



Response to Green Flag Judges - The Ridgeway Local Park, Hertford Winter 2017

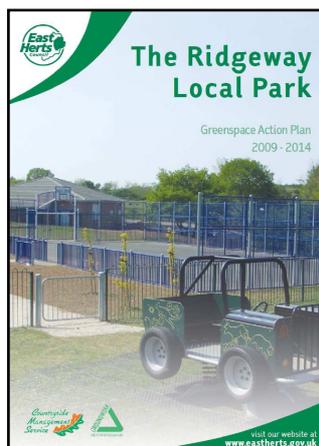
Following our first Green Flag in 2009, The Ridgeway Local Park successfully retained this prestigious award every year.

The Green Flag Judges have always been very complimentary about the park and the management plan we created to guide our work in this small open space and this has been reflected in our scores.

We were last judged in person in May 2015, and were awarded a Mystery Shop pass in 2016 and again in 2017 thanks to our consistently high scores. We are looking forward to being judged in person again in 2018, as we are very proud of this small local park.



The Ridgeway Local Park Greenspace Action Plan 2009 – 2014



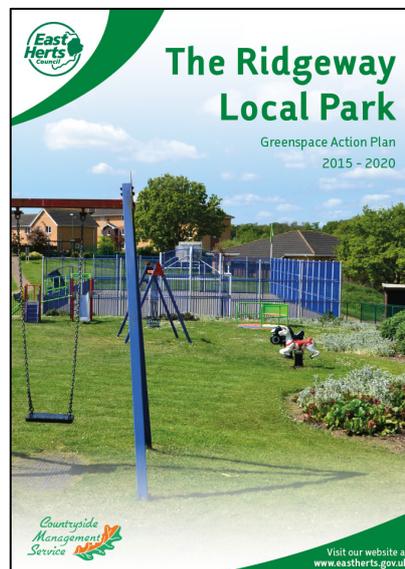
The first management plan for the site ran from 2009 to 2014 (pictured), with an additional year added to the action matrices to show the works completed in 2014/15 while we completed the next version.

We have achieved great things in the last few years and this small open space has been developed into a great little local park with many new and exciting features. However, it should be noted that while we continued to work towards fulfilling the actions and objectives set out in the first Management Plan, some of the initial ideas and actions outlined have changed in the new management plan.

New management plan - The Ridgeway Local Park 2015 – 2020

We reviewed the initial management plan and developed a new five-year plan in 2015/16. The new Management Plan runs from 2015 to 2020, carrying on our original vision and aims for the park. The Countryside Management Service (CMS) continue to guide our environmental and wildlife aspirations. The ongoing support of the local residents, Councillors and visitors to the park will enable us to progress our aims and aspirations for the park. The new management plan is an intrinsic part of any future bids for external funding for any proposed projects and the yearly Action Matrices, included at the end of all our management plans, will continue to be reviewed and updated annually.

For more information and the management plans see www.eastherts.gov.uk/theridgewaylocalpark



Progress so far.....

The park has been transformed since the inception of the first management plan back in 2009. With internal and external funding we have successfully delivered the annual management and development tasks set out within our initial Action Plan, only having to postpone only a few planned actions for further reviewing in the coming years and inclusion in the new management plan.



The Ridgeway Local Park, showing MUGA and younger children's play area – Dec 2016.

Officers from Parks and Open Spaces, Environmental Inspection Team and Business Support are all engaged in delivering the action plan along with our incumbent grounds maintenance contractor John O'Conner (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd. Progress continues to be reviewed as part of our monthly staff meetings along with a series of specific progress meetings held throughout the year.

Investment in the park - We continue to invest in the development of the park through both internal and external funding sources, in addition to our grounds maintenance budget.

The biggest improvements we have made in the park to date were in 2009/10. We invested over £100,000 external funding to undertake a "Play Builder" Project to develop an older children's play area and to create an easy access route down into the lower Dell area of the park, working in partnership with Groundwork and engaging with the local community.



The new older children's play area located in The Dell has been a success with the local young people who enjoy the challenge of the equipment and its setting within the natural landscape.

The adjacent photo shows a view into The Dell older children's play area from the top of the embankment slide.



The easy access pathway (see photo left) into the lower Dell area, created to allow buggies and the less mobile a safe route into the new play areas very well used.

These major works, funded by a community landfill grant, have greatly improved a once inaccessible, overgrown and unwelcoming area of the park. This lower Dell area has been transformed into a wide open space that is accessible for all the community.

In summer of 2013 we installed a new picnic table in the Dell at the end of the easy access pathway on the Judges recommendation – see adjacent photo.



