

2023

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**GREEN FLAG AWARD APPLICATION MANAGEMENT PACK**  
**CITY RECREATION GROUND**

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**NEWBURY TOWN COUNCIL**

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The largest park in Westfields area is situated in a highly populated historical part of the town and is a vital area for Newbury residents' relaxation, exercise and social requirements. Spread across 5.5 acres, it comprises of a football pitch and changing rooms, recreation areas, a play park, a fitness loop, sports wall, a picnic seating area, community orchards and a wildflower meadow.

The site has undergone extensive improvements between 2019 and 2021 to the playground areas and adding elements such as the sports wall, fitness loop and picnic seating area.

# CITY RECREATION GROUND



*City Recreation Ground is 5.5 acres of parkland with various facilities situated within the Westfields area of Newbury, a short walk from Bartholomew Street, St John the Evangelist Church and the oldest settlement within. It is surrounded on each side by Rectory Close, Andover Road and Buckingham Road.*

# City Recreation Ground



## **Access**

### **Vehicle access:**

Rectory Close bollards

### **Pedestrian access:**

Rectory Close,  
Buckingham Road and  
Andover Road

### **Disabled access:**

All areas.

### **Staff Presence:**

Works within the site are closely overseen by the Council's Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor and Facilities Officer and ground maintenance work is undertaken by John O'Conner Ltd, the Council's contractor.

John O'Conner Ltd duties include:

- Daily litter management
- Grass to be performance cut to be kept within length guidelines
- Relevant cut rotation to sustain wildflower meadow
- Weekly visual play inspections (ROSPA trained)
- Cleaning of changing rooms and marking out of the football pitches.

### **Designation**

Designated recreation area / public open space under the 1845 Enclose Act.

### **Facilities and Infrastructure**

- Play Park
- Fitness Activity Trail
- Sports Wall
- Community Orchards
- Football Pitch
- Wildflower Meadow
- Low-Level Solar Lighting

### **Biodiversity**

A tree planting programme is undertaken year after year, monitoring and developing tree stocks typically planting two trees for every tree lost. Works are undertaken each year by qualified tree surgeons where necessary.

The council is adopting a policy in certain areas of cutting the grass once a year in the areas around the orchards and dense areas of trees.

We are looking into fitting bat and bird boxes in the trees as a future development on the site.

There is a large wildflower meadow close to the Buckingham Road entrance which is now four years into development on the site.

### **Community Involvement**

Growing Newbury Green has been an active volunteer group working in City Recreation Ground since 2009 on the apple, plum and recently added pear orchard. Their aim is to provide edible crops for the people of Newbury through the installation of orchards and edible planting.

Their volunteers care and water the trees where necessary all year round. They also run yearly pruning sessions on the trees in which they have a resident expert within the group and they welcome the public to come and learn how to care for their apple trees.

The Newbury in Bloom initiative also runs yearly volunteer days including a wildflower cut and seed breaking with the local residents and, most recently, a bulb planting under the lime trees at the Andover Road entrance. We plan additional bulb planting on site in the coming years to give a greater display.

### **Events:**

Mainly events on the site have been linked to improving the park through the Newbury in Bloom initiative. Due to its size and the fact the residents back closely onto the park, we do not rent out City Recreation ground for commercial activities but we are looking at running a yearly Family Fun Day similar to what is run in Victoria Park to promote the park.

## **Marketing**

We regularly promote the new and existing facilities as they are upgraded or opened in the local media, using paid advertising together with press releases, and attaching photographs when we can.

Newbury Town Council promotes City Recreation Ground through its website, [www.newbury.gov.uk](http://www.newbury.gov.uk) and has social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter where the park and its activities are promoted. Events such as The Family Day are also promoted on the Town Council's noticeboards and in our bus shelters around town.

Volunteer days are usually promoted through the Newbury in Bloom initiative via letter drops, social media and also approaching public directly.

## **History**

As a result of the Enclosures Act in 1845, City Recreation Ground was designated as an area for public use and recreation purposes. The four acres of land set aside in 1849 initially made up the City Recreation Ground. Approximately one acre was then gifted in 1925 by a local land owner, Henry Leake, and a further 0.5 of an acre was gifted in 1935 by Albert Rawlings to make up the park as it is today.

