

Brook Open Spaces Policy

Rationale for a policy

This Open Spaces Policy has been produced to provide a guiding document to Brook Parish Council for the management and protection of the Brook village recreation ground (the recreation ground).

Ownership of the recreation ground

The Parish Council holds the freehold title for the recreation ground (K113772). This covers all the area shown on the title plan including the grassed playing field and its margins, the car park and the access driveway. Part of the land has been leased to Brook and Hinxhill Village Hall Trust on a 99-year basis commencing in January 1978 in return for an annual rent of £1. The area subject to the lease is indicated on the title plan.

Right of access

Open space is defined as public open space which provides generally unlimited free public access; genuinely useable open space for people; and accessibility over the great majority of the open space.

This definition applies to the recreation ground and as such, no single party may have exclusive occupational use of the recreation ground. There is a presumption in favour of users of the village hall having priority use of the car park adjacent to the village hall.

Role and responsibilities of the Parish Council

Brook Parish Council is committed to maintaining and improving the recreation ground, recognizing its importance for the community's well-being and the environment, and ensuring it remains accessible, safe, and environmentally sound.

Management

The grassed area and trees are managed under the Village Caretaker Scheme, with a contribution paid to the Scheme out of the village precept.

An annual arboriculture survey is carried out by a professional arboriculturist, which reports on the condition of the trees and advises on management.

The margins of the recreation ground are left in a semi-natural state to provide habitats for a range of wildlife. The Kentish Stour Countryside Project has provided advice on the management of these areas. The Parish Council is a riparian owner of the watercourse along the boundary of the recreation ground and is managed by the Environment Agency.

Play equipment

An area has been set aside for the provision of children's play equipment alongside which are items of fitness equipment. The on-going maintenance of all the equipment is the responsibility of the Parish Council; this includes periodic safety inspections.

Memorials

The current policy of the Parish Council is not to permit the placing of memorial benches due to the on-going maintenance cost and liability being borne by the Parish Council. Another form of memorial may be considered.

Requests to plant memorial trees will be considered as part of the on-going arboricultural management.

Health and safety

The Parish Council owes a duty of care to visitors to the Parish Council controlled areas of the village. Parish Councillors will ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that safe access is available and that areas are maintained in a safe condition. The Parish Council has a written Health and Safety Policy, and carries public liability insurance.