tree covered islands, these islands are well used by the water fowl populating Woodley Lake. There is an area of concrete on the south east bank where a pipe enters Woodley lake; the pond has been designed to act as a balancing pond. This pipe may be a source of organic matter and sediment inputs. The aquatic habitat at Woodley lake is considered to be poor due to the lack of macrophytes. The pond is surrounded by a rail that is constructed of railway sleeper; this is failing in some areas. Considerable amounts of tree works have been undertaken at Woodley Lake to decrease shade. The southern bank is populated by alder trees which have been coppiced and are re-generating.

3 Background

3.1 Ponds and People

Ponds and wetland habitats provide not only habitat for a range of wildlife but also as a valuable amenity resource for local communities. Amenity value of wetland habitats significantly increases in urban environments where access to natural spaces is limited. Ponds are an excellent educational resource providing an interactive location for persons in education to engage with the environment and learn about environmental science, conservation and ecology. Providing optimal wetland habitats increases the diversity of fauna and flora a site can support. Damsel and dragonflies are indicators of water chemistry and habitat quality of wetland habitat; encouraging these large, colourful and visually aesthetic invertebrates is a useful tool for engaging the public and increasing amenity value of a site. Duck feeding also provides amenity value to the public, however uncontrolled inputs of nutrients can lead to a decline in water quality. Lack of knowledge can lead to incorrect perceptions of aquatic ecosystems; providing education on the natural processes of these habitats and impacts that people have on them is essential element in improving and sustaining amenity value for people and a healthy wetland environment. Providing safe access to waterbodies via dipping platforms is an excellent option for encouraging the use of a wetland site as an educational resource. In addition to dipping platforms the creation of board walks increases engagement of the public with habitats difficult to access (i.e. wet and soft marginal habitat).



Photo 1: Example of pond dipping platform.

3.2 A Healthy Pond

Ponds provide habitat for a range of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. For some wildlife, such as amphibians and dragonflies, pond habitat is essential for the completion of their lifecycle; for others such as the grass snake and some bat species they provide optimal foraging habitat. A healthy and biologically diverse pond typically has all of the following characteristics;

- Good water quality – free from excessive nutrients and/or pollution;
- Diverse and abundant macrophyte community;
- Diverse and abundant aquatic invertebrates;
- No fish or a natural low stock of fish;

3.2.1 Water Quality

Good water quality is essential for maintaining a healthy and diverse pond ecosystem. The diversity of species a pond can support is associated with both the habitat and water quality. Water quality can be negatively impacted by;

- Point and diffuse pollution from surface water (i.e. drains, streams) and ground water sources (i.e. water table); and
- Excessive nutrients associated with overstocking of fish and feeding of water fowl;

Macrophytes are essential component in aquatic ecosystems whose role is to utilise nutrients during growth. If excess nutrients are available algal bloom and die back can occur. Decomposition of organic matter is a natural process. undertaken by bacteria, during which these bacteria use dissolved oxygen present in the water for respiration. When there is a mass die back of living organisms (i.e. algae) this can negatively impact water quality in the short term by reducing dissolved oxygen (DO) available for fauna reliant on DO content of the water (i.e. fish, aquatic invertebrates).

Decomposition of organic matter can be undertaken by either aerobic or anaerobic bacteria. Anaerobic bacteria are slower at the breakdown of organic matter than their aerobic counterparts. During anaerobic breakdown of organic matter, the bacteria produce toxic gases such as ammonia, methane and hydrogen sulphide; these gases are what causes the 'rotten egg' odour that can occur in stagnant areas of a waterbody.

3.3 Pond Flora and Fauna

3.3.1 Macrophytes

Macrophytes are a key component of a healthy and diverse pond environment. Their roles in aquatic ecosystems are significant and include; uptake of nutrients and pollutants; release of dissolved oxygen through photosynthesis; habitat for breeding, foraging and cover from predators for a multitude of wildlife.

Macrophytes are divided into four groups: emergent, submerged, floating and marginal. Emergent macrophytes are defined as plants that are rooted in shallow water with vegetative parts emerging above the water surface. Submerged macrophytes are defined as plants that are usually rooted in the substrate with the vegetative parts predominantly submerged. Marginal macrophytes are rooted in soil in either very shallow water or along the banks of wetlands where soil is wet.

A diverse pond will have a range of macrophyte types and species. Each species has its own requirements and tolerances of water depth, aspect, shade and water quality, water chemistry and turbidity. Each group of macrophytes are important for different wildlife; emergent reeds are used by emerging dragonfly nymphs; submerged vegetation is essential for newt egg laying; marginal vegetation is important for invertebrates and provides cover from predators for amphibians. Each type of macrophyte has a role in the aquatic environment; a healthy pond has a mosaic of different macrophyte types.

Abundant macrophyte coverage of a pond is generally considered beneficial for wildlife. However, maintaining a small areas of open water is beneficial for groups such as dragonflies, bats and great crested newts. Management of macrophytes should be targeted towards preventing the domination of one species and maintaining an area of open water.

3.3.2 Fish

The stocking density (number of fish) in a pond can affect the diversity and abundance of aquatic invertebrates (macro-invertebrates) and macrophytes (aquatic vegetation); ponds with large quantities of fish typically have a reduced diversity of aquatic invertebrates (macro-invertebrates) and macrophytes (aquatic vegetation). Some species have a more significant effect than others. Carp are benthic feeding fish, rooting through the pond bed sifting edible items from the substrate, uprooting vegetation through feeding activity and disturbing sediment. When present in high numbers the impact can be significant and macrophytes struggle to establish. The extent of damage depends on the density of carp and the types of macrophytes present.

3.3.3 Aquatic Invertebrates

Aquatic invertebrates are an essential component of any aquatic ecosystem and found in nearly every body of inland water. Invertebrates are involved in important functions, such as breakdown of detritus, grazing of algae, nutrient cycling and provide valuable food resources to aquatic and terrestrial fauna. Invertebrates require macrophytes to accommodate their different life stages; ponds with a poor macrophyte community will have a poor invertebrate community.

Ponds are host to a range of invertebrate species. Some are found permanently below the surface such as snails, whilst others have an aquatic larval life (i.e. dragonflies and damselflies). Aquatic invertebrates are commonly used as biological indicators of water quality; some species high quality water, while others can be found where the water is polluted. Dragonflies are large and vivid in colour, making them a useful species for assessing water and habitat quality.

The greatest diversity of invertebrate species will be associated with ponds that provide the greatest diversity of habitat. Essential elements of pond habitat for invertebrates are; varied and abundant macrophyte community; shallow marginal habitat with abundant marginal macrophytes. Fish should be absent or at low densities as they predate on invertebrates; when present at high densities fish cause damage to the macrophyte community by reducing light penetration and increasing nutrients. Dragonflies have additional habitat requirements which include;

- Open water – adults of many species hold territories over open water fringed by emergent macrophytes where they catch flying insects on the wing and attract a mate;
- An open aspect – dragonflies prefer sunshine and avoid areas of shade;
- Submerged macrophytes – provides cover for dragonfly nymph from predators, habitat for nymph prey and adult spawning substrate; and
- Emergent vegetation – essential for emerging dragonfly nymphs that climb up emergent macrophytes and hatch into adults.

3.3.4 Amphibians

Amphibians have a complex lifecycle that has interaction with both aquatic and adjacent terrestrial habitat; although they breed in ponds they spend much of their time on land. The UK is home to seven native species of amphibian; some have specific habitat requirements whilst others are more widespread. Adult amphibians migrate from their overwintering terrestrial habitat to ponds in spring to breed. The adults can remain in and around the pond during the summer, their terrestrial habitat requirements are damp cover which can be found in grassland, scrub and woodland. Come the end of summer the larvae leave the pond to spend autumn foraging in preparation for winter. Adults and juveniles spend winter at over wintering sites; these are damp terrestrial habitats that provide shelter from the elements. Adult amphibians can migrate distances of up to 500m to a breeding pond; this should be considered when managing terrestrial habitat in winter within close proximity of pond habitat. Overwintering habitat includes; tree stumps, piles of large woody debris, stone piles and old burrows excavated by mammals.

4 Methodology

4.1 Silt Volume Estimate

To estimate the volume of silt in Woodley lake the waterbody was divided into twelve areas. Within each area a transect was located approximately in the centre of the section. The locations of each of the transects is shown in Appendix A. Along each transect the silt depth was measured at ~2m intervals and recorded.

4.2 Silt Sample Collection & Analysis

4.2.1 Sample collection

A 1.5kg silt sample was collected from the bed of the lake, stored in an appropriate container and sent by courier for laboratory analysis.

4.2.2 Sample Analysis

A sample of silt was sent for laboratory analysis to a UKAS accredited laboratory for the testing of hydrocarbons (speciated PAH, aliphatic and aromatic fractions), metals, asbestos and inorganics.

The primary objective is to assess if any potential contamination sources of contamination are present within the silt sample prior to its removal.

4.3 Aquatic Habitat Condition Assessment

A visual assessment of the aquatic habitat was made by an experienced fisheries / aquatic ecologist. Observation were made from the bank, from a small inflatable boat and by wading. The following site characteristics were assessed.

- Bank profiles;
- Water depths;
- Shade;
- Macrophyte diversity and quality;
- Sources of organic matter and nutrient inputs;
- Water turbidity; and
- Field based water quality measurements were taken using a calibrated hand held YSI Pro Plus water quality. The determinands measured, accuracy and resolution of the equipment is provided in **Table xx**.

Determinand	Range	Accuracy	Resolution
pH	-2.60 to 16.60	± 0.1 mV (0.01 pH units)	0.1 mV (0.01 pH units)
ORP	-1999 to +1999 mV	± 0.5 mV	0.1 mV
Conductivity	0.0 to 200 mS/cm each range	$\pm 0.1\%$ FS ± 1 digit for $\mu\text{S/cm}$ to 0.1 mS/cm (range dependent)	0.0001 mS/cm or 0.1
Dissolved Oxygen	0.00 to 90 mg/L; 0 to 550%	$\pm 0.2\%$ FS (550% air saturation) ± 1 digit (with 1.25 PE membrane at 10 ° C)	0.01 mg/L; 0.1% air saturation
Temperature	-10 to 100.00° C	$\pm 0.2\%$ FS ± 1 digit	0.1° C

Table xx: Physico-chemical determinands, with associated ranges, accuracies and resolutions of the YSI Pro-Plus Meter.

4.4 Fish Population Assessment

To assess the fish population of Woodley lake the following was undertaken;

- Visual assessment by an experienced fisheries ecologist, wearing polaroid glasses, of the fish stock present;
- Visual assessment by an experienced fisheries ecologist, wearing polaroid glasses of stock from a boat.
- Electric fishing of the lakes margins and key areas of fish habitat. The use of electric fishing equipment was consented by the Environment Agency.

5 Results

5.1 Silt Volume Estimate

The results of the silt volume estimate are presented in Table xxx. The greatest volume of silt is present in the Eastern end of the lake; this is likely to be related to the direction of the prevailing winds (south westerly) distributing organic matter which are then deposited. A map of the transect locations and the silt depth at each sample point is provided in Appendix A.

