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Vision and Policies

In this section, a vision for both parks is defined; and from this, broad policies are set out that will guide and support the process of achieving the vision.

The vision is not necessarily something that is immediately attainable in full; it is intended to provoke ambition and aspiration for all those involved in the site, and to set out a clear direction and strong framework that will underpin all management decisions affecting the parks, into the future and for the long term.

Russell Gardens and Kearsney Abbey are an important part of a wider network of parks and open spaces on the edge of Dover – Bushy Rough Park to the west, Palmtree Hill and Scotland Common to the north, Frandham Wood and Gorsehill Wood to the south. This report focuses on Russell Gardens and Kearsney Abbey; however, it is desirable that, in time, the additional open space of neighbouring Bushy Rough Park is incorporated into a strategic planning approach, since it is an integral part of the open space network and is within Dover District Council's control. In so doing, additional plans may need to be developed in the future, to address wider circulation issues, including path networks, parking and traffic management issues; and the future of Bushy Rough House, (listed, but currently derelict), in relation to buildings and amenities in the adjacent parks.

In the meantime, wider issues of connectivity are considered here at a very broad level, as part of the vision and policies.

Vision

Our overarching vision is to work with the community to create high quality parks which meet the needs of today's park users by conserving and interpreting the significant heritage features, delivering high quality and accessible visitor facilities and activities, and managing them to high heritage and horticultural standards.

Policies

A series of policies have been developed in relation to topics that flow from the understanding and analysis of the site set out in early sections of this document, and which respond to the issues and opportunities identified in Section 7. These policies seek to safeguard the significant aspects of the parks, as set out in Section 6.

The policies form a central part of the conservation planning process. It is recommended that they are formally adopted by Dover District Council: this will help to ensure that the future, long-term, care of Kearsney Parks is embedded within the Council's strategic planning procedures.

For each topic, there are high-level general policies, followed by a number of specific aims, or actions, which flow from that policy, and which are defined so as to ensure delivery of that policy. It is intended that the aims are addressed and implemented on a site-wide basis.

Overall objectives:

To balance the uses of Kearsney Parks as historic landscapes; as local public parks; as a regional attraction; as an events venue; as places with significant educational potential;

To reconnect the designed landscape of Russell Gardens with its focal point, Kearsney Court.

To restore and enhance the historic landscape and views around the site of Kearsney Abbey;

To display horticultural and park management excellence;

To safeguard the integrity of the Dour and Drellingore chalk streams conserving their ecological, historical and landscape value

To enhance the biodiversity of the parks, particularly in ecological priority areas, and in other areas where this complements the historic landscape;

To make the best possible use of all available resources;

To communicate the history of the landscape, including its archaeology, ecology and uses, effectively.

To enhance visitors' experiences of both parks, whilst ensuring that the historic qualities and uniqueness of each park is not lost in the process.

1 Historic Landscape Policies

Summary of Issues

- It is essential that those involved in the management of the parks are aware of their significance, which derives from their rich history;
- Managers need to understand the historical development of each park, the vulnerability of designed landscapes, and how to protect and manage their special qualities;
- All stakeholders need to understand the special and unique history of the parks and appreciate how that should influence ideas for the parks in the future;
- History is happening now and most managers do not record important stages in the life of the parks.

POLICY A: All decisions relating to the management, conservation and enhancement of Kearsney Parks will respect, conserve, protect and enhance their designed character and the unique features that give these parks their significance

Aim A1: Formally adopt the Conservation Plan to ensure that all those making decisions which may affect the site and its setting do so with reference to the adopted policies, with the aim of conserving the significance of each of the parks.ⁱ

Aim A2: Form a joint management group with residents of Kearsney Court, stakeholders, users and special interest groups, to promote understanding and appreciation of the parks' history, complexities and management issues.

ⁱ see English Heritage, *the Setting of Heritage Assets* 2011

Aim A3: Periodically review progress of the Conservation Plan with the joint management group; update the Conservation Plan historical record and action plan recommendations as appropriate.

Aim A4: Assess any proposed new work against the Conservation Plan, using a Heritage Impact Assessment technique to evaluate the impact of proposed work on the historic features and design integrity of the parks and an Ecological Impact Assessment to assess the impact on the ecology of the parks.

Aim A5: Co-ordinate management and interpretation based on each park's unique qualities and historic landscape significance.

Aim A6: Create and maintain a Kearsney Parks archive, recording the current condition of landscape and structures and any new work undertaken, including planting; record events and collect oral history.

