

# HINKSEY PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2018 - 2022

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



## Contact Us

t: 01865 252 240

e: [parks@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:parks@oxford.gov.uk)

[www.oxford.gov.uk/parks](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/parks)



# Contents

- 1.0 A Welcoming Place**
  - 1.1 Site location and asset map
  - 1.2 Park features, buildings and infrastructure
  
- 2.0 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage**
  - 2.1 Historical background
  - 2.2 Biodiversity
  
- 3.0 Community Involvement**
  - 3.1 Stakeholders and partners
  - 3.2 Consultation
  - 3.3 Events
  - 3.4 Volunteering
  - 3.5 Contribution to health & wellbeing
  
- 4.0 Management**
  - 4.1 Vision for the Park
  - 4.2 Well maintained and clean
  - 4.3 Marketing and communication
  - 4.4 Healthy, Safe and Secure
  - 4.5 Environmental management
  
- 5.0 Aims and Five Year Action Plan**
- 6.0 Monitoring and Review**
- 7.0 Supporting Documents**
- Appendices**





Customer comments

## 1.0 A Welcoming Place

Hinksey Park lies just to the south of the city centre, on the Abingdon Road, which forms one of the main arterial routes in to Oxford. The park was laid out in the 1930s on the site of the former Victorian waterworks, and has a large lake, boating pond and an outdoor swimming pool; all of which were created out of the old filter beds.

This watery theme, and its avenues of Giant Redwood and Pine trees, create a unique green space within the city; providing a picturesque venue for picnics, play and relaxation.

The park is highly valued by the local community and visitors alike and has been awarded the Green Flag Standard since 2008. Customer comments are very complementary:

**“There are friendly staff who are willing to stop to give advice and information; it has excellently maintained shrub, tree, flower areas” “The Park Rangers are always visible and helpful” “The gardener does a super job and the park is always immaculate.....One of the best parks I've been to” “It is a really lovely park, fantastic play ground, splash area and swimming pool” “Love the park, lovely and very well kept”**

The park’s facilities cater for a range of water-based activities, such as swimming, model-boating, sculling, scuba driving and fishing; and for younger children there is a very popular water splash feature. Other attractions include a suburb play area, tennis courts, a thriving allotment, and a small sports field, which regularly hosts children’s football and community events. The park is also important as a wildlife habitat; and the lake and its surrounds supports colonies of amphibians, small mammals, bats, water-fowl, seabirds and many other bird species.

Over the last five years the focus has been on improving the infrastructure within the park. The drive for this has come from customer consultation, Green Flag Judges feedback and sound park management. The park has benefited from many infrastructure improvements, including a refurbished play area, new signs, pathways, big belly bins, re-surfaced and marked car park, refurbished toilets, re-surfaced tennis courts, improved fencing etc.

Over the next five years the focus will be on identifying the range and significance of the park’s biodiversity, so that strategies can be put in place to protect and encourage it. However, attention will still be sustained on managing and maintaining the infrastructure to a high standard, and further minor improvements will be made where needed.

This plan sets out the management strategies that are currently in place for the park and what improvements could be made to further enhance it. Although the current period of financial restraint means there is a need to be realistic and pragmatic, this management plan maintains an aspirational approach, and identifies potential avenues of additional funding, such as capital bids and grant funding.



**2016 Green Flag Judges Comments**

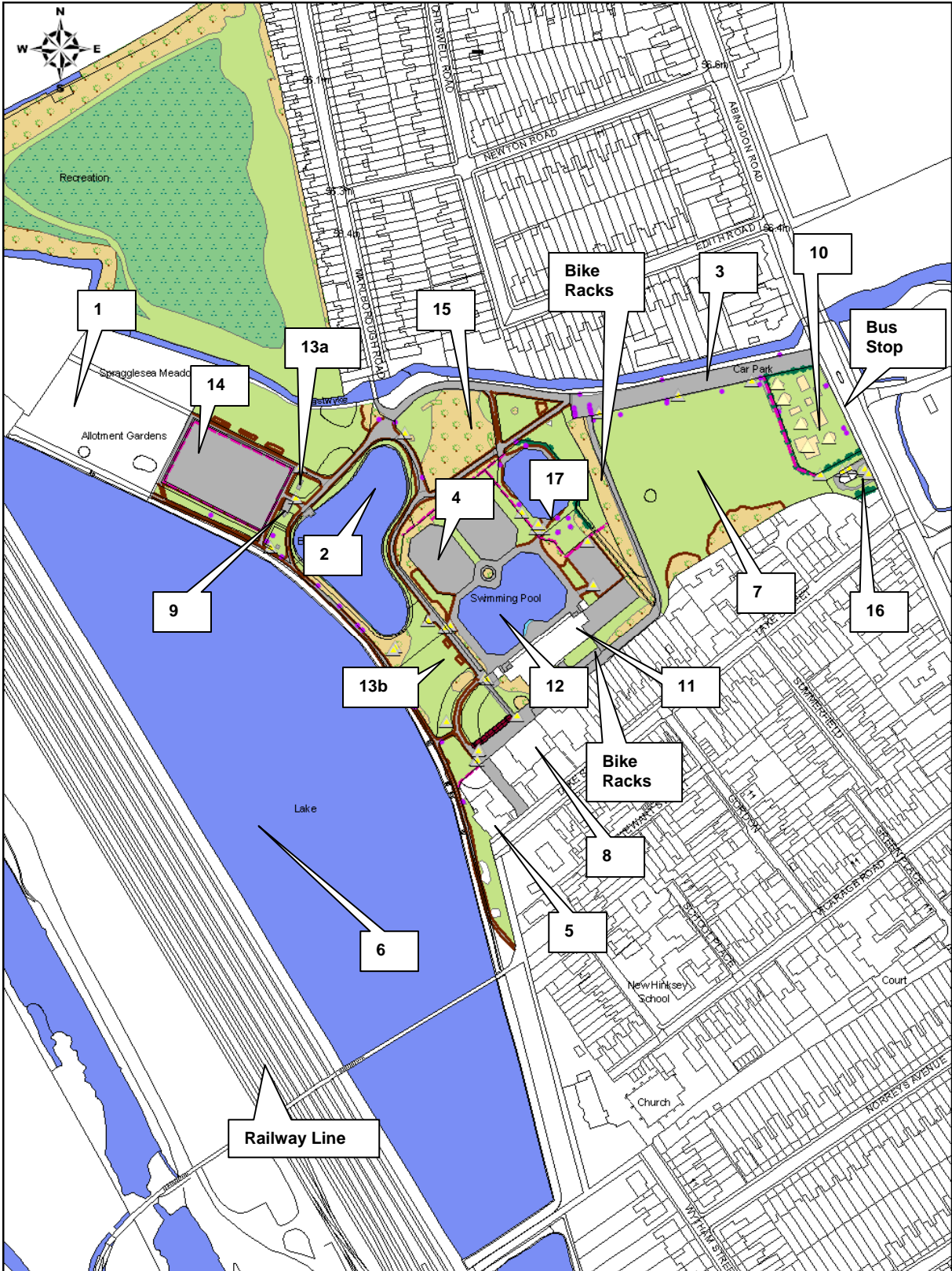
**“The site was very pleasant to walk round and had excellent facilities that ensured all age ranges had something to do in the park. Good community involvement. Really nice to see an active allotment group with good links with the council. The ping pong tables and tournament were an excellent addition to the park.”**

**“All staff had a good in depth knowledge of the park and its management plan, taking great pride in what they have achieved.”**



### 1.1 Site location and asset map

Postcode OX1 4PL




© Crown Copyright and database right 2013. Ordnance Survey 100019348.

## Legend





- OS MasterMap ( Line)
- △ Play Equipment
- ▲ Sports Equipment
- △ Utility
- Furniture
- Architectural Features
- - - - Retaining Wall
- - - - Fences
- Edging
- Hedge (Line)
- Hedge (Area)
- Playsurface

1. Allotments
2. Boating pond
3. Car park
4. Hard court area
5. South Oxford Health centre
6. Hinksey lake
7. Hinksey step
8. South Oxford Community Centre
9. On-site gardeners store

## Grass

 <all other values>

## Type

-  Amenity Grass
-  Conservation Grass
-  Fine Grass
-  Rough Grass
-  Sports Pitch
-  Difficult Ground
-  Hard Surface
-  Planting
- Watercourse
- Water Body

10. Play area
11. Playgroup
12. Swimming pool
- 13a/b. Table tennis
14. Tennis courts
15. The picnic area
16. Toilets
17. Water splash



## 1.2 Park features and infrastructure

### Allotments

This thriving allotment site is managed in an environmentally sensitive way by the Spragglesea Mead and Deans Ham Allotment Association, for which they have received awards. The activity of the allotment holders has a positive influence on the park by providing additional supervision which helps deter antisocial behaviour.

Sustainability is important to the site which houses a large water tank to collect rainwater and water is also drawn from the ditch. There are a number of bee hives in the allotments and the team has changed its annual bedding to include bee friendly plants along with installing a bee friendly herbaceous border.

At the 2015 AGM the association decided to complete a biodiversity survey of the site. Further information on this can be found in biodiversity section of plan. In 2017 a new gate to the allotment was installed.

### Bins (Litter and dog waste)

Litter bins are provided throughout the park, including four Big Belly Bins, these are emptied at least once a day. They are all in good order. The dog waste bins are emptied at least twice a week, and are well-used so that dog fouling is not a major issue in the park.

### Boating pond

The Oxford Model Boat Club meet at the park every week to sail their boats on the pond. It is also used by The Hinksey Sculling School for beginner sessions. The flat level surface around the pond allows children to feed the ducks.

### Buildings

The main buildings in the park are:

- The pool changing rooms
- To the rear of the changing rooms is the Oxford BSAC Scuba & Snorkel Club house and the Lake Street Play Group. Wheelie bins for the pool are also located in this area outside the entrance to the play group. It is proposed to refurbish this area of the park and create a proper bin store.
- The toilets on the Abingdon Road. A full refurbishment was completed in 2015.
- The gardener's store, which also houses the water pump.



### Car park

The car park surface is in a good condition, having been resurfaced in 2014, containing 40 marked bays, with two designated for disabled. Pay and Display tickets machines were installed in 2011 which deter commuter parking. The rates are favourable to park users, but eliminates the possibility of using the car park by commuters.

### Cycle track

The cycle track which runs through the outer section of the park forms part of the South Oxford Cycle Route and provides a popular alternative to the busy Abingdon Road. It was re-surfaced and marked in 2014.

Some cyclists also use the pedestrian paths in the inner park to get to the swimming pool and allotments, and as a north/south through route. This is officially against the bylaws but is very difficult to enforce and can lead to frequent conflict situations. Customer consultation has shown significant concern over this issue and identified the need for clearer signage. Embedded tile signage will be considered to reduce clutter.

### Flower beds

- Hinksey Park has a small number of beds at the entrance and by the tennis courts. How the displays are managed changed in 2010: they used to be filled with annuals which were changed twice with a spring and summer display, which was wasteful and increasingly expensive. Now, the material required each season is reduced by investing in new perennial plants and shrubs.
- Large beds are planted with shrubs and perennials in the centre to provide a structure to the display and all year interest.
- Architectural shrubs are used in place of spot plants which were previously replaced each season.
- A strip of bedding is used around the edge of the beds to provide colour highlights throughout the year.
- A greater variety of flowering plants is used to cover the ground which improves the appearance of the park and suppresses weed growth.
- Using less material reduces the environmental impact of using peat, reduces the energy used to produce plants in a heated green house and reduces waste caused by plastic pots. The need for watering is also reduced.
- On-site gardeners are involved in the design of the beds.
- In 2013 wild flower planting occurred along the edge of Eastwyke ditch.
- In 2014 a new herbaceous border was created with bee friendly planting.