In the spring of 2016, as part of our ongoing Play Area Development Programme, we invested just under £10,000 in capital on new play equipment in the younger children's play area – see adjacent photo.

In 2016 and 2017 we replaced some of the log roll in the park as it had rotted, and continue to monitor the site to undertake any required repairs.

The successful completion of the major improvement works, the new "Play Builder" natural play area and our continued investment in the park and play areas have been very well received by the local community.

Community Involvement - We are keen to provide more local people with the opportunity to participate in the design, management and care of their local green space and have been working with the Sele Youth & Community Forum to plant trees in the surrounding open spaces in the local area. Judges feedback recommended that we explore ways of getting the Community Centre involved in the site. We are conscious of a need to develop better partnership working with the volunteers who manage the Community Centre, but this is a sensitive issue that may not be deliverable in the near future.

The park continues to be well used by local residents and has a programme of activities arranged by local community groups such as Child UK who run a regular summer football school. In addition to this, a youth engagement programme that centres on The Ridgeway Park has been developed by the Hertfordshire County Council's Youth Work Team Leader for East Herts.

We know from past experience how important the park is to the local community; in 2011 The Sele Community Action Day relocated from its usual setting by the local shopping parade and was held in the Ridgeway Park for the first time. A variety of organisations worked in partnership to make this event a success including various East Herts Council departments, Hertfordshire County Council departments, the Police, local schools, Housing Association, charities, support and advisory groups.

Unfortunately changes to the funding and the staffing of these groups have made it difficult to continue this event and no Sele Community Action Day has taken place on site since then. However, we aim to continue to foster local pride and increase community involvement in the park and the surrounding area. We will continue to review the opportunities available as we progress with the next five-year management plan and look to work more closely with local people in the park and the surrounding open spaces.



Tuesday 19th July 11
Sele Community Day
 @ The Ridgeway Local Park 2pm - 6pm

- Face Painting and Competitions
- Activities for young children
- Housing Advice
- Prizes and Freebies
- Financial Advice
- Education and Training
- Crime Prevention & Fire Safety Advice
- Drumming workshop
- Fire Safety Advice
- Refreshments
- Youth Connections BBQ and activities
- and many more

"It is your community - We're here to listen.
 Come along and tell us your issues and concerns"

Logos for FUTURE & HOPE, C10 UK, and East Herts Community Safety Partnership.

The upper grassed open space, younger children's play area and MUGA continue to be a great success with both local children and their parents. The photos below show the view across the upper section of The Ridgeway Local Park, including the MUGA and younger children's play area and the easy access route down into The Dell and older children's play area.



Conservation and environmental sustainability -

We have continued to develop our mowing regimes and are dedicated to creating conservation areas that provide corridors and havens for wildlife, particularly in the lower Dell area. The banks down to the lower Dell area have been allowed to develop naturally and the park continues to provide a link from the urban area to the open countryside – see adjacent photo.



As part of our plans for future woodland management, a review of the maintenance in the lower Dell area was carried out in 2012/13 and again in 2015/16 in partnership with the Countryside Management Service (CMS).

Following on from this we developed coppicing and tree planting plans to create a link between the woods and the farmland adjacent. However, this woodland is privately owned, but we are working to develop a relationship with the owner to consider joint woodland management and have integrated this aspiration into the new management plan.



As part of the woodland management plans, the section of trees and scrub to the east of the play equipment will also be coppiced, protected and planted with native species. This section will maintain the pathway that currently runs through this area off which we will look to the creation of a woodland glade – the adjacent photo shows the area proposed for this at the end of the easy access pathway.

2016/17 volunteer tree planting – In December 2016 to launch the council's new programme of one paid day per year staff volunteering programme, the leadership team headed to The Ridgeway Park to dig holes in hard ground and plant 100 native trees in a new woodland area and another 120 for a new hedge.



Pictured right are chief executive Liz Watts and head of planning and building control Kevin Steptoe.



The project was overseen by the CMS as part of the woodland management plan for the park, and included the clearance of derelict elm boundary scrub, a new box fence for the new boundary hedge and additional woodland planting in north-western corner of site.

Volunteer projects such as these will provide an ideal opportunity to involve local residents and volunteer groups in future tasks in the park. CMS already have a local volunteer group that they have been working with on a community project in a nearby EHC open space whose help could be utilised here in the short term.

Other improvements and preventative maintenance works in the park have included fencing around the upper play area, which has been reinforced with rabbit protection mesh to protect the new shrub planting beds within from rabbit damage – see adjacent photo.



