Working in partnership, to create a Borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper

Affordable Housing ♦ Regeneration ♦ Building Community Capacity ♦ Safe and Clean Environment ♦ Dacorum Delivers
Urban parks and green spaces are an essential part of the urban heritage and infrastructure, being a strong element in the architectural and landscape character of towns and cities, providing a sense of place and engendering civic pride. They are important for enabling social interaction and fostering community development, as well as providing an outdoor classroom for biological and ecological studies. Public green spaces help to conserve natural systems, including carbon, water and other natural cycles, within the urban environment, supporting ecosystems and providing the contrast of living elements in both designed landscapes and conserved wildlife habitats within our urban settlements. Parks and green spaces are supportive of social and economic objectives and activities. In particular the provision of public parks helps to reduce the inequalities, poor health and social exclusion in deprived areas and reduces the inherent tension between the many social and ethnic groups who form the wider community. Providing for the recreational and leisure needs of a community assists the economic revival of cities, increasing their attractiveness as a place for business investment, to live, work and take our leisure.

Extract taken from
Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (86)11
of the Committee of Ministers States on Urban

“There are some fantastic features and facilities which contribute to the accessibility and enjoyment of this area of Berkhamsted. These include two waterways, a variety of trees, hedges and grassland, an exciting play area, millennium garden, skate park and bowling green. Special events take place which are well attended and supported by the local stakeholders.

I am very proud of the area which combines nature conservation with attractive activity areas. It is maintained to a high standard by Dacorum Borough Council’s Clean Safe and Green team, together with local volunteers and stakeholders. I am confident high standards will be maintained to ensure Canal Fields continues to achieve the much sought after Green Flag award.”

Cllr Julie Laws
Portfolio Holder Environmental Services and Sustainability
November 2015
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Introduction and Site description 1.0

Canal Fields occupies a central position in the historical market town of Berkhamsted. The site is a large green open space, approximately 2.5 ha in size and provides much needed recreational space for a town that is generally deficient in public green space. The Park was originally open fields and at one point had an open aired swimming pool as well as cress beds alongside the river Bulbourne. Canal Fields is now a park and recreation space much appreciated by the local population and has been awarded the Green Flag Standard since 2007.

The parks facilities cover a range of activities for all ages, including a bowls club, play area, Skate Park, fitness trail, large car park and open spaces for informal recreation. As well as enjoying tennis club and football club on site, which means it has a rich and diverse range of stakeholders involved in the park.

The park is also home to a wide range of mammals, birds, insects etc. Running through the park is the Grand Union Canal and the river Bulbourne which is a significant feature as this is a chalk stream, which is one of 200 in the world.

This plan sets out what management strategies are currently in place for the park and what further improvements could be made to the park, to enhance a visitors experience both from a facilities and infrastructure point of view and as a place where bio-diversity can be protected and encouraged.

Because of the current financial climate the plan will also identify other avenues of funding, such as 106 money, capital bids and sponsorship, to ensure that any plans can be properly financed.

The plan will carry on all the good work carried out in the park from 2007 until the present and carry that work on into the future.

Green flag Judges Comments

“The site was clean and tidy and this was also noted on another undisclosed visit. A site well used by all ages of the community. The millennium garden was well presented on the day and the volunteer group are actively involved in maintaining it.”
1.1 Site location, site description and site access maps
## 1.2 Judges Feedback

### Management Plan – Desk Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Criteria</th>
<th>Flag</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Response/Action</th>
<th>Time Scale</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>The management plan is an attractive document, with a good balance of maps and images amongst the text. A good impression of Canal Fields is gained through reading. Comprehensive, concise, and provides a good overview of the park; reads easily.</td>
<td>There are some issues with legibility of the maps due to the font size.</td>
<td>If viewed on a pc these can be viewed at a higher percentage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy, safety &amp; Security</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canal Fields appears to be a park with few problems – graffiti, dog fouling etc – and measures are in place to deal with associated issues.</td>
<td>This section is a little scant and would benefit from more information – the maintenance specification would be a helpful appendix.</td>
<td>Please see 4.3 Maintenance specification.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of Equipment, buildings and landscape.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The information provided on the work carried out by DBC’s Clean, Safe &amp; Green Team is thorough and should ensure minimal problems are encountered by visitors.</td>
<td>Again, this section is a little short on information – the maintenance specification would provide a helpful appendix.</td>
<td>Please see 4.3 Maintenance specification.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The provision of a dedicated team to deal with vandalism is excellent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation of heritage and Nature</td>
<td></td>
<td>The management plan includes robust sections on both the</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
management of natural features and historical structures, some of which is also available via the web page.

**Community Involvement**

The park is clearly accessed regularly by an extensive and varied group of stakeholders (including diverse age groups from the skate park to bowls club on site), as well as hosting several events throughout the year.

Volunteers are cited as being regularly involved with the Millennium Garden, Wild Trout Trust demonstrations etc.

The lack of a Friends group is a disappointment (and surprise, given the extensive list of community stakeholders).

We have tried with the help of Berkhamsted town council, DBC comms team to start a Friends group several times with no joy. The various stakeholder groups involved with the park do not want to be part of a friends group. They are happy dealing with DBC as separate organisations.

**Marketing Strategy**

The relevant web page is easy to find and access, providing a great deal of information through downloads (management plan and appendices).

Rather scant in general, and further consultation is not planned until 2017. Reliance upon data collected from visitors to the park only will exclude those who do not yet use the facilities or are unaware of what the park has to offer...