### **Hinksey lake**

- A number of clubs use Hinksey Lake for recreational purposes, including Hinksey Sculling School and Oxford Branch of the British Sub-aqua Club. The Oxford Model Boat Club use the lake for remote sailing boats; the club has no internal combustion engine craft.
- It is very popular for bird watchers and the pathway along the east edge of the lake allows good views.
- The sun sets behind the lake and the benches along the bank are a favourite place for many users to relax after work on a summer evening when the park is at its most picturesque and tranquil.
- The bridge over the lake, known locally as the 'Devils Backbone' is owned by Network Rail and provides links to the wider countryside to the west of Oxford and provides an excellent platform to view the wildlife on the lake.
- The bridge over the lake leads to a footbridge over the railway line. Many park users consider this to be an additional feature of the park and families enjoy the thrill of trains passing underneath.
- Oxford University Sub-aqua club and Thames Valley Police sometimes use the lake for training. The Sub-aqua club have their meeting rooms in the old swimming pool changing rooms.
- In 2014 a Tern raft was re-installed on the lake.

### **Hinksey Step**

Hinksey Step is an area of the park used for informal sports. Running track lanes are marked on the area for Hinksey Primary School sports day. The Hinksey Boys Football Team use it to train and play games on Saturday and Sundays.

### **Paths**

The paths, a mixture of tarmac and hoggin, are in a good condition, well maintained and suitable for wheelchairs and buggies. The hoggin path along the lake edge puddles after flooding and appropriate repair work is undertaken as necessary. The path and entrance to the park via Lake Street was re-tarmacked in 2015.

### **Picnic area**

The picnic area is popular with families and located in a shady part of the park. The fencing around this area was repainted by the probation service in 2007.

### **Play area**

- A review of Oxford's play areas resulted in a successful capital bid. Hinksey Park received £110K in 2009 to create a 'Destination Standard Play Area'.
- It was opened in 2010, after extensive consultation by Groundwork Thames Valley and incorporates lots of opportunities for imaginative and natural play.
- An independent insurance company inspects the Play Area every 6 months.
- There is an in-depth monthly play area inspection as well as a weekly visit by the Landscape and Play team.
- There is a community notice board in the play area.
- In 2016 there was a city wide consultation on making fenced plays a voluntary non-smoking zone. This was widely supported and has been implemented.
- In 2017 there was a request to have water play included.

### Railings, gates and signage

The railings are generally in good condition and were all repainted in 2010 using labour from the Community Pay-back scheme. At the same time the main entrance to the car park benefited from a new gate.

The park entrances are welcoming with striking and informative signs that were installed in 2008. A community notice board was installed in 2010. There are three tourist brown signs in the local area directing people to the park.

There are three historical notice boards.

In 2016 a new gate was installed to the allotments, this would benefit from being painted to help it blend in with the rest of the park.

### Open air swimming pool

The pool is owned by Oxford City Council and managed under a 10-year management contract by Fusion Lifestyle (a not-for-profit leisure trust). It's one of the largest outdoor swimming pools in the south of England and attracts customers to the park from all over the county. It is a 54m x 34m freeform pool with water features and has a capacity for 1300 people and a pool bather level of 250 swimmers. A refreshment kiosk is available only accessible once in the pool complex. The season commences in early May and runs until the end of September.

### Table tennis

Two, free table tennis are provided customers bring their own bat and ball. Oxford runs a popular "Ping!" programme throughout the summer, where table tennis is promoted through various activities and events. During "Ping!" bats and balls are provided. The concrete table tennis by the tennis courts needs re-painting.

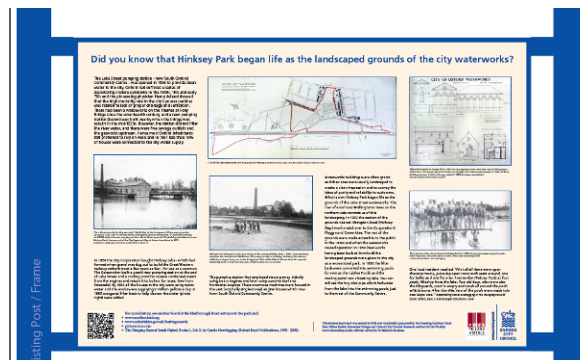
### Tennis courts

The tennis facilities are run by Parks Tennis, a community interest company, who have been working in partnership with the City Council for 3 years now to bring low-cost tennis and coaching for all ages and abilities to Oxford's public parks. Booking can be made on-line or through an app on a smart phone. Charges apply, although a number of free slots are still provided.

The Parks Tennis programme offers something for everyone including pay & play court bookings for those that just want to play a social match, coaching for those looking to learn the game or improve their skills, cardio-tennis for anyone wanting to focus on fitness, Advantage Tennis just for the men, Tennis Tuesdays just for women and the Oxford Tennis League for that friendly competition.

### Water splash facility

The old paddling pool was converted into a modern Water Splash Facility in 2004. It is a free attraction and very popular during the summer months. In 2017 £40,000 was spent to improve the pipes and operating system.



## 2.0 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

### 2.1 Historical background

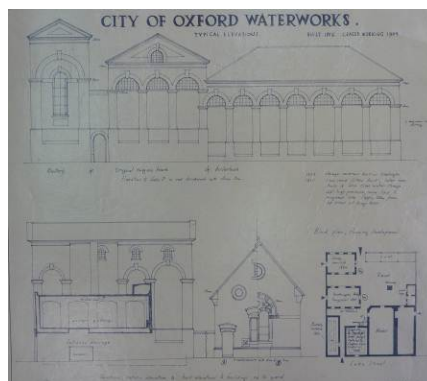
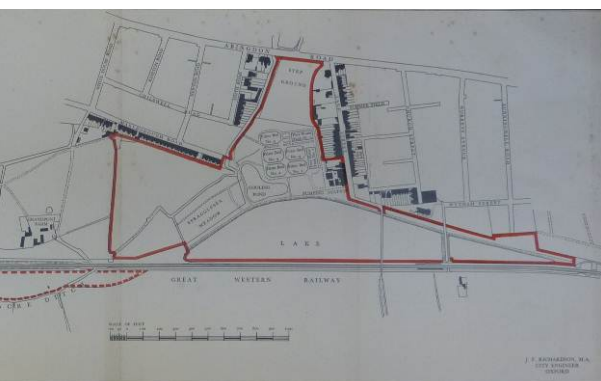
Hinksey Park was laid out in the 1930s on the site of the former Oxford Waterworks which operated from 1854 to 1933. The plan of the city waterworks can be seen in the photo below along with men washing sand in the base of one of the filter beds, c. 1914. The swimming pool and boating pond were created out of the old filter beds. The lake was created out of a gravel quarry.

The pumping station - now South Oxford Community Centre - was built in 1854 to provide clean water to the city. Wilfred Foreman's plans of the Lake Street pumping station, see below, show how new buildings were added over a forty-year period to house increasingly up-to-date engines. Most of these buildings survive, but the chimney, added in 1881, has been demolished.

A narrow finger of Victorian development surrounds Hinksey Park. This compact area is built on a tight grid of streets and is characterised by small block size. Buildings are predominantly two story terraced 'cottages' along narrow streets, with some infill of more modern developments of flats. This provides a sense of enclosure and the density of development means that there are few street trees. The park is therefore an important area of recreational green space for the local community. It provides visual and physical links with the wider floodplain at Hinksey Lake.

In 2014 a local historian raised funding from Brasenose College, Ward Councillors, The Four Pillars Hotel and Greening Lamborn Trust to install two historical information boards in the park

They are extremely popular and were well received. Further funding was then obtained in 2017 to install a further historical information board at the swimming pool entrance.



## 2.2 Biodiversity

### Wildlife and habitat conservation

Oxford City Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the park's habitats and increasing its biodiversity. One of the aims of the Green Spaces Strategy is: 'To promote the central role which green spaces play in contributing to the city's biodiversity, sustainability and heritage'. Hinksey Lake makes a significant contribution to the area's biodiversity, with the aquatic habitats being particularly important.

Initial work has already begun (see below), and a programme of survey and research will continue, and the information obtained will be used to ensure its habits are managed appropriately and that a careful balance is maintained between the needs of park users and the desire to protect and encourage wildlife. Once more detailed surveys have been completed a full biodiversity action plan will be created for the park.

### Improvements to the lake and boating pond

In 2014 a Tern Raft (floating bird island) was installed on the lake and the marginal reed cages were replanted and anchored. The Tern Raft has been successful, but the cages have not and need to be removed.

Nutrients from a build-up of water bird droppings in the boating pond are enriching the water and creating an excess of algae growth. Lots of little fish may also be present which will eat any of the zooplankton which would normally feast on the algae. It is therefore proposed to remove the fish and transfer them to the lake. Barley straw may also be used to control algae and restore the biodiversity balance in the pond.

### Bird and bat boxes

A small number of bird and bat boxes have been installed on the trees close to the lake. These are being monitored for usage and will be relocated as appropriate.



### Use of pesticides and herbicides

The Parks Department's policy is to use as few pesticides and herbicides as possible, as little as possible (only when strictly necessary). The only chemical used regularly in the park is a Glyphosate (Nomix Dual - non-hazardous to animals) which is used twice a year to treat the paths.

### Hinksey lake

Hinksey Lake forms part of the wildlife corridor, which runs alongside the railway and through Oxford. The lake is largely surrounded by trees, although there are areas of mown grass, brambles and nettles with some herbs along the eastern edge. Islands to provide semi-emergent vegetation on the lake have been created, these are necessary due to the depth and steep sides. They provide habitat areas as well as oxygen to the lake which is monitored by the Environmental Agency.

The main nature conservation values of the lake is the breeding waterfowl and the common terns. The margins and trees surrounding the lake are also known to be habitat to a variety of birds, most notably the kingfisher. It has been designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC).

The lake margins provide habitat for grass snakes, small mammals such as hedgehogs and mice etc. Bats are observed feeding over the lake and boating pond at night, often from the lee side of the trees lining the western bank. In 2015 an Otter was spotted feeding on fish at the water's edge (see below).

The lake's water fowl population was surveyed by the Oxford Ornithological Society in 2003/04. The lake would benefit from further biodiversity surveys. The aims would be to identify its value for aquatic wildlife, to see if there are any threats that need to be addressed (e.g. pollution), and determine what further enhancements would improve the lake for wildlife.

The lake is one of the only pieces of safe still open water where would-be junior athletes can learn the sport of sculling in a controlled environment. As such it is a popular venue for Hinksey Sculling School. In 2003 a report identified that sculling should continue, but within a marked zone thereby creating wildlife refuges (available on request). The Oxford Ornithological Society measured as far as reasonably practicable the effects of sculling on the bird population. The results showed that because the zones worked well the effects on the wildlife were limited.



The lake is popular for fishing and in March 2006 a lease was agreed with the Oxford and District Angling Association. The purpose of signing a lease with the ODAA is to enable the Environment Agency to work with them to establish Junior Fishery. In tandem with this, the EA and ODAA would like to work with the City Council to make continued improvements to the fishery, both for nature conservation reasons and to increase the stocks of fish in the lake to make it a more attractive fishery.

Customer consultation has shown that there are as many users who enjoy or believe the lake is valuable for its wildlife, as there are who use it for or believe it should be used for recreational purposes as well. Customers indicated that the balance between the peaceful enjoyment and the formal activities within the park and lake was correct. The Parks Department will therefore strive to keep this balance.

### **Eastwyke ditch**

The Eastwyke Ditch bounds the whole northern boundary and is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. As well as being visually attractive, it provides a wildlife corridor and is maintained accordingly. No biodiversity survey has been carried out on the ditch. The banks alongside the ditch are left to support an increase in biodiversity. Litter and fly tipping can occasionally be a problem, so the Environment Agency regularly clear the ditch as well as regular park users.

