

London Borough of Bexley

**Lesnes Abbey Wood Enhancement Project
Project Summary**

Second Round
Heritage Lottery Fund Application



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Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Blandford', is written over the printed name 'Chris Blandford'.

Chris Blandford

Position

Director

Date

29 August 2013

Revision

FINAL

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1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 General

1.1.1 The London Borough of Bexley (LBB) is applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) under the 'Parks for People' Programme for funds to restore Lesnes Abbey Woods in Abbey Wood, Bexley. A first round pass was awarded to LBB in December 2011. This document is the project summary for the second round application.

1.1.2 The design team has been working with LBB and stakeholders to develop costed designs and supporting plans in accordance with HLF requirements. In developing the second round proposals, the team has taken account of the first round submission and the views expressed through community engagement public and stakeholder consultations.

1.1.3 The proposals developed to RIBA Stage D, during the project development phase have broadly followed the outline proposals identified in the first round application. However, as a result of further studies and feedback received during the development phase between the first and second round applications the following key changes are now proposed.

- Following the engagement period and a detailed condition survey of the current building, it was clear that the proposed refurbishment and small extension of the existing information centre was no longer a viable and cost effective option. A new 'fit for purpose' high quality building is deemed to be the best approach in terms of lower costs (capital and on-going revenue) and will, by a considerable margin, be the best option for users and visitors to the site and the delivery of the Activity Plan. Key stakeholders such as English Heritage also strongly support the principle of a new build.
- Following detailed research, engagement and trial sessions with a number of schools, teachers and education providers have expressed the desire for formal spaces at many of the site's key features to gather and learn. As such, outdoor classrooms have been included at the following locations – Fish Pond (dipping platform), Monk's garden, heathland, London view point and the fossil bed.
- During the development of the second round Masterplan, it has become apparent that there are opportunities within the natural landscape and other site location to

hold events / performances. The creation of an amphitheatre is therefore deemed to be unnecessary, as it could potentially detract from the Abbey ruins and other key features.

- The Creative Realm Heritage Interpretation Strategy (CRHIS) has led to a more strategic view regarding gateway positioning and features, leading to a slight reduction from the first round. It is proposed that the gateways convey the site's timeline, with each location telling a different part of its story.
- Following the engagement period, the desire for additional recreation facilities was evident. These are designed to be sympathetic to the site (e.g. natural cycle pump track) and access improvements integrate the play and heritage value of the site.
- New permanent car parking within the park, proposed in the first round application, has been omitted following a parking and access appraisal. This concluded that adequate on-road parking provision exists within streets adjacent to the park to accommodate the anticipated uplift in users following implementation of the proposed enhancements. It is also proposed to encourage more sustainable methods of transport to the park. The opening of crossrail in 2019 will greatly improve public transport to Lesnes Abbey Woods.

1.1.4 As a result of the observations of the HLF and appointed monitors prior to commencement of the development phase the following is now also proposed.

- The inclusion of a Monk's Garden within the formal garden to provide further interpretation of 'Abbey Life' in recognition of the important significance of the Lesnes Abbey Scheduled Monument. The feature will enable visitors to learn about and reflect on the site's lengthy historical timeline. However, it was felt that a community growing garden would not be suitable, based upon the community engagement findings.

2.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

2.1 Consultation Summary

2.1.1 Community engagement and consultation has been an important part of the development of this project. It has involved individual meetings with key stakeholders, surveys and questionnaires and public consultation.

2.2 Meeting with Key Stakeholders

2.2.1 Stakeholders with an interest in the use and management of the site were consulted to inform the proposals. These included:

- English Heritage;
- Natural England;
- Lesnes Abbey Conservation Volunteers;
- Embrace Cooperation Ltd;
- London Borough of Bexley Operational Services;
- London Borough of Bexley Parks and Open Spaces;
- London Borough of Bexley Planning;
- London Borough of Bexley Regeneration, Delivery and Economic Development;
- The Tertiary Research Group;
- The London Geodiversity Partnership; and
- All stakeholders (e.g. Council staff, community groups and local residents) consulted during the preparation of the Activity Plan and Management & Maintenance Plan (see below for details).

LBB Officers	
Integrated Youth Service (detached youth team in parks and awards and the awards and alternative curriculum – outdoor activities team)	Sports Development
Property Services	Transport Planning & Development
Leisure Services (outdoor activities team)	Public Realm Management
Regeneration Delivery and Economic Development	Strategic Planning
Schools Improvement	Development Control
Libraries and Archives	Legal Services

Parks & Open Spaces	Procurement
Arts Development	Human Resources
Committee Services & Scrutiny	Neighbourhood Services
Adult Learning Disability Team	Environmental & Corporate Finance
LB Bexley Waste and Recycling	
Residents/Users/Families	
Local residents consulted through the road show events	Allotment gardeners (Lesnes Abbey Woods Allotments)
Local families and recreation park users (family consultation questionnaire)	Residents with park boundary properties (hand dropped flyers regarding the project)
Existing users - 260 surveys completed.	Non-users - 169 surveys completed.
Heritage/Historical/Arts Groups	
Bexley Heritage Trust (Gardens and Education Teams)	Erith & Belvedere Local History Group
Bexley Archaeological Group	Crayford Camera Club
Tertiary Society	Dartford & District Photographic Society
LB Bexley Local History and Archives	Aperture Woolwich Photographic Society
Bexleyheath Photographic Society	
Nature Groups	
Birchmere growing project (did not participate, but were invited to)	Crossness Nature Reserve
Lesnes Abbey Conservation Volunteers	North West Kent Countryside Partnership
Green Chain	London Wildlife Trust
Embrace Cooperation	Danson Photographic Club
Education/Learning	
Northwood Primary School	Bexley Nature and Environment Forum
St Fidelis Primary School	(Some overlap with other groups)
East Wickham Junior School	Trust Thamesmead (social and community benefit)
Lesnes Heath Primary School	Gallions Housing Association (local landlord)
Willow Bank Primary School	Belvedere Community Forum
Bexley Business Academy Primary School	Sure Start Children's Centre, Greenmead
Primary Schools Headteachers Conference Group	The Link (as part of Trust Thamesmead)
Orbit Housing Association	
Physical/Learning Disabilities	
Inspire Community Trust	Bexley Twofold (did not participate, but were invited to)
Re-Instate Limited	
Older People	
User and non-user surveys	Age UK and the Belvedere Pop in Parlour (did not participate, but were invited to)

Roadshow events	
BME and Interfaith	
Active Horizons youth engagement, mentoring and participation, Belvedere	Sikh Gurdwara - Belvedere
Transform Bexley Borough (Churches together in Bexley) (did not participate, but were invited to)	(Some overlap with other groups)
Emmanuel Baptist Church, Thamesmead	
Community Groups (Other)	
Belvedere Community Centre	Belvedere Community Forum
Bexley Community Safety Partnership	NHS Smoking Cessation Service
Crossness Pumping Station	
Young People	
Bexley Athletics Club	Nemesis Martial Arts
Bexley College	Phoenix Football Club
C4L Youth Church (Sunday School)	Bexley Youth Council
Playhouse Theatre	Smiley Ark
Thamesmead Youth Voice	LB Bexley Youth Council
SAY Youth Group	Abbey Wood Pentecostal Church (Youth engagement)
Active Horizons (BME youth engagement and mentoring group)	
Sports and Outdoor Pursuits Organisations	
Bike Doctor	The Crossway Gymnastics
Bexley Cycling and Road Safety Forum	Europa Gym
Dartford Orienteering Klubb	Footlights Dance Academy
Local Services	
Bexley NHS	London Fire Brigade
Police	St John Ambulance
Businesses	
Wiggly Wildshow	Forest Amusements

2.3 Stakeholder Working Group Meetings

2.3.1 Stakeholder working group meetings have also informed the development of the proposals. Several meetings were held between the 5th December 2012 and 6th August 2013. The Working Groups consisted of a diverse range of groups and organisations, including:

- The Belvedere Community Forum;
- The Link;

- North West Kent Countryside;
- Orbit Housing Association;
- Trust Thamesmead;
- Bexley Archaeological Group; and
- LBB Officers.

2.3.2 Most recently, Working Group meetings have been held to discuss the new build Information Centre. Potential users have attended the meetings, allowing them to shape the plans ensuring they are robust and meet community and stakeholder needs.

Your Park, Your Say Community Engagement Consultation Programme

2.3.3 Your Park, Your Say was a multi activity scheme involving schools, youth and community organisations, charities, residents and volunteering groups from across the LBB. It was developed and co-ordinated by the Regeneration Delivery team at the LBB with the support of Parks and Open Spaces. It involved unique collaborations with specialist consultants, experienced in community engagement.

2.3.4 Over the three months of consultation activity delivery, various park ideas and improvements were researched and have influenced and contributed to the Activity Plan content and Masterplan proposals for the development of new facilities.