The web page could be developed further to include additional images to provide insight for prospective visitors.

Some information on the demographics of the surrounding area would be helpful to better understand the real needs of nearby residents and hence how best to promote Canal Fields.

We are currently working with all the other councils in herts to provide a park app, this should deal with all the issues mentioned. This should be going live in 2017.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

There is a clear a need for the council to work more closely with the Canal and Rivers Trust to ensure adjacent areas and infrastructure under their ownership, including those which to all intents and purposes are part of the park, are maintained and managed to the same standard. A more joined up approach in managing this site would almost certainly be mutually beneficial. Ideally this joint working would be formally integrated in to the management policy for the site.

**Response**

DBC park officer does currently work closely with the canal and riverside trust, both groups attend
CARP meetings regularly. The above issues have been raised. Canal and Riverside trusts main priorities are keeping the waterways safe and therefore they do not see the above critique as a priority in manpower terms and budgetary terms.

Field Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Flag Criteria</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Response/Action</th>
<th>Time Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Welcoming Place</td>
<td>Free car parking is to be applauded (even if sometimes abused by non-park users). The upkeep of paths and hardstanding is generally excellent. Good use of branding across all signage, leading to a unified image for the park and Dacorum BC.</td>
<td>The addition of cycle parking facilities in or around the car park would be beneficial (particularly given the Bikefest event held in the park). The access road is heavily potholed and doesn’t provide a good first impression – this is hopefully being addressed shortly. Although signs in place are new and in good condition, signage provision is limited and additional signs at the various park entrances would be beneficial (consider a bespoke welcoming sign above the underpass). Some signs are not well laid out, with legibility being a potential issue for some users due to font size and height of text sections.</td>
<td>The addition of cycling rack somewhere in the park is an idea we proposed to our parking dept who were reluctant to provide this in the car park. We have considered other areas, but currently this is not a priority. The access road is not DBC owned, however due to the poor state we decided to resurface at a cost of £20,000 capital funding. We are happy with the legibility of the signs and have no plans to change them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy, Safe and Secure</td>
<td>Canal Fields park has an exceptional range of facilities to offer users of every age and with a variety of needs. There are many diverse attractions laid out within a relatively small area and the park is a valuable asset to the residential areas that surround it. Although not within the park’s boundaries (but visitors probably assume that it is), the Western end of the park adjacent to the canal locks has a somewhat abandoned feel and is in need of a collaborative approach to its management. No dogs seen during the visit but there was one instance of fouling.</td>
<td>We have quarterly CARP meetings where canal and riverside trust attend. These issues have been brought up on numerous occasions. Canal and Riverside trusts main priorities are keeping the waterways safe and useable. They do not have the manpower or budgets for the works mentioned.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Clean and well Maintained</strong></td>
<td>Car park and skate park are lit at night and the park is within an alcohol free zone. A dedicated dog warden is of great value in terms of policing this aspect.</td>
<td>Additional benches within the central section of the park would be beneficial for less mobile visitors and this is a very attractive area to spend more time in... Some dog bins were in poor condition and replacement/refurbishment should be considered.</td>
<td>Benches added summer 2016 DBC will be cancelling their contract with dog bin provider, as dog waste can be put in any litter bin.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>Some excellent initiatives to improve biodiversity and fully exploit the unique landscape features within the park have been undertaken (wildflower introduction and changing mowing regimes for example).</td>
<td>A full biodiversity survey has been recognised as being required for some time in order to provide a valid benchmark against future development activities. This is planned for 2016 and would be a hugely valuable piece of work to undertake. In terms of arboricultural</td>
<td>Due to budgetary constraints this will now be carried out in 2017. The tree work carried</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation and Heritage</td>
<td>No peat and minimal use of pesticides are to be commended.</td>
<td>management, more could be done to create diverse habitats with decaying trees – only one instance was evident...</td>
<td>out by network rail, the trees felled were asked by POSO to be left on site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation and Heritage</td>
<td>The natural and man-made features of the park are well documented and respected in terms of its management. The unique aspects of a chalk stream, the Grand Union Canal and a recently uncovered narrow gauge rail track on the adjacent site all provide interest to this park.</td>
<td>Further interpretative information could be provided on the site’s history and the features mentioned to the left. A leaflet might be a good means of delivering some of this additional information (downloadable from the web page). More could perhaps be made of the River Bulbourne, to increase knowledge of this important feature – perhaps pond dipping, bat walks etc as appropriate? Further collaboration with the Canal &amp; River Trust would be beneficial in order to fully exploit the special features of the site.</td>
<td>As a council we simply do not have the resources to carry out these recommendations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Good to see that unlawful mooring along the canal is being well controlled through the employment of sensitive signage. Active volunteers maintain the Millennium Garden (with support from DBC) and the skate park appears to be well used throughout the year (judging by the notice board located there).</td>
<td>While there are many on site facilities, and although there appear to be an extensive number of stakeholders involved in the park, it’s hard to see what impact some have upon the development and the management plan. The various groups appear to lack cohesion and the formation of a Friends group should address this.</td>
<td>Please see earlier response regarding Friends groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>The provision of appropriate information (about for instance the site’s history) is good, particularly if an interested party is</td>
<td>Again, the lack of a Friends group is a concern and should be an area upon which to focus (planned for 2016). Further links might be</td>
<td>The parks department is a very small department (One man) in regards to all the recommends and doesn’t have the resources in time and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willing to download the management plan for the web page.</td>
<td>built with local schools – in particular to educate about the unique chalk stream in the park – and also to investigate the possibility of a Forest School at the Western end of the park.</td>
<td>funding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Signage covering wildlife is good and could be further developed once an in-depth ecological survey has been conducted next year.</td>
<td>Local GPs surgeries might also be engaged to make more use of the park, and the outdoor gym equipment in particular.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Management**

Canal Fields is an attractive and very pleasant park, with much to commend it. Several areas are subject to some exciting plans for the future and it would be of great benefit to the community should these go ahead.