### **Trees**

The trees in Hinksey add to its unique character and offer frames and backdrops to the views when approaching the park. A full tree survey is completed every three years. This measures tree type, location, age, height, diameter, crown spread, vigour, condition, risk and any recommendation for tree surgery. All trees were plotted on GIS and stored on our tree management system.

The park's most notable trees are the row of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Wellingtonia) which form a stunning evergreen line to the north east of the lake and the *Pinus nigra* var. *maritima* (Corsican pine), with their notable bark and form, which run from the car park at Hinksey step to the rear of the swimming pool. Part of the feel of Hinksey Park can be attributed to the exotic nature of some of the trees. For this reason, future tree planting would look to maintain this feel and therefore retain the parks unique character.

### **Allotment Site**

Following the 2015 AGM it was proposed that a biodiversity site survey would provide a framework for the allotment society to balance the cultivation of the site with the promotion of a diverse and beneficial wildlife.

The site has a considerable number of wild areas which are mostly on the margins of the site or are too wooded or marshy to be incorporated into the cultivated areas. Several of these wild areas are continuous with woodland or scrubland outside the boundaries of the site.

Cumulatively these areas make an important contribution to the wildlife corridors that exist around the central area of Oxford. The whole site, including the cultivated areas, supports as many as 100 species of wild flower, 20 species of butterfly (including occasional visitors) and a varied range of bird life, including green and greater spotted woodpeckers and the occasional rare migrant.

Mammals include foxes, semi-feral cats, mice, rats and moles. Hedgehogs have not been seen for a number of years. The site does not have badgers, and rabbits are at least temporarily absent. Grass snakes, toads and frogs are quite common, although the frogs are becoming scarce. A small area bordering the stream and protected mostly by bramble, comfrey and stacked tree branches contains two active bee hives.

Full lists of species found are available at:

<http://www.oxquarry.co.uk/Allotment/Survey2015.html>

## 3.0 Community Involvement

### 3.1 Stakeholders and partners

The introduction of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG), which coordinate the skills, powers and resources of the Police, local politicians, Council and other agencies, has resulted in a significant reduction in the level of antisocial behaviour in the city. The Green Space Field Officers (formerly Park Rangers) form an important element in the NAG team and specifically target their resources to tackle issues highlighted as NAG priorities. They have been particularly successful in greatly reducing dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering which previously blighted a number of the city's green spaces including Hinksey Park; and have achieved this through a combination of education and enforcement.

Parks staff attend the Neighbourhood Forum organised by South Oxford Community Association.

The City Council works with Abingdon and Witney College to deliver an apprentice scheme. The apprentices gain experience in fine turf, horticulture, landscape work, arboriculture, countryside management, cemeteries, Rangering and business administration. It is very successful winning the APSE Apprentice of the year competition on numerous occasions as well as the Freeman of the City of Oxford award for the best apprentice in horticulture.

The Parks team worked in partnership with Groundwork to deliver the Play Area Refurbishment Programme where Hinksey Park received £110K.

In the past the City Council worked with the Thames Valley Probation Service, under the Community Pay Back Scheme, to provide useful work for offenders which also benefits the local community. This has included work in the park to clear vegetation, edge paths and paint all of the railings.



**Stakeholders in the park include:**

- Hinksey Sculling School
- Oxford BSAC Scuba & Snorkel Diving Club based in the pool facility
- Spragglesea Mead & Dean Ham Allotment Association
- Oxford Model Boat Club
- Lake Street Play Group whose nursery is in the pool facility
- South Oxford Community Centre
- Hinksey Primary School
- Local children's football teams
- Fusion Lifestyle
- South Oxford Health Centre
- South Oxford Community Association

### **3.2 Consultation**

Since 2000 Parks Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been completed annually across parks and recreation grounds in Oxford, including Hinksey Park. Park users are interviewed using a standard questionnaire, or customers can complete the survey on-line. This identifies patterns of use and customer improvement ideas which are recorded in an annual report (see Appendix 2) and fed into the Five Year Action Plan (Section 5.0).

Extensive consultation by Groundwork was carried out for the new play area, including schools, residents, drop in sessions and all stakeholders in the park.

In 2016 a new survey was carried out to better understand the way Oxford's residents use and value their local green spaces (see Appendix 1). Nearly 500 people responded, making this one of the largest surveys of its kind in the county. The findings revealed just how much people treasure their local parks and nature areas, and that they consider them vital to the health and well-being of themselves and their families:

- Almost all the respondents (98%) felt that their local green space plays a positive part in their happiness and well-being
- Almost all respondents (98%) felt that their local green space helps make their local area a better and a more desirable place to live
- The majority (95%) of respondents felt that their local green space helps to encourage them and others to keep fit and healthy

Many respondents also took the opportunity to praise the quality of the green spaces provided by the City Council and the way they are managed:

- "Oxford should be proud of its green spaces and the council and staff who develop and maintain them"
- "Oxford's green spaces are an absolutely vital part of the city. Oxford City Council does an excellent job in providing facilities and upkeep/ maintenance"



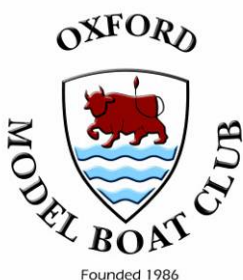
### 3.3 Events

- Hinksey Park's location within a relatively dense residential area enhances the potential for successful 'doorstep' events, whilst the proximity of the outdoor pool helps to ensure that visitors from outside the locality also attend.
- The open air swimming pool hosts an annual 'opening event' each May, where customers can try a number of activities and taster sessions for free.
- Other events that have been hosted in the park including: Bird Watching for Beginners, Bats by the Water, Theatre in the Parks, Film Under the Stars and Brass/Silver Band concerts.
- The Oxford Model Boat Club has a well supported race calendar for both 'International One Metre' and 'Fiesta' yachts classes. One Metre yachts are sailed on the lake and fiestas on the boating pond.
- Events held locally include the South Oxford Farmers and Community Market at the South Oxford Community Centre which recently expanded into the park.
- Oxford City Council has a team that helps events organisers to comply with relevant legislation, and to ensure their events are run safely. Parks staff play an important part in getting the park ready, supervising the event and returning the park back to normal after an event.

### 3.4 Volunteering

In 2017 the City Council achieved the "Investors in Volunteers" award. It promotes volunteering in green spaces in many different ways including:

- Joining the Friends of Hinksey Park, where local residents have set up a Friends of Hinksey Park Facebook page. They don't meet as a committee in the traditional style, but prefer to have active discussions on-line.
- Join the weekly volunteering working group organised by the Countryside Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator.
- Receiving volunteers from the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) which is the foremost organisation protecting wildlife and enhancing iconic landscapes. Also from the Oxford Conservation Volunteers (OCV), a voluntary organisation that has been carrying out practical work conserving the wildlife and traditional landscape of the Oxford area since 1977.
- Since 2010 annually welcomed an undergraduate internship from a University in Holland studying Leisure Development. They provided a lot of support in the customer satisfaction survey analysis.
- Volunteering as an individual to work alongside the Green Flag Park gardeners.
- Business team building days.
- Volunteering to be a Health Walk Leader which includes a free day of training by Natural England.



## South Oxford Farmers & Community Market

9.30-12noon on Sundays

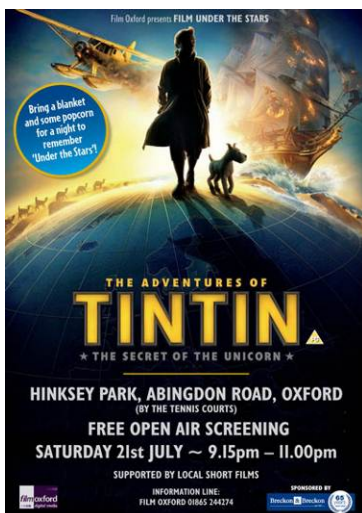


### 3.5 Contribution to health & wellbeing

One of the aims of the Green Spaces Strategy is: “To promote the central role that green spaces play in contributing to the city’s health and well-being”. There are worrying trends relating to the nation’s health: obesity and less active lifestyles have led to a rise in preventable diseases which is placing increasing pressures on the National Health Service. Hinksey Park provides a wealth of opportunities for exercise and sport. Evidence shows that a brisk walk every day (in a local green space) can reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes by 50%, fracture of the femur, colon cancer and breast cancer by 30% and Alzheimer’s by 25%. Add to this the impact of exposure to nature and green space on stress and mental health, on aggression and violence within inner-city communities, and on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder amongst children, and the full picture in relation to health and wellbeing and access to green space can start to be understood.

Hinksey Park offers many activities that contribute to the national and local health agenda:

- Outdoor swimming pool and sports area
- Tennis courts
- Organised health walks
- Water splash
- Allotments
- Play area
- Walks along the lake and access to the wider countryside
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Feel part of a local community
- Local events
- In 2016 there was a city wide consultation on making fenced plays a voluntary non-smoking zone. This was widely supported and has been implemented.



Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire



## 4.0 Management

Outstanding performance at Oxford City Council has been recognised by achieving a number of high profile awards:

- The Best Achieving Council category at the MJ Achievement Awards in 2014
- Investors in People Gold standard
- Investors in Volunteers standard
- Customer Service Excellence, which is an independent accreditation to recognise organisations that deliver excellent customer service and drive customer-focused changes.
- Oxford frequently performed well in the Thames and Chiltern in Bloom
- Regularly shortlisted for the APSE Parks & Horticulture Service of the year
- Six Green Flag Awards.

Oxford City Council's mission is: 'Building a world-class city for everyone'.

This management plan contributes towards the council's priorities set out in the Corporate Plan for 2016 - 2020 including:

- A Vibrant and Sustainable Economy
- Strong and Active Communities
- A Clean and Green Oxford
- An Efficient and Effective Council

The management plans are one of a number of tools used to deliver the objectives set out in the Oxford Green Spaces Strategy 2012-2026, available upon request.

### 4.1 Vision for the park

The vision for Hinksey Park is: To work with the community to create a world class, vibrant and safe city park that promotes, health, biodiversity and learning, and is accessible to all.'

One of the aims of the Council's Green Spaces Strategy is: 'To achieve high quality green spaces across Oxford, including spaces that are nationally recognised for their quality and attractions'. The management of Hinksey Park contributes towards achieving this aim.

Despite the current financial climate, Oxford City Council has been very successful in obtaining capital funding to ensure the infrastructure of its parks is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century and meets the needs of its customers.

Improvements to Hinksey Park in the last ten years have included:

- Creation of a 'Destination Standard' play area
- New welcome signs installed at the main entrances
- New fencing around the allotments
- Full tree survey undertaken (to be repeated on a three year rolling programme)
- Introduction of a standard design for bins and benches
- New fencing, repainting of Tennis Courts
- Fishing platforms (installed and maintain by Environment Agency, including a disabled access platform)

- Building of a £9K pontoon for improved access to the lake
- Installation of a Tern nesting raft on the main lake
- Re-surfaced Car Park
- Re-surfaced Cycle Track
- Three historical information boards
- Buggy shelter by the day nursery
- Four Big Belly bins
- Installation of visitor counters
- Installation of cycle racks
- Biodiversity survey on Allotment site

Having addressed the declining parks infrastructure, moving forward into the next five years, this plan will focus on the parks biodiversity, customer involvement and providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles.

One of the main challenges for the management of Hinksey Park is to ensure that a balance is maintained between the desire to preserve and increase biodiversity, whilst also meeting the needs of the wide variety of park users. This is particularly important at a time when there is a need to maximise the use of urban green spaces to promote healthy lifestyles. Therefore, in order to achieve this balance, a more detailed study of the park's biodiversity is needed to obtain a greater understanding of its character, so that appropriate strategies can be established to protect and encourage endangered or declining species.