2 Access Policies

Summary of Issues

- Kearsney Parks are a regional and also a very local visitor attraction;
- Vehicle access is unsatisfactory – coach parking is not catered for, sightlines are problematic; lack of provision for off-site parking;
- Parking provision is nowhere near sufficient to meet demand, resulting in on-street parking on the main Alkham Road and on narrow residential streets;
- Lack of information about alternative means of transport to the parks;
- It is unclear whether cycling is permitted in the parks or not;
- The Alkham Road, where traffic speeds often exceed the 30mph limit, separates the parks and prohibits easy pedestrian movement between them;
- Many of the pedestrian entrances have access issues associated with them - sited on blind corners, challenging gradients, poor path surfaces;
- Lack of a comprehensive, connected, path network.

Policy B: Take a strategic approach to travel to and from the site, including public transport, traffic circulation, vehicle management and parking

Aim B1: Develop a travel plan, exploring opportunities to increase use of public transport; address parking capacity and issues such as coach drop-off and pick-up points, and alternative off-site parking facilities for coaches, minibuses, and peak demand;

Aim B2: Re-configure vehicle access and car parking to make most efficient use of available space while also reducing and minimising the intrusive impact of parked cars upon the historic landscape.

Aim B2: Make information on transport and parking options easily available to visitors and potential visitors.

Policy C: Ensure access to and around the parks is available to as broad a user group as possible, ensuring safe entrances, easy routes and clear orientation

Aim C1: Work with the highways authority to reduce traffic speed along the Alkham Road (before traffic from the west reaches Russell Gardens) and to achieve a safe crossing point for pedestrians;

Aim C2: Promote use of the safest entrances to the parks;

Aim C3: Provide clear orientation and visitor facility information at all entrances, supported by online and printed information;

Aim C4: Develop circular routes around both of the parks, making it clear which routes are suitable for all users;

Aim C5: Develop a realistic policy on use of bicycles within the parks and make appropriate provision for bicycles to be left securely.

Aim C6: Provide seating / resting opportunities at regular intervals along all path routes, particularly on longer routes and steep paths;

3 Visitor Use Policies

Summary of Issues

- The pattern of use, particularly on peak visitor days through the summer, is very concentrated in Kearsney Abbey (north of the lake), resulting in overcrowding and wear and tear, while other parts of the park, and Russell Gardens, are much less popular;
- Visitor facilities such as the WCs in Kearsney Abbey are basic, visually intrusive, and separate from the café;
- Complete lack of basic visitor facilities (WCs, refreshment kiosk) in Russell Gardens;
- Play provision in Kearsney Abbey is too small to meet demand – evidenced by wear and tear although it has been recently refurbished;
- Play provision in Russell Gardens is remote from other visitor facilities (WCs, café, parking) and therefore under-used; it is also visually intrusive within the designed landscape setting;
- No interpretation or information about the history of the parks or about their distinctive and unique features;
- Until recently, there has been a very low level of events and activities within the parks;
- Limited opportunities for learning, volunteering or other means for people to actively engage with the landscape.

Policy D: Take a strategic approach to provision and location of visitor facilities and the timing of events with a view to achieving a more even spread of visitor use across both parks and across the seasons

Aim D1: Ensure that facilities within each park meet basic visitor needs and support events and activities in either park, by provision of WCs and refreshment opportunities on each site;

Aim D2: Develop a programme of events and activities that promotes increased use at off-peak times and encourages visits to under-used areas;

Aim D3: Review play provision across the parks and explore opportunities for expanding the play offer in a way that is sensitive to the historical landscape setting, and which builds upon the unique characteristics of each park.

Aim D4: Ensure that any new visitor facilities and amenities are sensitively designed and appropriate to the historic landscape, and are integrated so as to minimise visual intrusion and negative impacts.

Policy E: Develop proposals to improve intellectual access and opportunities for active recreation, through a programme of events and activities that draw on the heritage of the parks

Aim E1: Develop proposals for interpretation and events with a view to enabling every visitor to gain some understanding of an aspect of Kearsney Parks unique qualities and significance;

Aim E2: Develop a programme of events and activities that promote the unique and special character of each of the parks;

Aim E3: Promote healthy access to the outdoor environment through a range of events and activities for visitors of all ages and abilities.