Control of the rabbit population on site has been organised to take place in the winter months to have the greatest impact. We continue to work with the appropriate adjacent landowners to initiate a more collaborative approach.

We have installed additional metre high weld mesh fencing to all the shrub beds on the upper level of the open space as a preventative measure. This has proved successful in deterring rabbit damage, but some shrubs will need replacing as they have not thrived this summer. – see photo below showing the shrub bed fencing.



Through our work with CMS, Groundwork, local housing association and the Police, we have begun to develop a robust partnership framework to promote this valuable green space for the benefit of the local community and other users. This will allow us to increase the awareness of our new Management Plan and engage the community in the development and evolution of the park in future years. As Green Flag Judges noted previously, there is a real sense of local ownership of the site from local residents and the PCSO's.

Promoting The Ridgeway Local Park – we continue to actively promote all the parks and open spaces in East Herts as great places to visit and to promote our health and wellbeing initiatives.

Health Walks - The East Herts programme of Health Walks includes walks in Hertford that pass by the park. These walks are part of a countywide programme of free, volunteer led walks, to help people get outdoors and be more active - see <https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder/east-herts-hertford-bishops-stortford-health-walks>

Parksherts – is a mobile-first website application providing a single information point for over a hundred of Hertfordshire’s parks and open spaces from recreation grounds through to woodlands and award winning flagship parks, irrespective of administrative ownership. It is a Hertfordshire parks web project that launched to the public in July 2017, and provides a way for people to discover and enjoy sites they know and those that they haven’t yet discovered, whilst also supporting people to make outdoor exercise part of their everyday lives.



Initially funded by Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, all ten Hertfordshire District/Borough Councils and one Parish Council, it is a clear demonstration that cross county projects really can and do work and a great tool to encourage greater park use and promote our parks, including Green Flag sites. Visit www.parksherts.co.uk to find out more.

Since the launch, the website has had 4507 unique users and 6089 sessions logged on it. (Data from 21 July – 3 October 2017).

The Ridgeway Local Park on Parksherts – the park has a dedicated web page that shows the location of the park, how to get there and provides information on what is available.

For information about The Ridgeway Local Park on the Parksherts website, see <https://www.parksherts.co.uk/parks/view/the-ridgeway/>



Response to judges’ feedback

As we have been ‘mystery shopped’ in the last two years we have included the 2015/16 official feedback comments from the last judging visit in May 2015. This has an additional column to show our response to the comments the judge made and how we have taken these on board and used them to help us make any changes or improvements.

Mystery Shop 2017 – ‘Meets the requirements but has a few areas that require attention’. The feedback from the mystery shop judge who visited the park on 9 November 2017 was very positive, noting **“This is a delightful area which is clearly appreciated by the local community”** and **‘a very “open site” surrounded by modern housing very nice feel about whole area’.**

The judge noted that the amber grade was only due to the log roll issues noted on the day of the visit. In response, we have continued to monitor the log roll fencing on site and make the necessary repairs to keep the open space looking its best.

We are looking forward to being judged in person in the spring of 2018 so we can show off this delightful local park.



Green Flag Award 2015/2016

Name of Site – The Ridgeway Local Park
Managing Organisation – East Herts Council

Bandscores

Desk Assessment	0-9	10-14	15-19*	20-24	25-30			
Field Assessment	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	50-54*	55-59	60-64	65-70
Overall score	30-44	45-54	55-59	60-65	66-69	70-74	75-79	80+

Status – PASS

Overall band score – 66-69

Desk Assessment Feedback (Management Plan and supporting documentation)

Band score – 15-19

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	EHC Response:
Presentation	Good use of photographs to demonstrate site features. Explanation on links with strategic documents and partnerships clearly defined	Some of the headings could be adjusted now, much has been achieved in the last 5 years. For example the section on character could be absorbed by a section on historical context. There are a number of times when the author uses statements like 'in this financial year' or 'at the time of writing', better to put the year date to make it clear which year is being referenced.	We have developed a new five year management plan which follows on from the initial plan. The new management plan has a five year operational action plan with maps and matrices which identify what will be undertaken in each year.