Transect No.	No of sample points	Silt Depth (m)			Area of Transect (m2)	Silt volume (m3)
		Minimum	Maximum	Mean		
1	9	0.004	0.310	0.134	168	23
2	11	0.001	0.450	0.160	237	38
3	12	0.001	0.310	0.148	244	36
4	11	0.000	0.310	0.148	228	34
5	12	0.000	0.300	0.114	178	20
6	11	0.000	0.260	0.125	173	22
7	12	0.000	0.440	0.217	227	49
8	10	0.000	0.340	0.127	186	24
9	14	0.000	0.520	0.187	523	98
10	14	0.000	0.690	0.213	531	113
11	13	0.000	0.500	0.111	267	30
12	14	0.000	0.590	0.419	126	53
Lake Totals					3088	538

Table 1: Silt depths and volume estimates, Woodley Lake.

5.2 Silt Sample Analysis

Laboratory results indicated that concentrations of all potential contaminants are within LQM/CIEH, C4SL and EA guideline values for residential and allotment use. Hence, as this is the most sensitive end use assessment criteria, silt use for agriculture or landscaping will be acceptable. Full results are available on request.

5.3 Aquatic Habitat Condition Assessment

The banks were steep and supported by wooden revetment for the majority of the site, which limited the availability of shallow marginal habitat. Marginal macrophyte species were present along the banks of the lake in isolated pockets. Suitable water depth for marginal and emergent macrophyte species was available in the East and West corners of Woodley Lake. However, the shade in these areas has prevented the colonisation and establishment of macrophytes. No submerged or floating macrophytes were observed at Woodley lake. The lack of macrophytes significantly reduces the quality of the aquatic habitat at Woodley Lake; overall habitat is considered to be poor. Water turbidity at the time of assessment was not a factor limiting the growth of submerged macrophytes. The large carp present in

Woodley lake could be clearly seen disturbing sediment during benthic feeding; this increased turbidity in the immediate area. The turbidity of the water throughout the lake indicates that only a small population of carp are present; high density of carp increase turbidity significantly preventing sunlight penetrating the water column, limiting the growth of submerged macrophytes.

A number of water fowl were observed at Woodley lake at the time of assessment and duck feeding is considered to be highly likely. The high numbers of water fowl and supplementary feeding by park users is providing a source of organic matter and input of nutrients. No angling takes place at Woodley lake so the input of angling bait is not of concern. The large carp present are disturbing sediments during feeding; this process releases nutrients locked in the sediment and is a source of nutrients.

The lake has been subject to tree works in recent years and the inputs of organic matter from deciduous trees that border the lake has been reduced. The south bank is lined with alder trees that have been previously coppiced rather than removed; these are re-growing and likely to increase the inputs of leaves in the Autumn as these mature.

5.4 Fish Population Assessment

During the electric fishing of the lake margins and key areas of habitat only one species of fish was captured, rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*. In addition to the results of the electric fishing survey visual assessment of the fish population highlighted the presence of three large carp *Cyprinus carpio* (including one ornamental ghost carp), and one non-native albino channel catfish *Ictalurus punctatus*; these species are commonly available in the aquatic pet trade and are illegally introduced by the public once they outgrow their aquarium/pond. The presence of juvenile rudd (50mm) indicates the species are recruiting successfully; habitat for this species is considered to be poor due to the lack of macrophytes. Overall the fish population in Woodley Lake would be considered low stock density which is beneficial in creating and maintaining an ecologically diverse environment.

Species	Fork Length (mm)
RU	138
RU	145
RU	129
RU	117
RU	53
RU	139
RU	50
RU	120
RU	107
RU	118

Table xx: Electric fishing catch data (RU = Rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*)

6 Recommendations

6.1 Silt Management

The greatest concentrations of silt are found at in the East and West corners of the lake behind the islands. Organic matter has been directly input into these areas from surrounding vegetation and indirectly from sediments disturbed by feeding fish (carp) and water fowl throughout the lake, which are then transported by prevailing wind / wave action and deposited in the sheltered area. The presence of the islands has reduced wind action in these areas and the sheltered conditions provides optimal conditions for deposition of the organic matter and sediment in suspension. The presence of a foul odour is evidence that environmental conditions in this area favours decomposition of organic matter by anaerobic bacteria which produce gas that have a 'rotten egg' odour. Organic silt is accumulating in these areas faster than it is being decomposed due to the anaerobic conditions. Anaerobic bacteria have slower decomposition rates than aerobic bacteria; this allows silt to accumulate at a faster rate, increasing the rate of the natural process of succession. When levels are low during the summer months the silt is exposed and the smell reduces the amenity value for some park users in these areas. The following options and their indicative costs for silt management are targeted towards these areas;

- **Option A** – Do nothing
- **Option B** – Siltex Application
- **Option C** – Mechanical silt removal using excavators
- **Option D** – Wetland habitat creation

6.1.1 Option A - Do nothing

No silt removed or treated in any way and anaerobic conditions left to continue, no reduction in the smell produced by these areas. Organic matter will continue to accumulate and over time the natural process of succession will lead to the shallow corners eventually become terrestrial habitat. This process will be very slow. This option has no cost implication but does not address the issues that have been raised.

6.1.2 Option B – Siltex Application

This option uses a natural product called Siltex that is not harmful to the environment or public. The product assists the natural processes of silt decomposition by improving conditions for aerobic bacteria which are considerably faster at decomposition of organic matter; aerobic bacteria do not produce foul smelling gases (methane etc.) during decomposition. The treatment of Siltex will;

- Reduce the foul smelling gases produced;
- Reduce the quantity of sediment across the whole lake; and
- Provide calcium for invertebrates who play a key role in the initial stages of organic matter breakdown.

This option is low cost, easy to apply and effective; a boat is required to spread the product evenly across the whole of the lake. The cost of Siltex application at Woodley Lake would **~£1000/application**, price includes Siltex, labour and equipment required. Siltex can be applied annually in the Autumn and its effects should be monitored before considering a second application. No consent is required for the application of Siltex and has no impact on any protected species.

6.1.3 Option C – Silt Dredging

The effectiveness of the use of excavators for the removal of silt is restricted by the depth of water. Ideally a lake would be drained prior to dredging which would allow for effective silt removal using an excavator. Draining a pond is time consuming and requires a suitable location for the water to be pumped to. Dredging silt without draining leads to a proportion of each excavator bucket being lost into suspension, causing the pond to become turbid; the deeper the water the greater the proportion of silt lost and the sediment in suspension will deposit elsewhere in the lake at a later date. Removal of silt from the deepest areas of the lake are therefore not practical using this method unless the lake has been drained.

In addition to the practical restrictions of this method disturbed sediment has potential to create a short term reduction in dissolved oxygen concentration available to the lakes fauna and can cause fish mortality. Fish are an indicator of the dissolved oxygen available and their welfare should be monitored throughout dredging activities. Any sign of fish in distress (i.e. gasping at the surface) and the risk of fish mortality should be assessed, works potentially halted or aeration provided.

This indicative cost for removal of silt from the east and western corners of Woodley Lake, without draining the pond, are in excess of **£20 - £25k**. This option is expensive and the cost will be greatly impacted by;

- The volume of silt to be removed; and
- Location of the spoil heap.

The removal of silt will provide no direct improvements to the ecology at Woodley lake, unless the removed material is used for other habitat enhancement schemes; these are discussed in Chapter 6.2. Reducing the depth of silt may reduce the odour produced by anaerobic bacteria. Overtime, if there are no changes to the sheltered nature of these areas, silt will begin to accumulate in these again. The cost of silt removal is therefore deemed disproportionate to the perceived benefits of this type of activity; this option is not preferred for the restoration of Woodley Lake. If this option is considered, then the resource available should be targeted to the worst affected areas (east and western corners of the lake) where the water depth allows for the most effective removal without draining. To prevent the silt released into suspension from leaving the working area a silt curtain could be used to isolate the area and removed once the sediment deposits.

The laboratory results show that the lake silt contains no contaminants harmful to the public or environment and can therefore once removed be disposed of on site. The silt removed could be;

- Spread on adjacent terrestrial habitats; or
- Used as backfill for lake enhancement projects described in Section 7.3.

6.1.4 Option D – Wetland Habitat Creation

This option for restoration focuses on working with the natural process of succession for the creation of valuable wetland habitat in the areas most affected by the accumulation of silt (East and West corner). The option provides significant benefits to the aquatic ecosystem, amenity value and aesthetics of Woodley Lake; this is the preferential choice for the restoration of Woodley Lake. The objective is to create optimal habitat for marginal and emergent macrophytes. Creation of this habitat will significantly improve the aquatic ecology of Woodley lake. Improvements to the habitat provide a chain reaction throughout the food web, these benefit other wildlife that the lake has potential to support (i.e. bats, birds, water fowl, amphibians, reptiles). By introducing flowering wetland plant species additional improvements to the aesthetic nature and therefore amenity value of Woodley Lake will be achieved. The following actions are required for restoration works of this nature;

- Tree works to reduce shade surrounding the proposed wetland areas, providing optimal conditions for macrophytes growth and colonisation;
- Constriction of a retaining leading edge created from hazel faggots and chestnut posts;
- Materials won from tree works installed into the lake using an excavator and grapple. A mattress will be created from the material;
- Additional top soil/organic material to be infilled to create a range of water depths;
- The newly created wetland areas to be planted with a diverse range of native marginal and emergent macrophyte species; and
- The installation of water fowl anti-grazing netting to protect plants during initial establishment.

The design would include landscaping the wetland to create a varied range of water depths providing optimal conditions for a diversity of aquatic plants. To achieve this additional infill material will be required to create the desired landscaped design. The allocation of an onsite spoil donor site would provide a low cost option for creation of this wetland habitat feature; creation of a pond elsewhere on site should be considered. If material has to be imported this has cost implications. Another suitable source of organic material is the island themselves, these could be re-graded into the area creating a number of smaller islands, providing nesting habitat for water fowl utilising the site. By redistributing the islands, the sheltered nature of these areas can be reduced and promote aerobic decomposition in the future.

Creation of wetland habitat is estimated to cost **£15 – £25k**. This cost includes the felling of trees and scrub clearance, creation of wetland habitat and planting. The factors impacting the final cost would be;

- Size of the area created;
- The requirement for tree climbers to sectional dismantle a tree, which is more time consuming and therefore expensive than directional felling of trees at ground level;
- Requirement to undertake protected species surveys (i.e. bat roost inspections);

- The source of the organic material required for landscaping; and
- The density of plants introduced.

By improving habitat Option D provides considerable benefits to the amenity value by introducing visually aesthetic flowering aquatic plants and increasing the number of dragonfly, a highly visible and attractive indicator of aquatic habitat quality. This provides future opportunities to increase stakeholder engagement and use of the site as an educational resource. It would be beneficial to in conjunction with the creation of wetland habitat consider the application of Siltex to the remainder of the water body. The use of sustainably sourced site won materials, where possible, will reduce construction costs.

6.2 Aquatic Habitat Management & Enhancement

The profile of Woodley lake restricts the availability of marginal habitat; marginal macrophyte species were present at the site in isolated pockets. This habitat can be created and will benefit the ecology and amenity value of the lake. To create this habitat, the following is required;

- Ensure shade is reduced where the habitat is to be created;
- Construction of a retaining front edge using hazel faggots or site won brash, retained between chestnut stakes driven into the lake;
- Back fill behind the structure to the required levels, creating areas of gradual sloping wet marginal habitat.
- Planting of with native marginal and emergent macrophyte species;
- Water fowl anti-grazing fencing will be required to ensure plants can become established.

