

Subject:	Update on Battlemead Common open space
Reason for briefing note:	Update and summary on progress for the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in relation to Battlemead Common
Responsible officer(s):	David Scott – Head of Communities
Senior leader sponsor:	Russell O’Keefe – Executive Director Place
Date:	3 November 2020

UPDATE SUMMARY

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel asked as part of its work programme for an ‘Update on the progress and developments of the masterplan for Battlemead Common’, when reviewing the overall work programme of the panel earlier in the municipal year.

This report provides a brief update on progress, but due to the timing of deadlines for responses, the update is only up to and including the activity following the Friends of Battlemead Common virtual meeting held by Zoom on 16th September and the revised masterplan that was issued for comments and feedback from the Friends meeting.

Battlemead Common is an area of open space to the north of Maidenhead Riverside and was purchased by RBWM in 2018. A friends of Battlemead Common Group was established to support the development of the masterplan for the site in a similar way to the approach adopted at a number of successful open spaces across the borough, and in the same way as the Thriftwood Park was added to the Ockwells Park site.

The fourth meeting of the Friends of Battlemead Common was held via Zoom on 16 September 2020. It was very well attended with 36 friends, partners and officers involved. The aim of the Friends Group is to provide guidance, advice and recommendations to the Borough to ensure the effective management of Battlemead Common, to protect and enhance the wildlife, biodiversity and landscape value of the site whilst enabling public access and enjoyment. The two elements of this aim are of equal importance.

A comprehensive progress update was provided, and further discussion was held. The summary notes of that meeting have been issued along with a revised ‘Masterplan (Sept 2020)’ have been issued, to those attending for comment and responses.

The main items of amendment to the previous draft masterplan, that was issued in the summer, are summarised as follows:

1. The proposed sub-dividing fence and hedge in the East field has been repositioned further eastwards, thereby increasing the size of the protected/undisturbed western part of this field.
2. Access to the mown footpaths through the eastern part of the East field will be restricted to October-March only (i.e. when the causeway footpath is closed).
3. The mown paths within the North field have been omitted, and this area will be managed as a meadow with no mown paths.
4. The car park has been removed.

The Friends were asked for comments and feedback on this revised Masterplan, by email back to Anthony Hurst, by no later than 26th October 2020. A verbal update on the initial analysis of the feedback received, will be provided at the Panel meeting, as these have not been received or analysed at the time of preparing this update summary for Panel Members.

The revisions made to the latest version of the Masterplan mean that approximately 60% of the site will have no public access, and 40% of the site will be accessible via mown footpaths, either on a year-round or seasonal basis. This is considered to be a reasonable balance between the two key objectives of protecting and enhancing biodiversity/wildlife and providing for access to and enjoyment of the site.

It is proposed that the Masterplan will be monitored on an on-going basis, and reviewed annually in discussion with the Friends of Battlemead Common.

The Date of next meeting of the Friends is due to be in early December 2020, the specific date is still to be confirmed.