4 Archaeological Policies

Summary of Issues

- It is vital that archaeologists are involved from the outset in assessment and strategic planning of any works affecting the park, as well as in the detailed planning and implementation of any work;
- Archaeology is not solely a below-ground resource: it is an integrated, holistic one involving buildings and surface remains (e.g. earthworks, paths, surface finds, etc.) just as much as buried sites;
- Potential for community archaeological projects.

POLICY F: Safeguard, conserve, enhance and manage the archaeological heritage, both above and below ground,

appropriately and in line with corresponding historic landscape conservation policies

Aim F1: Create opportunities to investigate archaeological remains such as Kearsney Abbey House, River paper mill, the possible Neolithic site on Coxhill Mount, etc., including carrying out geophysical and other surveys as part of a considered research framework and programme of investigation, recording and interpretation.

Aim F2: Ensure that the public have the opportunity to be involved in, and to learn from, archaeological investigations and explorations within the parks;

Aim F3: Ensure that an appropriate level of archaeological evaluation, carried out with relevant expertise, accompanies any intrusive structural or ground works carried out within either of the parks.

5 Architectural Policies

Summary of Issues

- Detailed surveys of all listed structures and the major built features within the park have been carried out and detailed schedules of conservation / restoration works have been prepared;
- Historic walls and other structures are in need of a programme of works over the next ten years;
- Ownership of substantial walled garden walls in both Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens, where they form part of the respective park boundaries, has yet to be clarified;
- Terraces, balustrades and the curved bastion retaining wall which are key parts of Mawson's design for Russell Gardens are in separate ownership; the bastion wall which forms part of the park boundary is in poor condition;
- Surviving structures throughout the parks are in need of conservation repairs and maintenance;
- Some historical structures have been lost, e.g., the eyecatcher / bridge at the east end of the lake; the boathouse; footbridges to lake islands; summerhouse in Russell Gardens.

POLICY G: Record, protect and conserve all surviving historic structures and artefacts and ensure that any new structures and artefacts complement the historic landscapes and strengthen their underlying design principles

Aim G1: Implement the proposed schedule of repairs to historical structures, working to a phased plan of priorities over the next ten years;

Aim G2: Clarify ownership of kitchen garden walls; seek agreement

with owners of these, and other walls which form part of the parks' boundaries and which are important historical features of the original gardens, to be surveyed and subsequently seek a phased plan for any conservation works required to ensure their stability and longevity.

Aim G3: Where it is desirable to recreate or reinstate missing features as part of an overall conservation masterplan, take specialist design and historic landscape advice and carry out heritage impact assessment to ensure that modern designs are a good fit within the historic landscape;

Aim G4: Ensure that management and maintenance planning makes provision for future inspections and ongoing care and repair of historical structures, supported by appropriate expertise.

6 Hard Landscape Policies

Summary of Issues

- Visual intrusion of car parking, maintenance facilities, and other inappropriate or unsightly features and amenities;
- Paths do not follow historical layouts or historical design principles;
- Diversity of types of path surfaces and widths, lacking clear path hierarchy and orientation information;
- Lack of consistent and co-ordinated style of signage, benches, bins, etc.
- Lack of infrastructure to support events, e.g., temporary power, lighting, water and drainage connection points.

POLICY H: Plan and implement a network of paths based on historical layouts and design principles

Aim H1: Create a path network, based on the historical path layouts, for different uses and locations (garden, parkland, ecological areas) that provides a choice of routes around each park and facilitates visitor access to, and use of, under-used areas;

POLICY I: Design and apply an appropriate, consistent palette of surfacing, fencing, furniture and signs appropriate to the historic setting, including a colour strategy for each park that is related to their history

Aim I1: Take design advice and develop a style and colour palette for each park for surfacing, furniture, signs, fencing, etc., and apply it consistently throughout the foreseeable future;

Aim I2: Plan and implement a phased programme of renewal for fences, gates, signage and way-marking, furniture;

Aim I3: Develop and implement a policy for memorial bench donations, considering alternatives such as contributions to a management fund or

endowment fund, which would help to safeguard park management in the future.

POLICY J: Ensure that events and activities are supported by appropriate facilities and infrastructure

Aim J1: Identify the facilities and services needed to support proposed activities and events and install appropriate infrastructure to facilitate those events and activities, be it permanent provision or provision for temporary connections.

7 Ecological Policies

Summary of Issues

- The parks include a good range of habitats and support protected species, but there is scope to improve the ecological interest;ⁱⁱ
- Management of chalk grassland has ceased over the last decade and the valuable habitat is being lost;
- Loss of grassland on the scarp face of Coxhill Mount;
- Woodland needs to be actively managed to enhance its ecological potential.