As described for the management plan, some greater strategic vision is needed to get the best from Canal Fields.

The overall feel is somewhat introspective and future plans would benefit from a more thorough assessment of the needs of the local community in order to ensure those needs are being met.

The current 5 year plan is more than adequate for the parks. There is a lot of hard work that goes into the park every year and to say it needs a greater strategic vision is a bit of a throwaway statement, that doesn’t put in perspective, the current difficulties councils have to deal with.

**Additional comments** - and there is generally an awareness of the needs. It is important that funding required for certain elements (play area, skate park) is allocated in a timely manner so that these elements are not further degraded over the next few years.

It would be desirable to create a more flowing layout of the park and its furniture as the park currently feels segmented and divided. There are numerous facilities and benches etc at the eastern end of the park but just one picnic table and no benches in the whole of the central section.

Although outside the park’s boundaries, the western end of the site must be considered within the overall management plans as visitors would assume that there is no boundary and might expect the same high standards to be upheld up to the narrow gauge rail track. This western end of Canal Fields which is owned by the Canal and Rivers Trust incorporates a lock which is currently in a poor state or repair and partly covered in graffiti. This is particularly unfortunate, as this corner of the park with the backdrop of the lock could be a delightful spot if rejuvenated. An approach to the Canal and Rivers Trust should therefore be a priority.

**Response** - The skate park extension has been completed. It took a lot of hard work to secure the extra funding from sport England and to get buy in from senior executive officers as well as local councillors. The play area work will start in 2018 once money can be drawn down from 106 agreements.

More benches have been added and felled trees have also been turned into informal benches in the area mentioned. However to create a flowing layout to the park again is a bit of a landscape architect statement. The park was not designed but has grown organically over the years (Please read relevant part of management plan). Again the area mentioned is owned by Canal and Riverside Trust and this work is not a priority for them.
1.3 2015/16 Achievements

- Skate Park extension
- Wildflowers
- New benches
- Work in conjunction with network rail completed
- Crocus planting in partnership with Berkhamsted Rotary club and Berkhamsted Brownies
- Entrance road repaired
- Footpaths repaired
- Flagpole installed
- Bowling green car park extension complete
- Willows pollarded
1.4 Park Features and infrastructure

Grand Union Canal
- The Grand Union Canal, formally the Grand Junction Canal, links London to Birmingham and was completed to Berkhamsted in 1798. It provided the basis for the town’s wealth, by attracting local industry, such as grain mills and timber yards and it now provides an artery through the district for recreational boaters.
- Boaters can moor on both sides of the Canal.
- Recreational fishing takes place alongside the Canal.
- Dacorum Borough Council is also a member of CARP (Canal and Riverside Trust) alongside, Berkhamstead town council and the Canal and River trust, which was set up to enhance the amenity value of the Canal and riverside, through Berkhamsted for both citizens and visitors.

River Bulbourne
- The River Bulbourne is a chalk stream, a globally rare habitat, confined to North West Europe and New Zealand. Chalk streams are fed from groundwater held in the chalk that forms the Chiltern Hills. Chalk streams provide habitats for some of the UK’s rarest species including the white clawed crayfish, water vole and brown trout. The corridors of land adjacent to the streams are a major wildlife resource and a priority habitat for protection.
- DBC is the riparian owner of the section of the river that runs through the site.
- The area alongside the riverbank is a popular area for walking.

Millennium Garden
- The Millennium Garden was developed by Berkhamsted Town Council and local volunteers, to mark the year 2000. The garden is designed to promote biodiversity and sustainability and attracts a wide range of bees and butterflies throughout the flowering season.
- The garden is maintained by volunteers.

Hedgerow
- The hedgerow along the towpath provides a buffer between the tow path and the grassland alongside the river.
- A programme of restoration work was started in 2004 and completed in 2007.
- The restoration included coppicing of old hedge and gaps planted with a native hedge mix including-Hazel, Hawthorn, Spindle and Hornbeam.

Skatepark
- Berkhamsted Skate Park opened in December 2006, the result of a joint project by Berkhamsted Youth Town Council, Berkhamsted Community Police Team, BTC and DBC. The partnership successfully applied for a Barclays Spaces for Sports grant, a Community Safety Grant and further funding was given by BTC and DBC to complete the project.
- Swan skaters and the swan youth group, conduct skate boarding skill sessions throughout the year and other events such as safety courses and first aid courses.
- In 2013 Swan Youth centre noticeboard was installed on site.
- Floodlights were installed in 2012 in partnership with the Swan Youth centre and Berkhamsted Youth Town Council.
- 2016 skate park extension completed at a cost of £55,000.
- The skate park is inspected weekly by in house maintenance team and annually by an independent inspection company.
Play area
- The play area was developed and enhanced as a result of a partnership project between DBC, BTC and Berkhamsted Round Table. Work began in September 2003 and was completed in December of the same year. The size of the playground increased from $800m^2$ to $1680m^2$, and the number of items of play equipment increased from 4 to 11.
- In 2010 and 2013 further play equipment was installed.
- The play area is inspected once a week by our maintenance team and once a year by an independent company.

