
Worden Park Leyland

Vision Plan

South Ribble Borough Council



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PREFACE

**Foreword by Councillor Peter Mullineaux
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Neighbourhood Services**



Worden Park is the jewel in Leyland’s crown and one of a number of high quality parks and open spaces in the borough. With its range of wildlife, heritage and activities, it’s not surprising that it attracts more than a quarter of million visits every year.

I’m enormously proud of its record as the only green space north of London – and one of only a handful in the UK - to have been awarded a prestigious Green Flag Award every year since the scheme’s inception in 1997. Worden Park has also been voted as one of the best places for families to visit by internet parenting group Netmums. Both are deserved national recognition for our council officers, friends groups, volunteers and businesses who take a great deal of pride in this much-loved park.

The council is committed to enhancing Worden Park as a local asset and visitor attraction as part of our wider aim to provide top-quality green spaces right across South Ribble. It is essential, therefore, that we take a considered and co-ordinated approach to working with all interested parties, to ensure that standards remain at award-winning levels for many years to come.

1 INTRODUCTION

Worden Park is the largest public greenspace within the Borough of South Ribble and attracts over 250,000 visitors every year. The 63 hectare site was opened to the public as part of the Festival of Britain Celebrations in 1951 and has been open to the public from 8am to dusk every day since.

Prior to the site opening as a public park, the land was predominantly agricultural, forming part of the estate of the Farington family. Over time, changes and additions have taken place reflecting contemporary fashions and technology and replacing former buildings and landscape layouts. Today, the park benefits from a range of Georgian buildings and Victorian gardens as a result of the historical development of the former estate and the value of this heritage is recognised by the site's Grade II listing on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens maintained by English Heritage and also the Grade II listed status afforded to many of the park's buildings.

In addition to the built heritage, the large areas of semi-natural woodland, meadows and range of ponds provide habitats for a wide range of wildlife species some of which receive protection by law as a result of recent reductions in their populations. Two of the park's woodlands are also classified as Biological Heritage Sites at a County level due to the flora and fauna they support.

Worden Park also holds the record of being the only park north of London to have been awarded the Green Flag Award, the national standard for parks and open spaces, from the first round of awards in 1997 and to have retained it every year since.

Although works are carried out year on year to maintain and improve the park, a number of elements require capital investment to conserve them for the future and provide high quality infrastructure and facilities able to cater for the number of visits the park now receives.

This plan outlines the works required to conserve and develop the park's built infrastructure and landscape aiming to maintain the site as one of principal public parks in the North West Region. Many of the proposals are aspirational in nature with the aim of guiding expenditure at such time funding becomes available. As a result, the timescale for the plan is envisaged as being over a period of twenty years with updates every five years or so to reflect progress made.



2 RECENT IMPROVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES

Worden Park has continued to attract large numbers of visitors annually and the site remains one of the most visited parks in the local region. Investment in the site's landscape and infrastructure has continued allowing a range of projects to be undertaken including:

- Refurbishment of the historic North Lodge entrance and reconstruction of the path to the playground
- Completion of phase 1 of the children's playground refurbishment
- Completion of flood defences, watercourse improvements and upgraded access to the park from the northern boundary
- Creation of a partnership with the Brothers of Charity Services resulting in the ongoing restoration and refurbishment of the Walled Garden
- Refurbishment of the paths and gates within the formal gardens
- Improvements in night time security, closing the park to vehicles at the published times

Works are also ongoing to construct an area of reinforced grass for all-weather overflow car parking on Moon's Field on the eastern side of the park, along with the refurbishment of the deteriorating path from the Hall complex to the Walled Garden and surface dressing the formal gardens paths and hall courtyards.

3 AIMS

In order to build on the improvement and developments of recent years a vision has been drafted to set the future direction of the park's management, improvement and conservation, ensuring that the greenspace remains a well-maintained, vibrant and sustainable resource for the visitors it attracts. The aims of the vision are to provide a park that is:

- Accessible, identifiable and promotes a culture of pride and belonging
- Appealing to those visiting the area
- Attractive to those considering settling in the area



- Responsive to the needs of residents and visitors

4 OBJECTIVES

In order to ensure a sustainable long term future for the park that meets the needs of residents and visitors to the area, a range of objectives have been identified that cover the main 4 themes of development to deliver the vision:

- Maintaining and restoring the park's historic features and infrastructure
- Conserve and enhance the ecological value of the park
- Meet visitor expectations and improve the facilities on offer to visitors
- Develop the central core of the park ensuring full occupation of the Hall Complex and associated buildings and provide an attractive offer to residents and visitors
- Develop a Communications Strategy for the park



4.1 Maintaining and Restoring the Park's Historic Features and Infrastructure

There are a wide range of buildings and features within the park that are noted for their heritage value and contribute to the character of the park. Many of these require some level of repair or restoration work, some of which is of a specialist nature. In addition to the buildings and features of the former estate, new paths, car parks and other infrastructure has been added to support the sites contemporary use as a public park and have now reached a stage whereby they require capital investment to maintain or replace them. This objective includes:

- Restoring historic fabric by removing incompatible modern materials (e.g. Portland cement) and replacing with traditional materials (e.g. lime mortar)
- Restoring remaining historic buildings and structures within the walled garden (including the perimeter walls)
- Restoring the formal gardens conservatory and fountain
- Reconstructing paths and drives to improve access where the surface has deteriorated
- Repairing and reconstructing the banks and structures in and around Shaw Brook

4.2 Conserve and Enhance the Ecological Value of the Park

The range of woodlands, meadows, hedgerows and ponds within Worden Park make it an important resource for wildlife and this in turn attracts certain groups of visitors with an interest in wildlife and nature conservation. The maintenance of the park's landscape is a balance between maintaining the designed gardens and other associated areas to a high standard and managing semi-natural areas in a way that maximises biodiversity but does not appear abandoned. This objective includes:

- Continuing to remove non-native invasive species from semi-natural areas (including *Rhododendron ponticum* and Himalayan Balsam) and replace them with suitable native evergreen species and spring bulbs
- Maintaining and improving the park's ponds to support a range of wildlife and provide an educational amenity for visitors
- Maintaining and improving the wildlife value of Shaw Brook
- Restricting events or activities within ecologically important areas that may negatively impact the flora and fauna

4.3 Meet Visitor Expectations and Improve the Facilities on Offer to Visitors

Worden Park attracts over 250,000 visitors every year as a result of the large green open space and associated facilities and attractions within it. However, many visitor facilities are now dated or were not designed for the level of use they now receive. Also, with the increases in investment in the larger parks across the North West there is a greater expectation from visitors of the facilities that will be on offer at attractions such as Worden Park. As a result, this objective includes:

- Improvements to entrances and access into and around the park, including improvement of the main car park entrance and improved management of traffic within the park
- Expanding the current signage to provide further directional, entrance and interpretation signage. Improvements would also consider the creation of themed trails around the park with way markers, interpretation boards and associated leaflets
- Improvements to existing car parking areas on site, providing all-weather overflow parking facilities and improving links between the park and town centre car parks



- Improvements to existing features to increase the level of access to visitors such as the historic ice house. The opening of the walled garden is a good example of how additional attractions can be created within existing features of the park
- Develop the existing arboretum, removing overgrown shelter belts and replacing failed specimen trees
- Improving sports pitches drainage
- Improvements to the children's playground to maintain it as one of the borough principal facilities and consideration of provision of suitable toddler facilities within the central core of the park

4.4 Develop the Park's Central Core including the Hall Complex and Associated Buildings and Provide an Attractive Offer to Residents and Visitors

The central core of the park hosts a range of businesses and other attractions in the remaining buildings of the hall complex. These are complimented by the adjacent formal gardens and maze, walled garden and model railway. There is an opportunity to further develop the area in and around the complex of buildings to encourage greater footfall. This objective includes:

- Ensuring full occupation of the Hall complex and associated buildings by marketing vacancies in suitable places
- Working with the tenants and other stakeholders to maximise the potential of this area of the park.
- Maximising use of the courtyard spaces around the hall complex for a range of different events and other activities such as craft demonstrations
- Restoring and improving the hall complex buildings to improve the appearance of the area and making the buildings as accessible as possible according to the uses

4.5 A Communications Strategy for the Park

It is important that communications relating to the park will:

- Support the sustainable development of Worden Park as Leyland's major leisure and tourism asset
- Be open and honest with residents and stakeholders about the impact of development works

- Ensure internal and external enthusiasm and support for developments
- Develop internal and external understanding of the benefits of improvement and restoration, both within the park itself and in terms of its wider economic impact
- Engage and involve residents, businesses and other stakeholders as necessary

Communication tools include social media, media partnerships, resident and business engagement through events, sales and marketing materials such as leaflets.