POLICY K: Maintain and improve the biological interest and character of the site and seek to restore and enhance habitats such as chalk grassland and semi-mature woodland; safeguard fragile and protected habitats from effects of public recreation and where possible use bee-friendly species both in horticultural and natural planting.

Aim K1: Adopt management techniques that will rejuvenate the chalk grassland on Coxhill Mount, ideally grazing;

Aim K2: Manage woodlands on the south-east slopes of Coxhill for their ecological and screening values and encourage development of flora and fauna to improve integration with neighbouring Frandham Wood;

Aim K3: Use local provenance for native varieties wherever possible in replanting or in habitat creation, if necessary carrying out seed harvesting and propagation programmes.

Aim K4: Use fruit or nut bearing, nectar and pollen rich plants when enhancing existing planting areas wherever this is compatible with historic landscape precedent;

Aim K5: Control invasive species;

ⁱⁱ Bramley Associates 'A Phase 1 Ecological Survey of the Kearsney Parks in Dover, Kent' March 2015

Aim K6: Install bat and bird boxes where appropriate and create log and brash piles to serve as insect ‘hotels’ in informal areas.

8 Tree and Woodland Policies

Summary of Issues

- Loss of views, including views of Kearsney Court and of Coxhill Mount
- Need for active tree and woodland management to restore and maintain views and spatial structure;
- Loss of mature trees and structural planting due to age, and to disease, particularly sudden ash dieback;
- Avenues of lime are interspersed with other species;
- Lack of consistent strategic approach to conservation of veteran and mature trees, and to replacement and renewal of failing trees;
- Lack of understanding of species palette appropriate to each park;
- Greater age and species diversity within tree stock is desirable to encourage resilience to disease;
- Genetic stock of older trees may be more diverse than that which is commonly commercially available and therefore valuable in terms of disease resistance;
- Policy for memorial trees is needed to help conserve the spatial structure of planting and prevent parkland becoming woodland

Policy L: Prepare and implement a tree and woodland management programme

Aim L1: Complete the tree and woodland survey, ensuring that key trees within the woodlands on the slopes and at the foot of Coxhill are accurately located, surveyed and integrated into the 2015 survey;

Aim L2: Implement active management of views and restore spatial structure, by clearing and maintaining desirable views and open areas, reversing the scrubbing-up of Coxhill Mount and screening intrusive views;

Aim L3: Review and update tree survey at regular intervals;

Aim L4: Prepare a tree and woodland management strategy, including a regular programme of inspections and a costed schedule of maintenance operations, with special attention to the specific management needs of significant, mature or ancient trees and trees which form structural planting. The strategy will:

- Take account of both historical and ecological significance in all management decisions;
- Take account of views and vistas in all management decisions;

- Set out parameters for new planting, with reference to historical tree and woodland distribution and to historical planting palettes and species, where known;
- Seek to maintain and renew avenues, using species that are appropriate to the historic landscape, and at original spacing wherever possible;
- Take steps to reduce the spread of disease and develop planting strategies to limit future impacts;
- Ensure that donated and memorial trees are planted and managed in accordance with the tree management strategy and plaques and personal decorations are avoided;
- Consider alternatives to tree donations, such as contributions to a management fund or endowment fund, which will help to safeguard park management in the future

Aim L5: Develop seed banks and carry out propagation from key mature and veteran trees.

Aim L6: Carry out historical impact assessment and take design advice in relation to new planting locations for new trees.

9 Horticulture and Soft Landscape Policies

Summary of Issues

- Loss of horticultural interest in the shrub and herbaceous layer;
- Loss of historical planting structure provided by shrubberies and hedges;
- Lack of knowledge and information about species palettes appropriate to the period and design of each park.

Policy M: Research, record, restore, conserve and enhance the horticultural heritage of both parks

Aim M1: Prepare a species palette and planting guidelines for each park and ensure that these are embedded within the management plan;

Aim M2: Take specialist historic landscape design advice in relation to new planting areas, and carry out re-planting with reference to historical layouts and details where known and where appropriate.