The cost of materials and labour for the installation of the revetment required for the retention of back fill is **£80 - £100/linear meter**. The features can be created in aesthetically pleasing natural sweeping shapes and should incorporate flowering species. The cost of backfill will be dependent on its source, the following options are available for backfill material;

- Sediment removed during dredging;
- Won on site;
- By re-profiling of the banks; or
- Imported.

The cost of the plants will be **~£5/m²** for marginal and emergent species. The cost of labour **~£600/100m²**. Installation of plant protection fencing is **~£3/linear m**.

It is recommended that these features are created on the north bank where the greatest amount of sunlight is available. The shallow marginal features should be set at a height of a maximum of 100mm above summer water levels. Ideally the infill would be a graded from the top of the bank to the water, the front edge should be wet. These features should be planted with native species and protected from water fowl grazing. The following macrophyte species are recommended;

- Brook Lime, *Veronica beccabunga*;
- Water mint, *Mentha aquatica*;

- Marsh marigold, *Caltha Palustris*;
- Purple loosestrife *Lythrum Salicaria*
- Soft Rush, *Juncus Effusus*
- Yellow flag iris, *Iris Pseudacorus*
- Reed Canary Grass, *Phalaris Arundinacea*
- Water Figwort, *Scrophularia Aquatica*
- Flowering Rush, *Butomus Umbellatus*

If excess materials from tree works are available the creation of hibernacula's is recommended, an example of is shown below.



Shallow marginal habitat under construction



Example of shallow marginal habitat



Example of hibernacula created using site won woody material

6.3 Fishery Management

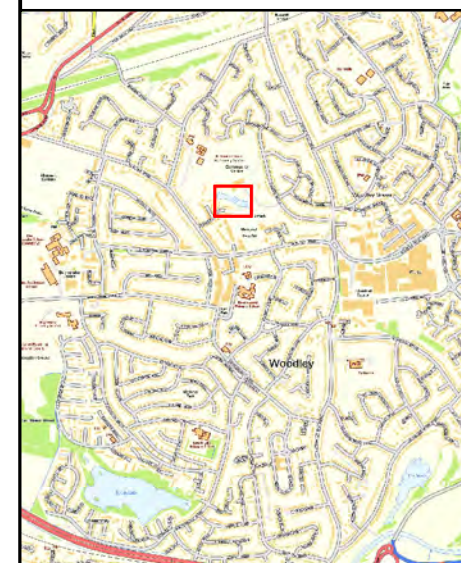
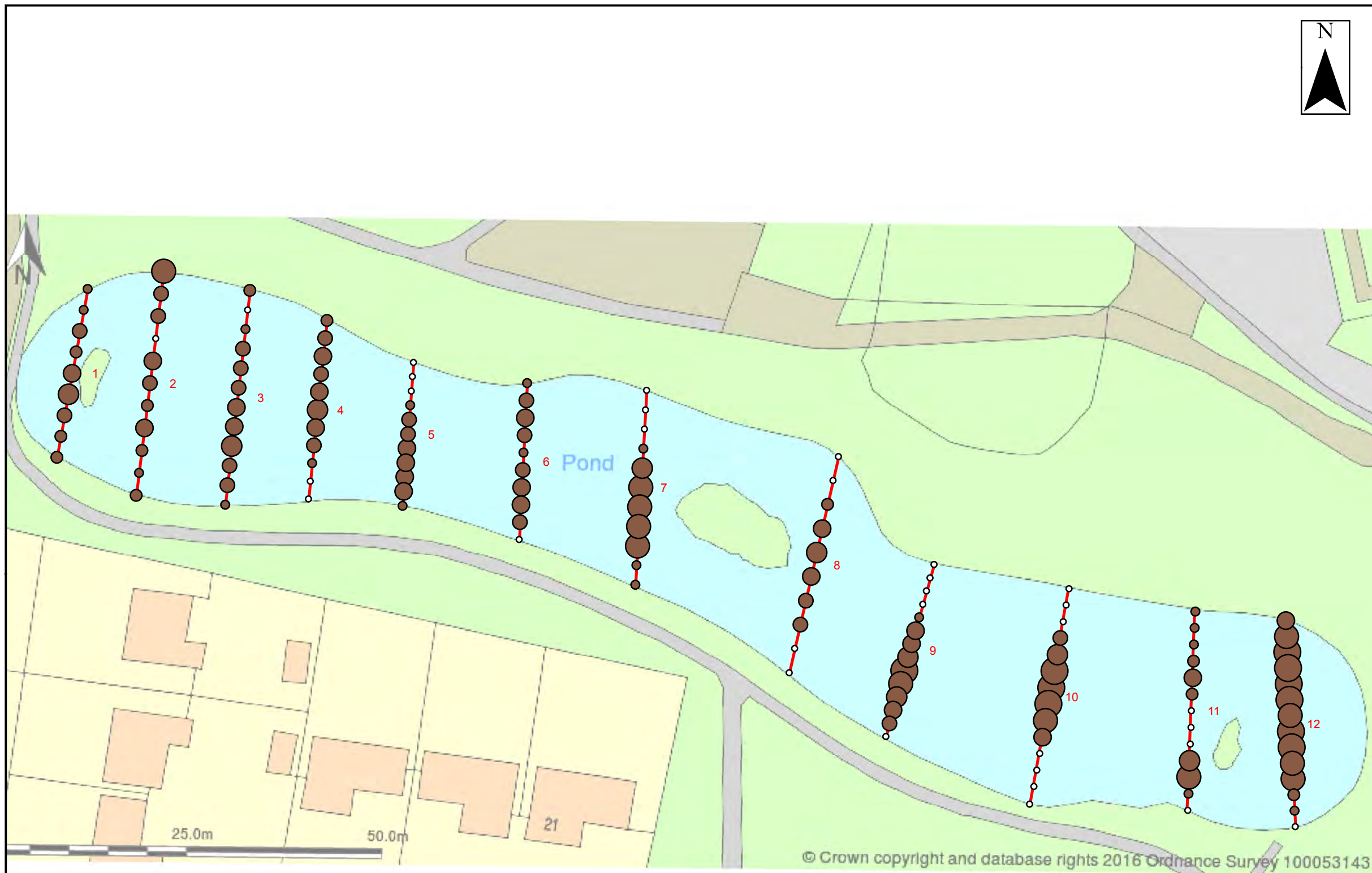
There is a natural stocking density of rudd at Woodley lake and a small population of non-native species. As the lake has no intention of being used as an angling facility no stocking of fish is recommended. If in the future recruitment of rudd increase because of the improvements made to habitat, then stock removal may be beneficial to maintain biomass at a natural level. If possible the non-native fish species should be removed, however the cost of removal would be disproportionate to the benefit of the removal. These large fish may also provide amenity value to some park users.

6.4 Amenity Value

The following recommendations are made to improve the amenity value of Woodley Lake;

- Pond dipping platform, 6m² in size: **£3000 - £5000** (cost dependent on the construction materials).
- Rustic log benches: **£600 - £1000/bench** (cost dependent on design)
- Board walk (15m x 1.2m): **£10,000 - £13,000**

Appendix A – Silt Transect Locations and Depth



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Legend

— Transect

Silt Depth (cm)

- 0
- 1 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- >50

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Client	LandShape Design Ltd.					
Project	1272M Woodley Lake					
Title	Woodley Lake Silt Transect Locations and Depths Sheet 1 of 1					
Drawing Status	Final					
Figure No.	1					
Scale	1:559 @ A3					
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Woodley Residents' Survey 2018



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1 Introduction

The 2018 Woodley Residents' survey was conducted in early December 2018. The survey was commissioned by Woodley Town Council with the aim of understanding residents' experiences of living in the town and their views about the services the Town Council provides. This is a regular survey which the Town Council asks an independent company to conduct, using methods that will obtain a representative sample of views from local people.

1.1 About the Survey

The survey was designed in consultation and agreement with Woodley Town Council, focusing on a set of regular questions and others which reflected council priorities at the time of the survey. It was developed and conducted by HMR, an independent research and consultation company. The survey was carried out with a structured sample of households, across each part of Woodley representing all age groups and household sizes. The sample was selected using an approach that selects households on a random but systematic basis. Interviewers visited 500 households around the town and asked residents questions about their views on the services provided by Woodley Town Council and about living in Woodley. The survey was designed to take between 5 and 15 minutes to complete, depending on how much information people wished to give.

Based on an estimated 11,000 households in Woodley ¹, the survey gives results that are 95% representative of local households to +/- 4.3%. This means that the results can be considered as an accurate guide to local people's views.

¹ NOMIS 2019 (based on 2011 census with estimated addition for new households)

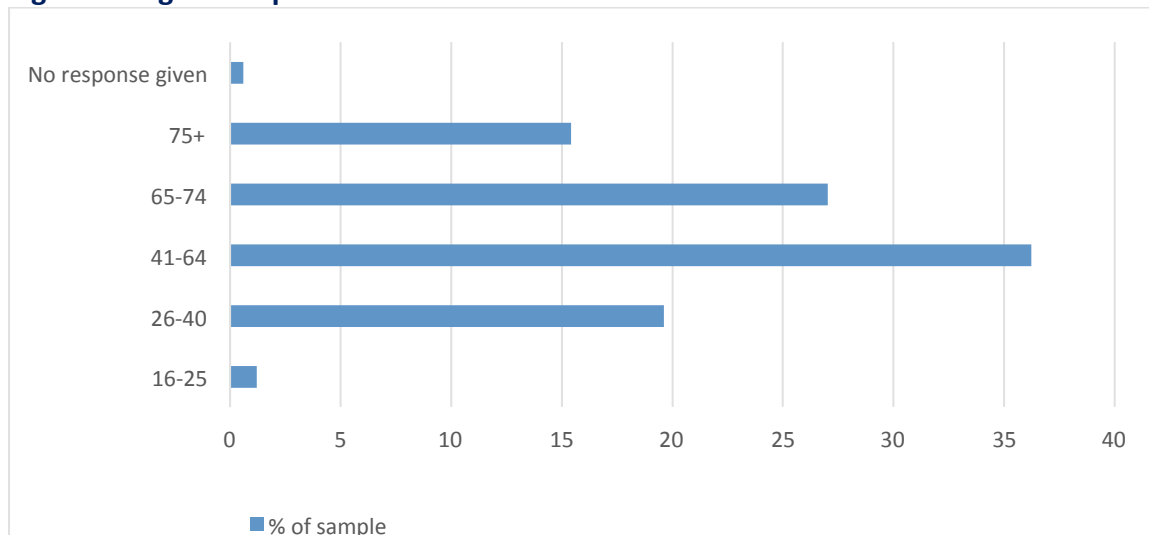
1.2 Respondent profiles

The mean household size in this sample was 2.6 people.

