

Part 1 - Hilton Green Spaces - Management Policy Document (MPD)

Issue -06

25th February 2016

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Scope
3. Objective
4. Public Use and Access
5. General Village Maintenance
6. Grass Cutting
7. Trees & Hedges
8. Ponds and Drainage Ditches
9. Footpaths and Tracks
10. Monuments and Village Furniture
11. Common Rights

Appendix:

Appendix 1 – Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (2016)

Appendix 2 – (*Note to Residents*) – Looking After Hilton’s Green Spaces, 2014

Supporting documentation:

Village Design Statement (VDS), 1999

Natural History Survey, 2000

Grassland Vegetation and Management of The Green, Hilton, 2003

Parish Plan (PP), 2005

Main Ditch Survey, 2007

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hilton Parish Council (HPC) will endeavour to protect, maintain and keep safe the public spaces of the village of Hilton, where necessary working with local authorities that have specific responsibilities in relation to Hilton.
- 1.2 Following an extensive survey in preparation of the Parish Plan in 2005, the residents of Hilton made it clear the green spaces of Hilton are of real value.

The Parish Plan states:

'People enjoy living in Hilton - both socially and environmentally. They value the various environmental aspects such as the Green, the Maze, the small wooded areas, open spaces and water features that collectively, make it such a pleasant place to live in. But there is also widespread concern that these features are vulnerable. There is an overriding consensus that they must continue to be properly managed and protected.'

- 1.3 HPC (as the owner), is responsible for the preservation and maintenance of 27 acres of common land called The Green, including the paths, bridges (brows) and various structures contained within. This open space serves as an amenity to the parishioners of Hilton and to many visitors. It is HPC's objective to manage this land to reflect the rural tradition of the village, to protect and enhance the diversity of wildlife whilst allowing for the many recreational needs of an increasing population.

- 1.4 This document has three parts:

Part 1 – Hilton Green Spaces - Management Policy Document (MPD).

Part 2 – Hilton Green Spaces – Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (see Appendix 1). This document describes in detail the various maintenance regimes for tree work, ditch clearing and grass cutting. This document is the basis for tendering and awarding contracted work and can be reissued independently from the main policy document as needs arise.

Part 3 – Looking After Hilton's Green Spaces (see Appendix 2). Informed by the main policy documents this short pamphlet is an attractive, readable and interesting way to inform residents of the extent of maintenance work conducted on our behalf within the village. It also outlines HPC's expectations for use of and to access of the green spaces. This pamphlet is intended for a wide distribution.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This HPC policy document is a public record identifying the green open spaces in the village of Hilton, the responsibility of maintenance for each area plus, where applicable, guidelines for access and use.
- 2.2 It is expected this document will be regularly reviewed, updated and re-issued on an as needed basis. Public notification will be given when a new issue is available. Each re-issue will be approved by HPC and notes on the changes will be available.

3. Objective

- 3.1 The object of this document is to serve as a public reference source, providing clarity on a multitude of issues related to the maintenance and use of and access to the public green spaces within the village.
- 3.2 A substantial proportion of the HPC precept is spent on the maintenance of the green spaces within Hilton. It is therefore appropriate that residents of Hilton are informed in general terms how this money is spent. This document endeavours to do this.
- 3.3 This document may be helpful to:
- Parishioners interested in, or concerned about aspects of, the public areas.
 - Those involved in the various maintenance activities operating in the village, some directly contracted by HPC, others from local authorities or even voluntary work groups.
 - Parish Councillors; as the members of the council change over time this document will serve as a reference to new incumbents.
- 3.4 Use and access:
- With open access to these public spaces, this document endeavours to promote considerate behaviour encouraging a general understanding of the value of this amenity.
 - This document also aims to promote awareness of the effort and cost required to maintain these spaces.
- 3.5 Maintenance:
- To identify the areas within the village that require regular maintenance.
 - To indicate the frequency with which that maintenance should be conducted.
 - To identify the responsible authority to conduct that maintenance (if not HPC).
 - To form the basis of maintenance contracts which are the responsibility of HPC.
- 3.6 This document aims to complement and build on the important work conducted in recent years with the aim of understanding, preserving and developing aspects of the Hilton environment, in particular the Village Design Statement (VDS), completed in 1999, produced in cooperation with HDC and the Grassland Vegetation and Management of The Green report, 2003. Many of the conclusions reached during these studies, particularly the VDS, are reflected as policy here.