"The City" area applied to the Argyle Road/ Newtown Road area, which has strong associations with the medieval St Bartholomew's Hospital and the Litten. However, "The City" as a name appears much more recently; it was used on political posters in the early 19th century around the time of Waterloo and it was adopted by City Recreation Ground due to its position within the area.

"The City" became a conservation area in its own right in 1971, but this was later merged into the wider conservation area for the whole of Newbury town centre.

## **Vision and Aims**

**The delivery of all services and functions by Newbury Town Council is governed by the Council's Strategy. This is driven by the Council's Mission Statement:**

**Newbury Town Council making Newbury a town we can all be proud of.**

**The Strategy sets out that:**

**We will continue to provide and improve well-managed services to the town, using direct labour or contractors as appropriate, and always ensure value for money while using local labour and suppliers where possible.**

**We will strive to ensure that our policies and actions do not exclude any sections of the community, and that our services are accessible by all citizens of the town.**

**Many of the service delivery objectives in the Strategy include our vision and aims for City Recreation Ground, including the following:**

- Maintain a budget explicitly for local environmental improvement capital projects such as footway lighting, public benches, litter/dog bins, salt/grit bins and tree planting.**
- Maintain and run high quality parks, playgrounds and leisure spaces/ facilities.**
- Provide and maintain benches and other street furniture in appropriate locations.**
- Provide and maintain trees, flower beds, hanging baskets and other plantings in appropriate locations.**
- Provide brochures, maps, signage and other information for the benefit of visitors to Newbury.**
- Support Community safety, including Town Centre CCTV, through working with partners in this area and, where required, expanding the provision of CCTV.**

- Support and promote community events through financial assistance and/or provision of venues and facilities.
- Lobby and work with West Berkshire Council to devolve appropriate assets and services to us.
- Encourage and facilitate residents' participation in social, recreational and sporting activities.

The short to longer term vision and aims within City Recreation Ground set out in the strategy are as follows:

- Maintain City Recreation Ground as a first class amenity and recreational area for the benefit of all the citizens of Newbury and achieve the Green Flag Award.

### Action/Service Plan

Newbury Town Council also uses park user feedback, consultations, policy frameworks and the Council's own Town Design Statement to help to plan for the future of the site. This information is translated into an action/service plan which lists required tasks and time frames for park development and improvement.

### Information applicable to all NTC sites

All NTC sites are covered by the NTC Byelaws stating the laws by which users and visitors to the park should abide.

# GREEN FLAG AWARD CRITERIA

## A Welcoming Place

### Signage

City Recreation Ground has attractive signage welcoming you to the facility, signage declaring the bylaws and relevant signage for the playground stating relevant safety advice.

### Good and Safe Access

Newbury Town Council has a positive approach to ensuring compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, with provision for everyone to access the park's facilities. We have made sure our fitness trail is accessible and have incorporated inclusive elements in the play sites. Installed on the pathways are low level solar lighting providing a trail to follow at night in the site and improving safety

# GREEN FLAG AWARD CRITERIA

## Healthy, Safe and Secure

### Patrolling Presence

The daily presence of our contractors for litter clearance, identifying issues to be dealt with and daily visual walk around by NTC staff. Regular police patrols within the park.

### Solar bollards and park lighting

City Recreation Ground has six solar bollards on the site that illuminate the pathways for residents travelling through the site at night and a streetlight at the Rectory Close corner. This contributes towards site safety and provides a feeling of additional security for the residents.

### Playground Inspections

Weekly visual inspection – John O’Conner Ltd staff

Monthly detailed inspections - Newbury Town Council’s Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor /

Facilities Officer

Yearly external inspection – play inspection company

### Built Environment

The site is overlooked by residents who take an active role in reporting any incidents that happen in the park outside of working hours of NTC and John O’Conner Ltd staff. We plan to incorporate local residents in a Friends Group for the site who will report to us any issues within the site.

The park is in a conservation area as designated by the planning authority, West Berkshire District Council. A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, with a distinctive character or appearance that is desirable to preserve or enhance.