2.3.5 The project was delivered in five Engagement Areas:

- Schools Engagement - Led by consultant Anne Brown and the North West Kent Countryside Partnership;
- Sport, Wellbeing and Outdoor Activities - In partnership with LBB Sports Development, Integrated Youth Service and Outdoor Activities teams;
- Youth Engagement - Delivered by a partnership between SAY youth group, Upper Belvedere and consultants Wavehill (Richard Brooks);
- Community Gardens - Led by Vinnie O'Connell, founding director of New Leaf; and
- Branding and Communications - Led by consultants Creative Junction.

User and Non-User surveys

- 2.3.6 Three waves of user and non-user surveys were undertaken between the period of February and June 2013. A total of 429 surveys were completed of which 260 were User surveys and 169 Non-user surveys.

Public Consultation on Draft Proposals

- 2.3.7 In addition to the community engagement described above, public consultations on the draft Masterplan proposals took place from the 18th to 30th March 2013. These consisted of static exhibitions of the proposals with questionnaires, and manned roadshow events enabling face to face discussions and feedback. The manned roadshow events were attended by 150 people and feedback overall was positive in regards to the improvements proposed.

New Hub Building Exhibition

- 2.3.8 A Public Exhibition event on the new build hub building (interim name Lesnes Lodge) proposals took place on the 6th August 2013. This consisted of an evening display at Lesnes Abbey Woods. The event was well attended by approximately 40 local residents. The overall majority were very supportive of the new build proposal and the potential activities/uses within the building and officers were able to allay the fears of the small number of residents who raised concerns.

3.0 SITE WIDE RESTORATION PROPOSALS

3.1 Site Wide Proposals

Vision

3.1.1 The vision for the Lesnes Abbey Woods Enhancement Project has been agreed as follows:

‘Lesnes Abbey Woods will become the heart of the community; a high quality open space with excellent access and sought after facilities, attracting people from all backgrounds both locally and beyond.

‘Appealing to current and future generations, Lesnes Abbey Woods will be a cherished place alive with diverse opportunities for people to celebrate and explore the park’s rich heritage and all it has to offer.’

3.1.2 Key to achieving the vision is the restoration proposals and in particular the improved awareness and interpretation of the site’s key features and assets.

3.1.3 The overall proposals are shown on the site Masterplans in Section 9 of the second round application:

- 10116301-D-001 ‘Site Wide Masterplan’
- 10116301-D-002 ‘Abbey Area Masterplan’
- 10116301-D-004 ‘Site Wide Masterplan (HLF Works Only)’
- 10116301-D-005 ‘Abbey Area Masterplan (HLF Works Only)’

3.1.4 The following strategies for the park have been devised and are included in Section 10 of the second round application. These will be developed further as part of the detailed design post the second round application:

- Hard surfacing (including new and existing paths and hard standing);
- Furniture (including new and existing seating, bins, picnic benches and cycle stands);
- Signage (including wayfinding, park notice boards and interpretation);
- Tree works (including removal, planting and management);
- Planting/horticultural interest;

- Cultural realm and heritage interpretation (CRHIS); and
- Colour policy.

3.2 Hard Landscape

3.2.1 The proposals for the surfacing and edge treatments are shown on CBA drawing 10116301-D-101 in Section 10 of the second round application. A hierarchy of materials is proposed which reflect their use and also their location within the site. The majority of the existing site footpaths are tarmac and in a good condition and therefore new paths will be finished to match, with the following exceptions.

New Hub Building – The paving surround to the new building will be finished in high quality flag stones in recognition of the facility’s prominence and importance within the project and proximity to the Abbey ruins. Selected paving units will incorporate decoration echoing the patterns of the Abbey floor tile finds.

Formal Gardens – The new paths will be surfaced in tarmac to match the existing and high quality paving stone used to provide a decorative, hard wearing surround to the Monk’s Garden, sympathetic to the formal character of the gardens.

Primary Gateways – Stone edged, bonded gravel thresholds will be combined with the proposed gateway features, providing visually prominent and hard wearing entrances to the park.

Launch Ponds – Breedon Gravel is the proposed material for the new pond edge footpath, which is appropriate to the naturalistic, informal character of the restored ponds.

Woodland Paths – Breedon Gravel is proposed where these footpaths are to be improved to match the existing finish and maintain the natural character of the woodland.

3.3 Furniture

3.3.1 The site landscape and access analysis (see Section 9 of the second round application) has identified that the current seating and bin provision lacks coherence and many items are in a poor condition. The furniture strategy shown on CBA drawing 10116201-D-102 in Section 10 of the second round application identifies proposed

locations for all seats and bins. The strategy proposes the introduction of new benches and bins of a consistent style. New feature stone benches, utilising salvaged stone from the former information centre, are proposed for the new hub building and London viewpoint. It is proposed that all new benches are of an appropriate style and sufficiently robust for their setting.

3.3.2 Bins across the park, will be replaced by new bins. The 'red' dog-bins will be replaced and/or refurbished and re-painted a more appropriate colour.

3.3.3 Although cycling is not formally permitted within the park, cycling to the site is to be encouraged and stands are therefore proposed at the new hub building and recreation ground.

3.3.4 At this stage the colour of all furniture is intended to be informed by the future colour policy and will be appropriate to the relevant individual character areas and wider site.

3.4 Signage

3.4.1 As with furniture, signage across the site is poor and it is recognised that both wayfinding and interpretation signage needs to be significantly improved.

3.4.2 The proposed signage includes entrance signage and wayfinding maps, direction signs and notice boards. These will be placed at entrances and strategically around the site – see CBA drawing 10116301-D-102 in Section 10 of the second round application.

3.4.3 Interpretation signs and features are also proposed primarily at key features such as the Abbey, Launch Ponds, Heathland, the London Viewpoint and Fossil Bed.

3.5 Tree Works

3.5.1 The Conservation Management Plan and BS5837:2012 tree survey (Tree Report - CBA Trees, February 2013) have informed the tree strategy.

3.5.2 The proposals include some tree removal. This is for arboricultural reasons and to facilitate the construction of the new hub building, but the proposals also include the removal of trees and vegetation which is encroaching on site features or blocking key views. The strategy does however envisage new tree planting across the site to

compensate for the loss of existing trees. 10no. trees and areas of woodland scrub are to be removed and are to be replaced with 30no. specimen trees. The tree strategy is included on CBA drawing 10116301-D-103 in Section 10 of the second round application.

Abbey Ruins – Encroaching woodland scrub vegetation at the south-east corner of the Abbey ruins and the unsightly shrub bed south of the nave are to be cleared to guard against potential future damage and improve the setting of the ruins.

Formal Gardens – Removal of the central shrub beds within the gardens will create open lawns echoing their original tennis court use and providing flexible event space. To the south of the gardens the enclosing hedgerow will be cleared, opening up views to the woodland beyond.

Launch Ponds – The ponds are to be revealed through selected removal of the surrounding woodland scrub to the north, west and south and the clearance of encroaching pioneer vegetation within the ponds.

Recreation Ground – As part of proposals to remove the visual and physical segregation of this area from the wider Park over-mature shrub planting and the existing Beech hedge are to be removed. An historic hedgerow in the locality is to be cleared of inappropriate species, reduced in height and traditionally laid.

Woolwich Road - Self-sown sycamore will be removed to the rear of the footway to open up this entrance and allow clearer views into the woodland in this location.

3.6 Planting/Horticultural Works

3.6.1 The planting strategy is shown on CBA 10116301-D-103 in Section 10 of the second round application. The strategy indicates where new planting is proposed across the site. The aim is to replace planting which is uncharacteristic of the site's character areas with more appropriate layouts, designs and selection of species.

New Hub Building – The existing planting beds are to be reconfigured to accommodate the new building footprint. Over-mature shrubs are to be removed/coppiced and new ornamental planting provided of an appropriate size and species to present an attractive setting to the new building and allow views to the Abbey ruins.

Monk's Garden – The new garden will be located centrally in the Formal Gardens close to and within sight of the Abbey ruins. Formal beds edged with low box hedges will be planted with a variety of historically themed plants and interpreted to explain the medieval significance and use of plants – i.e. medicinal, well-being, strewing and freshening, cooking and household uses.

Formal Gardens – The central beds outside of the Monk's Garden are to be replanted with a sustainable planting scheme, including perennial ornamental grasses to provide seasonal interest and contrast. Feature specimen topiaries will be included either side of the central axis directing and promoting views. To the east and west the formal hedges will be retained and the existing planting beds enhanced through the removal of over-mature planting and provision of new ornamental planting appropriate to the garden's original character.

Arboretum – The existing exotic mix of trees will be enhanced by the inclusion of 10no. new specimen trees selected to complement the existing mix.

Abbey Road – 5no. new specimen Lime trees will be planted in gaps in the existing avenue fronting Abbey Road providing continuity along this boundary.