Table 1: The age of respondents

Age group	% of sample	Number
16-25	1.2	6
26-40	19.6	98
41-64	36.2	181
65-74	27	135
75+	15.4	77
No response given	0.6	3
Total	100	500

Fig 1: The age of respondents



2 Survey results

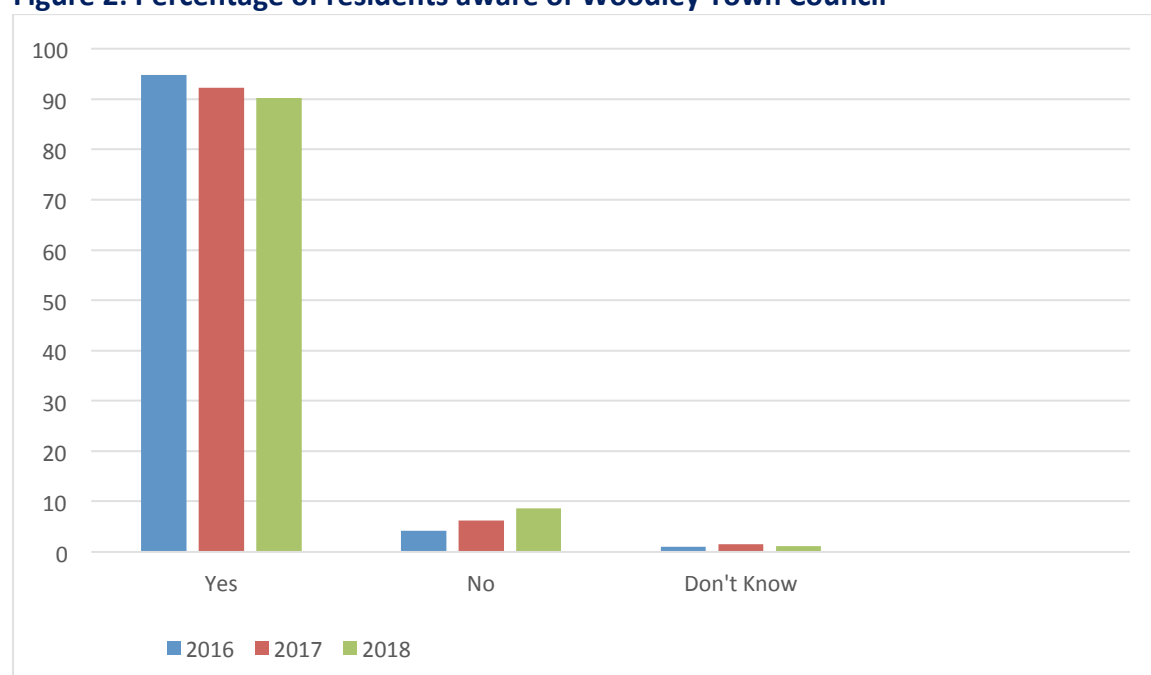
2.1 Awareness of Woodley Town Council

There had been a further slight decrease in the percentage of residents aware of Woodley Town Council in 2018, compared to the previous two years. The data showed that there appears to be lower awareness about the Town Council among residents in the newer areas of the town.

Table 2: Awareness of Woodley Town Council

Had you heard of Woodley Town Council before?	% Response		
	2016	2017	2018
Yes	94.8	92.3	89.2
No	4.2	6.2	8.6
Don't know	1.0	1.5	2.2
Total	100	100	100

Figure 2: Percentage of residents aware of Woodley Town Council



2.2 Town Council facilities

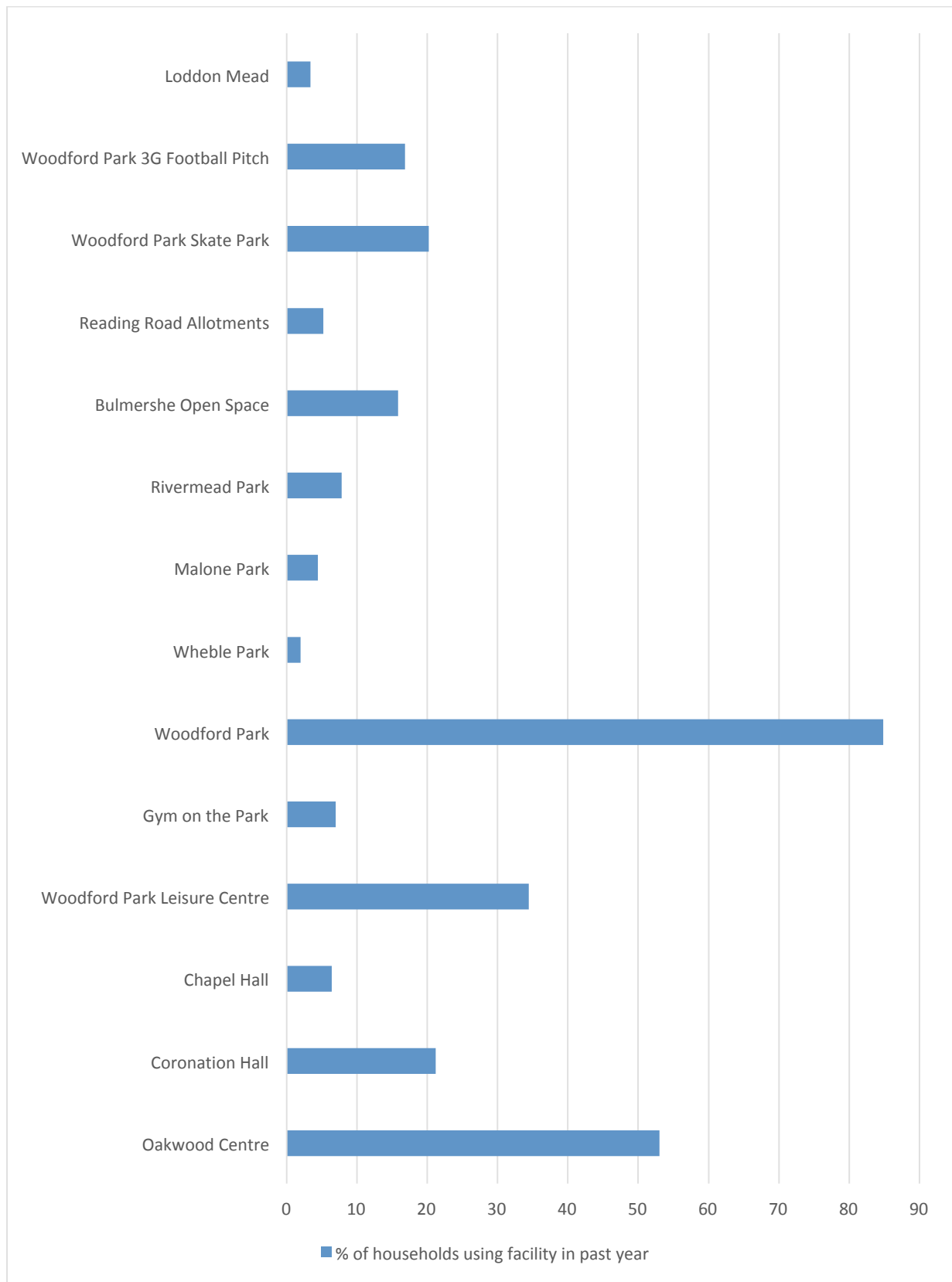
2.2.1 Use of Woodley Town Council facilities by local households

Woodford Park was the facility used by most people in Woodley. This is in keeping with the usual trend. Informal comments suggested that Woodford Park had been particularly popular during the warm summer of 2018. The Oakwood Centre was used by 53% of households and Woodford Park Leisure Centre by 38.6% of households. There had been a slight decrease in people using many of the Council facilities in 2018 compared to 2017, but the data did not suggest any underlying cause of this. The café in the Oakwood Centre was particularly popular among users of the centre.

Table 3: Use of Woodley Town Council facilities by local households

Facility	% of households using facility in past year (2018)	2017
Oakwood Centre	53.0	53.1
Coronation Hall	21.2	21.2
Chapel Hall	6.4	6.4
Woodford Park Leisure Centre	34.4	38.6
Gym on the Park	7.0	7.1
Woodford Park	84.8	84.9
Wheble Park	2.0	2.1
Malone Park	4.4	4.5
Rivermead Play Area	7.8	7.8
Bulmershe Open Space	15.8	19.1
Reading Road Allotments	5.2	5.2
Woodford Park Skate Park	20.2	19.7
Woodford Park 3G Football Pitch	16.8	17.5
Loddon Mead	3.4	2.8

Fig 3: Use of Woodley Town Council facilities by local households



2.2.2 Awareness of the facilities provided by Woodley Town Council

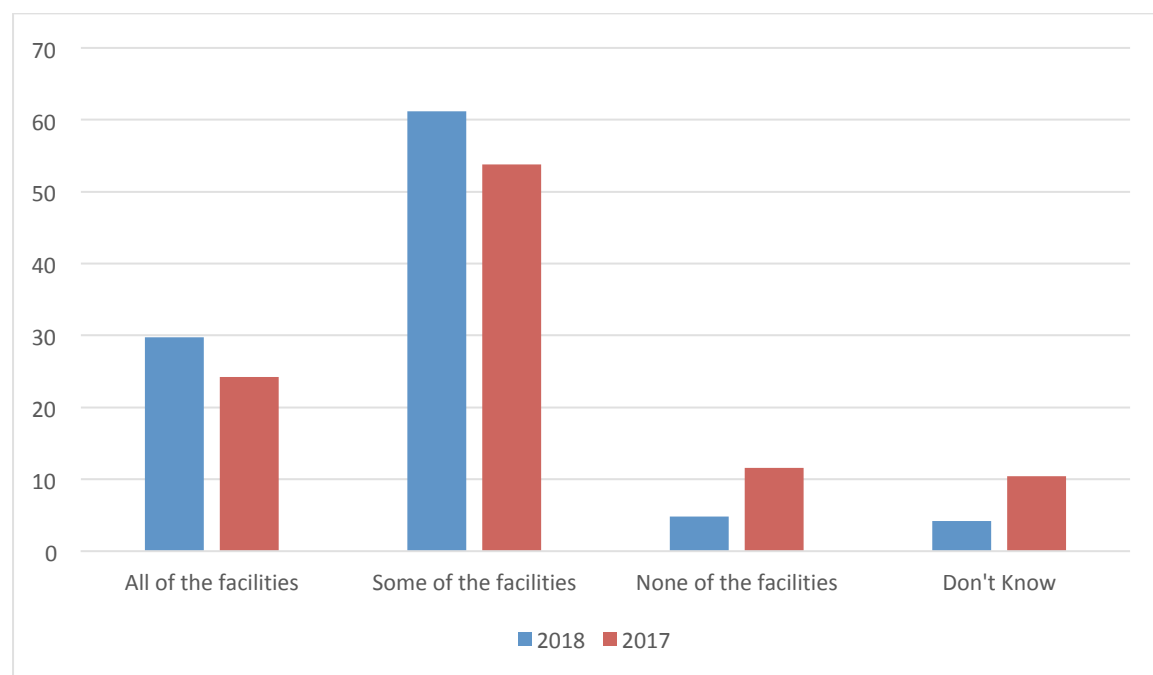
Among those who had heard of Woodley Town Council prior to being asked the survey questions, in 2018 there was a greater level of awareness of the services provided by the Council compared to 2017.

Five and a half percent more respondents were aware that the Town Council provided all the services that were being asked about. Compared to 2017, in 2018 7.4% more people knew that Woodley Town Council provided at least some of the services listed.

