



## Green Flag Award 2021 – Combined Feedback Desk Assessment and Mystery Shop

**Name of Site:** Keston Common

**Managing Organisation:** London Borough of Bromley & Id Verde

### Desk Assessment Feedback (Management Plan)

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
<b>Presentation</b>	An easy to read and well thought out management plan, with maps and images. It was well structured and consistent in terms of content and evidence for appropriate action.	Consider adding in more images and maps, where appropriate, where this can help illuminate and explain key features, habitats and management actions?
<b>Health, Safety &amp; Security</b>	<p>A good summary of the core actions in place to promote safe use by the public and to reduce the risk of harm.</p> <p>Actions provided to promote health and wellbeing, including informal play, exercise and popular sports like angling, running and horse riding.</p>	As key assets, e.g. steps, paths and pond edges age and deteriorate, plan should assess these impacts and how they can be mitigated for, including securing additional resources and extra funding.
<b>Maintenance of equipment, buildings &amp; landscape</b>	<p>Plan summarises the key objectives and actions to maintain standards of grounds maintenance, horticulture, arboriculture and landscape.</p> <p>These are appropriate to a site where its nature conservation, heritage and landscape features are of key significance, whilst also recognising the need for wider public access and use.</p>	<p>Future iterations of management plan should continue to assess how key assets are ageing and need replacing or repairing.</p> <p>Make sure that these are still realistic and achievable and can be addressed within available or future resources and capacity.</p>
<b>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</b>	Robust procedures are presented, along with evidence and actions, to maintain cleanliness and respond to litter and waste issues. Responses to issues over graffiti and vandalism are also detailed.	Increased use of the site during and post Covid-19 might impact upon litter and wastes on site, so future iterations of the plan can assess if this needs changes in how bins are located and managed, or other actions are also required

<b>Environmental Management</b>	<p>Management plan contains appropriate objectives and actions to promote responsible environmental management, including promoting recycling and on site reuse of greenwastes.</p> <p>However, the plan is also realistic in what can be achieved on such a sensitive site and what can be then maintained.</p>	<p>Increasing issues resulting from climate change, e.g. increased flooding or rainfall, or extended periods of drought, could impact upon key management actions and outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure the plan assesses these impacts and how they can be mitigated for, e.g. changing paths to minimise flood or water damage. This might involve changing tree planting or land management practices, or looking at opportunities to capture and divert more surface water in locations that protect more sensitive areas and features.</p>
<b>Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage</b>	<p>Plan contains appropriate and realistic actions to protect and improve the Common's biodiversity and manage sensitive habitats, including heathland, woodland, meadows and grasslands.</p> <p>Plan also recognises actions required to conserve key landscape and heritage assets, such as archaeological and cultural ones.</p>	<p>As the site continues to evolve and mature, make sure future reviews of the plan identify any additional actions or actions that need changing to ensure habitat quality and content are suitably protected and improving.</p> <p>Opportunities exist to increase the amount and quality of interpretation as to its heritage, landscape and biodiversity. Plan can look at how this can be achieved and with what resources.</p>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<p>Excellent overview of how a very disparate and complex community is engaged and involved in the management and use of the Common, and what actions are in place to ensure the community are kept aware of their responsibilities.</p>	<p>As and when the user community evolves or changes, especially after Covid-19, the plan can identify these new stakeholders and how they can be kept involved and on side.</p>
<b>Marketing &amp; Communication</b>	<p>Plan contains a sound marketing and communications strategy for the Common, based on the corporate approach for the Borough of Bromley.</p>	<p>The plan recognises the need for an interpretation strategy for the Common, to help improve and rationalise how information is conveyed to the public.</p> <p>This should be a priority for future versions of the plan, as there is clearly a strong and growing need of a coherent signage and interpretation programme for the Common. It will help support a more consistent approach in how the public are informed and guided in their use of the whole site.</p>

<b>Overall management</b>	Plan sets out the management structure and organisation for the Common, and who is responsible for what and when. There are appropriate measures and processes to ensure realistic decisions are made and resources are appropriately used on site.	Changes as a result of Covid-19 and increasing pressures on the Common might impact upon how it is managed or how resources need to be secured and then utilised.  Future iterations of the plan can look at what these impacts and changes could be and if this then influences the core management actions that are implemented on site.
<b>Additional comments</b>  A sound management plan that was both readable and easy to follow.  It might be good to include more images, if these 'tell a bigger story' as to key features and habitats, or to demonstrate how they are being used and maintained.  Consider adding in appendices of any promotional or publicity material, including any new signage or interpretation, and any additional maps and images to explain more about the on-site management of the Common over time,		