Recreation Area – New native woodland planting to the east of the play area will form a backdrop to the enhanced facilities and screen and provide separation from the adjacent residential boundaries. Additional clumps of specimen trees will provide a setting to the new facilities and create additional informal, shaded locations for picnics.

Grassland North of Hurst Wood – The unsightly residential boundaries belonging to properties along New Road will be screened by a new native hedgerow. Species will be locally appropriate and selected for the promotion of wildlife.

3.7 Cultural Realm & Heritage Interpretation Strategy (CRHIS)

3.7.1 The CRHIS has been developed by MeiLocI in conjunction with the masterplan proposals. The aims of the CRHIS are to increase awareness of Lesnes Abbey Woods, improve wayfinding and legibility across the site and further the interpretation and understanding of the site's key features. The following key elements have been included within the proposals and are illustrated in Section 10 of the second round application:

- Primary Gateway Features (including park signage and wayfinding information);
- Secondary Gateway Features (including park signage and wayfinding information);
- Tertiary Gateways (including park signage and wayfinding information);
- Internal Entrance Interpretative Feature;
- Abbey/Mulberry Tree Interpretative Feature;
- London Viewpoint Interpretative Feature;
- Monk's Garden Interpretative Feature; and
- Fossil Bed Interpretative Feature.

3.7.2 It is anticipated that the final design for the CRHIS signage and features will be undertaken through a series of community engagement workshops, and will incorporate images and text about the Site's history and contemporary culture.

3.8 Colour Policy

3.8.1 None of the surviving features on the site offer opportunity for paint analysis to inform the selection of appropriate historically relevant colour. During the detailed design phase of the project, a colour policy will be developed for both the wider site and where appropriate, individual character areas. Where character areas still strongly represent a specific era – i.e. the Formal Gardens, the policy will be informed by research into colour palettes relevant to that era. The colour policy will be developed in conjunction with and inform LBB's wider branding and communications strategy for the Park to be developed at the next stage.

4.0 RESTORATION PROPOSALS – BY CHARACTER AREA

4.1 General

4.1.1 The restoration proposals for the site are described under the following Character Areas:

- A Grassland North of Hurst Wood
- B Abbey Ruins, Formal Gardens & Arboretum
- C Recreation Ground
- D The Woodlands
- E The Heathland

4.1.2 These Character Areas are referred to in the Masterplan within Section 9 of the second round application, the cost plan in Section 3 and the Supporting Plans – (Activity Plan – Section 1, Management Maintenance Plan – Section 5 and Conservation Management Plan – Section 13 of the second round application).

4.2 Character Area A - Grassland North of Hurst Wood

4.2.1 Segregated from the rest of the park by New Road this area comprises open grassland with clumps of specimen trees to the north. The land rises steeply to the south to meet the woodland known as Hurst Wood. The area is predominantly used for walking, dog-walking and informal ball games on the flattest area to the north. The understated existing primary park entrance at the junction of Harrow Manor Way and Knee Hill is to be enhanced through the provision of a new feature gateway incorporating new signage and wayfinding information. Temporary event parking is to be provided through the creation of an area of reinforced grass adjacent to the existing vehicle access.

4.2.2 Access to the rest of the park east of New Road is to be improved through the provision of a new tarmac footpath linking the enhanced gateway to the existing alleyway running between houses on New Road. The alleyway is to be cleared of encroaching vegetation and resurfaced in tarmac. The poor visual appearance of rear boundaries belonging to properties located along New Road will be improved by the planting of a new native hedgerow. See drawings 10116301-D-004 and 10116301-D-005 in Section 9 of the second round application.

4.3 Character Area B - Abbey Ruins, Formal Gardens and Arboretum

Abbey Ruins

- 4.3.1 The ruins of Lesnes Abbey are set in amenity grassland, with the formal gardens to the south. The ruins are remnants of a 12th century monastery and a nationally important heritage asset designated a Scheduled Monument and a Grade II listed building. The ruins are in good condition and currently satisfactorily maintained by LBB in liaison with English Heritage. No works are proposed to the structure of the visible Abbey ruins. The aims of the proposals in this area are to protect and improve the Abbey's setting. Encroaching woodland scrub to the south-east of the Abbey and the unsightly shrub bed south of the nave are to be removed and reinstated to grass to protect the fabric of the ruins and provide a consistent open grassland setting. The eclectic mix of existing signs are to be removed and a new Abbey interpretation sign board is to be provided adjacent to the existing footpath to west of the ruins.
- 4.3.2 A tarmac footpath is proposed to the south of the ruins, connecting with a further proposed path running north-south to the east. The new paths will formalise existing desire lines and alleviate the existing erosion at the south-east corner of the Abbey.
- 4.3.3 Compaction within the root protection area of the existing Mulberry tree located to the north of the ruins is to be remediated in accordance with the recommendations of the 'Tree Survey Report', CBA Trees - February 2013. A protective fence is to be erected to the extent of the root protection zone of the tree and the ground within the fence line aerated. See drawings 10116301-D-004 and 10116301-D-005 in Section 9 of the second round application.

Information Centre/New Hub Building

- 4.3.4 The existing information centre is to be demolished and replaced with a new single-storey hub building combining the existing operational facilities and public WCs function with new community and educational/learning facilities. The first round application proposed reuse of the existing building and during the round two project development phase several refurbishment options were considered. However, following a building condition survey (Thomas Ford & Partners, March 2013 – See CMP Appendix I) and a review of the refurbishment options against the aims and aspirations of creating a significant visitor 'hub' that provides both a community and educational function, a number of issues were identified. The constraints of the

existing building were a compromise to the standard of the education/ community facility and staff accommodation that could be provided and were perceived as a barrier/constraint to some potential occupiers/user groups. The future flexibility of the building's use was also compromised. Significant investment would be required to affect the repair and refurbishment of the building. Although the refurbishment options could deliver some improvements, the constraints of the existing building would limit the efficiency and sustainability of the facility, resulting in significant operational and future maintenance costs. For these reasons and after consultation with HLF, English Heritage, LBB Planning and Conservation Officers, LBB elected to pursue a new build option to best deliver the new facilities.

- 4.3.5 The new build design has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and in consultation with the potential user groups identified through the consultation exercise. The proposed new building is designed to be appropriate to the site's significant heritage values and to maximise the special views to the Scheduled Monument. See drawings 10116301-D-201, LBB001, LBB002, LBB03 and 10116301-D-008 in Section 10 of the second round application.

Formal Gardens

- 4.3.6 The gardens are believed to date from the 1950s and used to contain tennis courts when they were first laid out in the 1930s. The gardens consist of paths, steps, formal hedging and amenity grass split up into three formal lawns. Planting within the gardens is predominately perennial shrubs with some exotic tree specimens. The gardens are well-maintained and all elements are generally in a good condition, although some of the original character has been eroded. The existing gardens are to be restored for informal enjoyment and to create a flexible space for organised park events. New 900mm high ornamental metal railings located inside the existing paths to the north and south will complete the enclosure of the gardens, creating a dog-free area.
- 4.3.7 Central to the gardens restoration is the inclusion of a Monk's Garden providing an interpretative link to Abbey life. The garden will consist of a central stone seating feature, echoing the shape of the De Luci family crest. This will be surrounded by a formal arrangement of themed beds planted with a variety of historic species to explain and demonstrate the historic uses of plants – i.e. medicinal, well-being, strewing and freshening, cooking and household uses.

- 4.3.8 Elsewhere the existing planting is to be enhanced through the removal of over-mature specimens and the provision of new planting appropriate to the garden's character. The former ornamental beds located in the centre of each lawn will be returned to grass to create open lawns reminiscent of their original tennis court function. The open, level lawns will provide a flexible space, creating the opportunity for the hosting of a variety of small scale, appropriate events within the park.
- 4.3.9 The eclectic mix of tired looking benches will be rationalised to a single traditional type. Suitable existing benches will be refurbished, with others replaced with new to match.
- 4.3.10 The existing hedge located at the south of the gardens is to be removed to provide open views extending into the woodland and beyond. The area to the south between the formal gardens and woodland will be enhanced through new ornamental bulb planting.
- 4.3.11 The existing ornamental rockery to the south-west of the existing gardens is to be extended to incorporate a new accessible path by-passing the existing steps. Additional access improvements include footpath improvements to the south and ornamental handrails to selected steps within the formal garden. See drawings 10116301-D-202, 10116301-D-203 and 10116301-D-207 in Section 10 of the second round application.

Arboretum

- 4.3.12 The existing arboretum is located to the west of the ruins on an undulating grassy slope and contains a number of mature exotic trees. The arboretum is to be enhanced through the planting of 10no. new semi-mature ornamental trees and all the trees will be tagged with identification plaques. See drawings 10116301-D-004 and 10116301-D-005 in Section 9 of the second round application.