Customers have also requested improved wildlife interpretation and options for café/kiosk facilities for the park. There is also a need to encourage greater community engagement in the park and it is hoped this can be achieved with a more proactive Friends of Group and further contact with South Oxford Community Centre.

A detailed list of aims and Five Year Action Plan is provided in Section 5.

## **4.2 Well Maintained and Clean**

In 2010 (revised 2016) a full grounds maintenance specification and standards was written and applied to Hinksey Park, see Appendix 3.

Two skilled gardeners are based in Hinksey Park two days a week to ensure it is kept in prime condition throughout the year. The gardeners are pro-active and have a can do approach, having been given autonomy and responsibility. In addition, mobile Green Space Field Officers visit daily to patrol the park, and specialist teams look after the facilities, countryside areas, trees and infrastructure.

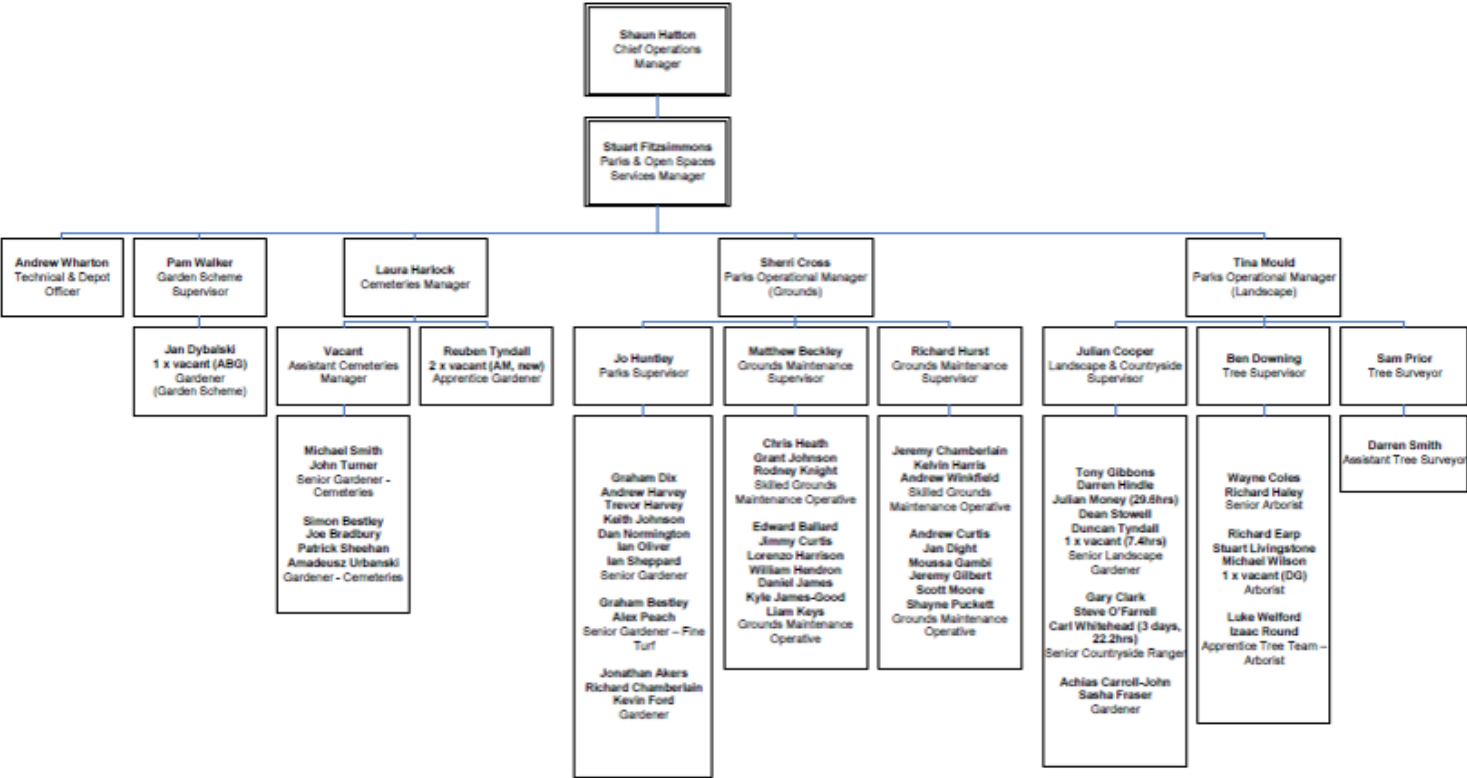
The service has been accredited with IOS9001:2008 and ISO14001 and monitors the quality of its horticulture.

## Management structure

A re-structure at Oxford City Council in 2015 resulted in the management & maintenance of green spaces being located with the Parks and Open Spaces Team within Direct Services. Green Space Development and community involvement in green space is located within Community Services. At the time of writing Direct Services is creating a commercial arm, Latco, to undertake external work in addition to statutory work.

### Parks Direct Services

Parks & Open Spaces Services Team



### Community Services



### 4.3 Marketing and Communication

The service has a marketing plan that provides a full audit of the current marketing situation (available on request). A leaflet is available to download from the website, or a hard copy can be obtained from the office containing information about the site and its history. Detailed information, pictures and information about forthcoming events in the park are available at [www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk). A copy of the Hinksey Park Management Plan is available at the swimming pool, Parks office and on the website.

The service is increasing its use of social media, and now has a Facebook page and a Twitter account. It is including QR codes on new signage (including the historical information boards).

### 4.4 Healthy, Safe and Secure

Customers view the park as a safe and secure place because:

- The park is very busy, especially during the swimming pool season, which helps to improve customers' perception of safety
- The lines of vision are good in the park because there are few hidden dark corners, which increasing the sense of security
- There is lighting along the cycle track
- The play area is located by Abingdon Road. This is a busy route into Oxford, which allows for good natural surveillance from the pavement. There is also a phone box immediately outside the play area
- There are daily patrols by Green Space Officers who enforce the byelaws, ensure dog owners act responsibly, and issue fines to those who do not; tackle environmental crime and ensure the parks are free of graffiti, fly-tipping and vandalism
- Offensive graffiti on areas that we are responsible for will be removed within 1 working day. All other graffiti will be addressed within 7 days
- The presence of an on-site gardener
- Active groups both in and around the edge of the park including the Community Centre, the playgroup and the allotments
- Close proximity of the Health Centre

Hinksey Park is covered by the Oxford City Council Byelaws and a site specific risk assessment, both of which are available on request.

In 2011 Oxford City Council and local Police teams were given new powers called Dog Control Orders to help deal with irresponsible dog owners. Any owner whose dog is out of control or causing a nuisance in a public place may be ordered to put the dog on a lead immediately or face an £80 fine or court action; and no one is allowed to walk more than four dogs at a time. In addition, the fine for owners who fail to clear up after their dog fouls in public place increased from £50 to £80 and owners can also be fined £80 if they allow their dogs to go into a fenced off play area.

At the same time as adopting the act, 150 dog waste bins were installed in parks and recreation grounds across the city to provide a convenient means of disposal for dog owners. As a results dog fouling is not a problem in Hinksey Park.

## Staff

- All staff who use equipment are trained annually by external specialists. Staff are made aware of the Council's Health and Safety Policy (available on request) when they begin work. Procedures are included in ISO9001:2008. Internal copies are made accessible to all staff.
- Staff undertake risk assessments on all equipment and machinery used by the department.
- Cutting machinery is only used by trained staff
- All staff are provided with, and are required to wear, appropriate safety equipment.
- All parks vehicles are included on a vehicle maintenance schedule, managed by the Council's Direct Services. Maintenance of vehicles is carried out in a dedicated garage within their depot.
- Fuel, equipment and machinery is all stored in a secure compound within Cutteslowe Park, with a small amount stored on-site.
- All, chemicals used in the park are managed in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations. All staff handling pesticides hold a PA/6 certificate.
- Water related risk is documented in the site specific risk assessment, available on request.
- Oxford City Council has been accredited with Investors in People, reflecting its commitment to its staff. The Parks service values its staff and offers a full programme of training linked to an appraisal system.

## Play areas

- The Landscape & Play Team maintains the play facilities in Hinksey Park , completing weekly equipment inspections and quarterly safety inspections of the play areas. These inspections test the fixings, supports and components of equipment, and report any faults or required repairs.
- Every member of the team is fully trained in play area maintenance to ROSPA standards, and all have achieved RPII (Register of Playground Inspectors International) Operation Level.
- They are also trained in the use of machinery, health and safety, and all are CRB checked.
- The council's insurer carries out technical checks every 6 months





## 4.5 Environmental management

A high number of environmental principles are demonstrated within the City Council and applied to Hinksey Park:

- The service works with the Oxford City Council Climate Change Action Team which aims to tackle the effects of climate change and reduce the overall carbon footprint of its buildings and services.
- In December 2011 the Parks Team was accredited with ISO14001.
- Pesticides are used only where there are no practical alternatives. Where more traditional methods can be used, such as the removal of thatch by hand over a small area, or the removal of weed growth within fine turf areas, then these methods are carried out to minimize the environmental impact of using chemicals.
- A chemical log is kept in the store in the depot. When chemicals are delivered their details are logged. When they are taken out, the user fills in a spraying log, recording when and where the pesticide was used, how much was used, the reason, the application method, the weather conditions and the protective clothing worn. All the contaminated items of PPE and containers are disposed of by an external registered company.
- All of the non-contaminated green waste is composted on the allotment site.
- Old play equipment, and any other metal items collected from the park is taken to the Parks depot and put in a metal skip. All scrap metal is recycled and used as a source of income.
- There are water tanks on the allotments to collect rain water.
- Showers in the pool complex are powered by solar panels.
- The service actively avoids the use of peat-based products wherever possible. When ordering floral displays via our suppliers we put in the specification that this is a requirement of Oxford City Council.
- To encourage visitors to use alternative forms of transport, bike parking is provided outside the swimming pool and between Hinksey Step and the Splash Pool. The bus service on the Abingdon Road is promoted.
- The service utilises vehicles operated via alternative fuels including LPG and electric and continually seeks to procure the most energy efficient and low-emission vehicles.
- To prepare for the likelihood of a drier climate in future, the use of bedding plants has been reviewed. More resilient plants such as Geraniums, Marigolds and Dahlias are used instead, along side perennial planting. With drier summers, and warmer winters with reduced risk of frost, any new trees and shrubs planted will be chosen to tolerate future conditions. If summers become even drier, the use of bedding plants may be reduced further.
- The Green Space Field Officers use electric bikes to patrol the city's parks. This has allowed them to beat congestion, whilst also reducing the council's carbon footprint and making significant savings on fuel and vehicle maintenance cost.

Oxford City Council's Procurement Strategy states, when buying materials, we will:

- avoid ozone-depleting chemicals & those with a high global warming potential
- use durable products and materials
- choose low-maintenance building materials
- choose building materials with low embodied energy
- use building products made from recycled materials
- use salvaged building materials when possible
- choose European soft wood over hard wood. Wood must come from schemes that have been certified as sustainable, e.g. by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). We will not use tropical hard woods such as teak, iroko and mahogany unless it has been reclaimed for reuse
- avoid materials that will give off gas pollutants
- minimise packaging waste.
- During the tendering process, companies are asked to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and those who comply are looked on more favourably.

## Flood management

Hinksey Park provides an important area for flood protection for the surrounding houses. Eastwyke ditch is vital to keep water moving through the area. Parks services works closely with the Environment Agency and a flood defence scheme is installed when water levels rise around the perimeter of part of the park. In 2013 a new water pump costing £18K was purchased to control the water into the boating pond, and pump water to the correct side of the flood defence.