Table 4: Knowledge of facilities provided by Woodley Town Council

Awareness that Woodley Town Council provided the facilities listed?	% response	2017
All of the facilities	29.8	24.2
Some of the facilities	61.2	53.8
None of the facilities	4.8	11.6
Don't know/Not Sure	4.2	10.4

Fig 4: Knowledge of facilities provided by Woodley Town Council



2.2.3 The rating of WTC facilities by users

The majority of users rated Woodley Town Council facilities as good or satisfactory. In this survey there was an evening out of opinion about the quality of services, with fewer people, rating services as excellent or poor. Most services remained rated as good or satisfactory, with the Oakwood Centre, Woodford Park Leisure Centre, The Gym on the Park and the 3G football pitch being rated excellent or good by the majority of users.

Though the proportion of users giving a higher rating to facilities had in some cases fallen, the overall pattern of rating remained similar to that in 2017.

Table 5: How users rated WTC facilities

Facility	% response			
	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Oakwood Centre	41.8	34.3	20.4	3.5
Coronation Hall	10.8	36.4	44.1	8.7
Chapel Hall	3.3	28.6	59.2	8.9
Woodford Park Leisure Centre	33.9	31.6	27	7.5
Gym on The Park	45.8	38.2	15.8	0.2
Woodford Park	34.3	49.8	15.3	0.6
Wheble Park	1.2	33	45.4	20.4
Malone Park	14.1	40.3	36	9.6
Rivermead Play Area	12	39.1	42.9	6
Bulmershe Open Space	8.6	50.2	33.1	8.1
Reading Road Allotments	25.1	46.6	27.1	2.2
Woodford Park Skate Park	38.9	41.3	19.6	0.2
Woodford Park 3G Football Pitch	62.1	34.1	3.3	0.5
Loddon Mead	1.5	24.2	67.5	6.8

Most frequent response

Second most frequent response

2.2.4 Aggregated rating for all Town Council facilities

Table 6: Aggregated ratings for Woodley Town Council services

	% response (all data)		
Rating	2018	2017	2016
Excellent	23.8	27.6	18.8
Good	37.7	37.2	39.8
Satisfactory	32.6	26.9	30.5
Poor	5.9	8.3	10.9

The 2018 overall weighted rating score for all facilities rated satisfactory to excellent by their users was 64.9%.

2.2.5 Improving facilities in Woodley

The most popular suggestions for improving facilities in Woodley were:

- Improve planting and greenery in the town centre
- Have local speed awareness signs on busier roads
- Improve signposts around the town
- Have more community noticeboards
- Have a befriending scheme for lonely people, especially people housebound (not limited by age group)
- Have a community choir
- Improve facilities in Rivermead Play Area and Malone Park
- Tidy up under the bridges at Loddon Mead
- Have a youth action group to get local young people involved in helping around the town
- Have a Woodley volunteer organisation to organise volunteers for local people
- Have a community gardening club
- Have more litter bins around the town
- Have more litter picking all over Woodley

- Have a clean Woodley campaign
- Have a green Woodley campaign with more planting of flowers around the town
- Stop cars speeding on the main routes through Woodley
- Get Bulmershe Leisure Centre finished more quickly
- Get the toilet installed in the shopping centre
- Have a child safe place scheme for young people who are out in the town
- Have better policing in Woodley
- Have a place where people can go for drop in and free counselling if they need it
- Have a Town council reception/information desk at the Oakwood Centre when you walk in – so people don't have to walk down to the offices to get what they need
- Improve advertising about community halls
- Make halls easier and cheaper to hire
- Improve décor in community halls
- Make Coronation Hall parking available to people visiting Woodley Town Council
- Encourage young people to run community events
- Have a Woodley nature trail
- Have a history walk around the town to show people places of interest
- Run free courses/give free talks for local people .

2.3 The importance of Woodley Town Council services

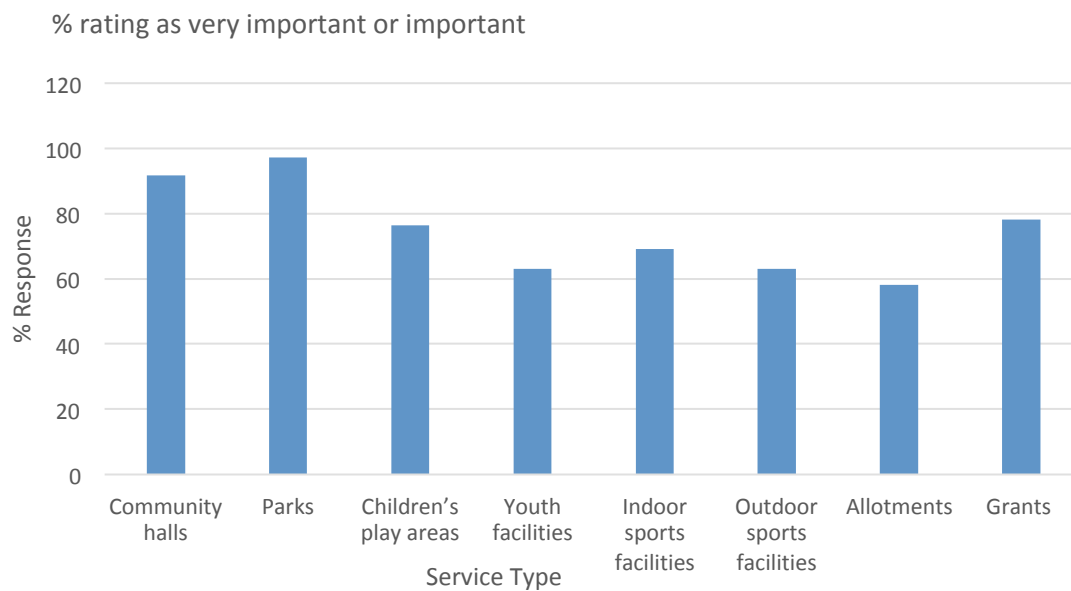
In 2018, there was a marked increase in the proportion of respondents who thought the services provided by Woodley Town Council are either important or very important to people living in the town. Community spaces, especially parks and halls, are important to the people of Woodley. One person said: "I think that we, as people who live here, do not know how lucky we are to have so much greenery and so many places we can use for our interests and clubs. We should make more of this".

In this survey, the importance of outdoor leisure facilities to local people was greater than in previous surveys, with the rating for indoor spaces decreasing slightly, but not significantly. Grants to local people and groups was rated as being more important than in previous years.

Table 7: The importance of Woodley Town Council services

Type of service	% rating as very important or important
Community halls (including Oakwood Centre)	91.8
Parks	97.2
Children's play areas	76.4
Youth facilities	63.1
Indoor sports facilities	69.2
Outdoor sports facilities	63.1
Allotments	58.1
Grants to services for local people and community groups	78.1

Fig 5: The importance of Woodley Town Council services



2.4 Service quality

Of those interviewed 13% had had some form of contact with Woodley Town Council staff in the previous two years. The majority of those responding had had a positive experience, finding staff courteous and helpful and usually knowledgeable and able to deal with queries effectively.

Table 8: The quality of service provided by Woodley Town Council staff

Characteristic	% response
Helpful	91.6
Courteous	99.2
Knowledgeable	90.0
Able to deal with queries effectively	92.3

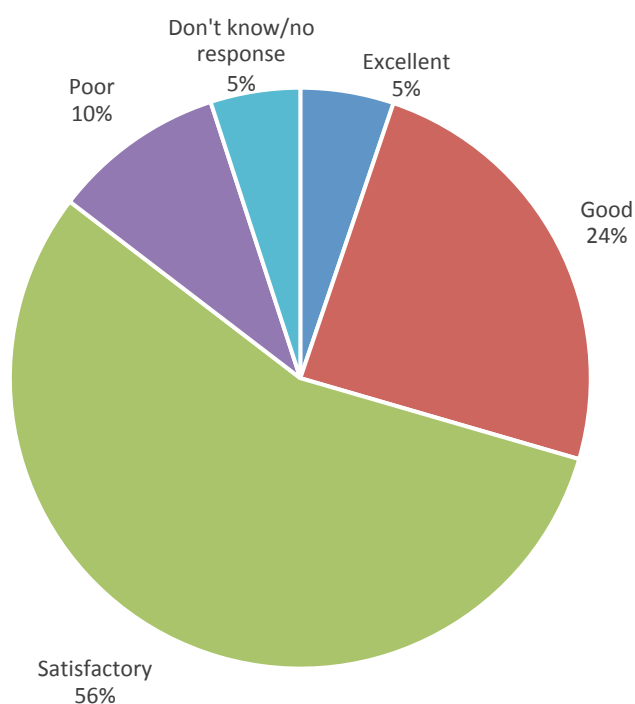
2.5 Value for money

Almost 30% of people thought that Woodley Town Council provides good or excellent value for money. Over half thought that value for money was satisfactory. More than a third of those responding commented that they felt council services as a whole were underfunded and that they thought Council Tax had risen too much. However, this perception appeared to refer to Wokingham Borough Council Tax, rather than Woodley Town Council precept. There was an apparent lack of clarity about the difference between the two and the way that Council Tax payments are split.

Table 9: Woodley Town Council: rating of value for money

<i>Value for money rating</i>	<i>% response</i>
<i>Excellent</i>	5.2
<i>Good</i>	24.3
<i>Satisfactory</i>	55.9
<i>Poor</i>	9.6
<i>Don't know/no response</i>	5

Fig 7: Woodley Town Council: Value for money rating



2.5.1 Suggestions for other facilities Woodley Town Council could provide

The following suggestions were made for other services that the Town Council could provide:

- A community counselling service
- More youth services
- Community befriending scheme
- Community volunteer service
- An information space/council information office in the shopping centre
- A service to take library books to people who can't get out/do not use the internet
- A telephone helpline for local people
- A swimming pool
- Volunteers to give assistance with shopping for disabled people
- Better facilities for blind people.

2.6 Oakwood Centre

Seventy four percent of residents knew that it was possible to hire rooms at the Oakwood Centre for business meetings and social occasions. However, there was some uncertainty about whether there were restrictions on the type of social occasions that can be held there. One interviewer reported an extensive conversation with a local small business person who was unaware of the possibilities of renting rooms for business purposes. This person suggested a mail drop to all local houses advertising use of the Oakwood Centre, especially aimed at reaching local home-based small business.

Table 10: How likely are you to hire a room at the Oakwood Centre in the future?

	% response
Very likely	10.4
Possibly	45.1
Not likely	40.3
Don't know	5.2

Ten percent of respondents said that it was very likely they would hire a room at the Oakwood Centre in the future. Forty five percent thought that they might hire a room there if they had a function that was suitable. Forty percent said it was unlikely, and when asked why the most usual reasons was that they did not hire rooms for any reason, or were not likely to have an occasion that warranted hiring a room.

The most common factors that would deter people from hiring a room at the Oakwood Centre were:

- Not having a reason to hire a room
- Cost
- Availability of rooms at required time
- Suitability of rooms or venue
- Restrictions on catering, particularly being able to bring in own refreshments
- Restrictions on alcohol consumption
- Restrictions on teenagers having parties
- Too complicated to arrange.

The reasons given for possibly hiring a room are shown below:

Table 11: Possible reasons to hire a room at the Oakwood Centre

	% response
Party	53.0
Other social function	18.2
Business meeting	19.1
Training event	5.3
Club or society event or meeting	10.2
Exercise class	3.1
Other class	2.1
Music lessons	8.9
Hire theatre	2.2
Unsure	28.3

Respondents were asked if they knew about certain aspects of hiring rooms at the Oakwood Centre.