Outdoor Fitness Equipment
- In 2008 Berkhamsted Community Partnership (BCP) secured funding to install outside fitness equipment in Canal Fields from the BIG Lottery through Dacorum Play Strategy.
- The scheme includes a play trail for the toddler age range.

Car Park
- 60 marked car parking spaces.
- 3 disabled bays.
- 1 electric car charging bay.
- Up to four hours only parking free, this deters commuters from taking up all the parking.

Bridges
- There are four pedestrian bridges on site.
- The Waitrose Bridge which crosses the Grand Union Canal and the River Bulbourne is owned and maintained by DBC. In 2012 major renovation capital works were completed on the bridge at a cost of £85,000.
- A pedestrian footbridge crosses the River Bulbourne via St Johns Well lane. This bridge had all its boards replaced in 2012 at a cost of £1,500.
- Park Street Concrete Bridge spans the Grand Union Canal and the River Bulbourne. This bridge is owned by Hertfordshire county council and they are responsible for its overall maintenance. (Please refer to site access map)
- At the foot of the Park Street Bridge there is a wooden pedestrian bridge that received minor maintenance works in 2011 and 2012.

Bowls club
- Berkhamsted Bowls Club offers a full range of bowling activities to suit all levels of ability. Founded in 1985, the mixed club offers men’s, ladies’ and mixed matches plus regular friendly ‘roll ups’. A pay and play facility is available to non-members. The Club is open for bowls from 1 May to 20 September and offers a full programme of social activities and events throughout the year.
- The bowling green and surrounding area was leased to the club in 2005 for 25yrs.
Signage
- There is one main park entrance sign that is both visually engaging and informative. This is situated at the beginning of the main footpath to the park. This was installed in 2011.
- There are three other signs - one for the millennium garden and two for the river Bulbourne all installed in 2011. All three are visually engaging and informative.

Bins (Litter and dog waste)
- Litter bins are provided throughout the park and are emptied every day.
- All the litter bins were replaced with new bins in 2012.
- Dog bins are provided and are emptied once a week. There are no problems with dog fouling in the park.

Paths
- The paths in the park are a mixture of tarmac and type 1 pathway. The tarmac path running from Lower King’s road was installed in 2011.
- All paths are in good condition and are suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.
- An informal path runs through the grassland alongside the river Bulbourne, this can become muddy in the winter months.

Benches/Picnic tables
- New benches were installed in 2013. Every 2 years all benches are rubbed down and oiled.
- There are two areas where there are picnic benches (Please see site description map), these are re-painted once a year, or more regular if they suffer from graffiti.

Tennis Club
- The tennis club is one of several stakeholders at the park, it is a members club.
- They are one of the stakeholders (along with DBC, Bowls club, football club local residents) who are responsible for the up-keep repairs of the access road.

Football club
- Berkhamsted football team (The comrades) are another one of the parks stakeholders.
- The club nickname is the Comrades, after Berkhamsted Comrades which was the name of the football club formed in the town by servicemen returning from the First World War.

Subway structure
- Network Rail is responsible for the subway structure and embankment fence. (Please see site description map)
1.5 Historical background

In the 18\textsuperscript{th} century the land now known as Canal Fields was largely wetland associated with the Bulbourne chalk stream. When the Grand Junction Canal (now the Grand Union Canal) was constructed in 1798, and later the railway in 1839, the land was raised using displaced soil and transformed into open fields.

In 1865 Lord Brownlow wanted to enclose Berkhamsted Common and was willing to give the town land for the purpose of recreation as compensation. Canal Fields formed part of the land considered, which was known at the time as St. Johns Brook.

Historical maps of the site from around 1889 onwards show the land divided into separate plots, which were probably used as smallholdings. A map from 1932 shows a nursery on the largest field. Watercress beds were situated between the canal and the River Bulbourne, owned and worked by the Bedford family for many years, until their closure in the 1960s. In 1906 Berkhamsted gas works were constructed east of Billet Lane, with an 18\textsuperscript{th} gauge tramway across Canal Fields at the rear of South Park Gardens linking to a railway siding near the station. Horses were used to transport coal along the line until the closure of the gas works in 1955.

After 1923 the land was conveyed plot by plot to Berkhamsted Urban District Council, and then by devolution of title to Dacorum Borough Council in 1974.

Today the site is an open green space used entirely for recreational purposes and managed by DBC.
1.6 Biodiversity

The River Bulbourne is a chalk stream, which is a globally rare habitat, confined to North West Europe and New Zealand. Chalk streams have become threatened by issues such as water abstraction, physical modification, pollution and some fisheries management practices; however the UK Biodiversity Action Plan identifies chalk streams as habitats for some of the UK’s rarest species including the white-clawed crayfish and water vole. As a result the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan identifies chalk streams as a priority habitat for protection. The DBC Nature Conservation Strategy: A Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2001) identifies chalk streams and the corridors of land through which they flow as a major wildlife resource of critical importance to wetland habitats. The strategy notes that they should be treated as single ecological units, and that degraded sections should be enhanced to allow the dispersal of species. Both the River and the adjacent Grand Union Canal provide an important green corridor through the town for wildlife. The DBC Urban Conservation Study, 2006 notes that management should seek to enhance the ecological interest of green infrastructure, such as the river/canal corridor. Away from the canal and river the BAP refers to Canal Fields as consisting of amenity grassland and standard trees, with open space value only, though the adjacent railway embankment and western end provides a natural green space element.