Launch Ponds

- 4.3.13 The two ponds are located in a depression to the west of the ruins. The ponds are currently obscured by encroaching vegetation and enclosed by a fence to the west and steep topography to the east. The historic 'Launch Ponds' are to be selectively cleared of pioneer vegetation and surrounding scrub vegetation to the north, west and south, creating clear water and opening up views to the ponds. The perimeter fence is to be

removed allowing open access to the ponds' shallow edges. The ponds are to be actively managed to preserve and enhance their existing historic and ecological values. A new dipping platform, including interpretation, is to be provided between the two ponds, creating an opportunity for outdoor learning and increased opportunity for engagement with the ponds.

- 4.3.14 Physical access to this part of the site is to be improved through the enhancement of the existing primary entrances on New Road (North) and Abbey Road (West), with new gateway features including park signage and wayfinding maps. The existing unmade north-south path from the Abbey Road entrance is to be surfaced in tarmac providing an accessible link to the new Lodge building, formal gardens and Abbey ruins. A new lower path is to be provided from the Abbey Road gateway running adjacent to the ponds and connecting to the existing path network via a stepped ramp to the south. Although not fully accessible due to the constraints of the existing topography, the new path will allow users increased access to the restored ponds. See drawing 10116301-204 in Section 10 of the second round application.

Abbey Road Grasslands

- 4.3.15 The area north of the Abbey ruins is characterised by amenity grass with specimen trees, uneven topography and fairly steep gradients towards Abbey Road. To the north-east, the grassland becomes more extensive and incorporates large wildflower plots. The frontage of Abbey Road is to be improved by the planting of 5no. additional trees to complete the existing Lime tree avenue. Wayfinding maps are to be provided at the footbridge entrance and central Abbey Road entrance. LBB have recently been successful in a funding application to the All London Green Grid's Big Green Fund for a separate project entitled 'Crossness to Lesnes'. This aims to improve connectivity and enhance the route between both attractions. Improvements to the existing pedestrian footbridge are included.
- 4.3.16 The existing lack of connectivity between the Abbey ruins, information centre, formal gardens and the recreation ground is to be addressed through the provision of a new tarmac path between the existing path network north of the Abbey and the recreation ground.
- 4.3.17 East of the Abbey ruins, on the high ground at the junction of the existing paths and new proposed path, a west-east panoramic view of London is achieved. At this junction a 'London View' point feature is proposed incorporating seating and

interpretation of the view. See Drawings 10116301-D-004, 10116301-D-005 and CRHIS strategy included in Sections 9 and 10 of the application.

4.4 Character Area C - Recreation Ground

- 4.4.1 The existing playground is well used and was updated recently under the Playbuilder Grant Scheme and contains a variety of equipment for children of all ages, although it has less variety for older children. The proposals seek to address the existing visual and physical separation of the recreation ground from the park in several ways. Barriers such as the tall Beech hedge and high security fence are to be removed, opening up views between the recreation ground and rest of the park. In lieu of the existing security fence, the existing young children's play area only is to be maintained as dog-free and enclosed by a new lower metal fence of an appropriate design. An existing historic hedge line is to be retained but at a reduced height and cleared of invasive plants such as Laurel.
- 4.4.2 A new park gateway is to be incorporated at Abbey Road, replacing the existing segregated entrances. Land between Abbey Road and the children's play area is to be cleared of over-mature vegetation and restored as grassland. In response to consultation feedback a number of new facilities are to be provided, with an emphasis on older users, including a new parkour facility, cycle track, table tennis tables, outdoor multi-gym and site wide trim-trail.
- 4.4.3 The existing facilities are to be enhanced through replacement of the high fence to the children's play area with a new lower fence, repair and redecoration of existing enclosures and new tree and shrub planting. See drawings 10116301-D-205 and 10116301-D-206 in Section 10 of the second round application.

4.5 Character Area D - The Woodlands

- 4.5.1 As with the first round application, the majority of the proposed works are located outside of the woodland in the open areas to the north. Proposed works within the woodland predominately comprise gateway improvements, essential footpath repairs, new signage and waymarking and improvements to the setting and interpretation of the Fossil Bed. See drawings 10116301-D-004 and 10116301-D-005 in Section 9 of the second round application.

4.5.2 Gateway improvements to the woodland perimeter include:

- Primary feature gateways to the southern boundary of the Park to the east of New Road (South) and to Woolwich Road;
- Secondary gateway features at the eastern end of the byway on St Augustines Road (near the Leather Bottle PH), at the junction of Knee Hill and Hurst Lane and at the junction of New Road and Hurst Lane; and
- Tertiary gateway feature wayfinding maps located within the park, to the entrances located on the byway from St Augustines Road, Walden Close and The View.

4.5.3 Footpath improvements are predominately focused on providing improved access to the key features within the woodland and include:

- Improved link to wildflower enclosures (D10);
- Improved link to fossil bed from north (D15); and
- Improved link into woodland and northern areas from Woolwich Road (D17).

4.5.4 The lack of clear signage within the woodlands was identified as a barrier to access by many park users and is to be addressed through the provision of new directional signage. Reference to key destinations and information regarding distance and path gradients will be included. The new signage will also be used to waymark a variety of themed trails through the site.

4.6 Character Area E: The Heathland

4.6.1 The restored heathland area at Lesnes Abbey Woods is highly valued for its 'uniqueness and naturalness' therefore 'light-touch' proposals have deliberately been adopted for enhancing this area to avoid detracting from these inherent special qualities. A new wayfinding map is to be located at The View, the nearest entrance to the heathland. The map will identify entry to Lesnes Abbey Woods and provide information on accessibility, the heathland and tumulus and other site features beyond. Understanding of this area's heritage and ecological values will be further promoted by the provision of a new interpretation sign board on the approach to the tumulus and heathland.

4.6.2 This unique location provides an ideal environment for education and learning opportunities, which will be facilitated by the creation of an informal tree trunk seating area on the western fringe of the heathland able to accommodate a class of

approximately 30 individuals. See drawings 10116301-D-004 and 10116301-D-005 in Section 9 of the second round application.

5.0 PROJECT COSTS

5.1 Capital Costs

5.1.1 The table below summarises the costs of the capital works which have been calculated from the RIBA Stage D design package. A full cost plan is provided in Section 3 of the second round application.

Summary of Capital Costs

Character Area	Costs
A - Grassland North of Hurst Wood	£80,152.60*
B - Abbey Ruins, Formal Gardens & Arboretum	£621,761.25*
C - Recreation Ground	£272,351.20*
D - The Woodlands	£283,102.60*
E - The Heathland	£13,200.00*
Site Wide Proposals	£99,660.00*
New 'Hub' Building	£427,342.30*
Sub-Total	£1,797,569.95*
Prelims (18%)	£323,562.59
Sub-Total	£2,121,132.54
Contingency (10%)	£212,113.25
Sub-Total	£2,333,245.80
Inflation to March 2015 (BCIS 6%)	£139,994.75
Sub-Total	£2,473,240.54
Additional Items	
Provisional Sum for Employers Furniture to New Hub Building	£25,000.00
Total of Main Capital Works & Additional Items	£2,498,240.54

* Figures allow for +10% design development & discovery cost works pre-contract.

5.2 Revenue Funding

5.2.1 The above costs do represent uplift from the round one application, but can in part be explained by the following additional scope.

- Omission of refurbishment of the existing information centre in favour of the new 'hub' building;
- Provision of additional recreation facilities (e.g. cycle pump track) in response to need identified in the engagement period;
- Inclusion of outdoor classrooms following desire expressed in consultation with schools, teachers and education providers; and
- Inclusion of the Monk's Garden.

5.2.2 Following the milestone C Review, a concerted effort was made to reduce the scheme costs and in particular the capital costs. This exercise resulted in the capital costs being reduced, but without damaging the scope or quality of the proposed enhancements.

Funding

5.2.3 Funding to support the park improvements, activities and enhanced management and maintenance will be provided by the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| • HLF PfP | £3,268,897.00 |
| • LBB | £684,000.00 |
| • Other (Non-Cash Contribution) | £55,200.00 |

Expenditure

5.2.4 The largest part of the increased revenue costs is that associated with the creation of new posts. There will also be increased costs associated with improved maintenance and activities contained within the Activity Plan.

Staff

5.2.5 Forming a significant element in the enhanced management and maintenance of the site will be an increase in spending on staff of £105,102pa. in Years 1-5 and £23,110pa in Years 6-10 as a result of the creation of new posts.

Maintenance Costs

5.2.6 The maintenance costs include all-non staff costs associated with the management and maintenance of the park. LBB's commitment is to increase maintenance expenditure

by £22,000pa. Further detail is provided in the 10 year outline Maintenance and Management Plan, Section 11 of the second round application.

Activity Plan

5.2.7 Funding for the Activity Plan is broadly consistent with the initial estimates provided in the first round. Revenue costs associated with the Activity Plan are summarised as follows:

- Year 0 (January 2015-March 2015) £5,250
- Year 1 (April 2015-March 2016) £62,750
- Year 2 (April 2016-March 2017) £55,075
- Year 3 (April 2017-March 2018) £53,225
- Year 4 (April 2018-March 2019) £54,400
- Year 5 (April 2019-December 2019) £52,075

Further information is available within the Activity Plan, Section 1 of the second round application.

