



## **POLICY FOR COUNCIL OWNED LAND IN PETERSFIELD**

### **1. Background**

1.1 The Town Council owns considerable areas of land in the town and to have a policy for Council owned land was considered to be a positive management tool in the progression of the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan.

### **2. Purpose**

2.1 To consider all land owned by Petersfield Town Council and to provide a policy on the current strategy to be applied by the Council for the use of these land areas.

2.2 To make public the aim to continue seeking acquisition of land within the parish of Petersfield for the purpose of protecting and preserving green spaces for the benefit of the community.

### **3. PTC Sites**

#### **3.1 Petersfield Heath**

3.1.1 The current strategy is to provide recreational facilities on the west side of the Heath. These consist of the children's play area; the Plump Duck cafe; the boating lake; fishing rights and space for regular events including fairs, circuses and special events.

3.1.2 PTC must always be mindful and fully aware that this area of the Heath has reached its limit on development for fear of over urbanisation, collateral impact on the integrity of the land and not least higher maintenance costs to preserve the surrounding areas.

3.1.3 Both the expanded café and play area have been a great success and the enhanced amenity to visitors to the Heath from Petersfield and

further afield is welcome. However operations do bring challenges with them. The significant increase in pedestrian and vehicular traffic volumes has impacted the use and risk profile of Heath Road West for both forms of use of the road..

3.1.4 Vehicles and footfall have also added to widespread erosion to the surface of the Heath in this location, requiring greater ongoing maintenance, which has an impact on financial planning and budgeting. There is a need for the Council to balance the need to manage this balance between amenity and the cost of repair and maintenance.

3.1.5 In view of paragraphs 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 the Council should work to the following principles:

- The Plump Duck refreshment kiosk should not be further expanded from its current footprint defined as the perimeter of the canopy, now enclosed and the rear of the building formed by un-canopied walls and a storage shed. The scale of operation means operating on a daily basis as a café and as an occasional evening venue with plated meals and alcohol within the footprint only.
- The play area, although subject to updating, maintenance and change should be limited to its current boundary defined by the fenced toddler area, the rocking horse and climbing unit.
- As Landlords and Trustees of this high profile area of the Heath, the Council acknowledges that the growth of the Plump Duck and increased use of the play area has had some collateral impact on immediate residents and it is accepted that there is anxiety about any future growth which would extend that impact. Accordingly, in the event that the Council decides to change this policy and allow future growth, consideration should be given to consultation with owners/tenants of the properties affected at the time of considering the expansion of activity and in advance of any planning process being commenced.

3.1.6 The east side of the Heath consists of a wooded area and heathland of ecological interest. It also has a cricket pitch. It is also home to the Barrows, historic sites of architectural significance, and events such as the Secrets of the Heath.

3.1.7 In pursuance of robust stewardship of the Heath, the Council, as Trustee should determine the ultimate management of the site.

This is exercised ostensibly by the Chairman of the Grounds Committee and the Town Clerk who take day to day responsibility for activities and plans for grounds work.

- 3.1.8 PTC takes a pro-active role in the development of the Heath Management Plan and its implementation, particularly in regard to maintenance programmes, pollarding, and improvement programmes.
- 3.1.9 The Heathland and Barrows have become more of a feature open to the general public by the establishment of mown paths and the provision of information boards giving the history and general information about the various sites. Such features continue to be considered as highly important by the Council with plans to provide additional heritage information boards once the outcomes of the recent historical study by Petersfield Museum are known. Work to protect and provide access is part of the routine maintenance schedules.
- 3.1.10 The Council continues to work with the volunteers from the Friends of Petersfield Heath where practical and possible in the maintenance of the Heath.

### **3.2 Penns Farm Playing Fields, including Penns Field B**

- 3.2.1 PTC continues to view that the use of this land is for sports purposes and general recreational open space usage.
- 3.2.2 The field known as Penns Field B is considered to be a site which along with other arrangements for the whole area of Penns Farm playing fields will allow for the transference of Petersfield Town Junior Football Club from the Love Lane site. This forms the objective from the Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan for Penns Farm becoming a Sports Hub for Petersfield.
- 3.2.3 PTC sees the only way to be sure to protect the land against unwanted development, or to ensure that the land remains available potentially for all sections of the community is for the land to remain in the ownership of the Town Council.

### **3.3 Love Lane Recreation Ground**

- 3.3.1 Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan proposes that the Love Lane Grounds is potentially a site for a new multi-purpose Community Centre for Petersfield. The preferred site would be the north west

corner of the site so that the existing entrance and car park may be retained.