The site hosts a range of bird species associated with the water habitats including swans, mallard, moorhen and coot. Kingfisher and grey wagtail have also been recorded. The wider site also hosts a good range of species including blue tit, great tit, chaffinch, green finch and song thrush. The song thrush is highlighted on the red species list of high conservation concern with a rapid decline of over 50% in the breeding population over the last 25 years (British Trust for Ornithology). There are no other animals known to be associated with the site except rabbits on the embankment, however there is a bat roost very close to the site (Herts Biological Records Centre) and Canal Fields is thought to be used as a feeding site, after a bat survey was carried out.

River Bulbourne works

In 2005 work started on restoration improvements to the river Bulbourne. Restoration was required because the river had become overshadowed by large clumps of Willow trees and the riverbed had become covered in thick silt due to poor flow dynamics. The project aimed to reinstate characteristic chalk stream conditions by improving flow dynamics, and opening up the tree canopy to increase light inception and naturalisation of the bank line below.

The work was carried out in 4 phases.
- **Phase 1** - The EA carried out channel narrowing by St Johns Well footbridge.
- **Phase 2** - Faggotts and Brushwood deflectors installed.
- **Phase 3** - Willow coppicing and pollarding carried out. This work was done again Autumn 09 and 14.

Wildflower areas

In 2007 wildflower plugs were planted at the top of the northern bank of the Waitrose Bridge to improve botanical diversity. The plugs were not a great success. In 2014 it was decided to sow wildflower seed both sides of the Waitrose bridge to see if this would have better results than the plugs. In 2015 the grassland area between the river Bulbourne and the Canal will also be sown with wildflower seed to increase bio diversity.
Bird boxes

There are several bird boxes throughout the site; more will be installed in conjunction with a local school in 2015.

Use of pesticides and herbicides

CSG operates a minimal use policy with regards to pesticides. At Canal Fields herbicide is used to control grass growth around obstacles, to reduce the need for strimming operations, helping to save on labour costs and to mitigate against the health problems caused by vibration when using hand held machinery. Selective weed killer is also used to help control broad leaved dock.

Trees

The trees on site are highly valued and are an integral part of the landscape. There are 225 trees spread throughout the site, ranging in size from recently planted trees to large mature specimen trees. All the trees are on our Ezytreev system, which logs inspection dates, work carried out to trees etc. The trees are inspected on a regular basis.

All work is carried out in accordance with DBC tree policy, which can be provided on request.

The last tree work carried out on site was the coppicing/pollarding of the Willows alongside the river Bulbourne in the Autumn of 2014.
2.0 Policy context

Our Vision

In Dacorum, we aspire to protect and enhance our natural environment, heritage and habitats. With the involvement of the community, we will create attractive, sustainable, accessible and well-managed green spaces.

The priorities of Dacorum’s community form the foundations of the Green Space Strategy and the basis of the following policies:

Policy 1 – To protect our green space from development
Policy 2 – To protect and enhance our natural environment, heritage and habitats
Policy 3 – To create attractive sustainable accessible and well managed green spaces
Policy 4 – To manage our green spaces with community involvement to ensure they are fit for purpose
Policy 5 – To make people feel safe
Policy 6 – To use development opportunities to improve the quality and provision of open space

Green Space Strategy

The Green Space Strategy is a vision and plan to deliver improved public spaces within the Borough and to help protect our environment from the pressures of development. It sets out Dacorum’s commitment to manage and preserve green spaces – including managed parks and woodlands, nature reserves, and play areas – and to sustain the quality of neighborhoods.

Green spaces are integral to Dacorum, and important components of people’s health and wellbeing, the Borough’s economic prosperity, the biodiversity of the environment and our contribution to sustainability. The Green Space Strategy will improve the quality of neighborhood’s, to meet community and planning needs, and to deliver the priorities of Dacorum Borough Council and The Dacorum Partnership.

The views of the Dacorum’s residents, stakeholders and the Dacorum Partnership have helped to develop and inform the strategy.

A five year action plan designed to achieve the vision for Canal Fields can be found in Section 5. The Green Space strategy is available on request.
3.0 Neighbourhood, Volunteering & Community Use
3.1 Stakeholders and partners

The park has many stakeholders both internal and external involved with day to day activities and events that happen throughout the year.

- Building Services
- Clean, Safe and Clean Service
- Environmental Health Service
- Parking Management Service
- Valuation and Estates Service
- Berkhamsted Bowls Club
- Berkhamsted Community Partnership
- Berkhamsted Community Police
- Berkhamsted Town Council
- Berkhamsted Town Football Club
- Berkhamsted Youth Town Council
- Canal and River Trust
- Chiltern Chalk Stream Project
- Countryside Management Service
- Chiltern Woodland Project
- Dacorum Environmental Forum Water Group
- Environment Agency
- Residents of Tennis Cottages
- St. John’s Well Court Residents
- Swan Youth Skates
- The Canal and Riverside Partnership
- Lawn Tennis and Squash Rackets Club
- Three Valleys Water
- Transition town Berkhamsted
- Waitrose Supermarket

Some of the successful projects working with partners over the last management plan include;
- Installation of floodlights and noticeboard for the skate park, in conjunction with both the Swan Skaters and the Berkhamsted youth town council.
- River Bulbourne works carried out with the following partners; Environmental Agency, Chiltern Chalk stream project and Berkhamsted Town Council.
- Restoration of canal towpath in partnership with the Canal and Riverside Trust and Berkhamsted Town Council.
- Waitrose bridge restoration. £80,000 capital project, in partnership with Waitrose.
3.2 Consultation

In 2011 a customer survey was carried out in Canal Fields. Actions/comments from this were then fed into the last management plans action plan and all these actions were completed. The next customer survey will be carried out in 2015.
A copy of the results can be provided on request.