6.0 SUPPORTING PLANS

6.1.1 In accordance with the HLF guidance for the second round application, the following supporting plans have been prepared:

- 10 Year Management and Maintenance Plan;
- Conservation Management Plan; and
- Activity Plan.

6.2 10 Year Management and Maintenance Plan

General

6.2.1 The 10 year Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP) sets out how Lesnes Abbey Woods is to be managed and the standards that are to be achieved through maintenance. The plan has a life-span of ten years, for the period 2016 to 2026, but will be reviewed annually. It identifies the key people with a stake in the Site, how their interests will be accommodated and how the Site will be managed to deliver benefits that respond to the community's needs and aspirations. The Plan sets out a summary of the Park's existing features, historical development, significance and current management and maintenance. It provides an evaluation of risks and opportunities associated with the Site and sets out a proposed structure for the delivery of the Park's management and maintenance. Detailed management objectives and outline prescriptions for the management and maintenance of the Site over a five year period are also presented.

Existing Management

6.2.2 Lesnes Abbey Woods is owned and managed by the London Borough of Bexley (LBB). Responsibility for parks lies with the Directorate of Environment and Well Being. The Kier Group is responsible for the majority of park maintenance operations via a grounds maintenance contract covering the general parkland, formal gardens, ruins and play area. Additional contracts cover security, management of the heathland and arboriculture. LBB park staff carry out some additional maintenance works. The current and proposed management structure for the Park is illustrated in the MMP.

Reasons for Restoration

- 6.2.3 Although Lesnes Abbey Woods is an important local asset offering a range of recreational and cultural opportunities, there are a number of issues present, which means the Site does not currently realise its full potential.

Buildings and Archaeology

- 6.2.4 The Abbey ruins are a key cultural heritage feature of the site and a designated Scheduled Monument; while currently in excellent condition, they remain potentially at risk from visitor misuse (Issue 1). There is likely to be unexcavated archaeology around the ruins that will need consideration from the onset of any proposed works to prevent unplanned disturbance (Issue 2). The tumulus (or bowl barrow) in the southern section of the heathland has been subjected to severe deterioration caused by inappropriate BMX bike use as well as the encroachment of heathland fauna (Issue 3). The information centre is in need of repair and refurbishment and the existing interpretation is out dated and un-engaging (Issue 4).

Condition of the Landscape

- 6.2.5 A small number of features have been introduced to the site that have affected its character or impacted on key features (Issue 5). While generally in good condition, the formal gardens' historic character has somewhat eroded and there appears to be an issue with dog fouling to the 1950s gardens. The arboretum would benefit from having a tree strategy to guide its future development (Issue 6). A number of historic features have been lost over the years (Issue 7) although there may be opportunities to reinstate them.

Nature and Geological Conservation

- 6.2.6 The Lesnes Abbey Conservation Volunteers (LACV), who carry out much of the Site's habitat management, would benefit from more training, equipment and guidance in order to properly implement management on site (Issue 8). While currently in a reasonable condition, the Mulberry Tree has suffered damage and it is not known how much longer it will be viable (Issue 9). The condition of the woodland is affected by the presence of invasive species and occurrences of vandalism in the past continue to be potential threats. The wildflower enclosures are at risk from holly and bramble encroachment (Issue 10).

6.2.7 Dog fouling poses some threat to the site's nature conservation values (Issue 11). The heathland's small size makes it fragile (Issue 12). The Ponds in the woodland are thought to be in sub-optimal condition and susceptible to drying up, silting up and over shading (Issue 13). Currently a number of non-native and invasive plant and animal species have been identified across the site in the semi-natural habitats (Issue 14). There is a general risk of disturbance to wildlife, as with any site open for public use (Issue 15). There is an opportunity to enhance the site's overall biodiversity (Issue 16) and target the habitat management of the site in order to contribute to the Bexley Biodiversity Action Plan (Issue 18). Further surveying is necessary in order to understand the site's species, and monitoring will help determine the effectiveness of management decisions (Issue 17).

Visitor Access and Enjoyment

6.2.8 The site needs upgrading; currently it is underused but opportunities exist to tap unrealised audiences and to improve the visitor experience (Issue 19). The site lacks a sense of arrival, orientation, adequate signage, both outside and inside, and features a range of physical accessibility (Issues 20 – 22). There are concerns over vandalism and misuse of the site and its features (Issue 23) as well as conflict between different user groups (Issue 24). Opportunities include the potential for increased volunteering and working with other partners such as community groups and other heritage sites/organisations in the area (Issues 25 and 26).

Management and Maintenance

6.2.9 Management to date has generally been piecemeal and there is need for integrated site-wide conservation management (Issue 27). There is an opportunity to enter into a management agreement with English Heritage for the Abbey ruins (Issue 28). The currently limited monitoring of the site's biodiversity is a concern (Issue 29). Adequate ongoing financial and human resources will need to be in place to ensure the long-term sustainability and protection of the site and its significance/values (Issue 30). The site could be negatively impacted on by climate change in a number of ways (Issue 31). There is currently no framework in place whereby members of the community/representatives of community groups who have an interest in the site to become involved; therefore there is need for a Community Advisory Forum (Issue 32).

Understanding the Site's Significance

- 6.2.10 Some gaps in the information base need to be filled in in order to ensure the effective management, conservation and enhancement of Lesnes Abbey Woods' heritage and values (Issue 33). There is a lack of awareness among managers, site staff, users and the local community of the site's history, significance and values, its context or the importance of specific features (Issue 34). There is a need to improve both on and off-site interpretation to aid appreciation of the site's values (Issue 35). The site offers wide ranging learning (formal and informal) opportunities that are not currently being capitalised on (Issue 36).

Proposed Management

Management Structure and New Posts

- 6.2.11 Changes will be made to the management structure of the Site, including the creation of a number of new posts. The management and maintenance will follow the Action Plan below. A new full-time Estate Manager will provide the lead role in the implementation of the Management Plan and certain management prescriptions including the assessment of the potential impact of new installations, repairs and management on the heritage of the Park. A new full-time Partnerships and Activities Manager will support the delivery of a wide ranging scheme of audience development as set out in the Activity Plan. A new Park maintenance contract, to begin in 2016, will be responsible for services including maintenance of paths, lawns, ornamental planting beds, rock garden and hedges, park furniture and playground, management of waste, weeds and (some) heathland and regular inspection for litter, vandalism and graffiti.
- 6.2.12 A strong structured volunteer programme will be key in increasing levels of participation, providing opportunities for community engagement and for skills development and maintaining and managing the Site. In addition, an apprenticeship scheme is planned. This will be an ideal mechanism to enhance skills on site and increase resources, the two proposed apprentice roles focus on Horticulture and Marketing and Customer Service.

Action Plan

- 6.2.13 An Action Plan has been prepared which sets out the objectives and actions necessary to meet the on-going management and maintenance needs of Lesnes Abbey Woods, with particular regard to structure and grounds maintenance. This is summarised in the table below.
- 6.2.14 A 10 Year Financial Plan is provided in Section 11 of the MMP detailing income and expenditure for the management and maintenance of the Site.
- 6.2.15 Finally proposals for the monitoring and review of the Plan are set out in Section 12 of the MMP.

Green Flag Award Criteria	Detail	Existing Situation and/or issues	Action	Lead organisation(s)	Active by Date
A Welcoming Place	Entrances	Park lacks sense of arrival; entrances unattractive and poorly signed.	Enhance entrances with clear orientation and signage.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
	Internal signage	Potential for improvement throughout.	New and improved internal signage.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
	Pathways	Poor links between key features.	New paths.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
		Poor condition of surfaces and steps.	Improve surface and condition (including increasing length of DDA compliant paths).	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
	Interpretation	Potential or increasing interpretation and information.	Develop interpretation strategy.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
	Barriers to access	Surrounding roads busy and lack of pedestrian crossing points.	Mitigate hazards.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
	Misuse and vandalism	Some anti-social behaviour, misuse, vandalism and graffiti occurs; concerns about security in woodland areas.	Improve design, access, signing, interpretation, staffing, community involvement and management.	All	Year 0 and throughout
Healthy Safe and Secure	Cycling	Currently no cycling allowed but cycling does occur and causes damage to some features.	Continue 'no cycling' except in dedicated track/skill areas in the recreation ground. Use interpretation and activities to encourage appropriate visitor behaviour.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Throughout
	Recreation ground	Hedge reduces visual access/surveillance.	Remove.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
		No access to recreation ground from the park.	Create new access.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
Well Maintained and Clean	Dogs fouling/dogs off leads	Problems of dog fouling in all areas. Dogs off leads disturbing to visitors and wildlife.	Consider dog-free zones. Use interpretation and activities to encourage appropriate visitor behaviour.	LBB (EM) LBB (PAM)	Year 1 Throughout