4. Public use and access

- 4.1 Access to the public green areas of the village is open to all under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, for the purpose of recreation, including the 27 acres of common land henceforth referred to as 'The Green' which includes the outer area called 'The Wilderness'.
- 4.2 Although these 27 acres are owned by HPC, specific conditions apply as a result of it being traditionally registered common land (see item 11.1).

- 4.3 Sometimes it will be necessary to temporarily cordon off some areas for maintenance or to deal with safety issues; this decision will be at the discretion of HPC.
- 4.4 Right of access includes domestic pets. For health reasons it is a legal requirement that the owners of pets take responsibility to pick up and correctly dispose of any faeces left behind.
- 4.5 Right of access also includes ridden horses but on the bridle ways only, not on the grass areas of the Green and walking only, no cantering or galloping.
- 4.6 HPC encourages all users of these spaces to show respect and consideration to other people also enjoying this amenity and to those who live adjacent to these spaces and their properties.
- 4.7 HPC requests that care be taken with the natural fabric of these open spaces, that the grass areas, ditches and trees are not damaged through mistreatment. It is important that the green spaces are left exactly as they were found, with no impact to the wildlife and flora.
- 4.8 HPC also requests that no wilful damage occurs to the man-made structures and village furniture such as brows, benches and the playground and pavilion. Wilful damage is unsightly, potentially dangerous, and expensive to repair.
- 4.9 It is important that litter is disposed of properly. Litter bins are provided at various points around the village and are emptied regularly.
- 4.10 There are two distinct sports fields which have been specially prepared on The Green: the cricket ground (summer), and the football pitch (winter). HPC request, out of respect for Hilton Cricket Club, walking across the wicket, should be avoided; (an area which is usually cordoned off). The football pitch and cricket outfield are open to all except when organised matches are taking place.
- 4.11 It is not permissible to drive a motor vehicle across The Green or park on The Green, without the express permission of HPC as the authority under civil law. Further to that, for all of the 27 acres of the Green, it is an offence to drive across it, or park a motor vehicle on it under section 34(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, unless with the express permission of HPC as the authority. This is a criminal law provision.
- 4.12 There is temporary parking available adjacent to the Village Hall, where the surface is either gravel or lattice paving. Primarily this space is intended for all visitors to Hilton, not exclusively for Village Hall visitors. Under no circumstance should this space be used for long term parking, this is not a designated carpark; it is still part of The Green.
- 4.13 Organisers of events which attract numbers of vehicles must make sure their guests are informed of the parking arrangements which the organiser has agreed with HPC in advance.
- 4.14 Agricultural vehicles accessing fields via the Green do so with the permission of HPC. Vehicles must keep to the gravelled road /track and not stray onto the grass area where considerable damage can be done.

- 4.15 Fishing in the village ponds, particularly Reeves Ditch, is an amenity open to all those who live in the village. In accordance with 4.6 above it is not permissible to park a vehicle close to the pond on the verges, which are part of the village Green. HPC ask that respect be shown to other users and those wishing to feed the ducks. It is also important that fishing line and weights are not left behind as these present a threat to wildlife.
- 4.16 It is essential that access to municipal engineering sites such as the pumping station at Reeves Ditch, High Street, and the electrical sub stations, remain unhindered by parked cars at all times.
- 4.16 Camping, either under canvas or with a camper van, with the intention of an overnight stay, is not allowed at any time on The Green. The temporary erection of a tent or marquee may be acceptable but must only be done with the written permission of HPC.
- 4.17 Permission to use The Green for annual village events such as Feast Week and Bonfire Night is implicit due to the long-standing nature of these events; however, this activity is still subject to the conditions of use and access stated here.
- 4.18 On rare occasions over the years, as the village has developed, HPC have entered into negotiations over easement, (or right of access), across some parts of The Green, mainly to gain access to a new property. Such settlements are usually conducted with legal representation employed by both parties with HPC and Common Right Holders working together. Without this legal settlement there shall be no encroachment by households abutting onto The Green.
- 4.19 Temporary signs or posters advertising events or services are not to be placed on The Green without the permission of HPC. HPC also requests that residents refrain from the placement of such signs or posters throughout the village unless absolutely necessary.
- 4.20 Should any parishioner be concerned that these conditions of use and access of The Green are not being adhered to, they are requested to contact the Clerk to HPC with details.
- 4.21 For the protection and wellbeing of these open spaces and to ensure the continued enjoyment of all those who use this amenity, HPC ask that these requirements and requests concerning use and access are adhered to. Repeated flouting will be taken seriously and will result in further action being taken by HPC appropriate to the nature of the transgression.
- 4.22 HPC defines the scope of organised activities permissible on the Green as:
- Activities for the general benefit of Hilton residents only. No scheme for individual/group benefit or profit will be considered. All schemes will be judged on their merit with this central guideline in mind.
- Activities that provide benefit to parishioners of Hilton. Benefit defined as:
- Accessible by all Hilton parishioners,
 - Likely to appeal to a broad spectrum of parishioners
 - Celebratory, uplifting and positive experiences

Activities not permissible on the Green are those for which the provider:

- Is the primary beneficiary
- Limits access to a specific group.
- Gains financially and/or makes a profit for themselves
- Is not a parishioner nor commissioned by a parishioner.