3.3 Events

Dacorum’s parks, playing fields and open spaces are used for public special events organised by community and charitable organisations. These are usually hired without a fee. Commercial bookings for which a fee is charged include fun fairs, hot air balloon launches, and filming units. Commercial and private functions must not restrict local residents’ enjoyment of the open space nor pose safety issues for the general public. Sports training and tournaments are dealt with through the sports pitch booking system.

Hirer’s of Dacorum Borough Council managed land are required to submit an Application Form for the Use of Council Land for Special Events, with a copy of their risk assessment, public liability insurance certificate and any additional operational procedures. Relevant groups such as Town and Parish Council’s, Environmental Health and The Dacorum Safety Advisory Group are then notified of the event. The Dacorum Safety Advisory Group is a multi-agency group including the Police, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, Hertfordshire Highways, and chaired by Dacorum Borough Council’s, Head of Public Protection. The Group aims to provide advice and guidance to enable those responsible for organising events to run them safely and successfully. A Safety Event Guide has been produced to provide some of the information event organisers need to help them plan a safe event.

Events that happen throughout the year include:

- **Bikefest** - An annual event organised by Transition Town Berkhamsted. Activities include; Cycle training for youngsters, free bike repairs and advice, second-hand bike sales etc.
- **The Swan Youth Centre** runs regular events at the Berkhamsted skate park with the help of 'The Swan Skaters'. This is a group of keen young people who are passionate about skateboarding and want to help manage and maintain the skate park for the use of all local young people. They help to plan and deliver free skate coaching sessions in the holidays for children from 8 - 12 years. The Swan Skaters pass on their skills and knowledge and this also helps break down the barriers between the different age groups that attend the park. The group were awarded 'The Berkhamsted Rotary Clubs Centenary Civic Award 2009' for contributions to their community.
- Berkhamsted bowls club, hold free events throughout the year to encourage people to participate.
- Every Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Buggyblitz provide postnatal exercise classes in the Park.
3.4 Volunteering

Dacorum Borough Council promotes many different ways to volunteer in Parks and Open Spaces throughout the borough, which include the following:

- Wild trout trust demonstrations. These are held in partnership with the EA and the Wild trout trust. Volunteers help build Trout habitat in our local rivers/chalk streams. So far two workshops have been held on Dacorum land. We are planning to hold a workshop in Canal Fields, as they have been a great way of engaging with the local community.
- Joining Friends groups four of the boroughs parks have active Friends Groups. The groups participate in many varied activities from getting their hands dirty on the ground, to helping promote the boroughs parks etc. Canal Fields currently has no active official friends group, although several attempts have been tried.
- Many Corporate social responsibility events have been held with several local and multi-national firms throughout the borough. These include works within Hemel Hempstead’s Water Gardens, Walled garden where extensive planting was carried out with the volunteers.

Volunteers specific to Canal Fields include:

- The Millennium garden is maintained by three local volunteers, although any materials needed are provided by DBC.
- The skate Park is used heavily by volunteers, who organise events/teaching and paint the ramps when needed.
- Bikefest is organised and run entirely by local people from Berkhamsted town in transition.
- Berkhamsted Youth Town Council, who actively campaigned for floodlights to be installed in the skate Park.

3.5 Contribution to health and wellbeing

‘Green spaces promote health and well-being, providing breathing space for relaxation and stress reduction. They provide traffic-free transport routes, and opportunities for people to lead healthier lives.’

Green space strategy extract

Over the last decade there has been a shift in the health agenda towards promoting healthy lifestyle behaviour and choices. There has also been recognition of the role the environment can play in enhancing health. Less active lifestyles have led to an increase in preventable diseases which are placing increasing pressures on the National Health Service and cost the NHS £8.2 Billion annually.

Parks and green spaces contribute to all aspects of health and well-being including increasing levels of physical activity which could alleviate pressures on the NHS. Simply being outside in a green space can promote mental well-being, relieve stress, overcome isolation, improve social cohesion and alleviate physical problems so that fewer working days are lost to ill health.

Parks provide spaces where people can get some fresh air, go for a walk, play football, exercise or just enjoy the surroundings.

- Living near parks, woodland or other open spaces helps to reduce health inequalities, regardless of social class.
- In urban areas people are more likely to rate their health as good if there is a safe and pleasant green space in their neighbourhood: an increase from 48% to 58%.
• 60% of interviewees thought pleasant local green spaces would improve their overall physical health, 48% thought it could improve their mental health, and 46% thought it would make them feel better about their relationships with family and friends.
• 91% of people believe that public parks and open spaces improve quality of life.
• In a survey of 5831 respondents, 79% agreed with the statement: —Parks and open spaces help me stay fit and healthy . Only 4.5% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Canal Fields provides the following activities that can contribute to a healthy lifestyle and a sense of wellbeing:

• Tennis courts, Bowls club and football club are all stakeholders onsite.
• Outdoor fitness equipment provided onsite.
• Skate Park.
• Play area.
• Buggyblitz post natal exercise classes.
• Informal recreation.
• Walks around the Park.
• Volunteering opportunities.
• Enjoyment of the landscape and local flora and fauna.
• Relax on the many benches and picnic tables provided.
• Fishing alongside the canal.
• Bike riding.
• Dog walking.
4.0 Current Management

4.1 Vision of the Park

In Dacorum, we aspire to protect and enhance our natural environment, heritage and habitats. With the involvement of the community, we will create attractive, sustainable, accessible and well-managed green spaces.