- 3.3.2 Petersfield does not have a quality park with ornamental shrubs, flower gardens, all weather paths and seating. It is considered that the balance of the Love Lane site could be very suitable for such facilities.
- 3.3.3 It is assumed that it will be possible for the Petersfield Town Juniors football club to relocate to Penns Farm and organise games to suit the availability of the space at Penns Farm. It may also be possible for extra space to be made available if required at the existing football ground at The Avenue. This may mean that Love Lane will no longer be available for football however the Town Juniors will need to be fully consulted prior to any decision being made.
- 3.3.4 It is recognised that there is a need for the whole of the Love Lane recreation area to be part of a new Master Plan which would include Petersfield Town Football Club, the two phases of the Skatepark, a new Community Centre facility and a new Park.
- 3.3.5 The south west corner of the recreation ground is to be developed as a wooded glade with recreational seating and picnic tables provided. The glade will contain the first of the World War I Centenary Memorial Trees planted in 2018.

### **3.4 Bell Hill Recreation Ground**

- 3.4.1 With over 100 houses being proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan in the private land at the western end of the Bell Hill Recreation Ground, it is considered appropriate to enlarge the Play Area.
- 3.4.2 The site used by the Round Table on Bonfire Night is the only public site for this facility and should be retained.
- 3.4.3 The recreation ground is considered to be a suitable site to contain the majority of the World War I Centenary Memorial Trees and the associated paths and seating that will accompany the facility.
- 3.4.4 The Recreation Ground should be improved by the planting of additional low maintenance trees and shrubs.

### **3.5 Bell Hill Common**

- 3.5.1 This area is larger than immediately apparent. In addition to the grass verge, there is an area of woodland and dense undergrowth leading to a small pond on the right hand side of Bell Hill Ridge.

- 3.5.2 This area can be significantly improved. There are two bench seats that could be replaced. The dense undergrowth could be cleared to provide a small but more interesting walk through the wooded area, particularly towards the pond.

### **3.6 Woods Meadow Recreation Ground**

- 3.6.1 Woods Meadow forms part of what has been identified as a “Green Finger” from Tilmore Road and points north to Steep, into Petersfield. This idea could be developed further by the acquisition of the privately owned land to the north and south.
- 3.6.2 On the north side of Woods Meadow is a strip of land which is subject to flooding and is currently lying fallow and is overgrown. It is land which is not included in the Neighbourhood Plan as suitable for housing development. PTC considers potential for making an offer for this land on the basis of the land being preserved as Green Space.
- 3.6.3 On the south side of the railway line is North Field, part of Merritts Meadow, which has been specifically excluded for Housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan. It is not looked after and PTC have already started discussions regarding the acquisition of this land, to be held as Green Space.

### **3.7 Borough Road Recreation Ground**

- 3.7.1 This is a small site with a children’s play area.
- 3.7.2 The site could do with improvements and some replanting of trees and shrubs.
- 3.7.3 The land to the south of the site forms part of the Borough Road water meadows. PTC is in discussion with Tesco with regard to acquiring this site and improving it for the benefit of local residents.

### **3.8 Paddock Way Recreation Ground**

- 3.8.1 This land is leased from Hampshire County Council.
- 3.8.2 A significant amount of housing is being developed to the east of the site, at Larcombe Road and on land south of Larcombe Road.

3.8.3 This site may come under pressure in the future. PTC should look to acquire this land to ensure a Green Space between the housing to the north and potential building land further south.

### **3.9 The Spain Greensward**

3.9.1 This is open land unsuitable for any other use. There are no suggestions for this land.

### **3.10 High Meadow**

3.10.1 This land is held in trust by PTC as Green Space. No changes are suggested at this time.

### **3.11 Tilmore Allotments**

3.11.1 These are the only allotments in Petersfield and should be kept as such.

### **3.12 Heathfield – Barnfield Link**

3.12.1 No suggestions are made.

### **3.13 The Avenue Playing Fields**

3.13.1 The pavilion on the site is used by the community. There are also tennis courts which are currently free, unless for hire by an approved commercial coaching operative, and a football field for informal and casual use. The football field could be used as an overflow from Penns Farm if needed.

### **3.14 St Peter’s Churchyard**

3.14.1 PTC has a responsibility to maintain the site but not to improve it.

### **3.15 Rotherlands Nature Reserve**

3.15.1 This is an attractive woodland walk along the banks of the River Rother. PTC should take a leadership role in managing this area and working with the Rotherlands volunteers.

### **3.16 Eastlake Close**

3.16.1 There is a small strip of land at the end of the cul de sac at the east end of Eastlake Close

3.16.2 PTC remains open to offers of purchase of this land by nearby residents.

## **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 The pressures on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to find land suitable for the building of more than 700 homes in Petersfield, including initially building on the Love Lane and Bell Hill Recreation Grounds, demonstrates that the PTC cannot be complacent when it comes to preserving the Green Spaces in the town. The suggestions and recommendations made in this policy paper are intended to focus attention on where there may be opportunities to acquire and preserve additional land in Petersfield and how some of the sites may be improved to provide additional facilities for the people of the town.
- 4.2 With the sale of Penns Field A to Kebbel Homes, PTC has been given a unique opportunity to fund the proposals included in the paper. At the same time some real improvements to existing sites can be made and therefore Petersfield's residents will see and obtain some real benefits from the release of the land at Penns Field 'A'.
- 4.3 PTC reviews this policy on a regular basis and at least annually.

**Approved:**