All applications will be judged on their merit with this central guideline in mind. All proposed activities must gain the written permission of the HPC Clerk before they can commence or indeed be advertised.

5. General Village Maintenance

5.1 The green areas of the village, including ponds, ditches, verges, etc. which are not owned by Hilton Parish Council (HPC) are either under the stewardship of Huntingdon District Council (HDC) or Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC).

The roads are the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council. The area surrounding the village hall is the responsibility of the Village Hall Management Committee. The churchyard is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council.

5.2 Hilton Parish Council understands that the general appearance of the village should be a mixture of 'old rural', e.g. the area of The Green, and 'relatively modern' e.g. the public areas within the newer developments, (refer to VDS).

5.3 The cost of maintaining The Green is met by the annual Parish precept received bi-annually from Huntingdon District Council, (HDC). A case has to be made each year for a budget to cover the grass cutting, tree work, ditch clearing and general maintenance which has to be approved by HPC at public meetings.

5.4 In addition to the mainstream maintenance work, HPC support a Village Handyman whose duties are varied but include keeping the green areas and ditches free of litter, some repair work where appropriate and to bring any potential maintenance problems arising to the attention of HPC.

5.5 Over the years there has been much good work done by volunteer groups utilising expertise in various forms from a number of Hilton residents. HPC encourages this initiative, which means desirable but not always affordable work can be carried out whilst building on Hilton's unique community spirit.

6. Grass cutting

6.1 Informed by the study 'Grassland Vegetation and Management of The Green, Hilton, 2003', different areas within the village are subject to different cutting regimes in order to satisfy specific objectives. These objectives should take into account:

- Visual impact.

- Amenity use.
- Encouragement of certain species.
- Long-term sustainability of a given regime.
- Maintain and enhance the open rural nature of The Green.

6.2 There are twelve principle areas subject to four cutting regimes. These areas are marked out on the attached map.

6.3 The cutting regimes are detailed in the Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (see Appendix 1). The timings given for all cutting regimes are approximate. Inevitably grass growth is driven by season and starting and finishing times may vary year by year. The length of the growing season may also affect the total number of cuts in any one year.

7. Trees & Hedges

7.1 Much of Hilton has been designated a Conservation Area. As such, certain conditions apply to the cutting and lopping of trees.

7.2 Trees, shrubs and hedges that contribute to the special character of the village should be encouraged, promoted and protected. The maintenance, replacement and planting of new trees, shrubs and hedges should favour native species, particularly in the public areas, (VDS).

7.3 The trees around the village will be regularly inspected principally by the HPC Tree Warden and when necessary by the HDC Tree Officer.

7.4 Planting and corrective maintenance will be carried out on an as-needed basis, the costs having first been approved by HPC. Priority will be given to dangerous trees in public areas.

7.5 Periodically a bough or whole tree is felled in accordance with tree preservation work. If suitable the resulting timber is left on site, cut into manageable pieces for the village to share. HPC request that only one wheelbarrow per household is taken so the timber is shared equally amongst all villagers.

7.6 The maintenance guidelines are detailed in the Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (see Appendix 1)

8. Ponds and Drainage Ditches

8.1 There are a large number of ditches and ponds in Hilton which contain a wide variety of wildlife. There are four principle threats to these areas and future maintenance of them must bear these in mind. They are:

- Incorrect timing and severity of cutting which destabilises the banks.
- Erosion from heavy rainfall which combines with the above.
- A high duck population which reduces the variety of life within the ponds.
- A high number of trees on the north side of ponds which shield sunlight and reduce plant growth in the ponds.
-

8.2 The main objectives of any maintenance should be:

- To provide efficient drainage.
- To minimise the threats outlined above.
- To provide an environment that encourages a diverse spread of species.
- To provide an aesthetically pleasing amenity.

8.3 The main regular maintenance requirement for the ponds is twofold:

- Clearing the culverts that link the ponds and/or allow water flow away from the ponds.
- Periodic dredging in order to remove excess silt.

Both are currently maintained by a HPC with the appointment of a contractor on an as needed basis.