Green Flag Award Criteria	Detail	Existing Situation and/or issues	Action	Lead organisation(s)	Active by Date
Sustainability	General management	Some potential for increasing sustainable management.	Prepare detailed MMP with reference to detailed sustainability proposals. Annual review of sustainability/climate change issues as part of annual maintenance and management review (see management below).	LBB (EM)	Year 1
	Management arisings	All 'soft' arisings composted but transport charges an issue. Likelihood of increased woody arisings from woodland and heath management.	Review the option of 'on site' composting. Review options for bio fuel (including use of woodland harvest to heat information centre, and working with firewood contractor).	LBB (EM)	Year 2
	Information centre	Existing building has few sustainable features.	New building to have green roof.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0
Conservation and Heritage	Condition of Abbey Ruins	Annual maintenance programme.	Continue annual maintenance programme. Consider entering into Management Agreement with EH.	LBB (EM)	On-going Year 2
		Ensure all repairs and any development work near ruins is carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.	Involve suitably qualified professionals and appropriate materials and techniques.	LBB (EM)	On-going
		Damage from visitors.	Use interpretation and activities to encourage appropriate visitor behaviour; plan for only appropriate activities close to ruins.	Capital works (project team) LBB (PAM)	Year 1 and throughout
		Consider works to east wall, north doorway.	Review options and costs.	LBB	Year 1

Green Flag Award Criteria	Detail	Existing Situation and/or issues	Action	Lead organisation(s)	Active by Date	
	Unexcavated archaeology	Many areas vulnerable to disturbance.	Involve qualified professionals in any proposals for new works.	LBB	Throughout	
		Some historic features have been lost.	Replace as part of Masterplan works.	Capital works (project team)	Year 0	
	Historic Landscape	Ensure any development works take into account historic character and setting of heritage assets.	Masterplan takes historic character into account (including capital works, mulberry tree, tree strategy and design guidelines).	Capital works (Project team)	LBB (incl EM and PAM)	Year 0 Throughout
			Survey work, research (eg into age/provenance of mulberry tree, original park layouts etc) and involvement of appropriate specialists.			
			Survey work and research. Interpretation. Activities.	LBB (EM and PAM)		
	Condition of Tumulus	Lack of knowledge re ancient woodland/heathland/wetlands (wood/coppice banks, dene holes etc). Need to repair, and extend management of, historic landscapes.	Capital works. Manage historic landscapes in accordance with Section 9 above. Involve community and volunteers.	Project team LBB (EM and PAM)	LBB (EM) LBB (PAM)	Throughout
			Erect log barriers. Use interpretation/activities to influence visitor behaviour.			
			Review and update SSSI management statement. Prepare survey programme. Involve specialist organisations. Train volunteers in surveying techniques.	LBB/NE		
	Natural and Geological Heritage	Lack of SSSI management and monitoring. Lack of ecological survey data.	Prepare survey programme. Involve specialist organisations. Train volunteers in surveying techniques.	LBB (EM)	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1 and continue throughout

Green Flag Award Criteria	Detail	Existing Situation and/or issues	Action	Lead organisation(s)	Active by Date
		Potential for loss of biodiversity and wild life value.	Manage landscapes in accordance with Section 9 above. Involve community and volunteers.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1 and continue throughout
		Control of Invasive Species.	Manage in accordance with Section 9 above. Any nesting boxes to be small to exclude ring-necked parakeets.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Throughout
Community Involvement	Information Centre	Poor condition and underused.	Rebuild Centre as community/education/interpretation centre.	Capital Works (Project team)	Year 1
	Community activities and engagement	Underdeveloped potential; lack of awareness.	Prepare Activity Plan. Appoint Partnerships & Activities Manager. Execute Activity Plan.	LBB LBB LBB (PAM)	Year 0 Year 0 Year 0 and throughout
	Volunteer programme	Underdeveloped potential.	Realise potential as part of Activity Plan.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 0 and throughout
	Education and training	Underdeveloped potential.	Realise potential as part of Activity Plan (to include provision of educational resources, schools programme, internship, work experience, training for volunteers etc).	LBB (PAM)	Year 0 and throughout
	Interpretation	Potential for increasing interpretation and information.	Develop interpretation strategy. Provide interpretation materials using wide range of media.	Capital works (project team) LBB (PAM)	Year 0 Throughout
	Friends Group	Potential.	Establish friends group and stakeholder forum.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1
Marketing	Marketing and use of park	Enormous untapped local potential to increase use. Potential to increase marketing and promotion.	Develop and execute Activity Plan.	LBB (PAM)	Year 0 and throughout

Green Flag Award Criteria	Detail	Existing Situation and/or issues	Action	Lead organisation(s)	Active by Date	
Management	Facilities	Potential for improved and additional facilities without damaging park's heritage and landscape value.	Improve quality of visitor facilities such as play, access, seating, toilets, gardens etc.	Capital Works (Project team)	Year 0	
	Signage	No or poor signage to/from nearby facilities such as Abbey Woods station and Thames Path.	Review options for introducing signage/art works.	LBB (EN)	Year 3	
	Information Centre	Poor condition and underused.	Rebuild Centre and use as community/education/interpretation centre.	Project team LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 0 and throughout	
	Resources		Resources currently limited.	Appoint Estate Manager and Partnerships & Activities Manager.	LBB	Year 0
				Prepare detailed MMP to match forecast resource availability.	LBB (EM)	Year 0
				Start Apprenticeship scheme.	LBB (PAM)	Year 1
				Actively manage grounds maintenance contract to ensure effective and efficient delivery.	LBB (EM)	Throughout
				Involve community and specialist volunteers in all management activities.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1
				Develop partnerships to improve delivery.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Throughout
				Ensure all personnel are appropriately trained and supported.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Throughout
Prepare and execute fund raising strategy (including friends group, stakeholder forum and other volunteers).				LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1 and throughout	
			Regular review of management tasks and resource availability.	LBB	Throughout	

Green Flag Award Criteria	Detail	Existing Situation and/or issues	Action	Lead organisation(s)	Active by Date
	Delivery	As per Section 5 above. Some management and conservation opportunities missed due to lack of site wide planning.	Prepare Park Maintenance Manual (PMM) as per Section 12 below.	LBB (EM)	Year 1
			Prepare annual maintenance programme prior to start of each maintenance year.	LBB (EM)	Annually
			Ensure delivery in accordance with MMP, PMM and resource planning as detailed above.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Throughout
	Monitoring	Potential for improving monitoring in all areas.	Implement monitoring as per MMP/PMM/AP including baseline surveys, species/habitat specific monitoring, visitor surveys, feedback from users/volunteers etc. Collate, review and store monitoring results; adapt management as required.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1 and throughout
			Undertake annual review of site and MMP and adapt MMP, PMM and management delivery as required.	LBB (EM and PAM)	Year 1 and throughout
Review	Annual review.				

6.3 Conservation Management Plan

6.3.1 Lesnes Abbey Woods is a noteworthy historic landscape with important community, recreational and environmental/ecological values associated with it. However, its condition has deteriorated and there is a general lack of awareness of its values. The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) identifies why the Site is important, the challenges it faces, and the key priorities for the future. This will help ensure the Site's sustainability over the long term, and help ensure that its values and significance are maintained and enhanced.

The Site Today

6.3.2 The 88ha site includes a number of features:

- 67ha of ancient semi-natural woodland which includes a small expanse of rare heathland and a tumulus, as well as several ponds, wildflower enclosures, former chalk pit and a fossil bed.
- The ruins of Lesnes Abbey, an Augustinian Abbey dating from the 12th century, designated a Scheduled Monument and a Grade II Listed Building.
- An Information Centre.
- Formal Gardens and Arboretum.
- A Recreation Ground.
- Other natural and heritage landscape features.

6.3.3 Lesnes Abbey Woods is currently used mainly for dog walking, orienteering and informal recreation activities. A popular recreation ground provides formal provision for children's play and a MUGA. A small number of events take place on the Site (e.g. Pentecost celebration and orienteering event).

6.3.4 The Site's learning potential is currently unrecognised with very few schools undertaking educational visits to the Park.

Designations

6.3.5 The following designations apply to the Site:

Historical Designations

- Lesnes Abbey Ruins (including the area immediately surrounding them) is a **Scheduled Ancient Monument**. This is a statutory designation of national importance.
- Lesnes Abbey Ruins is a **Grade II Listed Building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest**. This is a statutory designation of national importance.

- A portion of the Site falls within an **Area of Archaeological Priority Search**. These are areas which have been identified as having particular archaeological interest in Bexley. This is a non-statutory designation of borough-wide importance.

Geological and Ecological Designations

- A portion of the Site (covering the extent of the wildflower meadows) is designated as a **Site of Special Scientific Interest**. This is a statutory designation of national importance.
- The entire Site (with the exception of the recreation ground) is designated as a **Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation**. This is a non-statutory designation of borough-wide importance.
- The majority of the Site is designated as a **Local Nature Reserve**. This is a non-statutory designation of borough-wide importance.