The management of Canal Fields and its current management plan aims to achieve this aspiration in the next five years as it did in the previous five years.

Improvements to Canal Fields in the last five years include;
- Improvements works to the river Bulbourne.
- New play equipment installed in play area.
- New signage throughout the Park.
- Floodlights for Skate Park.
- £80,000 of capital works on Waitrose Bridge.
- New bins and benches.
- Works to car park to improve pedestrian access and drainage.
- Banks of Waitrose Bridge sown with wildflower seed.
- Bridge and subway lighting updated.
- Crocus planting in conjunction with Berkhamsted Rotary club
- Skate Park extension

The challenges going forward into this new management plan will be many and varied, especially with the current financial climate that exists within council budgets. A good balance needs to be struck between the parks users’ needs and protecting and increasing (where we can) biodiversity. A full wildlife survey will be undertaken, to understand more fully what we have on site. This may also encourage more local people to become involved with the park, which is another area that the park could improve on, as currently the park has no official Friends Group, although several attempts to form one have taken place.

Areas that also need improving are the skate park area and play area. The skate park needs to expand/improve as it is looking a little dated as are several pieces of equipment in the play area.

A detailed action plan is provided in section 5.
4.2 Neighbourhood Delivery Structure

Parks and Open Spaces are part of the Clean, Safe and Green Team, which in turn is part of Neighbourhood Delivery. All grounds maintenance and street cleansing is achieved in house.

4.3 Maintenance specification

In 2011 a full maintenance specification was written and applied to Canal Fields. This can be made available on request.

4.4 Resources, expenditure and income

The Parks and Open Spaces officer has an overall management role for the site, and co-ordinates essential repairs and replacements to infrastructure, and site furniture (bins, benches, etc.). Any large scale, infrastructural maintenance or development work will normally be organised via the internal Building Services team. The Parks and Open Spaces officer along with Trees and Woodlands manages the trees on site.

Maintenance of the green space (excluding trees) is the responsibility of the CSG area team, and maintenance tasks currently performed include grass cutting, litter collection, hedge cutting, autumn leaf clearance, litter bin emptying (including the weekends), fly tipping, sweeping of hard surfaces (including the car park) and edging along footpaths. The maintenance of the Play Area and Skate Park facilities is also the responsibility of CSG, via the specialist Play Area Maintenance Team.
All members of the CSG team from Parks Officer to maintenance staff receive annual appraisals; from these a full training programme is included.

Currently the budget for Canal Fields falls under the umbrella of the whole Parks budget. When needed, capital expenditure can be accessed. Other sources of income that as a service we use, especially for play areas is section 106 money, from this source we have managed to refurbish many play areas in and around Canal Fields.
We have a three year play area refurbishment plan and Canal Fields is part of this plan. Capital funding, 106 funding and an external funding bid are all incorporated into this. Please see action plan in section 5.

4.5 Performance monitoring and standards

The CSG service has been accredited with ISO14001. The Parks and Open Spaces Officer is responsible for the monitoring of Canal Fields in every aspect from horticulture to infrastructure. There are also procedures in place where both the grounds maintenance team and members of the public can report any issues with the park.

4.6 Marketing

On the Dacorum Borough Council website there is a full description of Canal Fields including a copy of the management plan. There is also a full description of the park in the Berkhamsted Town Council website.
The park is also included on the Canal and River Trust explore Berkhamsted map. Promoting the Park will be a priority in the next five year action plan.

4.7 Security and dog control

There are currently no major issues around security and the area is regularly patrolled by the Community Police Officer. The site is open, with good natural surveillance, and there is lighting in the car park. Should problems such as vandalism, or antisocial behaviour arise then the CSG team will work with the community police to resolve the issue.

The town of Berkhamsted including Canal Fields has been designated as an alcohol free zone and notices have been placed on site notifying visitors.

Dogs are allowed on site, but are excluded from the play area. Dog owners are encouraged to act responsibly by using the dog bins provided. The bins are well spread throughout the site and are emptied twice a week. This service is managed by the Dog Warden within the Environmental Health Service. Any dog fouling incidents are dealt with by the dog warden who will contact offenders if known and has the power to issue a fixed penalty notice of £50. Canal Fields does not currently suffer from major dog fouling problems.
4.8 Environmental management and sustainability

As part of its corporate plan Dacorum Borough Council is committed to;
- Minimise waste and improve recycling levels.
- Take a leading role in reducing CO2 emissions.
- Reduce consumption of natural resources by the Council and set the pace as community leaders.

The Clean, Safe and Green Team actively support this plan in many ways, including;
- Neighbourhood delivery is accredited with ISO 14001.
- Pesticides are only used when no other practical solution is possible.
- All use of chemicals is recorded.
- All chemicals are stored, recorded and used appropriately.
- Only operatives with a PA1/PA6 can apply any herbicides/pesticides.
- All green waste from parks and open spaces is collected and taken to the Cupid Green Depot, where it is mixed with green and food waste from domestic household collections. It is then transported to the ‘Envar’ processing plant in St Ives, Cambridgeshire where it is turned into compost. The compost produced is currently used in the agricultural industry.
- It is the policy of the CSG team not to use peat at Canal Fields. When plant stock is required it will either be purchased as bare root or supplied by a nursery that uses peat free compost.
- Electric car charging point in the car park.