Table 12: Those aware that at the Oakwood Centre

Aspect	% aware of this
Rooms can be hired to suit your needs	24.1
Rooms will be set up and cleared away for users	11.2
Rooms can be decorated by the hirer to suit the occasion	15.3
Onsite catering is available	28.1
You can use your own professional caterers	9.2
Several of the rooms open on to Woodford Park	58.1
The building is fully staffed at all times	36.3

2.7 Woodford Park

5a. In general, what do you think of Woodford Park?

In general, local people are positive about Woodford Park. They consider the park to be well maintained and the facilities available to be varied and appealing to a variety of needs. The improved car parking by the playgroup building (old Horticultural Hut) and Leisure Centre was popular, and several people commented that this encouraged them to park there and walk through the park to the town centre.

The paddling pool was popular among those with young children, though some people felt that maintenance of this should be improved. The children's play areas were a popular attraction, particularly the one close to Woodford Park Leisure Centre, as was the lake and the ducks living there. The wild flower planting and the garden behind the Oakwood Centre were liked by local people and there were comments that the football/cricket field was an asset to the town.

The War Memorial was particularly well liked, thought to be an enhancement and well kept. Those who had attended thought that the Remembrance Day service was very good and suggested this should be better advertised in the future as an important community event.

When asked if they were aware that Woodford Park had Green Flag status only 8.4 % of people knew of this. Many people (this was not formally collected data but a tally showed at least 67%) people do not know what Green Flag status is.

Improvements suggested for Woodford Park included:

- Update the playgrounds
- Improve the paddling pool and have sprinklers and sprays – a mini water park?
- A nature trail or trails around the park
- Improve the grass across the memorial ground or put a path in across the field
- Put a memorial path – formed of bricks from local people donating in memory for others, across the memorial field?
- Information boards about wildlife, local history, health and fitness etc
- Art boards for local schools or societies to display their works
- A refreshment kiosk
- An activity centre for events and activities to do with ecology/outdoor living/nature etc
- Getting local people involved in developing and maintaining local green spaces, including the park – a Woodley ranger scheme for all ages?
- Clean up the lake and improve the paths around it
- Maintain the park better after park runs – it gets too muddy
- Better signposting and maps of the park
- Improve the fitness circuit equipment
- Have more community events in the park – summer concerts etc?
- Have more wild flowers and trees
- Improve policing of groups in the park in the evenings.

The playground behind the Oakwood Centre

The playground behind the Oakwood Centre was thought to be out dated and in need of improvement. Suggestions for improvement included:

- Safe equipment made of natural materials
- Equipment that allows adults and children to use it but is safe for children to use alone
- A layout that allows children to play safely whilst being watched by adults from benches etc
- Equipment that allows children to explore and experiment safely
- Hanging bars, roundabouts, climbing equipment, tunnels
- Equipment accessible to disabled children
- A wooden fort
- An area suitable for groups such as schools or preschools to visit and use
- A refreshment vending machine or hut next to the play area.

2.8 Woodley town centre

Local people said that the town centre is convenient, good for parking and has a useful variety of shops. Typically, residents felt that most basic needs could be bought here. It was also useful as a shopping centre with easily accessible shops and well-placed disabled parking bays, however the disabled parking can sometimes be too busy.

One person commented that “I sometimes think we take our town centre for granted. It is not the prettiest place but is easy to get to and has everything we need day to day”.

Another commented that: “Shops in the precinct (*a common local name for the town centre*) are usually friendly and helpful, local people work here and they care about what they do”.

The buildings, especially the flats above the shops were considered to be shabby in places and needing improvement.

The markets and other events in Woodley centre were liked by local people, especially the Saturday market which was very popular. It was felt that this brings life and character to the town.

2.8.1 Recent improvements to Woodley town centre

Ninety six percent of respondents had been to the town centre in the past year and of these 92% had noticed the improvements made at the northern end of the centre (The Headley Road end).

The improvements were popular, although some people commented that they thought more could have been done with the play area. Centre Stage was liked but some people suggested it was under used and that they did not know what it was for. There was a lack of awareness of the seating around Centre Stage. There was a small proportion of people who regretted that the old Pagoda had been taken down and felt that this had been a feature of the town that should have been maintained.

Over half of local people thought that they might possibly attend an event at Centre Stage, if it appealed to them (and if the weather were good enough). The weather was a factor as the viewing area is open air. People would be encouraged to attend events at Centre Stage if they were well advertised, interesting and if they were taking place in good weather.

There was evidence that some local residents did not realise that the Centre Stage was intended as a performance area, as the viewing area is also a play area.

The majority of people thought that they would be most likely to view entertainment at the performance area if they were visiting the town centre for shopping or another purpose.

Several people thought that this might change if the town centre became well known for performances and if performances were well publicised.

Table 13: How likely are you to attend events at the new Centre Stage in the town centre?

	% response
Very likely	21.9
Possibly	59.7
Not likely	11.7
Don't know	6.7

2.8.2 Suggestions for types of entertainment

- Local musicians and groups
- Craft and art events
- Activities for children while parents shop
- Taster events by local groups and societies wanting to recruit members
- Health and fitness awareness events
- Displays and concerts from local schools and groups
- Local choirs performing
- Busking events
- Contests and best of Woodley events
- Local choirs and bands
- Children's shows
- Charity sales
- Evening concerts in the summer
- Have a 'Woodley Day' and use the Stage and other locations for events.

2.8.3 Likely viewing times at the performance space

The most likely times that people would visit events at the Centre Stage were:

- Weekends
- While out shopping
- Summer evenings
- Near Christmas for Christmas concerts
- Special occasions (e.g. Christmas, Midsummer, May Day, national celebrations, Carnival Day).

2.8.4 Further Town Centre improvements

Further improvements suggested for the town centre included:

- Improve the maintenance and look of the buildings in the shopping centre
- Have more plants and hanging baskets
- Regenerate the whole town centre
- Put in windbreaks by Headley Road
- Have more attractive and noticeable notice boards
- Encourage more small individual shops
- Have pop up shops for local people starting businesses
- Have more restaurants and bars to go to in the evening
- Have free information leaflets about town events in local shops
- Encourage a proper butcher to start in Woodley
- Have an easily accessible public toilet
- Have a crèche/indoor play area for children
- Cover the whole precinct area so that it is protected from the rain
- Improve the walk way to the car park next to Iceland
- Have signs showing if one of the car parks is full.

2.9 Communication

If local residents want to know something to do with Woodley the most usually source of information is the internet, including Woodley Town Council and Wokingham Borough Council websites. Other more specific searches typically included 'what's on' websites, local clubs, schools and societies and searching for specific events. Social media was especially popular among those aged under 65, but all ages accessed this. Facebook was the most commonly used method of social media.

Local newsletters from Woodley Town Council, political parties and advertising booklets such as Round and About were also considered helpful.

Use of local papers was limited but two thirds of people thought it was a way they would like to receive information. Several of those questioned suggested a good, regular (monthly?) local paper, possibly available free in the town centre and local places, would be a good source of information.

Local noticeboards were thought to be useful, provided they are attractive, prominent and well maintained.

Table 14: Preferred methods of communication about Woodley

Method	% response
Newsletter	71.3
Website	52.6
Email	46.9
Facebook	43.2
Twitter	17.9
Local Press	61.7
Local Magazines	38.4
Other	5.2

Local people had the following priorities in the information they wanted about the town:

- Local facilities and services
- Events/what's on
- Clubs and societies
- Local businesses
- Things to be proud of about Woodley
- Schools and preschool facilities
- Successes for local people
- How to contact local councils
- How to contact councillors and MPs
- Health and social care services, including GPs, dentists, care homes and local hospitals
- How to hire halls and rooms
- How to get help with family problems
- Contacting local police services.

2.9.1 Woodley Town Council website

Woodley Town Council website was an important way for local people to find out information about the town. Almost 40% of people had used the site in the past year.

Table 15: Use of the Town Council website in the past year

	% response
<i>Have used website</i>	38.7
<i>Have not used website</i>	54.4
<i>Don't know</i>	6.9

Of those who had visited the website, most had found it to be useful, informative and helpful to people living in Woodley. Deleted sentence as it didn't make sense??

Table 16: Experiences of Woodley Town Council website

% of users who found Woodley Town Council website:	% Response
Useful	84.6
Informative	91.3
Helpful to people who live in Woodley	82.4
Well presented	63.1
Interesting	71.2

2.9.2 Suggestions for improvement to the website

- Make the layout clearer
- Bring the website up to date – looks a bit old fashioned
- Have more about the history of Woodley
- Have a page for community ‘swaps’, of time etc.
- Have a page for volunteer opportunities and people needing volunteers
- Have space for items available free (like freecycle)
- Make it a community hub so that it involves local people
- Keep it regularly up to date
- Improve the images and colours on the website
- Make sure it is fully accessible to visually impaired people
- Allow local people to subscribe/log in to get extra information.

2.9.3 The Woodley Herald

The Woodley Herald is the Town Council's newsletter for local households, produced three times a year. It covers council and community news and gives contact information for some Council services.

Almost two thirds of interviewees were aware of having received a copy of the Woodley Herald. Thirteen percent were not sure, usually saying that they may not have seen it in among other post that had arrived or that another household member may have picked it up. Almost a quarter of those asked thought that they had not received a copy of the newsletter, although it is delivered to all household in the town.

Table 17: Receipt of the Woodley Herald

	% response
Woodley Herald received	62.9
Woodley Herald not received	23.8
Don't know	13.3

Of those who had received it, almost 60% of people said that they had read the Woodley Herald. Anecdotal comments showed that some read the whole newsletter, but most people seem to skim quickly through it.

Table 18: Reading the Woodley Herald

	% response
Woodley Herald read	59.6
Woodley Herald not read	34.8
Don't know	5.6

Of those who had read the Woodley Herald, over three quarters thought it was useful and helpful to people who live in Woodley. Seventy one percent found it useful, over 90% thought the newsletter was well presented, while 53% thought that the Woodley Herald was interesting.

Table 19: Opinions about the Woodley Herald

% of readers rating the Woodley Herald as:	% Response
Useful	75.3
Informative	71.2
Well presented	90.5
Interesting	53.1
Helpful to people who live in Woodley	75.1

2.9.4 Suggestions for improvements to the Woodley Herald

Suggestions to improve the Woodley Herald included:

- Have more information about local interest groups
- Have a contacts section for local services
- Less information about councillors, more information about local people.

2.9.5 Social Media

Local residents were asked if they had ever used social media (such as Facebook or Twitter) to find out information about Woodley.

Table 20: Use of social media for information about Woodley

	% response
Social media used	36.3
Social Media not used	61.2
Don't know	2.5

One third of people had used social media for this purpose, most of whom had used Facebook, and a small proportion, Twitter. It seemed that, among internet users, social media was a popular tool, but that awareness of pages and feeds created by Woodley Town Council was low, and tended to be driven by awareness of a page through existing use of a facility.

However, among those who had used social media for information about the town there was a relatively low level of awareness of local sources. Nineteen percent were aware of the Woodley Town Council Facebook page, 8% aware of the Oakwood page and 9% aware of the Woodford Park Leisure Centre page. Awareness of the Twitter feeds for these sites appeared to be lower than for Facebook, primarily because fewer respondents used Twitter. Most users of social media appeared to use this to find out specific information about local groups, services or events with which they were already connected, rather than as a way of obtaining new information. For instance, those accessing the Woodford Park Leisure Centre Facebook page tended to be frequent users of the leisure centre.

