



RAMSHILL RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

Ramshill Estate

Grounds, landscape and biodiversity management plan

2021-2025

Introduction

This management plan has been drawn up following the Management Plan for Landscape and Open Spaces produced by CPM in May 2002. The latter was produced as a condition of permission for the Ramshill development in the 2000s – it reflected the need to develop and then maintain the estate sympathetically with natural features that would be retained during and after development was completed. The original report states that Petersfield Town Council were party to it, and that its plans were compliant with the EHDC Countryside Design Summary, as published as Supplementary Planning Guidance in May 1999. This version of the plan has been written by representatives of Petersfield Town Council (PTC) Grounds Department and Ramshill Residents Association (RRA).

In 2021, the importance of greenspace for the promotion of health and well-being is acutely understood, especially in the light of the Covid-19 emergency. Some residents on the estate live in flats and apartments with no provision of private gardens, and even those with this facility can enjoy shared space for formal and informal recreation and amenity. Greenspace, especially that with trees, provides cooling and shade, of increasing importance as the climate changes – Met Office climate change projections suggest the town might be nearly 50% warmer in 2050 than it was in 1990. In addition, urban greenspace can be a valuable resource for wildlife habitat, all the more important in times of a biodiversity crisis¹. Visual connection with wildlife, particularly birdlife, provides a simple but important pleasure for many residents, and has

¹ Defra (2020) Biodiversity 2020. A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb135_83-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf

proved particularly important during periods of lockdown, as responses to the emergency referred to above.

The following plan is put forward as consistent with the original management aims and objectives set out in the 2002 report but developed and modernised to support current national, regional and local policies that pertain to greenspace management².

Original Management Aims and Objectives (2002)

The management aims were to:

Aim 1: Maintain and strengthen the wooded character of Kingsfernden Lane and the site whilst reinforcing the extent of the Petersfield settlement

Aim 2: Maintain and enhance species diversity within the development area.

Aim 3: Increase recreational opportunities within the site.

The management objectives were:

Objective 1. Protection of those landscape elements making the most contribution to the identity and character of Petersfield, in particular the retention of tree and woodland features, whilst allowing residential development to proceed.

Objective 2. Ensure works to vegetative features cause the minimal visual and operational disruption during the life span of the development.

Objective 3. Undertake new tree planting.

Objective 4. Re-establish traditional management techniques to prolong the life span of vegetative features.

Objective 5. Introduce new species appropriate to the local context.

Objective 6. Manage the grassland to increase species diversity.

Objective 7. Exclude non-indigenous species, in particular Sycamore from the retained and new landscape features.

Objective 8. Provide formal and informal play facilities within the site.

Objective 9. Make available connections to the wider footpath network.

² e.g. Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan 2015, South Downs Local Plan 2019; EHDC Climate and Environment Strategy 2020-2025.

A Management Plan for 2021 to 2025

The previous plan aims and objectives are all largely still relevant to today's needs, except that development of the built environment in the Ramshill Estate has largely been completed (Figure 1). Of course, like other parts of Petersfield, there occur private planning applications for changes to property, and other smaller changes which are now allowed without planning permission (e.g. small extensions, changes to driveways). The original Objectives 1 and 2 have therefore been superseded by those that focus on ongoing maintenance and enhancement (see below). Street tree planting under Objective 3 took place at the time of road construction in the estate, and these trees are now the responsibility of the Highways Department in Hampshire County Council. Petersfield Town Council (PTC) have taken on the responsibility for managing non-highway trees, grassland and other public area vegetation, and are thus responsible for discharging Objectives 4, 5, 6 and 7. PTC has already made a significant commitment to managing the play area in the centre of the estate (Objective 8) and are also expected to take responsibility for maintaining the footpath known as Skinners Farm Lane, leading out of the estate and onto the Ramshill road into the town centre (Objective 9).