10 Hydrology and Water Features

Summary of Issues

- The river Dour and its tributaries are important chalk streams that are both nationally and internationally rare habitats
- Canal in Russell Gardens has silt and vegetation build up and has been known to dry out raising concerns that it may not be generally watertight

- Edges to both the canal and Kearsney Abbey lake are in a poor state of repair with damage to edges, subsidence and loss of bankside issues
- Many of the culverts are in a poor state of repair and in Kearsney Abbey there are potential health and safety issues with the possibility that lengths may collapse
- Various water control features such as sluices and structures are in need of either repair or replacement

Policy N: Monitor water levels and manage water bodies and watercourses to maintain in good condition whilst respecting the unique ecology of the chalk streams

Aim N1: Ensure any maintenance and management of the water courses follows good ecological practice to conserve and enhance the value of the chalk streams

Aim N2: Monitor water levels and any water loss from Russell Gardens canal. Ensure vegetation and siltation do not prevent adequate water flows through the canal and remove algal blooms as and when they occur.

Aim N3: Repair and restore the edges to the designed water bodies. The canal should be

Aim N4: Open up culverts where possible and establish natural edges to enhance the ecology and visual amenity of these features

Aim N5: Repair and restore water infrastructure such as weir and sluices to ensure appropriate management of the watercourses and prevent flooding

11 Community Policies

Summary of Issues

- There is no Activities Plan or Audience Development Plan linked to the parks;
- Volunteering does not take place in an organised fashion;
- There is no ‘Friends of Kearsney Parks’ group;
- There is no stakeholder group or organised means by which stakeholders can influence management and maintenance decisions.

POLICY O: Users and local residents will be encouraged to take an active part in the management of the parks

Aim O1: Develop an Activities Plan identifying how local audiences will

be engaged and encouraged to use the parks;

Aim O2: Develop and promote a volunteer base of those willing to assist in enhancing the parks and/or in supporting activities in the parks;

Aim O3: Create a programme of events and activities that will engage audiences across local communities;

Aim O4: Work with local schools and other education providers to promote links between curriculum activities and the parks;

Aim O5: Enable and encourage a supportive Friends Group to form;

Aim O6: Identify stakeholders and a means by which they can be informed about, and engaged in, management decisions

12 Management Policies

Summary of Issues

- Maintenance arrangements are being reviewed and there is a need to ensure an enhanced range of skills within the team to meet the demands of historic landscape improvements
- Conflict between site maintenance traffic and maintenance compound use, with visitor car parking and people crossing the café car park between café and WCs;
- Some areas and features have very minimal management and maintenance at present and this will need to be addressed.

POLICY P: Manage and maintain the landscapes and their features and structures, in a manner informed by, and appropriate to, the significance of the parks and their underlying design principles

Aim P1: Develop the aims and recommendations of this Conservation Plan into a full Management and Maintenance Plan including a clear management policy base, a detailed work programme and a masterplan;

Aim P2: Carry out a five-yearly review of management and maintenance effectiveness, need and forward planning actions.

Aim P3: Develop a strategy for attaining the Green Flag Award for Kearsney Parks and, additionally, given the heritage status of the sites, seek Green Heritage Award status.

POLICY Q: Develop a highly skilled management and maintenance team, creating clear lines of responsibility and accountability and make long term plan to secure appropriate skills and resources

Aim Q1: Maintain and enhance the management team structure to provide the full range of skills needed to care for these historic assets, including horticultural excellence;

Aim Q2: Identify the need for, and provide training in, specialist skills or knowledge, including use of the Conservation Plan, Heritage Impact Assessment techniques and management planning for historic landscapes.

Aim Q3: Explore potential for horticultural apprenticeships and skills sharing opportunities with other centres of excellence.

13 Sustainability Issues

Summary of issues

- Spread of arboricultural and horticultural diseases;
- Climate change and the effects of extreme weather conditions, flooding and disease patterns;
- Use of materials and resources, including water, peat, pesticides, artificial fertilizers;
- Composting and other on-site facilities to support horticultural and parks management activities;
- Waste management and recycling.

POLICY R: Prepare and implement a Sustainable Management Strategy

Aim R1: Adopt ecologically appropriate, sustainable and environmentally sensitive management practices in accordance with best practice, strategies and plans, including sourcing of materials, use of herbicides and pesticides, avoiding peat based products, composting of green waste on site, and reuse/recycling of materials where possible.

Aim R2: Seek to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, by ensuring that use of resources (particularly water, drainage, energy use and production) and choice of plant material (planting schemes, grass, tree selection) are consistent with predictions for climate change and its mitigation, are consistent with control of pests and diseases, and contribute to Green Infrastructure.