Health, Safety & Security	Appropriate policy in place for dog fouling. Monitoring of facilities and play equipment referenced and well covered. Established inspection programme.		A new Public Spaces Protection Order was introduced in May 2016 to cover dog fouling and any persistent anti-social behaviour across the District.
Maintenance of equipment, buildings & landscape	Contractual arrangements all in place for maintenance	Identify the period of the maintenance contracts and renewal dates.	The current grounds maintenance contract ends in 2019 and we will be retendering the contract next year.
Litter, cleanliness, vandalism	Waste management procedures in place and viable approach to ASB.		A new Public Spaces Protection Order was introduced in May 2016 to cover any persistent anti-social behaviour across the District.
Environmental Sustainability	Good policies in place associated with pesticide and peat use and approach to recycling is sound.	Source recycled products locally wherever possible	We continue to follow these policies in all our parks and open spaces.
Conservation of heritage & nature	Tree survey undertaken and recognition of the connectivity between site and adjacent ancient woodland	Site survey data on existing native flora and fauna would be a valuable addition.	We are continuing to work with CMS to enhance the native planting and links with the adjacent ancient woodland.
Community Involvement	Well established links with partners that utilise space for community events.	No update/progress report on the attempts to establish Friends of Group or volunteer input.	There is not a bespoke Friends Group for the park, but we continue to work closely with CMS and local community groups such as the Sele Youth & Community Forum.
Marketing Strategy	Good promotional link to Health agenda with healthy walking website.	May want combined parks leaflet in the future to encapsulate East Herts open space portfolio	We are currently working with CMS on the 'Hartham & Beyond' project to develop walking links in and around Hertford to link our parks and open spaces. This will include a bespoke leaflet and links on the new Parks Herts App.

<p>Overall management</p>	<p>Clearly signposted to website for appendices. Comprehensively covered essential elements.</p>	<p>Under organisational management – a personnel structure would be good to show who is directly involved in the site and the departments inputs. The plan doesn't give you a clear indication on progress – for example the viewing platform was rejected in favour of a more stable structure. But the action matrix doesn't reflect this.</p>	<p>The management plan was developed to last five years and during this time the projects we initially suggested evolved. However it was not proposed to rewrite the plan each year. We have taken this point on board in the new management plan.</p>
<p>Additional comments All the main elements of the plan are well written and it is clear what the aspirations for the site have been. The action matrix needs to be augmented with a section that establishes a clear path of progress, although completion dates are evident for most of the tasks it hasn't fully shown where actions have been adjusted or proved to be unachievable.</p>			<p>We thank the Judges for the positive comments and feedback.</p> <p>We have developed a new management plan from this feedback and other Green Flag Judges comments.</p> <p>We look forward to being judged again in 2017.</p>

Field Assessment Feedback
Band score – 50-54

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	EHC Response:
<p>A Welcoming Place</p>	<p>Good open aspect to the park with appropriate made up pathways through the formal section of the site. Welcome panel with map of site.</p>	<p>New welcome panel required</p>	<p>We are developing new welcome and information panels for all our parks in Hertford as part of the 'Hartham & Beyond' project.</p>
<p>Healthy, Safe and Secure</p>	<p>All equipment and facilities in good and safe condition, sloping pathways reinforced. Formal play provision and wild play appropriate for site. Evidence of adjustment to embankment slide to make safer.</p>		<p>We have installed new play equipment in the park as part of our ongoing Play Area Development Programme.</p>

Clean and Well Maintained	Very well maintained, no litter or dog fouling evident. Evidence that replacement plants were secured quickly after vandalism.		Our grounds maintenance contractor continues to provide a very good standard of service in all aspects relating to the park.
Sustainability	No herbicides used. Trees surveyed and managed for the future.		We continue to work closely with our grounds maintenance contractor and CMS to maintain the park to our set environmental standards.
Conservation and Heritage	Some banks and woodland edges left long as meadow habitat	Extend cutting regimes to create different lengths of grass growth to allow more plants to flower.	We are working with CMS to replant the natural woodland edge and enhance the native flora and fauna in the park.
Community Involvement	Partners make good use of site as an event venue – Child UK summer Play Scheme, Youth Connection Outreach BBQ.	Whilst Friends Group has proved difficult to establish for the site individually, developing input to the site from neighbouring parks volunteers could be the way forward.	We are continuing to work with local residents and partners from the local community to ensure the park continues to be a valuable community resource.
Marketing	Good use of website, and advertised through quarterly link magazine.	Last consultation was during Play builder 2009/10. Would be useful to do another now as part of the next management plan.	As we develop the 'Hartham & Beyond' project we will be consulting with all our park users.
Management	Phase 1 and 2 have been delivered very effectively and turned the site into popular asset to the local community.		We will continue to use the new management plan to guide our work in the park.
Additional Comments Would like to see the potential for wildlife improvements extended and further integration with the adjacent ancient woodland. Overall, however the planning and implementation of the original aspirations for the site have been very successful.			We thank the Judges for their positive feedback and have taken their comments on board. We look forward to showing off the park when it is judged again in 2017.