Following on from, and building on, the previous aims and objectives, the following new set are proposed as more appropriate over the next five years. A single, unifying aim and two supporting Objectives are proposed. These recognise that management must seek to balance the needs of residents and of wildlife sympathetically and synergistically as far as this is possible, but that in some areas, one outcome or the other will be managed preferentially.

Aim: To maintain and manage the existing publicly accessible and visible greenspace areas both for their wildlife and recreational benefits, and to improve greenspace quality to meet both outcomes, as appropriate.

Objective 1. Manage hedgerows and wooded areas to maximise benefits for wildlife, and to sustain and enhance a sylvan landscape within the estate.

Objective 2. Manage grassland areas to support recreational needs whilst optimising for biodiversity in areas where recreational pressure is low or absent.

Objective 1. Manage hedgerows and wooded areas to maximise benefits for wildlife, and to sustain and enhance a sylvan landscape within the estate.

Figure 1 shows the location of the semi-natural vegetation on the site. The mature trees and hedges forming field boundaries before development largely still exist. They now require sensitive management to maintain their role as important landscape features whilst also benefiting wildlife.



Figure 1. The area of Ramshill Estate before and after development. Note the preservation of the majority of pre-existing trees and hedgerows as “wildlife corridors” as a Condition (No. 35) of Planning Permission (F.35364/002/FUL).

Mature trees. There are several large mature trees, mainly of oak and ash, concentrated in the hedgerow to the east of the playground in the centre of the site. Other mature trees occur in other hedgerows to the west of Crafts Lane and Dickins Lane, and to the west of Charlton Drive. The oak trees generally appear stable and in good health, although twigs and small branches are reported to be shed in windy weather. A general principle to maintain the stature of these trees will be adopted, whilst accepting that some crown management may be required from time to time to alleviate reasonable and evidenced-based concerns by residents.

In contrast, several of the ash trees have clearly succumbed or are succumbing to ash die-back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), and will need to be removed as they reach a state judged by PTC Grounds staff as potentially dangerous to residents. This particularly applies to those ash trees adjacent to the playground area.

Any mature tree removed from the estate for reasons of health & safety or for other sanitary reasons will be replaced by trees that are capable of forming significant replacement features in the landscape. They will be chosen from species that will support local wildlife whilst being identified as resilient to the changing climate predicted for the future decades. Planting and establishment will follow best practice (BS 3998: 2010 Tree Work – Recommendations³).

³ <https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail?pid=00000000030089960>

Other hedgerow species. The other hedgerow species are mainly hazel, hawthorn, holly and elder which have been largely neglected since development began in 2003. Whilst desirable for ecological reasons, the coppicing of part of the hedgerow to the north of Crafts Lane which was performed in early 2020 met with considerable resident disapproval. Views were expressed that the nature of change left too stark a landscape, whilst others considered the practice inherently dangerous. Nevertheless, the remaining hedgerows will require management, either by coppicing⁴ or laying⁵, to retain their vitality and their roles as wildlife corridors, **If coppicing is chosen then this should be conducted on a five to seven year cycle, beginning with individual trees cut back to 10 to 20 cm above ground level. To reduce visual impact to acceptable levels, annual programmes should select trees such that tree stems next to them are retained at existing height for at least two years.** Tree material resulting from coppicing operations or removal of dead wood should be taken from site and not burnt – this is regarded as an unsafe practice in view of the proximity of children on the Estate.

New tree planting. The first management plan for the Estate included additional tree planting, but apart from 30 small trees planted by the developer and now adopted by Hampshire County Council (HCC) Highways Department, no further trees have been planted on land managed by local authorities. Nevertheless, the Petersfield Community Tree Location Survey

(<http://bit.ly/3qNPdt0>) identified up to 10 potential areas for additional trees on the estate, notably in and around the two main greenspace areas – the central area surrounding the playground, and the outfall area west of Kingsfernden Lane. Further consideration will be given to the planting of appropriate tree species in these areas in the first two years of this management plan. A joint project between PTC and RRA will be developed to establish as many trees as is reasonable on these areas, taking full account of the existing recreational usage of the areas in question, and the views of residents whose properties abut sites proposed for new trees. It will be desirable to involve residents in tree planting, tending and watering during summer months in the first few years after planting. As before, planting practice should follow BS 3998: 2010 Tree Work – Recommendations.