## 5.0 Aims and Five Year Action Plan

| Action   | How   | Resources   | Timescale                | 2018 Review |
|--|---|---|--------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Buildings and infrastructure</b>                            |   |   |                          |             |
| Kiosk/café options for the park                                | Improved links with the community centre and investigate option of creating a café at the rear of the building to serve the centre and park or approach fusion to check the viability of a kiosk on the boundary of the pool and park | Community centre  | 2019                     |             |
| Improve the area of the park by the entrance to the play group | Reduce appearance of clutter and 'bin blight' by creating a wheelie bin store for the pool and play group   | GSD to approach local councillors to obtain CIL/ward budget | 2018                     |             |
| Increase access through Marlborough Rd gate                    | Replace current kissing gate to allow access for all  | GSD team to investigate funding sources                     | 2019                     |             |
| Better control cycling in the park                             | Undertake a signage audit to identify need and locations etc. Consider embedded tiles signage to reduce clutter   | GSD Team  | 2018                     |             |
| Cycle track  | Re-marked   |   | 2018                     |             |
| Installation of signage prohibiting swimming in the lake       | Following the recommendations of the site specific risk assessment  | Parks Direct Services                                       | Signs installed Oct 2017 |             |

|   |  |  |               |  |
|---|--|--|---------------|--|
| Wildlife Interpretation                       | Boards, interactive trail, leaflet and educational tool about feeding ducks. Ask the kiosk to sell appropriate duck food   | Parks Development Officers<br>Work with schools, forest school?  | 2019          |  |
| Install water play pump in play area sand pit | Following input from a user focus group, install play pump similar to that at Cutteslowe Park  | GSD to approach local councillors to obtain CIL/ward budget  | 2019          |  |
| Refurbish concrete Table Tennis table         |  | Parks Direct Services  | 2018          |  |
| <b>Biodiversity</b>                           |  |  |               |  |
| Improve biodiversity                          | Work closer with environmental groups such as BBOWT to improve biodiversity.<br><br>Seek grant funding to survey groups of flora and fauna with the aim of identifying important habitat features and guiding their future management so as to maintain and where possible enhance the value of the park for wildlife. | GSD Team to seek funding<br><br>GSD Team to work with environmental groups such as BBOWT<br><br>Approach Brookes to assist surveys | 2018 on-wards |  |
| Habitat                                       | Remove the old pallets and replace with habitat/shelter for pollinators and other insects  | In house resources, local schools, BBOWT   | 2018          |  |
| Marginal planting in Lake                     | Remove or relocate the marginal planting cages   | Environment Agency   | 2018          |  |
| <b>Community</b>                              |  |  |               |  |
| Firm up partnerships with EA, Friends         | Join Friends of Hinksey Park Facebook Page<br>Contact EA   | Parks Development Officers   | Ongoing       |  |

|  |   |  |      |  |
|--|---|--|------|--|
| of Hinksey Park, South Oxon Community Centre and the Health Centre |   |  |      |  |
| Access Audit   | Approach Oxford Unlimited<br>Request from the community to cover visual impairment especially with all the open water |  | 2018 |  |
| Cycle Racks  | Request for further racks at the entrance to the nursery  |  |      |  |

## 6.0 Monitoring and Review

The Green Space Development Team, with Parks Direct Services reviews the management plan once a year. This review will incorporate a discussion on the comments and advice from the Green Flag judges. Progress will be measured against the Five Year Action Plan.

All parks staff will be made aware of the Hinksey Park Management Plan. All teams (Fine Turf, Landscape and Play, Trees, Green Space Officers, Grounds, Management) have regular meetings, and any actions relating to their respective teams will be monitored at these meetings.

Where individuals are given specific tasks in relation to Hinksey Park, it may be appropriate to include the tasks in their Personal Development Plan, and monitor through the appraisal process. User surveys will be carried out in the parks on an annual basis and scores will be used to monitor changes in approval ratings amongst parks users.



## 7.0 Supporting Documents

These documents are made available on request, and are also available to Green Flag Judges on the day of a tour.

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | <b>Grounds Maintenance Service Standards and Specification – Executive Summary</b>                    |
| 2  | <b>Risk Assessment &amp; ROSPA Reports</b>  |
| 3  | <b>Byelaws</b>  |
| 4  | <b>OCC Health and Safety Policy</b>   |
| 5  | <b>Press Releases, Media Coverage, Events etc</b>   |
| 6  | <b>Customer Satisfaction Survey results</b>   |
| 7  | <b>Marketing Plan &amp; Leaflet</b>   |
| 8  | <b>DDA Audit</b>  |
| 9  | <b>Health Walks, events and investment in swimming pool</b>   |
| 10 | <b>Community Involvement, Friends of Hinksey Park Facebook Page, South Oxon Community Partnership</b> |

## Appendix One: 2016 Value of Oxford's Parks & Green Spaces Results



### Summary

The City Council recently undertook an extensive consultation exercise to better understand the way Oxford's residents use and value their local green spaces. Nearly 500 people responded, making this one of the largest surveys of its kind. The findings revealed just how much people treasure their local parks and nature areas, and that they consider them vital to the health and well-being of themselves and their families:

- Almost all the respondents (98%) felt that their local green space plays a positive part in their happiness and well-being
- Almost all respondents (98%) felt that their local green space helps make their local area a better and a more desirable place to live
- The majority (95%) of respondents felt that their local green space helps to encourage them and others to keep fit and healthy

Many respondents also took the opportunity to praise the quality of the green spaces provided by the City Council and the way they are managed:

- "Oxford should be proud of its green spaces and the council and staff who develop and maintain them"
- "Oxford's green spaces are an absolutely vital part of the city. Oxford City Council does an excellent job in providing facilities and upkeep/ maintenance"

Conclusions are provided at the end of the report on the significance of the results, and how they should inform on-going and future investment and provision of green space in the city.

### 1. Background

In December 2015 The Land Trust commissioned a social value survey on its green spaces. With their permission aspects of the survey were replicated by Oxford City Council. A social value approach provides a method to quantify goods and services, which are not traditionally quantified monetarily.



The survey explored visitors' perceptions of parks, why they used them, the impact they make to people's health and well-being and how they personally value the spaces.

A copy of the survey is provided as Appendix A and compliments as Appendix B.

## 2. The consultation process

The on-line survey was open for 5 months from Sept 2016-January 2017. This was supplemented by on-site interviews. It was also promoted through social media and advertised in email auto-signatures and distributed to Parks Friends groups and at volunteer sessions.

A £25 shopping voucher prize draw was provided as an incentive to complete the survey, although 45% opted out of being put in the prize draw. A total of 498 surveys were completed; this is the highest recorded return rate for a parks and green spaces survey nationally since year 2000.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Sites Surveyed

Table below lists the sites surveyed and numbers of returned questionnaires:

| Site                              | Total | Category from GSS       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Florence Park                     | 68    | Green Flag City Park    |
| Cuttleslowe and Sunnymead Park    | 62    | Green Flag City Park    |
| South Park                        | 45    | City Park               |
| Bury Knowle Park                  | 31    | Green Flag City Park    |
| Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground | 26    | Local Park              |
| Lye Valley Nature Reserve         | 25    | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Blackbird Leys Park               | 19    | Green Flag City Park    |
| Hinksey Park                      | 19    | Green Flag City Park    |
| Port Meadow                       | 17    | <b>Countryside Site</b> |
| Shotover Country Park             | 16    | <b>Countryside Site</b> |
| Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground    | 13    | Local Park              |
| Kendall Copse                     | 11    | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Oxford University Park            | 9     | Other                   |
| Rock Edge Nature Reserve          | 9     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Headington Hill Park              | 8     | City Park               |
| Alexandra Park                    | 7     | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Raleigh Park                      | 7     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Fettiplace Barton                 | 6     | Local Park              |
| Oatlands Road Recreation Ground   | 6     | Local Park              |
| Magdalen Woods                    | 5     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Aristotle Lane Recreation Ground  | 4     | Local Park              |
| Botley Park                       | 4     | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Grandpont Nature Reserve          | 4     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Kidneys Nature Park               | 4     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Meadow Lane                       | 4     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Milham Ford Nature Park           | 4     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Barracks Lane Meadow              | 3     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Magdalen Quarry                   | 3     | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |

|   |   |                         |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Northway Park   | 3 | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Thames Tow Path   | 3 | Other                   |
| Wolvercote Common   | 3 | <b>Countryside Site</b> |
| Christ Church Meadow                                      | 2 | Other                   |
| Croft Road Recreation Ground                              | 2 | Local Park              |
| Manzil Way Gardens  | 2 | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Rivermead   | 2 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Rose Hill Recreation Ground                               | 2 | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Warneford Meadow  | 2 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Angel and Greyhound meadow                                | 1 | Other                   |
| Boundary Brook Nature Park                                | 1 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Peat Moors  | 1 | Local Park              |
| Burgess Field Nature Park                                 | 1 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Chilswell Valley  | 1 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Donnington Field  | 1 | Local Park              |
| Dunstan Park  | 1 | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Hollow Way Recreation Ground                              | 1 | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Hythe Bridge Pocket Park                                  | 1 | Other                   |
| Iffley Lock and Thames towpath around that area           | 1 | Other                   |
| Louie Memorial Fields, Botley                             | 1 | Other                   |
| Land from north of Victoria Arms access lane to ring road | 1 | Other                   |
| Margaret Road Park  | 1 | Local Park              |
| Marston (cycle path area)                                 | 1 | Other                   |
| New Marston Recreation Ground                             | 1 | Local Park              |
| Old Marston Park  | 1 | Local Park              |
| Quarry Hollow   | 1 | Local Park              |
| Risinghurst Recreation Ground                             | 1 | Neighbourhood Park      |
| Ryder close the waterways.                                | 1 | Other                   |
| Seacourt Nature Reserve                                   | 1 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Spindleberry Nature Reserve                               | 1 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| SS Mary and John churchyard                               | 1 | Other                   |
| St Clements   | 1 | Other                   |
| Trap Grounds Town Green                                   | 1 | <b>Nature Reserve</b>   |
| Valentia Road   | 1 | Other                   |
| Wellington Square   | 1 | Other                   |
| Wytham Woods  | 1 | Other                   |