Landscape/Planning Designations

- The entire Site is designated as **Metropolitan Open Land**, a statutory development plan designation.
- A portion of the Site is designated as **Heritage Land**, a development plan designation.

6.4 Summary Statement of Significance

- 6.4.1 Lesnes Abbey Woods is a distinctive and substantial green space within the densely built-up townscape of South East London, providing a valuable resource for the local community and wildlife. An important historic landscape, the Site is capable of providing diverse educational and recreational opportunities where multiple stories can be told.
- 6.4.2 The scheduled and listed ruins of Lesnes Abbey and its associated collections reveal the way medieval religious communities lived and worked. The presence of such well-preserved ruins is rare, not only in the context of London but also nationally. The Site today is of high archaeological potential and represents a rich tapestry of historical and cultural associations. The murder of Thomas Becket (the Archbishop of Canterbury), the Peasant's Rebellion, the dissolution of the monasteries and the execution of Catherine Howard, as well as the Site's later use as a public open space, are all intertwined with the story of Lesnes Abbey Woods.
- 6.4.3 The ancient semi-natural woodland over three quarters of the Site is a valuable remnant of a landscape which would have once covered a swathe of South East London. The Site supports a range of habitats, including wetlands, woodlands, wildflower meadows, acid grassland and heathland and provides a haven for wildlife. Its designation as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation reflects the Site's regional significance for wildlife, including wild daffodils in their only native site in London. The heathland is a rare and increasingly endangered remnant of what was once a common feature of the landscape in the capital.

- 6.4.4 The Site contains a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, containing fossils of rare and extinct species of birds, fish and mammals dating back to the Eocene epoch. The internationally renowned fossil bed provides invaluable evidence of climate environment and land connections in the local area dating back 55 million years ago.

Issues and Key Risks

- 6.4.5 The key risks and issues facing Lesnes Abbey Woods are summarised below:

Condition of the buildings and archaeology:

- Abbey ruins potentially at risk from visitors sitting/climbing on them.
- Buried archaeological remains vulnerable to disturbance; new works could damage/negatively impact on them.
- Tumulus (or bowl barrow) subjected to damage through misuse/encroachment of heathland.
- Information centre in need of repair/refurbishment. Existing interpretation needs updating.

Condition of the landscape:

- Some modern/unsympathetic features undermine the Site's character.
- Formal gardens: historic character eroded, and issues with dog fouling.
- Arboretum: lack of a tree strategy.
- Opportunities to reinstate lost historic features.
- Loss of traditional historic woodland management.

Nature and geological conservation:

- LACV assist with habitat management on site, would benefit from additional resources.
- The Mulberry tree has suffered from people climbing up it.
- Woodland/wildflower enclosures affected by presence of invasive species.
- Woodland has suffered from some vandalism/arson.
- Grassland not rich with typical meadow diversity.
- Dog fouling poses a potential threat to nature conservation values.
- Fragile heathland habitat due to its small extent.
- Ponds in woodland thought to be in sub-optimal condition/susceptible to drying up, silting up and over shading.
- A number of non-native/invasive plant/animal species identified across Site.
- General risk of disturbance to wildlife.
- Opportunities to enhance overall biodiversity.
- Need baseline ecological surveys for species groups with a programme of follow up monitoring to analyse the effectiveness of management decisions.
- Opportunity to target habitat management of Site to contribute to Bexley Biodiversity Action Plan.

Visitor access and enjoyment:

- Site underused and full potential unrealised in terms of number/range of audiences it attracts and level of engagement/involvement that locals have with the site.
- Lack of awareness of full extent of Site/offer.
- Lack of signage/interpretation and limited marketing.
- Lacks sense of arrival/welcome/orientation.
- Access within Site varies. Opportunities to seek to better integrate different parts of Site.

- Site has been subject to some vandalism/anti-social behaviour/miss-use.
- Opportunities to encourage different community groups/individuals to actively engage with the Site/make valuable contributions.
- Opportunities for partnership working.
- Potential for increased volunteering.
- Potential for informal and formal learning programme.

Management and Maintenance:

- Need for integrated approach to conservation management across the Site to ensure wide ranging conservation/community values fully considered.
- The CMP and MMP will provide guidance for integrated management of the Site as a whole.
- Opportunity for management agreement to cover management/maintenance/routine repair of ruins.
- Systematic monitoring of species/habitats needed. Monitoring of visitors and user/non-user surveys now carried out.
- A structured volunteer programme will help deliver the Site's future management/maintenance strategy.
- New staff to be appointed.
- The Site could be negatively impacted on by climate change.
- A community advisory forum is needed.

Understanding:

- Some gaps in baseline information.
- Educate managers/Site staff/users about Site and its significance/values and its place in landscape/historical context and importance of specific features.

6.5 Conservation Aims and Objectives

6.5.1 The overall vision for the future focuses on managing, protecting and enhancing the Park's significance and values and on ensuring these are appreciated and enjoyed by current and future generations. The vision therefore requires the improvement of the condition of the historic landscape and involves enhancing the Park's geological and biodiversity values. It requires increasing awareness and understanding of the Park's significance and realising its potential to support formal and informal learning. It will also be necessary to enhance the Park's community values, through improved physical access, better recreational facilities and more opportunities for community participation.

6.5.2 The CMP recognises that there will need to be a balance between the Park's different values, which on occasion could potentially compete with one another. The following overarching principles will guide decision making in relation to the future management of the Site:

- Principle 1: All decisions about the management of the Site will aim to conserve and, where possible, enhance, the significance/values of the Site as defined by the Statement of Significance.

- Principle 2: Appropriate methods and materials will be used for all heritage restoration/enhancement works, by suitably qualified professionals and in accordance with best practice.
- Principle 3: Adequate levels of capital/revenue funding and resources will be provided to support the ongoing management and maintenance of the Site.
- Principle 4: The Site's significance, values and sensitivities will be communicated to as wide an audience as possible.
- Principle 5: The Site will be managed and maintained as a high quality learning and recreational resource.
- Principle 6: New works will be assessed, as appropriate, against the CMP, using a heritage impact assessment form.

6.6 Aims and Objectives

The table below summaries the key aims and objectives for Lesnes Abbey Woods.

Conservation Aims	Conservation Objectives
Aim 1: Conserve and Enhance the Site's Cultural Heritage	Objective 1a: Conserve and Enhance the Site's Archaeology
	Objective 1b: Conserve and Enhance the Site's Historic Landscape Features
	Objective 1c: Conserve and Enhance the Site's Character
Aim 2: Conserve and Enhance the Site's Natural Heritage	Objective 2a: Conserve and Enhance the SSSI and Chalk Pit
	Objective 2b: Conserve and Enhance the Heathland Habitat
	Objective 2c: Conserve and Enhance the Woodland Habitat
	Objective 2d: Conserve and Enhance the Wild Flower Habitat
	Objective 2e: Conserve and Enhance the Grassland Habitat
	Objective 2f: Conserve and Enhance the Standing Water Habitat
	Objective 2g: Control Invasive Plant Species
	Objective 2h: Conserve and Enhance Overall Biodiversity
	Objective 2i: Enhance Ecological Monitoring
Aim 3: Conserve and Enhance the Site's Community and Recreational Values	Objective 3a: Improve Orientation and Sense of Arrival
	Objective 3b: Improve Physical Access within the Site
	Objective 3c: Encourage Greater Use of the Site
	Objective 3d: Develop Educational Potential of the Site
	Objective 3e: Develop Opportunities for Volunteering and Community Engagement
	Objective 3f: Balance Needs of the Site's Different 'User' Groups
Aim 4: Ensure Sustainable Management and Maintenance of the Site	Objective 4a: Adopt, Implement and Regularly Review Management Strategies
	Objective 4b: Provide Adequate Skills and Resources
	Objective 4c: Undertake Monitoring and Maintenance
	Objective 4d: Identify Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Opportunities
Aim 5: Promote Understanding of the Site's Significance	Objective 5a: Increase Staff and Stakeholder Awareness of the Site's Significance
	Objective 5b: Increase Visitor Appreciation of the Site's Significance
	Objective 5c: Undertake Research to Enhance Understanding of the Site's Significance

6.7 Activity Plan

- 6.7.1 The Activity Plan for Lesnes Abbey Woods aims to broaden the range of visitors to the Site and to enhance the visitor experience. It also aims to foster greater understanding of the Site's various values and to increase participation in conserving, enhancing and communicating those values. The Activity Plan also seeks to ensure that the appropriate skills are in place to deliver both the actions in the Activity Plan itself and also to ensure effective ongoing management and maintenance of the restored Site.
- 6.7.2 The Activity Plan provides an understanding of the site today in terms of who visits/doesn't visit it and why, its current offer and demographic context, as well as the borough's wider park/open space context. This understanding, combined with wide-ranging consultation, helps inform decisions about future activity planning at the Site. It is closely related to the Conservation Management Plan, Masterplan and 10 Year Management and Maintenance Plan.
- 6.7.3 A small number of events and activities take place on the site and the interpretation offer is mixed (while some areas of the Site have a small number of information panels, there is no interpretation at all at many key points. The interpretation housed in the Information Centre is outdated and un-engaging).
- 6.7.4 Volunteering opportunities at present are largely concentrated with Lesnes Abbey Conservation Volunteers. The group's fortnightly opportunities include hedge laying, fencing, coppicing, heath land restoration, pond maintenance, shrub clearance and wildlife surveys.