8.4 The maintenance work regimes are detailed in the Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (see Appendix 1).

9. Footpaths

9.1 There are three types of path in general use to be found within the village:

- Hard metalled paths normally next to roads, which are maintained by CCC.
- Gravel paths within green spaces, maintained by HPC with the assistance of the Parish Path Partnership (PPP). These paths are indicated on the attached map in orange.
- Grass base paths, cut along with the grass cutting regime described below. These paths are indicated on the attached map in pale green.

9.2 Recorded in the CCC archive are old 'rights of way' protected by an act of parliament, some of which form the basis of the current path network in the village, others are all but lost. There are no plans for these unused paths to be reinstated, however HPC are mindful of these ancient 'rights of way' and will maintain an independent record of their position.

9.3 The gravel-based paths are currently edged with boarding which is eroding away in places. In future these will not be renewed allowing the path edges to soften over time. The hard packed ground granite base will ensure lower maintenance but should be top dressed with fine locally sourced vernacular gravel. This should be done every two years.

9.4 The cutting regimes for the village paths are detailed in the Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (see Appendix 1).

10. Monuments and Village Furniture

10.1 The Maze is scheduled as an ancient monument. Maintenance is the responsibility of HPC, assisted in the past with a grant from English Heritage. The Maze needs corrective maintenance every 5 to 10 years or so when it is re-turfed.

10.2 The Maze is roped off from mid-December to the end of March to let the turf rest.

- 10.3 The pavilion which is owned and maintained by HPC is not within the remit of this document.
- 10.4 The play area in The Grove (Jubilee Park) is annually inspected by an experienced contractor and corrective maintenance work is undertaken as needed, approved and paid for by HPC.
- 10.5 The maintenance schedule for the Jubilee Park is detailed in the Schedule Village Maintenance Tender (see Appendix 1).
- 10.6 Items such as benches, bridges (brows), bins and picnic tables which stand on HPC land, plus the Parish Garden and village sign on Potton Rd, are maintained on an as needed basis by HPC.
- 10.7 The litter bins positioned at convenient points around the village are regularly emptied by the village.
- 10.8 There are regular requests to HPC for permanent memorials and items of commemoration to be positioned in the village, particularly on The Green. As the responsible authority, charged with the task of maintaining and enhancing the open rural nature of The Green, regrettably such requests will be refused. HPC is open to discuss other forms of memorial which do not contravene this guideline. For the same reason, no other forms of permanent structure will be considered by HPC for placement on The Green.
- 10.9 HPC does however encourage the replacement of poor quality village furniture and the provision of new items that contribute to the character of the village where appropriate, (refer to VDS).
- 10.10 Other public structures such as bus shelter, street lights, sign posts, etc. are generally the responsibility of either HDC or CCC. However, some streetlights are owned by HPC but are maintained by others under contract. HPC request any damage to these structures be reported directly to the responsible authority, or to the HPC clerk in the case of HPC lights which are identified by the prefix PC.
- 10.11 When carrying out works affecting village furniture, Local Authorities and the Utility Services should do so in ways that contribute to the special character of the village, consulting the Parish Council before work is undertaken (refer to VDS).
- 10.12 Encouragement will be given to the replacement of poor quality village furniture and the provision of new items that contribute to the character of the village where appropriate, (refer to VDS).
- 10.13 New public and private lighting should balance the requirements of safety with light pollution and intrusion, (refer to VDS).

11. Common Rights

- 11.1 The boundary limits of the Green or common are defined by the Land Registry title number CB323787. This area has been owned by HPC since 1970 when it was purchased from the Lord of the Manor, and is a registered common. Although this land is owned by the HPC, special rights over its use still remain in Common Law and are held by 15 Common Rights

attached to 13 properties in the village and these rights are now protected by the Commons Act (updated in 2006). The principal right is to allow Common Rights holders, (commoners), to graze cattle on The Green and this historic practice has been fundamental to the preservation of The Green which is so central to Hilton's unique character.

The traditional management of grass and hay-making as described in Appendix 1, preserves the right to graze cattle even if the right is never exercised. This regime also has the benefit of preserving the traditional rural nature of The Green rather than a closely mowed recreation ground.

Parishioners are permitted to take fallen firewood, walnuts, etc. from HPC owned and registered common land and usually when trees are felled or lopped the timber is cut and stacked for anyone to collect (see 7.5).

- 11.2 Today the value of the hay produced pays for a local farmer to come and cut it. There is no material benefit to Common Rights holders.
- 11.3 The Common Rights holders and HPC work together via a liaison group with councillors appointed by HPC.

END