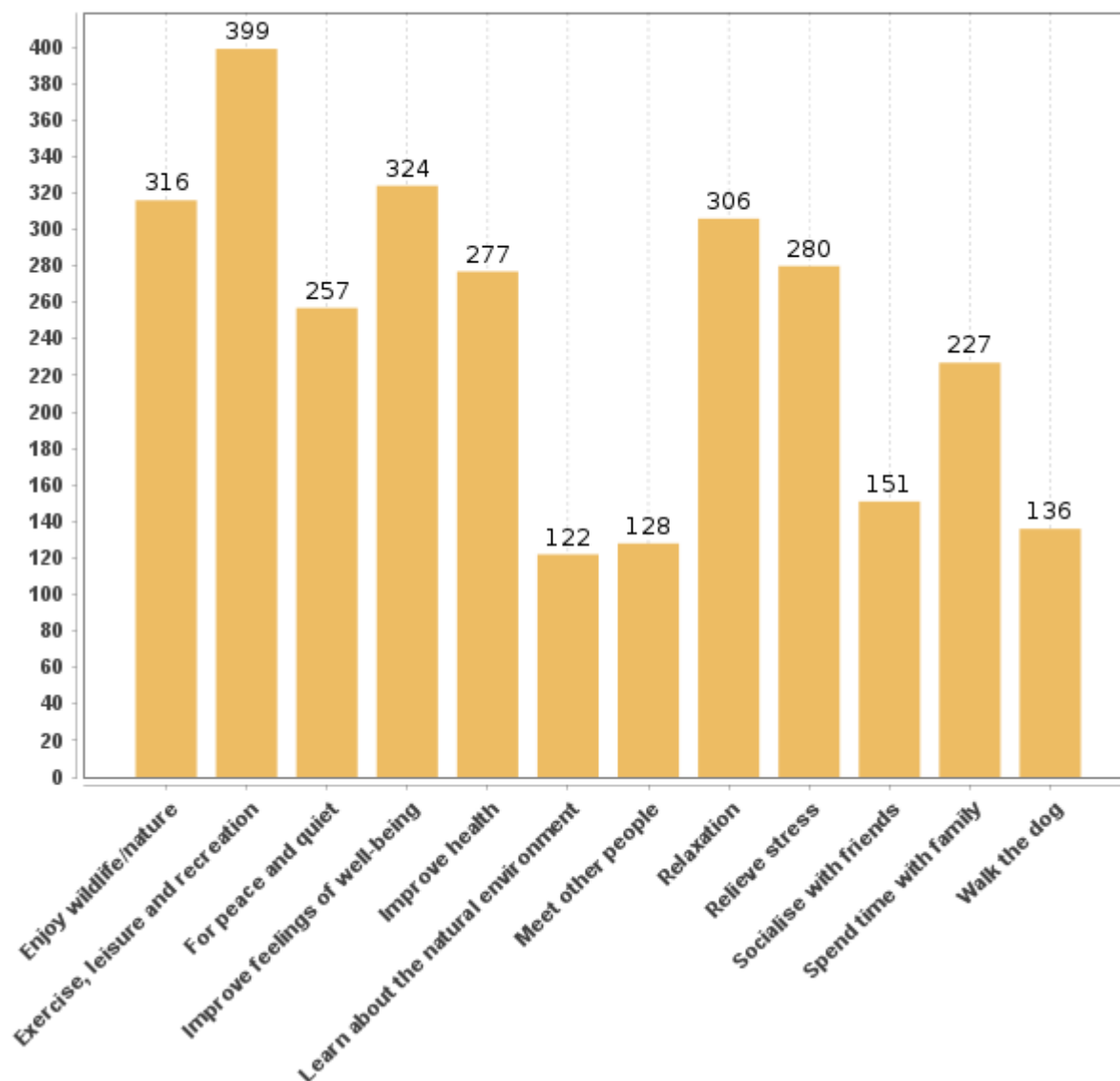
It is usual for the popular Green Flag Parks such as Cutteslowe & Sunnymead, Florence and Bury Knowle to receive a high number of completed surveys. However, interestingly, in this survey a lot of nature reserves and countryside sites also featured, some with a high return rate such as Lye Valley and Rock Edge.

| <b>Category</b>                  | <b>No. of sites surveyed</b> | <b>No. of completed surveys</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Green Flag and City Parks        | 7                            | 252                             |
| Countryside Site/Nature Reserves | 22                           | 125                             |
| Neighbourhood Parks              | 8                            | 21                              |
| Local Parks                      | 12                           | 63                              |
| Other plus non-OCC sites         | 15                           | 26                              |

Based on these results we can suggest that the importance of the nature reserves and countryside sites is evident in the respondents' choice of site.

### 3.2 Health and Exercise

Respondents were asked why they use the park/green space; they could select more than one answer.



The most frequently cited reason for using green spaces was for exercise, leisure and recreation, with 80% of respondents choosing this option. Other high scoring activities included improving feelings of well-being (65%), enjoy the wildlife (64%) and relaxation (62%); all receiving over 300 votes each. Other significant reasons cited were: learning about the natural environment (25%), to meet other people (26%), walk the dog (27%) and socialise with friends (30%).

The results from the Oxford survey mirror The Land Trust results in that the most frequent use of the sites is also for exercise, leisure and recreation, but in their survey only 56 percent of respondents cited this reason. The least frequently cited reasons for using the Land Trust sites was to learn about the natural environment

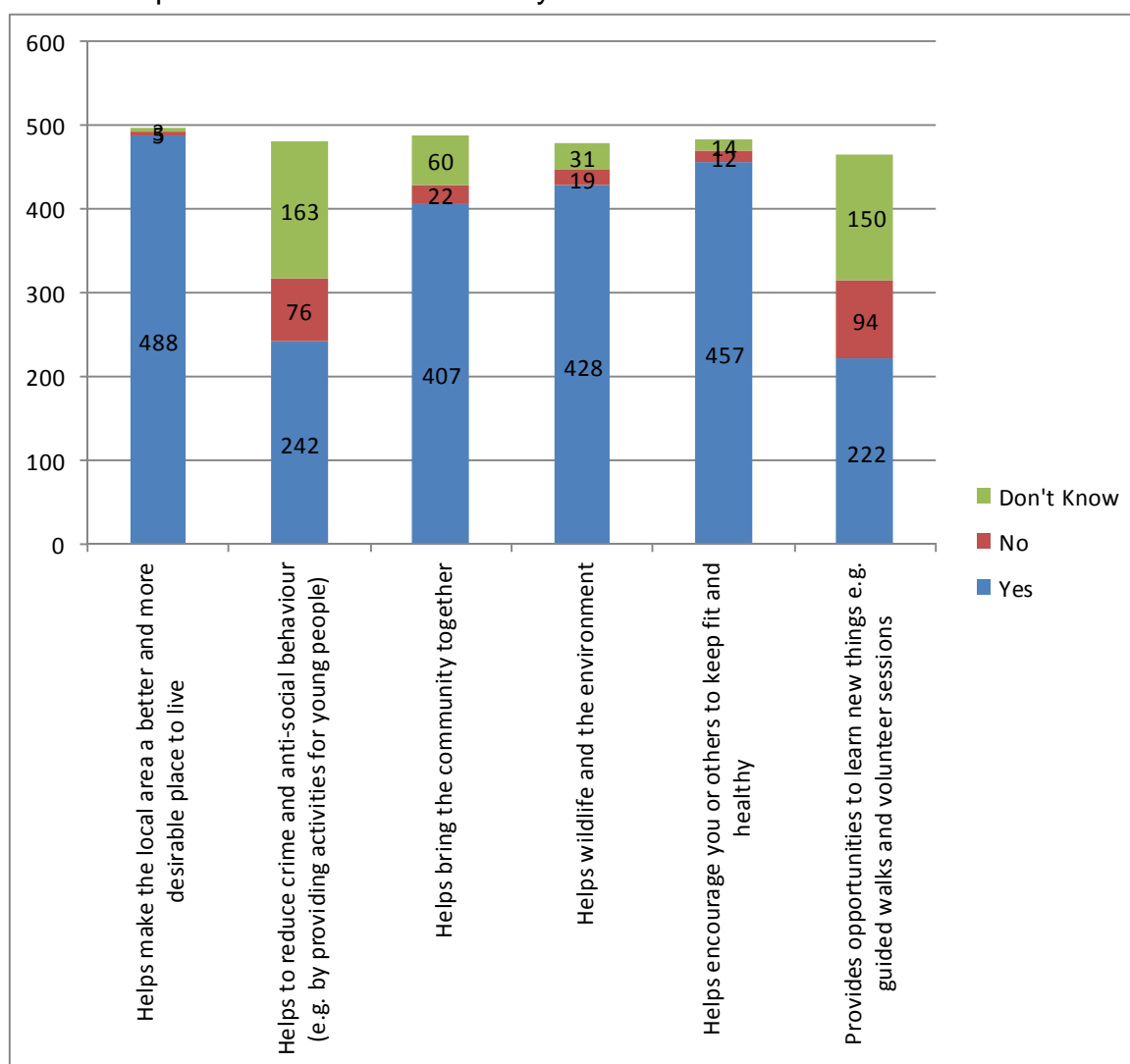
(16%), meet other people (10%) and socialise with friends (10%). The main difference was walking the dog, which was cited by 45% of respondents in the Land Trust Survey compared to only 27% Oxford.

**Visitor comments:**

- *“I support people with dementia and they benefit enormously from walking in a safe space where there is no traffic and there are trees and plants and grass. We also enjoy watching children playing and dogs being walked. It is an uncommercial space where you can spend time and feel better for it.”*
- *“They provide sanity and relief from all the traffic and urban environment. As soon as I enter the park I feel a relief from stress and pressure. It’s as though a green envelope has folded me inside it and I am calm. Seeing greenery, particularly trees, de-stresses me and makes me slow down.”*

**3.3 Contribution to Local Community**

Respondents were asked a series of questions on whether the site contributes to different aspects of the local community.



Almost all the respondents (98%) felt their local green space helps make their area a better and more desirable place to live, and 95% felt it encourages them or others

keep fit and healthy. This demonstrates a very high level of understanding and appreciation residents have regarding the role their local green spaces play in ensuring satisfaction with urban neighbourhoods and encouraging healthier lifestyles.

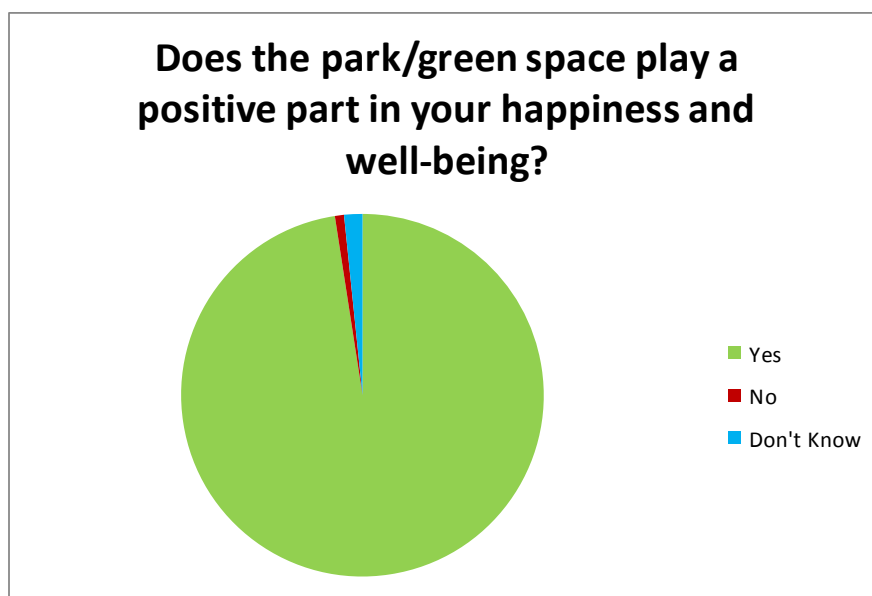
**Visitor comments:**

- *“A small but relatively peaceful oasis acting as an antidote to the noise and poor air quality around the London Road. Well looked-after and vital to me for jogging or convenient quiet walking. A vital asset to the people of Headington.” Bury Knowle Park*
- *“It is hard to overstate how much they contribute to the sense of community and the quality of life in Oxford.”*
- *“Having lived in the countryside all my life, now living in Oxford I am impressed with the quality of the parks, the facilities offered and the attention to the long term environmental developments. It’s like having my own garden back again but without the work.”*

Although 89% of those surveyed thought their local green spaces help wildlife and the environment only 50% though they provided opportunities to learn new things. This suggests there is potential to increase the use of green spaces to teach people, particularly children, about things such as food production, wildlife and caring for the environment.

**3.4 Contribution to happiness and wellbeing**

Almost all the respondents (98%) felt that the sites play a positive part in their happiness and well-being.