Current Audience and Local Demographics

- 6.7.5 In terms of the profile of current audiences, user surveys revealed that:
- The majority of existing users registered their ethnicity as white (83%), a higher percentage than both the local area (defined as residents within 1km of the Site) and the London Borough of Bexley (LBB) and the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), which are all more ethnically diverse.
 - A significant proportion of visitors were aged 60+ (32%). It must however be noted that park user surveys typically do not capture the views of those younger than 16 years of age because they can only be interviewed with parental consent. The largest age group in the local and borough population, nearly a third, are under the age of 20. There are discrepancies in comparison with the age profile of the Park's users, where those aged 60+ are overrepresented and those aged 20 and under are underrepresented.
 - 10% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability; a slightly higher percentage than in the local area which in turn is slightly higher than in the boroughs as a whole.

- 6.7.6 Consultation revealed that 16% of users visit the Site on a daily basis and 18% once or twice a week. Summer visitors, both during the week and on the weekend, spent longer at the Site, with the majority of respondents stating that they stayed between 1 and 2 hours. Only one-fifth of visitors stayed less than half an hour on weekdays and 7% at the weekend. During the winter months, both during the week and on the weekend, the majority of respondents stated that they stayed between 30 minutes and 1 hour.
- 6.7.7 The majority of visitors gave more than one response when asked why they visited the Site. The most popular reasons given were for walking (58%), visiting the ruins (47%), fresh air (42%), peace and quiet (42%) and to enjoy the beautiful surroundings (44%). Overall, there is high satisfaction with the Park, however satisfaction levels were average in relation to visitor facilities and poor in relation to the provision of information about the Park.

Barriers to Access

- 6.7.8 Consultation, research and in-depth knowledge about the Site revealed a number of key issues and barriers that prevent users and potential users from fully participating at Lesnes Abbey Wood. A range of physical barriers have been identified including, for example, concerns over the size of the Site and its topography, lack of signage and concerns about pedestrian links into the Site.
- 6.7.9 There is limited awareness of the Park's values, the range of facilities and amenities it has to offer and its proximity to public transportation. The site lacks a sense of arrival; there is no clear main entrance and directional signage to and within the site is insufficient. There are a number of organisational barriers, such as the lack of a more permanent security presence or supervising member of staff on site to ensure safety and prevent anti-social behaviour. There is limited community outreach and engagement, events, learning and volunteering and limited marketing of the Park's general offer. Additionally, sensory and social and cultural barriers also affect access and participation. Such barriers include a lack of multi-generational activities and user group specific activities, an absence of visual and tactile warnings for the visually impaired and some concern over the presence of dogs at the site.

Key Priorities

- 6.7.10 Lesnes Abbey Woods is a key heritage asset with a wide-ranging offer, combining outstanding geological and natural heritage features with cultural heritage. As stated in the Conservation Management Plan, Lesnes Abbey Woods is a distinctive and substantial green space within the densely built-up townscape of South East London, providing a valuable resource for people and wildlife. The Park, capable of providing diverse educational/learning and recreational

opportunities for visitors from both the local community and beyond, is currently under-used. Reasons for this include, for example, the mixed awareness of the richness of the site's offer and the range of features/facilities present there, the rather challenging topography, the lack of events/activities on offer and safety concerns voiced by some in relation to using the woods. There is significant potential to further develop the Park's audiences, visitor offer and heritage learning/participation activities. Although there is an existing volunteer group based at Lesnes Abbey Woods, there are opportunities to broaden volunteering and community engagement at the site.

Target Audiences

6.7.11 Six target audiences have been prioritised for Lesnes Abbey Woods, these comprise three key existing user groups and user groups who are currently under-represented among park users/or who form a small share of users. The following target audiences are key existing user groups:

- Families
- Older people (60+)
- Visitors with disabilities

6.7.12 The following target audiences are currently key under-represented user groups/user groups who form a small share of the Park's visitors:

- Schools
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups
- Young people

6.7.13 Reaching out to target audience groups who are currently under-represented among site users (or who form a small share of users) will require a balanced approach – a focus both on opening up channels for them to enjoy the existing facilities, amenities and events/activities at the Park and also a focus on ensuring that any improved offer is relevant to them and where appropriate, tailored to their specific needs and interests. This should also be balanced with an understanding of the values of the site in order to protect what is special about it.

Aims, Objectives and Delivery

6.7.14 It is proposed that a full-time Partnerships and Activities Manager is appointed in January 2015 (Year 0). This officer will have day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that the Activity Plan's Action Plan is delivered and that key milestones and targets are met. The Partnerships and Activities Manager will liaise with and be supported by other teams within the Council and a range of delivery partners.

6.7.15 A full-time Estate Manager, based in the Park's Lodge, will focus solely on Lesnes Abbey Woods and the co-ordination and delivery of the 10 Year Management and Maintenance Plan. Horticultural/habitat management and maintenance volunteering activities and apprenticeships, whilst co-ordinated by the Partnerships and Activities Manager, will be managed on a day-to-day basis by the Estate Manager.

- **Year 0 and Year 1 (2015 to 2016):** capital works, establishing volunteer structures, general awareness building and community outreach, marketing/website development, staff training, development of formal/informal learning resources, start delivery of the programme of events/activities from January 2016 (volunteering, formal/informal learning, general interest, healthy living and focused events) – programme of events/activities to increase in scale and frequency over the years.
- **Year 2 (2016 to 2017):** community outreach and engagement, marketing, programme of events/activities increasing in scale and frequency from previous year.
- **Year 3 (2017 to 2018):** community outreach and engagement, marketing, programme of events/activities increasing in scale and frequency from previous year.
- **Year 4 (2018 to 2019):** community outreach and engagement, marketing, programme of events/activities increasing in scale and frequency from previous year.
- **Year 5 (2019 to 2020):** community outreach and engagement, marketing, programme of events/activities.

6.7.16 The following table summarises the Activity Plan's aims and objectives, which in turn are supported by a range of activities (see Section 10 of the Activity Plan).

Aims	Objectives
Aim 1: Increase Learning Opportunities and Awareness of the Site's Assets and Values	Objective 1.1: Reintroduce Lost Historic Features
	Objective 1.2: Develop a Range of Informal Learning Activities
	Objective 1.3: Develop a Range of Formal Learning Opportunities
	Objective 1.4: Improve Interpretation
	Objective 1.5: Increase the Level and Quality of Marketing of the Site and its Values
	Objective 1.6: Improve Orientation and Wayfinding at the Site
Aim 2: Enhance the Visitor Experience for All Users	Objective 2.1: Enhance the Site's Contribution to Healthy Living
	Objective 2.2: Improve Physical Access
	Objective 2.3: Introduce a Range of General Interest Events and Activities
	Objective 2.4: Improve the Park's Attractiveness
	Objective 2.5: Introduce New Facilities
	Objective 2.6: Improve Sense of Safety and Security on the Site
Aim 3: Broaden the Diversity of Visitors to the Site	Objective 3.1: Build Awareness of the Site and its Offer with Under-Represented Target Audiences and Visitors with Disabilities
	Objective 3.2: Introduce Facilities and Amenities that Appeal to Under-Represented User Groups and Visitors with Disabilities
	Objective 3.3: Introduce Events and Activities which Appeal to Under-Represented User Groups and Visitors with Disabilities
Aim 4: Increase Opportunities for Volunteering and Skills Development	Objective 4.1: Develop a Structured Volunteer Programme around Horticulture and Wildlife/Habitat Management
	Objective 4.2: Develop a Structured Volunteer Programme around Audience Development and Learning Activities
	Objective 4.3: Develop Systems and Policies for Volunteer Recruitment and Management
	Objective 4.4: Provide Skills Development Opportunities for the Local Community

	Objective 4.5: Recognise and Reward Volunteer Learning
	Objective 4.6: Support Existing Volunteering Opportunities
	Objective 4.7: Increase Community Involvement in the Site's Offer, Interpretation and Management
Aim 5: Enhance Staff Skills and Training	Objective 5.1: Ensure that there are Adequate Resources in Place to Deliver the Enhancement Project
	Objective 5.2: Provide Staff Training related to Delivering the Activity Plan
	Objective 5.3: Provide Staff Training Relating to Improving the Site's Management and Maintenance