Dacorum Borough Council’s procurement strategy states when buying materials
- The Council is committed to protecting the local environment and taking responsibility for minimising the wider environmental effects of its procurement decisions. The Council expects its contractors and suppliers to meet a similar level of commitment and will seek information to determine that commitment from potential suppliers.
- As a purchaser of services, supplies and works, the Council has an influence on the environment in the manufacture, use and disposal of goods and materials. Where possible, the Council’s purchasing power will be used to promote environmental sustainability. Suppliers are encouraged to look for imaginative ways to assist the Council in achieving these objectives.

4.9 Safety and risk assessment

- All staff are made aware of the Council’s Health and Safety Policy via staff handbook, that all staff receive as part of their induction.
- CSG undertake risk assessments for all tasks, machinery and equipment.
- All staff are provided with and required to wear the appropriate PPE.
- All staff are fully trained in any machinery/equipment they use.
- All vehicles are included on a vehicle maintenance schedule, managed and maintained by the council’s own vehicle maintenance team, carried out at the council’s own dedicated garage.
- All fuel is safely stored at the council’s main depot.
- All chemicals used are managed in compliance with COSHH regulations.
Play area and skate park

- Clean Safe and Green have a dedicated team of play area maintenance staff, who are fully trained in play area maintenance to ROSPA standards.
- All operatives are CRB checked.
- Every two weeks all equipment in the play area and the skate park are inspected.
- An outside company carries out an annual risk assessment of all the play equipment and Skate Park.
## 6.0 Five Year Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Resource Implications</th>
<th>Date Completed/Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Achieve Green Flag</td>
<td>Continue to enter the site for the annual Green Flag Award.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Revenue (currently £312 per year)</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Regularly liaise with Berkhamsted Youth Town Council and Swan Skaters throughout 2015 with regards to the proposed extension to the Skate Park facility.</td>
<td>POSO to have regular meetings with Swan youth centre and Neighbourhood Action officer.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Staff time.</td>
<td>The Swan youth centre were heavily involved/consulted in regards to the skate park extension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Continue to keep partnership with BTC and Canal and River Trust going</td>
<td>Continue to attend Canal and River Project meetings.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Parks officer regularly attends meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Try to establish a Friends Group for Canal Fields.</td>
<td>Advertise and promote the start of Friends group with the help of Berkhamsted town council</td>
<td>Summer 2016</td>
<td>Staff Time Revenue</td>
<td>We have tried along with Berkhamsted town council to start a friends group but so far have had no luck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Create annual onsite stakeholder meeting.</td>
<td>Invite all onsite stakeholders to an annual meeting.</td>
<td>Summer 2017</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARKETING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Website.</td>
<td>Keep information about Canal Fields up to date on DBC website.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
<td>Website has been updated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Park survey. | Undertake further customer research to evaluate the effectiveness of the management. | Summer 2017 | Staff Time Revenue

8. Postcard | Create post card to help promote Canal Fields. | Spring 2017 | Staff Time and Revenue

### ENVIRONMENTAL/BIODIVERSITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resource Implications</th>
<th>Date Completed/Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Increase wildflowers on site</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Revenue..</td>
<td>Sown Spring 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Increase biodiversity</td>
<td>Autumn 2015</td>
<td>Staff time/revenue.</td>
<td>Bird boxes installed 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Lay hedge along tow path</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>Professional hedge layer consulted. Hedge needs 3-5 years more growth, before it can be laid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Pollarded trees</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>Trees pollarded Autumn 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Autumn 16</td>
<td>Revenue for the 40,000 machine planted bulbs. 5000 bulbs donated by the Rotary club.</td>
<td>Completed Autumn 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Newtwork rail to remove trees within fall zone of track.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>10 trees felled. Officer asked Network rail to leave felled trunks to turn into informal benches and to turn stumps into seats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### INFRASTRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resource Implications</th>
<th>Date Completed/Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Repair pathways</td>
<td>Repair footpath from subway to play area.</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>Staff Time Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Liaise/help bowls club with parking issue</td>
<td>Bowls club have applied for planning permission to convert part of the land surrounding the club to parking spaces with the support of the Parks officer.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Staff Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Update play equipment</td>
<td>Install new equipment in play area with secured s106 funding £30,000. A further £150,000 has been allocated from 106 money. The first instalment has been paid, the second instalment will be received in Dec 17</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
<td>Staff Time 106 contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Update skate park</td>
<td>Extend skate park with secured £30,000 capital money and possible £25,000 grant from sport England</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Capital and Grant Staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Number</td>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Funding Source(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Improve tow path</td>
<td>DBC alongside Canal and River trust and Berkhamsted town council will be re-laying the canal tow path all the way through the park.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Capital and Grant Staff time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Improve Green flag perception</td>
<td>Install new flag pole at the entrance to park.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Staff Time Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Improve site accessibility</td>
<td>Consider creating a more formal path between the river and canal tow path.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Capital Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Repair entrance roadway</td>
<td>Although the entrance road is not DBC owned consider repairing to improve visitors visit.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Capital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.0 Monitoring and Review

This management plan will be reviewed annually with monitoring of progress against targets. The Action Plan will also be monitored quarterly and amended when necessary. The Green Flag Criteria and the judge’s comments will be used as the best indicators for measuring the achievements against this management plan.