**Visitors Comments:**

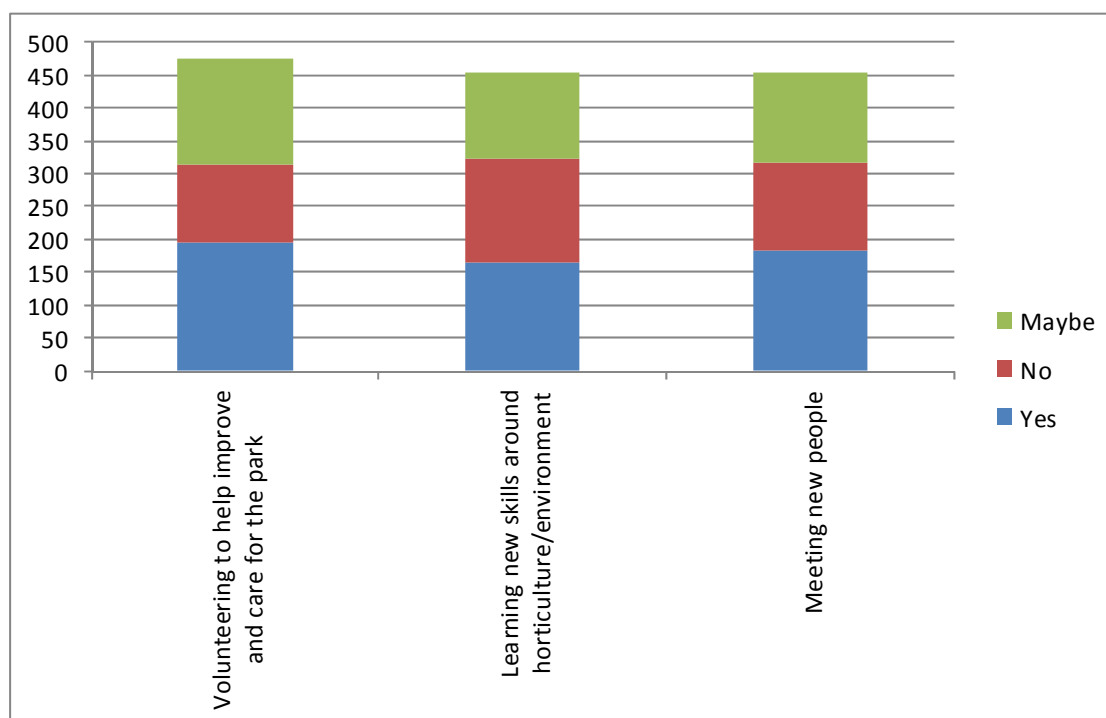
- *“I couldn’t live happily without it”.*
- *“As a GP, I know too well how much we need parks and natural spaces in a town. Especially a densely populated town like Oxford. We need natural spaces to stay mentally as well as physically healthy. Please preserve these*

*parks for all of us to enjoy, get some head space, get sunshine (vitamin D), see beautiful plants and enjoy animals (from insects to deer and owls), get fresh air and exercise.”*

- *“In a particularly stressful time I went for several walks on Portmeadow and found that it cleared my head so I could move ahead again. Walking there with friends has also been very enjoyable, and enables conversations in a very different way from being indoors.”*
- *“The parks are a really important part of the fabric of the city and help make Oxford such a great city to live in. Maintaining the parks isn't a luxury - it is vital for the health and well-being of the city”.*

### 3.5 Getting Involved

Respondents were asked if they would welcome opportunities to get involved in different types of activities. The results were fairly equal across all three options, with a sizable amount of interest in volunteering (40%), meeting new people (40%) and learning new skills around horticulture/environment (36%).



### 3.6 Top Words

Respondents were asked to describe their green space in one word, the size of the word represents the frequency it was mentioned.

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Space     | 34 |
| Peace     | 33 |
| Beautiful | 18 |
| Health    | 15 |
| Nature    | 15 |
| Freedom   | 14 |
| Community | 14 |

#### **4. Conclusions**

The results of the consultation reveal the high level of value Oxford's residents place on their local green spaces, and a belief they play a vital role in encouraging healthier lifestyles and maintaining feelings of well-being.

The level of response to the survey, and the numerous and unanimously positive comments, also demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the way the council manages its green spaces and the facilities it provides. This validates the considerable investment Oxford City Council has made in its parks, play areas and sport facilities over recent years, and the management policies and practices it has put in place.

The evidence provided by the survey should be used to ensure provision of green space is maintained in the city, and that there is adequate provision in the numerous new developments that will be created in reaction to housing need over the next two decades.

There is also a need to increase access and further promote the use of the city's green spaces to ensure all communities are reaping the benefits they provide. The results of this survey can be used to help with this promotion.





**Visitor comments:**

- *“Florence Park allowed me a fabulous opportunity to be involved with the biological processes of our natural environment. As a child I remember distinctly collecting frog spawn to help grow in the family pond. It provides a valuable resource for people of all ages to engage in the nature that defines them.”*
- *“Florence Park is a particularly well-managed resource and, increasingly, working well with local community groups' positive involvement. I really hope this can continue and increase; as above, I would welcome more opportunities to interact with Council staff (e.g. horticultural training/volunteering in the park) and it would also be great to be able to, for example, purchase Council-made compost and surplus plants. Initiatives like Friends of Florence Park, the new cafe contract, floodlights for the tennis courts and play space improvements are all very beneficial.*
- *“As a Council Countryside volunteer I help clear its paths and cut back intrusive scrub so that people can enjoy the meadow land right in the heart of Headington.”*
- *“I often work as a volunteer in Magdalen Wood West, clearing brush, coppicing and creating glades to encourage butterflies and flowers to return which have been shaded out. It is a wonderful amenity in the middle of a housing estate where I suspect many children are not taken on countryside expeditions by their parents. It may therefore be the only place they can interact with nature.”*
- *“As Britain is a country with a declining species richness, Shotover Country Park should be appreciated more fully as a unique biological reserve with nationally rare and declining species and should managed sensitively in this respect for maximum protection and conservation potential. It should be noted that this conflicts very little with it's use as a popular country park.”*
- *“The park provides a great amenity for local people. It's often full of local people playing cricket, football or exercising on the machines. Many of the people I see playing sport in the park are from ethnic minorities including EU migrants, and these groups may generally be feeling less welcome to participate in British society, due to the rise in hate crimes across the country. It's great to see local people from all backgrounds feeling confident to socialise and play sport together in an open space. Young guys use the basket ball courts, and families with young children frequently use the tennis courts and playground facilities.”*

Appendix A

## 2016 Value of the Park Survey

### Complete the survey for your chance to win a £25 shopping voucher!



Oxford City Council would like to hear what you think of the parks, nature reserves and green spaces that it manages. We want to know what they mean to you and how they benefit the local area. This is so we can learn how to make the parks and green spaces even better in the future.

**Please write the name of the park/nature reserve you would like to comment on**

---

1. Why do you use the park? *Please tick all that apply*

| Reason                           | ✓ | Reason                              | ✓ |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Improve health                   |   | Walk the dog                        |   |
| Exercise, leisure and recreation |   | Socialise with friends              |   |
| Relieve stress                   |   | Spend time with family              |   |
| Improve feelings of well-being   |   | Enjoy wildlife/nature               |   |
| Relaxation                       |   | Learn about the natural environment |   |
| For peace and quiet              |   | Other (Please state)                |   |
| Meet other people                |   |                                     |   |

2. Do you think the park...?

|  | Yes | No | Don't Know |
|--|-----|----|------------|
| Helps make the local area a better and more desirable place to live?                             |     |    |            |
| Helps to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (e.g. by providing activities for young people)? |     |    |            |
| Helps bring the community together?  |     |    |            |
| Provides opportunities to learn new things e.g. guided walks and volunteer sessions?             |     |    |            |
| Helps wildlife and the environment?  |     |    |            |
| Helps encourage you or others to keep fit and healthy?   |     |    |            |

3. Pick one word that sums up what this park means to you

.....  
 4. At the park, would you welcome more opportunities to get involved with:

|   | Yes | No | Maybe |
|---|-----|----|-------|
| Volunteering to help improve and care for the park  |     |    |       |
| Learning new skills around horticulture/environment |     |    |       |
| Meeting new people                                  |     |    |       |

5. Does this park play a positive part in your happiness and well-being?

| Yes | No | Don't know |
|-----|----|------------|
|     |    |            |

6. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the park?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

7. About You

**Are you male or female? What is your post code?** \_\_\_\_\_

Male       Female

**How old are you?**

Under 16     16-18     19-24     25-44     45-59     60-74     75+

8. Please supply details if you have answered yes to Q4 or would like to be included in the prize draw.

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Name     |  |
| Address  |  |
| Postcode |  |
| Email    |  |
| Tel      |  |

**Thank you for taking the time to help us with this survey!**  
 Prize Draw Terms and Conditions are available on request: 07483 010610

## **Appendix B - Compliments**

“Oxford's green spaces are an absolutely vital part of the city for all the reasons above. Oxford City Council does an excellent job in providing facilities and upkeep/maintenance. Any threat to funding or resources must be strongly resisted”.

“It's well managed with good investment” Bury Knowe Park

“Oxford should be proud of their green spaces and the council and staff who develop and maintain them”.

“They are great - well maintained by the council - they are very necessary for well-being.”

“A small but relatively peaceful oasis acting as an antidote to the noise and poor air quality around the London Road. Well looked-after and vital to me for jogging or convenient quiet walking. A vital asset to the people of Headington.” Bury Knowle Park

“The work the Council has done with the wildlife trust to manage and restore the valley is a credit to both parties and to the city.” Chiswell Valley

“It is very well kept and imaginatively cared-for. Its facilities have increased and improved a great deal in recent years.” Cutteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“About time a good water feature has been built - the San Remo cafe is brilliant!” Cutteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“Keep up the great work in the park - well done.” Cutteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“It is kept immaculately clean and tidy; recent changes and upgrades have meant more opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy their visits” Cutteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“It is brilliantly maintained and has wonderful children's playgrounds. Dog bins reliably and regularly emptied.” Florence Park

“It is well maintained, suitable for all ages, the ground maintenance crew are friendly, hardworking and polite.” Florence Park

“The activities at half term and school holidays are brilliant” Florence Park

“A very pleasant, well equipped and well maintained park.” Hinksey Park

“Thank you for the great job that the Parks team does to keep Marsh Rd Park and all the others in such tip top condition!”

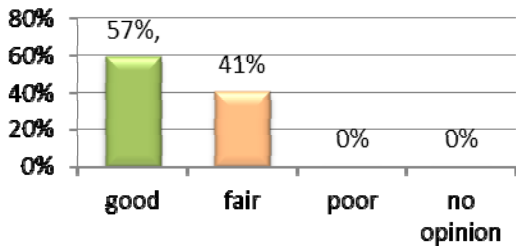
“Thank you to all those who keep Shotover so well.”

“It's great and very well kept. Thank you very much. Keep it as natural and pure as possible.” South Park

## Appendix 2: Key findings 2014 customer satisfaction survey

In 2014 a total number of 37 surveys were completed about Hinksey Park of which 3 were done online. In the previous year a total of 49 surveys was completed. This is significantly more and should be taken into consideration when comparing the data outcomes.

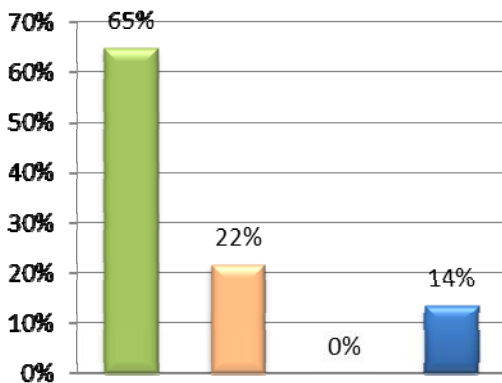
### Park in general



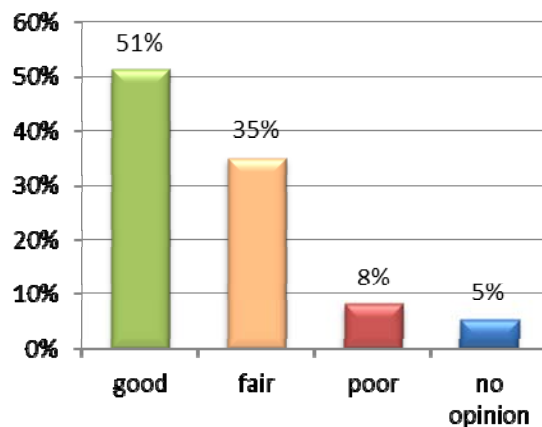
The park in general scored satisfactory with a 57% 'good' rating and a 41% 'fair' rating. None of the participants in the survey gave the park in general a 'poor' rating.