Of those who had used the social media information provided by Woodley Town Council, half found it useful and informative. Comments were made that it tended to look ad hoc and sometimes was out of date. However social media sources were thought to be helpful to local people by 57% of those who had used them.

Table 21: Awareness of Woodley Town Council social media sources

	% awareness
Woodley Town Council	19.2
Oakwood Centre	8.1
Woodford Park Leisure Centre	9.3

(Woodley Town Council: @WoodleyCouncil (Facebook & Twitter)

Oakwood Centre - @OakwoodCentreUK (Facebook & Twitter)

Woodford Park Leisure Centre – @WoodfordParkLC (Facebook))

Table 22: How social media was rated by local people

% of readers rating Woodley social media as:	% Response
Useful	50.2
Informative	49.5
Well presented	68.1
Interesting	41.7
Helpful to people who live in Woodley	56.9

2.9.6 Improvements to Social Media

Very few people had ideas about how Woodley Town Council's social media could be improved.

Those that did suggested the following:

- Ensure regular updates – especially for the Oakwood Centre
- Have a clear and cohesive look for each place that has a social media page
- Advertise more extensively to show that Woodley Town Council has social media pages
- Consider advertising with postcards left in shops and local places, sent out to groups and schools etc.
- Ask for contributions from local people to social media sites
- Encourage comments
- Give simple prizes for people taking part in local social media.

2.10 Living in Woodley

2.10.1 Satisfaction with Woodley as a place to live

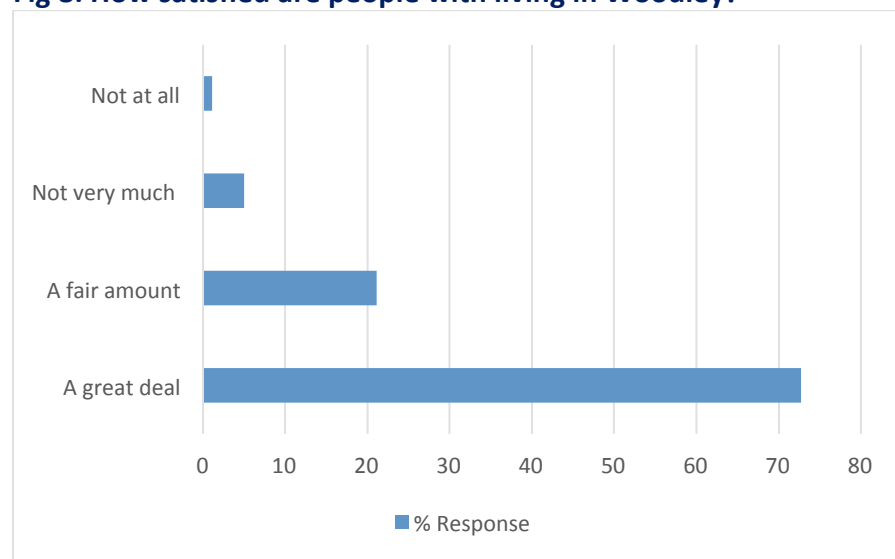
Woodley is a popular place to live. Among other reasons, people choose to live in Woodley because of convenience and local facilities and because of the sense of community. Having good schools and an accessible and well served town centre is also important, as are community facilities such as the leisure centre, and plenty of open spaces.

Almost 3/4 of people living in Woodley like living in the town a great deal, a further 21% like living here a fair amount.

Table 23: How satisfied are people with living in Woodley?

Rating	% Response
A great deal	72.7
A fair amount	21.1
Not very much	5.0
Not at all	1.1
Don't know	0.1

Fig 8: How satisfied are people with living in Woodley?



2.10.2 The sense of belonging to Woodley

Just over a quarter of people felt they belonged to Woodley a great deal, 40% felt they belonged to the town a fair amount. This indicates that there is quite a strong sense of locality among residents. People new to the town tended to say that they liked living in Woodley but that it felt it took a while to feel part of the community, especially if they were working, less so if they had children.

Table 24: Identifying with Woodley

Rating	% Response
Great deal	27.6
Fair amount	40.1
Not very much	19.8
Not at all	11.2
Don't know	1.3

2.10.3 Community spirit

In general, local people are uncertain how much people in Woodley work together to improve the local area, with 43% of respondents saying that they did not know. A quarter of respondents felt that people work together a fair amount to improve the town.

Table 25: To what extent do people in Woodley work together to improve the local area?

Rating	% Response
A great deal	6.7
A fair amount	25.5
Not very much	19
Not at all	2.6
This kind of improvement is not needed	3.1
Don't know	43.1

Our News & Events

Herald, Marketing, PR & Event enquiries:
Anuszk Ransley, Communications Manager
communications@woodley.gov.uk



www.woodley.gov.uk
@WoodleyCouncil
@WoodleyCouncil
Woodley Town Council



Mayor's Afternoon Tea

Woodley Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor are to host a fundraising Afternoon Tea Party to raise money for the Mayor's chosen charity, Keep Mobile.

The event will be held at the Oakwood Centre on Sunday 23rd October 13.00-16.00 and guests will be entertained, while enjoying a delicious Afternoon Tea of assorted sandwiches, cakes and scones, accompanied by tea, coffee or a glass of Prosecco. There will also be a live fundraising auction.

More information about how to buy a ticket will soon be available on our website and social media pages.



Woodford Park new play area opening

We are delighted to announce that the new play area at Woodford Park is now open.

Woodley Town Mayor, Cllr Janet Sartorel, officially opened the new play area in June, at an event attended by over 600 local residents.

The new play area has been designed specifically with inclusivity in mind, and will offer a stimulating, exciting play experience for children of all abilities. It includes a double cableway, a sensory area, a wheelchair accessible play mound, an agility trail, a 7m tall canopy trail slide, seven types of swings and much more.

We have also received a certificate offsetting our carbon footprint in the making and installation of the park, which is in line with our climate change policy to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The sensory garden within the toddler area has been planted in memory of Cllr David Stares, who was Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee when the new play area was first suggested and was instrumental in driving the project forward. A memorial plaque will be installed to honour David.

The bespoke archway was exclusively designed and made by Hannah Morris-Coole from Omna Studios and was carved from one whole tree trunk. The crowds clapped and cheered as Janet cut the ribbon across the archway to officially declare the park open. Children at the event were also treated to free ice cream and goody bags provided by the contractor, Proludic.

The play area also contains our Jubilee Tree, which was planted for the Queen's Green Canopy and the Jubilee Stones display to commemorate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Please see the Jubilee article on page 2 for more information about this.

The event was filmed by 7 Video Company and we will add the footage to our website and YouTube channel once we have received it.



Toddler area



Sensory garden



Canopy trail slide



Mayor cutting ribbon



Our Venue, Your Way

Celebrate at the Oakwood Centre

Surrounded by the Green Flag award winning Woodford Park, the Oakwood Centre offers bespoke packages for wedding receptions and celebrations for up to 150 people in its flexible and versatile rooms. Windows occupy one entire wall of each room, offering views over the park, providing the opportunity to extend your celebration to the external spaces, perfect for an outside drinks reception, BBQ and beautiful photos. The rooms can be extended and configured to create the ideal sized space, while the Miles Suite, for smaller or more intimate celebrations, is particularly elegant, flooded with natural light from full length windows on three sides and from a roof light set in to the high ceiling. Our professional Venues Team work closely with each party to ensure the celebration runs smoothly, setting up and clearing down, leaving each party free to focus on and enjoy their event. We also now hire glasses, table linen and chair covers, to make your celebration extra special.

For all enquiries, please contact Nikki Syers, Bookings Manager: bookings@woodley.gov.uk
www.theoakwoodcentre.com



Oakwood
centre

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations

We'd like to thank all of our local residents who attended our Jubilee events to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Here's a summary of the celebrations.

The Queen's Beacon

Woodley Town Mayor, Cllr Janet Sartorel, was joined by hundreds of local residents as she lit the Queen's Beacon to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in a timed event across the UK and the commonwealth. As the Beacon lit up the night sky, local choir, Bel Canto Choir sang 'Song for the Commonwealth' as a musical tribute to Her Majesty The Queen, filling Woodford Park with the sound of music and song.

The Queen's Green Canopy & Jubilee Stones display

A purple leaved cherry plum tree was planted by the Mayor in Woodford Park near the new play area as part of The Queen's Green Canopy, a nationwide initiative focusing on planting sustainably and creating a legacy in honour of The Queen's 75 year reign. The tree is surrounded by jubilee-themed stones decorated by local children for a competition to win a place at the top table at our Big Jubilee Lunch. The winner of the Under 5s category was four year old Edward Von Der Recke, the 6-8 years category winner was eight year old Abhyuday Varma and the 9-12 years old category winner was 12 year old Abbey Jenkins.

Woodley's Big Jubilee Lunch

The winners and their families sat with Woodley the Town Mayor and the Woodley Town Deputy Mayor, Cllr Kay Gilder, at the top table at our Big Jubilee Lunch in the town centre. The event, which was held in partnership with Woodley Town Centre, was attended by over 1000 people who enjoyed live music from across The Queen's reign, street entertainment and free ice cream for children from Maya's Treats.



Queen's Beacon



Queen's Green Canopy & stones



Jubilee stone winner Edward



Jubilee stone winner Abhyuday



Jubilee stone winner Abbey



Woodley's Big Jubilee Lunch

Community News

Girls' football

In the past year, more than seventy girls have either attended Woodley United FC's Saturday morning sessions at Woodford Park Leisure Centre or played for its u10 and u12 teams, with the coming season seeing the club provide football from reception class up to and including year 8. For more information about the girls' club, please email: amy.hardy@woodleyunitedfc.co.uk

Happy birthday u3a

Woodley & District University of the 3rd Age (u3a) is celebrating its third successful year this summer.

"When we launched Woodley & District u3a in the summer of 2019, none of us could have envisaged what was coming over the horizon. Our members' determination to keep going during lockdown by connecting on Zoom or meeting safely when permitted proved a great support in combating isolation during the worst of the pandemic... we now have over 240 members from across the area," said Chairman Chris Mould. Member Diana Meager joined on moving to Woodley. "u3a has widened my social circle. Making friends when you're older takes a bit more effort, but u3a stands out as being just so friendly and welcoming. It offers so many different activities, too! It really is open to everyone and fellow members are so encouraging."

www.woodleyu3a.org.uk



Woodley United ladies and Under 12s teams



Matt Allwright with the Lunch Bunch team



u3a members at The Wyne

Lunch Bunch new patron

The committee of Woodley Lunch Bunch were delighted to first meet Matt Allwright at our Citizens' Awards evening in April, and were thrilled by his enthusiasm for their work.

Matt supports several local charities and, originally hailing from Woodley, the Lunch Bunch team thought he would be the perfect patron for Woodley Lunch Bunch. Matt agreed, and the committee look forward to working with him to help with fund raising, networking and publicity. "He's a genuinely lovely, generous man with many talents that we hope will benefit our charity and in turn, the families we support. We would like to thank Matt for taking on this role with us," says Juliet Sherratt, one of the Lunch Bunch founders.