### Staff Training and Welfare

All work is undertaken within the park by members of staff that have the required qualifications. Contractors and NTC staff are DBS checked.

## **Well Maintained and Clean**

### **Litter Management**

The site's litter bins are emptied four times a week and the park is litter picked every day to ensure the site is clean and smart for the coming day.

Dog faeces are removed and dog bins are emptied every other day.

### **Benches and Bins**

Benches are audited every two years and oiled once a year.

Bins are given a thorough clean four times a year and are emptied daily each morning.

### **Horticultural Maintenance**

All works within the park are undertaken to the highest horticultural standards. The following are key horticultural features:

- The wildflower meadow was seeded by volunteers and has been cut in between lockdown by volunteers since 2019.
- Areas of bulbs planted on volunteer days help to give all round bloom within the park.

# GREEN FLAG AWARD CRITERIA

## Arboricultural Maintenance

Trees are visually monitored by the Grounds Maintenance Officer (BTI qualified) and by John O'Conner Ltd, to assess for issues on a weekly basis. The trees are also independently surveyed by a PTI accredited surveyor once every five years unless flagged as needing more frequent visits.

We have been undertaking tree planting within the park and aim to add at least ten trees to the current stock each year.

## **Environmental Management**

### Managing Environmental Impact

We manage the environmental impact of our service delivery as set out in the Council's strategy:

When delivering these services we will:

- Use local suppliers wherever possible.
- Work to safeguard the vitality of the local economy, ensuring that any adverse impact on the environment and the quality of life in Newbury and its surrounding area is minimised.
- Minimise waste created by the Council and the services we provide.
- Maximise opportunities to recycle waste created by the Council and the services we provide wherever possible.
- Work with other partners and stakeholders to achieve efficiency savings in service delivery and, where appropriate, expand the range of services provided by the Town Council.

During the recent site developments at City Recreation Ground it was requested that we provided lighting to the footpaths for safety at night. We installed solar light bollards that mark out the footpaths on the site which was environmentally beneficial and also did not affect the residents or local bat populations.

### Waste Minimisation

Waste minimisation is important for Newbury Town Council as set out above in the Council's Strategy. Our contractor's, John O'Conner Ltd, mulch green waste to be reused on the sites and it is used across shrub beds within the park.

City Recreation Ground is the first site that we have installed split recycling and general waste bins and this has helped to increase recycling levels by 30%. Rubbish that is put in general waste is sifted for recycling and then is used in incineration to produce energy.

## **Environmental Management continued...**

### **Chemical Use**

Chemical use such as Glyphosates are not used in the park. For weed removal on hard surfaces we jet wash or use a road sweeper to clear the weeds.

### **Peat Use**

Newbury Town Council does not use peat for the development of any of our sites. We use natural compost, recycled leaf mulch and green waste through our contractors as well as natural additives such as fish blood and bone to add nutrients to our soil.

### **Climate change adaptation strategy**

The Council's environmental strategies are set out above. We are now more mindful of the need to reduce our carbon footprint by minimising emissions and the careful use of natural resources. It is an objective in the Town Council's Strategy to "Increase the biodiversity of the town, through drought and pest resistant planting, reduced use of pesticides, herbicides and peat, replacing diseased trees and extending tree planting." (O1.20).

The Council is currently also looking to undertake a reduction in summer and winter bedding, reducing this by 20% year on year for the next four years and replacing them with perennial planting that will in turn increase biodiversity as part of the Council's carbon reduction policy.

Recently we have undertaken the process of overhauling our new GM Contract this has in turn meant we can enforce new measures in which we are limiting our carbon footprint such as-

- The predominant use of electric tools.
- The use of electric vehicles where practicable.
- The recycling of our waste with reporting on where it goes after it leaves our parks.



# GREEN FLAG AWARD CRITERIA

## **Conservation and Heritage**

### **Management of natural features, wild fauna and flora**

City Recreation Ground houses a large wildflower area, installed and cared for by volunteers since 2019 which has developed over the years slowly providing a more diverse species list as the years go on.