The best scoring features of Hinksey Park are the play area, the seating and the general grass area.

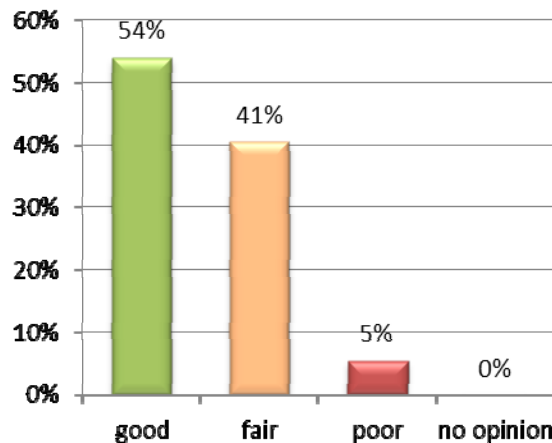
### Play area



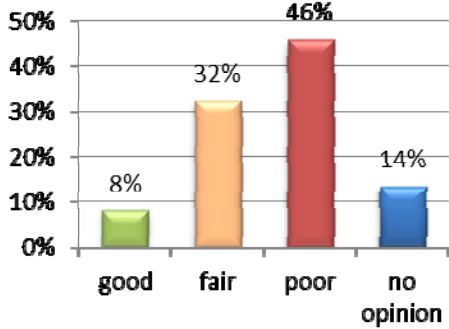
### Seating



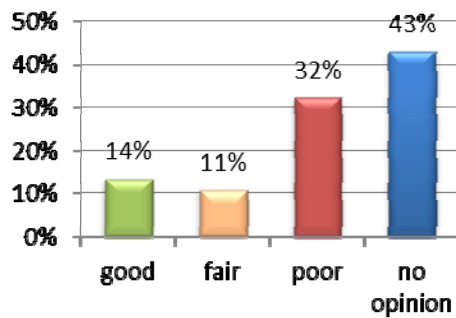
### General grass area



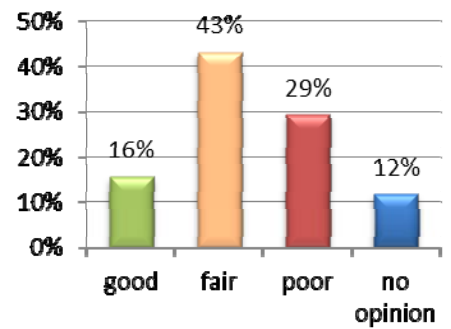
### Toilet facilities



### Park events



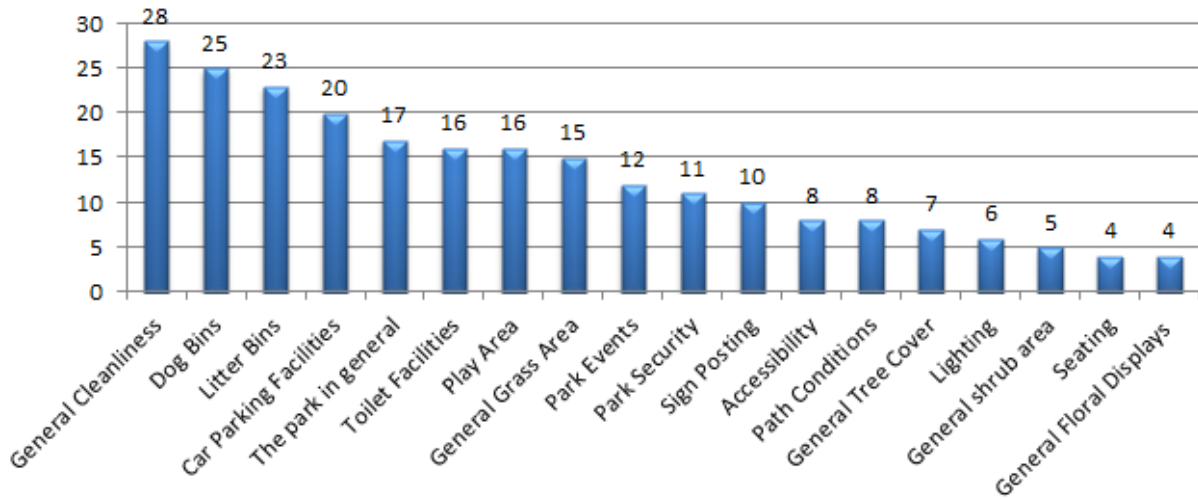
### Path condition



Three of the somewhat lower scoring facilities in the park are the toilet facilities with a 'poor' scoring of 46%. Secondly park events score 32% 'poor' and a lower percentage of 'fair' scoring. Lastly the path conditions are scoring satisfactory however improvements could be made to lower the 'poor' rating.

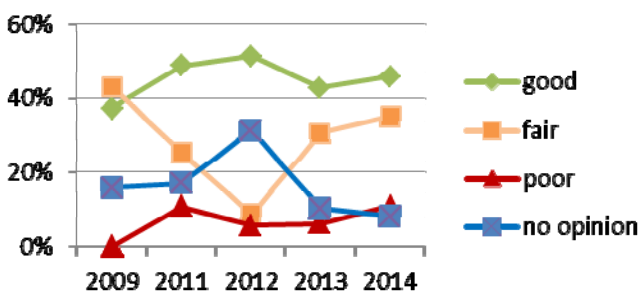
As can be seen, the bar chart below indicates there are three priorities scoring higher than 20. These three are the general cleanliness, dog bins and litterbins.

### Priorities

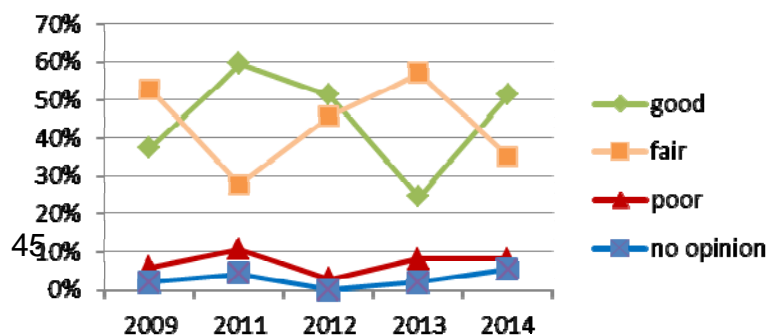


Two features of the park that scored good in comparison to the previous year are the parks security and the seating. The 'good' rating increased slightly for the park security and sharply for seating.

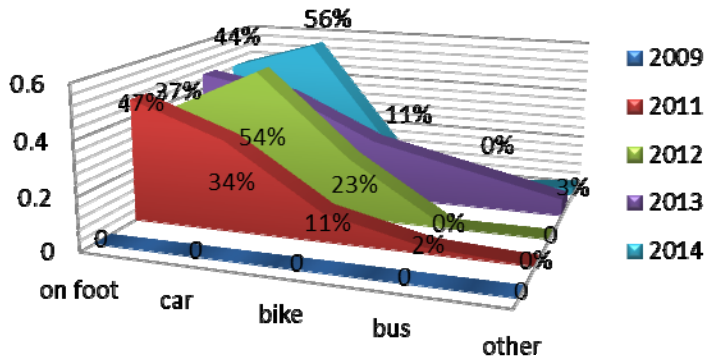
### Comparison Park Security



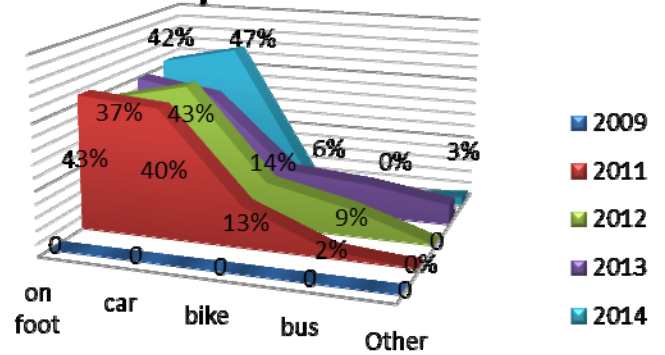
### Comparing Seating



### Comparison transportation - Summer



### Comparison transportation - Winter



In 2014 the car was the most popular method of transportation to the park, closely followed by on foot. The use of cars has increased compared to previous years.

## **Appendix 3 Direct Services**

### **Parks and Open Spaces Specification Executive Summary (April 2016)**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This summary highlights the purpose of the Parks and Open Spaces specification and provides headline information to Officers, Councillors and the public on the standard of works that we aim to achieve.

#### **2. Purpose of the Specification**

- 2.1 The specification illustrates the way in which we deliver services in the following areas; parks maintenance, outdoor sports facilities, pavilions, litter picking, litter and dog bin emptying, park patrols, cemetery management and maintenance, tree works (including planting), playground maintenance and countryside maintenance.

#### **3. Headline Standards:**

- Litter and Bin Emptying
  - Bins are emptied at the same time as litter picking is undertaken. The frequency varies depending on the usage within the parks from daily in high use parks to weekly in low use parks across the City.
  - In our Green Flag Parks this is ongoing throughout the day.
  - Big Belly bins have been placed around the City Parks to reduce the frequencies of visits. These bins are able to inform use of their status as to when they need emptying. This data is transmitted to our Park Office
- Grass Cutting
  - The majority of grassed areas, termed standard in the full specification, are cut between late March and early November with around 15 to 16 cuts over the year. Grass Cutting is dependent of the weather conditions so as to keep to a high standard across the City Parks
- Sports Turf
  - Maintained to a standard suitable for amateur leagues, such as Football, Lacrosse, Rugby, Gaelic Football, Tennis, Bowls, and Cricket etc. All are maintained by a highly skilled workforce.
  - Marking out is carried out to accommodate all types of rules for individual sport as well as the normal programmed sports
- Shrub Beds
  - Green Flag Parks are maintained on an ongoing base over the year, City Parks are visited by staff and the main works are carried out over the winter months in the dormant season.
  - The majority of shrub beds, termed standard in the full specification, are pruned and maintained twice per annum and barked when necessary
- Hedges



- The majority of hedges, termed standard in the full specification, are cut according to the nesting season between the months of August and March
  - Countryside hedges are cut once per annum again between August and March, any hedge cutting outside of this period would be carried out only with the advice of an ecologist at each are this work would take place. ( note we endeavour not to promote hedge cutting during the bird nesting period)
  - Tree Surveys and Tree Maintenance
    - Tree surveys are carried out as a Parks Management function every three years.
    - The tree team carry out work as required from the surveys based on their priority.
    - Further work may be undertaken as a result of public request following an inspection.
    - Please refer to the Tree Management Plan Dec 2011
  - Pavilion and Toilet Maintenance
    - Pavilions cleaned a minimum of once per week.
    - Parks toilets cleaned daily
  - Playground Maintenance
    - Monthly inspections undertaken
    - Monthly report of repair work carried from weekly inspections
    - Independent engineer checks undertaken every six months
  - We also offer a 24 hour out of hours service – 07711 439 090
- 3.1 The appendices show a summarised frequency table of all of the activities that are covered in detail the full service specification.
- 3.2 The specification will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 3.3 Sites are also monitored to ensure the standards in the specification are being consistently delivered.
- 3.4 This document is only a summary of the specification and the full specification should be viewed for a complete understanding of the standards we aim to achieve. A full copy of the specification is not on the website as it is a working document however it is available from [parks@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:parks@oxford.gov.uk).

Appendices:

1. Parks maintenance table of frequencies
2. Fine turf table of frequencies