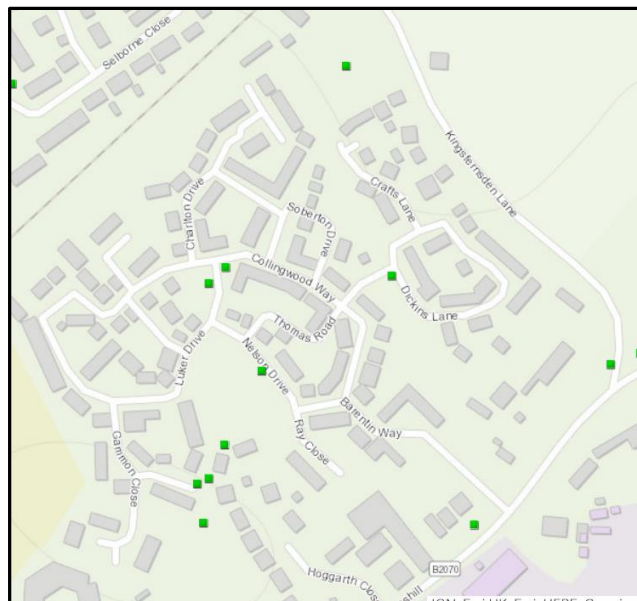


Figure 2. Potential new tree locations

⁴ https://www.conservationhandbooks.com/how-coppice-trees/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIxoTt9lvn7wIVRPiyCh2UJgRiEAAAYASAAEgKHqfD_BwE

⁵ https://www.conservationhandbooks.com/how-to-lay-a-hedge/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIgsvs143n7wIV2QJ7Ch0OdQyKEAAYAAEgJ-TPD_BwE

Objective 2. Manage grassland areas to support recreational needs whilst optimising for biodiversity in areas where recreational pressure is low or absent.

As a result of the declared biodiversity crisis (see p. 1) there is increasing interest in managing grassland areas to support insects and other wildlife. Hampshire County Council has recently announced a change to cutting of grass verges as a result of advice from Plantlife⁶. Traditional regular grass mowing during the growing season has been replaced where possible by much less frequent intervention (2 to 4 mows a year), with the main summer months of July and August completely clear of cutting. A similar approach is being considered for some greenspace areas managed by PTC, with the additional use of cut & collect machinery to remove grass cuttings. Moving to a similar approach on the Ramshill estate would honour Objective 6 in the original management plan – to “Manage the.... grassland to increase species diversity”.

In the Ramshill Estate, it is apparent that traditional mowing will continue to be appropriate for some areas mainly used for recreational purposes (e.g. the central playground). However, there is certainly scope for the adoption of a minimal mowing regime on grass verge areas on other parts of the Estate. With advice from RRA, PTC Grounds staff will prepare a plan identifying where a minimal mowing regime will be adopted. Moving to a mixed approach for grass management will also require communication to, and acceptance by, the Ramshill community, and a leaflet will be prepared as a mailshot to all residents once the Management Plan has been adopted.

Next steps

It is recommended that once adopted, this management plan is supported by the development of an Action Plan incorporating an annual schedule of work that will be necessary from year to year and which take forward the recommendations in this report. In addition, the Action Plan will provide detail of location of specific projects and interventions which will further support the overarching objectives of the management plan.

Beyond 2025

This management plan is for five years, after which it will require review and revision to take account of experiences accrued during this time. The next version should also align with inevitable changes in greenspace policy as set out by PTC and influenced by other agencies such as EHDC, HCC and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).

⁶ <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/grasscutting>