Parkside Family Practice

Parkside Family Practice - Woodley & Green Road Surgeries - are looking for new participants for its Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to discuss the services on offer and how improvements can be made. Participants represent the views of patients, such as the quality of care, appointments, and opening times. The practice has an active PPG group who meet every two months. For more information about joining, please call reception, email or complete the form on the Practice's website.

bwccg.pfp@nhs.net

<https://parksidefamilypractice.nhs.uk>

Community Heroes

Following the huge success of this year's Citizens' Awards, the Council has decided to rename the awards to Community Heroes and have introduced six categories. The awards are for individuals and organisations whose good works benefit an individual or organisation in Woodley. They can be good neighbours, people or organisations who carry out voluntary work, or those who care for people in our community. Nominees can be any age and there is a youth category for nominees aged 19 or under.

- ★ Community Heroes - Neighbour of the Year - to award an individual who has, independently (ie not part of a wider charity organisation) provided exceptional care and support to a Woodley resident or residents within their local community
- ★ Community Heroes - Volunteer of the Year - to award an individual who has, as part of a voluntary or charity organisation, provided exceptional support to the activities of the organisation, making a difference to residents of Woodley
- ★ Community Heroes - Voluntary Group of the Year - to award an organisation that has provided exceptional support and services to Woodley residents
- ★ Community Heroes - Climate Champion of the Year - to award an individual, organisation or group that has made a significant contribution to fighting climate change and / or climate initiatives within the area
- ★ Community Heroes - Young Person of the Year - to award an individual aged 19 or under who, through voluntary activities, has made an exceptional contribution to the Woodley community
- ★ Community Heroes - Mayor's Outstanding Contribution Award - awarded by the Mayor to an individual or organisation who they feel have provided an outstanding contribution to the community.

The Mayor will present the awards at a Civic Reception, to which the award winners, their family and friends, and the nominators are invited. The next Community Heroes Awards ceremony will be on 24 February 2023.

If you know an individual or organisation you think deserves recognition for their work in our town you can make a nomination by filling in the form on our website. Please contact Matthew Filmore (matthew.filmore@woodley.gov.uk) for more information. The deadline for nominations is 16 November 2022.



Council Committee Meetings

Planning & Community Meeting: 12 July, 9 August, 6 September, 4 October, 1 & 29 November

Leisure Services Meeting: 30 August, 15 November

Strategy & Resources Meeting: 13 September, 22 November

Full Council: 27 September

For more information please email: matthew.filmore@woodley.gov.uk



Saturday Market 09.00-15.00

The Saturday Market

Woodley's long running popular weekly Saturday Market has an assortment of stalls selling a variety of goods.



Artisan Market 09.00-14.00

The Wednesday Artisans Market

Every Wednesday with an increasing number of stalls selling a range of Artisan products, many made or grown locally.



Every Sunday 08.00-13.00

The Sunday Car Boot Sale

Grab a bargain or sell your preloved goods every 2nd & 4th Sunday of the month, 08.00-13.00. Contact Nicholas & Lorraine Harris: 01932 761985

Town Centre Manager: Brian Fennelly: tcm@woodley.gov.uk / 07506 741591

www.woodleytowncentre.co.uk @WoodleyTCMI @Woodley Town Centre

ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

The management of Woodley Town Council operates an integrated environmental, health and safety management system, which is geared towards the identification and control of key processes in our organisation. It is also our intention to encompass environmental, health and safety best practice into our business activities and decisions and to:

- bring this Policy Statement to the attention of all stakeholders
- carry out regular audits of our environmental, health and safety management systems
- comply with legislation, guidance and approved codes of practice issued at International, National and Local levels
- eliminate risks to the environment, health and safety, where possible, through selection and design of materials, buildings, facilities, equipment and processes
- ensure that emergency procedures are in place at all locations for dealing with foreseeable environmental, health and safety incidents
- establish meaningful, measurable targets and goals for environmental, health and safety performance
- maintain an open and constructive dialogue on environmental, health and safety issues with our employees, contractors, suppliers, customers and regulatory authorities
- maintain our premises, provide and maintain safe plant and equipment
- minimise waste and increase recycling within the framework of our waste management procedures
- only engage contractors who are able to demonstrate due regard to environmental, health and safety law
- prevent pollution to land, air and water
- promote environmentally responsible purchasing
- provide adequate resources to control the environmental, health and safety risks arising from our work activities
- raise awareness, encourage participation and train employees in environmental, health and safety matters
- reduce the use of water, energy and any other natural resources
- seek opportunities to continuously improve our ability to identify measure and control the environmental, health and safety impacts of our activities

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually and revised as necessary to reflect changes to the business activities and any changes to legislation. Any changes to the Policy will be brought to the attention of all stakeholders.

Signed:

Dated:

Position: Director

Green Flag Award Criteria

Green Flag Award® Assessment Criteria

Green Flag Award® applications are judged against eight key criteria. Where certain criteria are not met, applicants can provide justifications that may be taken into account. What's more, if management practice changes are in progress but not yet fully implemented, transitional phases will be acknowledged and viewed positively.

The judging criteria also considers the fact that each park/green space will offer different kinds of facilities, and will be managed and developed to varying opportunities and constraints. Innovation and the way facilities offered are tailored to the needs of the community will also be taken into account.

Eight key criteria

1. A welcoming place

When approaching or entering the park/green space, the overall impression for any member of the community - regardless of the purpose of their visit - should be positive and inviting. There should be:

- Good and safe access
- Good signage to and in the park/green space
- Equal access for all members of the community

2. Healthy, safe and secure

The park/green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Any issues that have come to light must be addressed in the management plan and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use
- It must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed
- Health and safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed
- Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park/green space, and be clearly signposted.

3. Clean and well maintained

For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:

- Litter and other waste management
- The maintenance of grounds, buildings, equipment and other features
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

4. Environmental Management

Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed. Parks/green spaces should:

- Have an environmental policy or charter and management strategy in place, which is in

practice and regularly reviewed

- Minimise and justify pesticide use
- Eliminate horticultural peat use
- Recycle waste plant material
- Demonstrate high horticultural and arboriculture standards
- Have energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures

5. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna
- Landscapes
- Buildings and structural features
- These should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment

6. Community involvement

The park/green space management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park/green space user groups as possible. The following should be demonstrated:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community

7. Marketing and Communication

- A marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- There should be good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved
- The park/green space should be promoted as a community resource

8. Management

- A management plan or strategy should be in place
- This should clearly and adequately address all of the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park/green space's management
- The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed
- A financially sound management of the park/green space must also be demonstrated

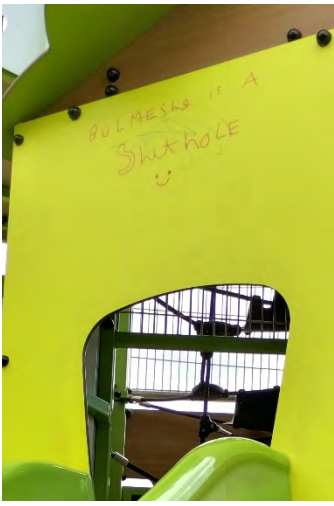
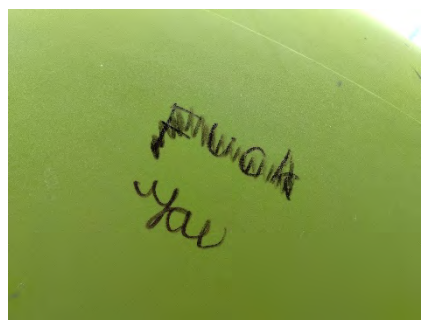


Site Quality Evaluation (Mystery Shop)

Name of Site	Woodford Park		Managing organisation	Woodley Town Council
Weather Conditions	Warm, dry, overcast			
Date of assessment	28 th August 2023		Time (from – to)	12.20pm – 13.30pm
Overall Result	Green – Meets the standard with no concerns raised Amber – Meets the standard but with some minor areas of concern Red – Does not meet the requirement with major issues identified			
Result: (✓)	Is the site of Green Flag Award Standard? Green ☒ Amber ☐ Red ☐			
Grading			Strengths and Recommendations	
Each question is graded Green, Amber or Red NG (not graded) is used when the question can't be answered or is not applicable – for which an explanation is provided.			Strengths and recommendation are provided to support each grading. Photographs can be included throughout, or at the end of the report to support the feedback from the judge(s) in relation to both strengths and recommendations. Please refer to the Raising the Standard guidance manual here for further information on the criteria.	
A Welcoming Place				
1. Is the site welcoming?	NG	☒	☐	☐
		X		
Big welcome signs at each entrance. Some of them could be better placed for pedestrians.  This one was really tall.				
2. Is the site easy to find?	NG	☒	☐	☐
		X		
Well signposted from the road and good, helpful internal signposts.				
3. Is signage in good condition?	NG	☒	☐	☐
			X	
All signs generally in very good condition but one near the primary school had some graffiti. 				

4. Is the site accessible to all users?	NG	G	A	R	Paths well surfaced, accessible and clear. Plenty of car parking.
		X			
Healthy, Safe and Secure					
5. Are facilities on site in good and safe condition?	NG	G	A	R	Some of the buildings looked a little shabby but everything is well used and in good condition.
		X			
6. Did you feel safe during the visit?	NG	G	A	R	Good sightlines, lots of other park users.
		X			
7. Are dogs being controlled and the site free of dog fouling?	NG	G	A	R	No dog fouling observed. Plenty of dog bins.
		X			

Well Maintained and Clean					
8. Is litter, waste and recycling managed?	NG	G	A	R	No litter and the bins had been emptied recently. No recycling bins seen.
		X			
9. Is there a good standard of horticulture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R	The site was well mown and very tidy. A good variety of plantings. The gardens were well looked after. Some weeds on the tennis court. 
			X		
10. Is there a good standard of arboriculture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R	
		X			
11. Are buildings and infrastructure such as walls, paths, steps and structures in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	
		X			
12. Is equipment used by the public and staff in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	Everything was in very good condition, particularly the benches. However, there was offensive graffiti on the children's play equipment that should be removed immediately.
			X		

					 
Environmental Management					
13. Is there evidence that the site is managed to have a positive impact on the environment?	NG	G	A	R	Good diversity of plants around the lake. Dead wood piles near the remembrance garden. Some wildflower and long grass areas – perhaps could do more of these.
		X			
Landscape and Heritage					
14. Are heritage and/or landscape features in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	War memorial well kept with good interpretation signs.
		X			
Community Involvement					
15. Is there evidence of community involvement and engagement?	NG	G	A	R	Several small community gardens within the park, created and maintained by volunteers.
		X			 Friends group.
16. Is user feedback positive?	NG	G	A	R	(Apart from whoever wrote on the slide.)
		X			Lots of happy park users having picnics.
Marketing and Communication					
17. Is there evidence of marketing and promotion, including events? e.g. notice boards, in buildings, website & social media.	NG	G	A	R	Plenty of banners advertising activities. Various notice boards.
		X			
18. Is the correct year flag flying and certificate on display?	NG	G	A	R	
		X			

Overall Result (✓)	Is the site of Green Flag Award Standard? Green  Amber  Red 			
Final comments: A pleasant park with lots of interesting features and facilities. I found it to be very clean and tidy. The only real negative was the graffiti on the play equipment. It is obviously loved and well used by the local community and provides a range of activities and different spaces for everyone.				