We have three community orchards on site managed by the volunteer group Growing Newbury Green who specialise in planting crops and fruit trees for the local community to enjoy. The plum orchard, apple orchard and new pear orchard have been in development on the site since 2010 with the plums pre-dating the project. The group run picking and pruning days each year in the site to engage the local community and teach new skills.

The site has four lime trees that are approximately 70-80 years old. These are maintained and pollarded every 10 years.

### **Conservation of landscape features**

The sites main landscape feature is the football pitch which has been in situ for at least 25 years and has a rounders pitch marked out in the grass over the summer. A lot of the other features have been added in the last 10 years to engage the community in utilising the site to exercise, play and relax.

### **Conservation of buildings and structures**

The only structures within the park are the changing rooms and footpaths. The changing rooms undertake routine maintenance and are repainted every three years via the use of the Community Payback Scheme. Recently the paths that back onto Rectory Close and Buckingham Road around the perimeter were reinstalled via the use of Agri-Flex, a rubber based pathway that now forms part of the park's exercise circuit. These pathways are specifically designed to provide cushioning for runners when they are exercising.

## Community Involvement

### Community involvement in management and development

Newbury Town Council is looking to form a Friends Group over the period of this submission to give input on any future developments on the site and provide support in community events. With the chair of the group taking up a position on the Green Spaces Working Group which is a steering group for all activities and improvement on Newbury Town Council land.

Currently, any event on the site is arranged via the council itself, the Newbury in Bloom initiative and Growing Newbury Green.

### Community involvement in the park

The Newbury in Bloom initiative runs yearly bulb plantings and volunteer wildflower cuts on the site, engaging the local community in getting involved in caring for their park.

Growing Newbury Green runs yearly fruit picking days and a pruning day on the site to care for the orchards. They use these as teaching sessions in which they show how to care for your fruit trees at home. The fruit picked, that is not taken by the local community, is then used to produce juice or preserves to help fund the project in the future and provide additional sites around Newbury.

## Marketing

### Marketing and Promotions

City Recreation Ground covers a wide demographic of users due to its facilities.

We regularly promote the new and existing facilities as they are upgraded or opened in the local media, using paid advertising together with press releases, and attaching photographs when we can.

# GREEN FLAG AWARD CRITERIA

## Appropriate information channels

The site is promoted through the Town Council website with pages linking to its facilities.

Events held within the site are posted through social media, promoting community involvement and care for the site. Posters are erected on the entranceways to the site to promote Newbury in Bloom and Growing Newbury Green events.

The noticeboard at the Town Hall publicises upcoming events within the site and appropriate banners and notices are put up to promote any larger events. We are planning to install a community noticeboard to promote within the site itself.

Any new development or event within the park is distributed through local press via press releases covering all the local newspapers, publications, television and radio outlets.

All our site events are promoted on our noticeboards, in our bus shelters and on our website and social media.

## Appropriate educational and interpretational information

City Recreation Ground has an information panel explaining the fitness loop near to the playground showing the start and finish.

There is an interpretation panel central to the orchard area explaining the orchard's history and the wildflower meadow, with descriptions of wildflowers that can be found in the meadow and pictures to help local residents identify the species when they flower.

## Management

### Client /Contractor relationship

The Town Council works closely with all contractors regarding any developments on the site whether they are full-time contractors based on the site or temporary contractors undertaking a specific purpose.

The Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor holds site meetings daily when specific tasks are being undertaken to monitor the standard of work and processes being used.

### Monthly meetings regarding development

Meetings are held monthly between the Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor and John O'Conner Ltd, incorporating any other contractor who is working on-site, to discuss logistics and the coming month's developments on the site. These meetings include problem solving and identifying future issues.

### Annual report

The development of the park has been included in the Council's Annual Report and from 2021/22 we implemented our first annual report on the development on the park to gauge the success of the projects and the newly identified needs going forward.

### Monitoring and Review

This Management Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Town Council, the Grounds Maintenance Contractor and other key committees and working groups to ensure that the plan is meeting its management aims and objectives and responding to the developing needs of the site.

The review will include both the management of the site and the uses and activities promoted and undertaken on the site. In addition, this review will take into account and update any changes in legislation or policy.