# Green Flag Award Mystery Shop Assessment

<b>Name of Site</b>	Keston Common		<b>Managing organisation</b>	London Borough of Bromley & Id Verde	
<b>Weather Conditions</b>	Sunny, breezy, dry				
<b>Date of assessment</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> May 2021		<b>Time (from – to)</b>	09:30 to 11:00	
<b>Result: (✓)</b>	<b>Is the site of Green Flag Award Standard?</b> Green <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amber <input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Grading</b>			<b>Comments and Recommendations</b>		
Please mark each section as Green, Amber or Red If there is no evidence or the section is not applicable mark as NG (not graded) and provide an explanation			Comments should be provided to support each grading  *Please include photographs to support your grading where applicable **Please refer to Raising the Standard manual if necessary		
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>					
1. Is the site welcoming?	NG	G	A	R	The site, although surprisingly complex in terms of layout and topography, still had a good welcoming effect; this was particularly evident around the main or more popular entry points into the Common such as round car parks and lakes (Figure 1).  However, some edges of the site will need attention and careful opening up, where sightlines and views into it are becoming enclosed or dense.
		X			
2. Is the site easy to find?	NG	G	A	R	The site was easy to find from Bromley Town centre using local buses and walking; information in the management plan and on the website was accurate and easy to interpret.
		X			
3. Is signage in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	Entrance signage and notice boards around the main or busiest parts of the Common were well located, clean and well maintained, containing relevant and up to date information (Figure 2).  Some of the older on-site interpretative or other information signage was showing its age, with some wooden frames distorted or metal panels showing weathering and discoloration (Figure 3).  Although still perfectly readable and useable, monitor this signage and repair or replace as necessary and as resources permit.
		X			

4. Is the site accessible to all user?	NG	G	A		<p>For such a complex site in terms of topography and gradients, it is still relatively accessible for most users and in most key locations, with good low graded paths and open views (Figure 4).</p> <p>There were some old wooden sleeper steps near the main heath area that were in poor condition and deteriorating rapidly (Figure 5). There need repairing or replacement as they pose a growing public safety risk.</p> <p>The recent prolonged periods of heavy rain, combined with heavy footfall, had made some paths around the main ponds boggy and impassable (Figure 6).</p> <p>Hopefully these will sort themselves out with improved weather, but if not then look at temporarily fencing them off and some appropriate intervention to allow them to reinstate themselves and become safer.</p>
		X			
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>					
5. Are facilities on site in good and safe condition?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Most of the fixed infrastructure on the Common was secure, sound and in good condition, especially walls, bridges, fencing, pond cascades and most pond edges (Figure 7).</p> <p>There was a section alongside the western edge of the upper (southernmost) pond, where the bank was continually eroding and collapsing into the pond, which was also affecting the path (Figure 8).</p> <p>This is something that won't be easy to resolve or find an immediate solution to, but consider a number of temporary or stopgap measures to help divert path users, fence off the bank and install new revetments or bankside planting so it can be allowed to reinstate and be less of a safety and access risk.</p>
		X			
6. Did you feel safe during the visit?	NG	G	A	R	<p>For such a complex, heavily wooded and shaded site, it still felt very safe.</p> <p>Good sightlines were maintained around the most popular and accessible parts of the Common, and there was a clear focus on maximising natural surveillance around high risk areas including the car park, ponds, meadows and seating areas.</p>
		X			
7. Are dogs being controlled and the site free of dog fouling?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Although the whole site was popular with dogs and dog walkers, there was no evidence of any dog fouling or dog related damage including to young trees or site furniture.</p> <p>There appeared to be a strong community-led focus on promoting responsible dog ownership and use of the Common, which was commendable.</p>
		X			

Well Maintained and Clean					
8. Is litter, waste and recycling managed?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Litter and waste management across the site was very good, and there was no evidence of waste build up. Recycling was being promoted on signage and notice boards and to take litter home where possible.</p> <p>Some of the older wooden bins are looking a bit tired and might not be in the best locations as user patterns change (Figure 9), so consider replacing with larger or more durable bins and in alternative locations, as and when resources allow.</p>
		X			
9. Is there a good standard of horticulture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Not a site that has any formal horticultural assets, so the management is focused on maintaining a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats to conserve biodiversity and landscapes. The style and level of such maintenance was appropriate and acceptable, and is promoting key habitats like woodland, heathland and meadows (Figure 10).</p>
		X			
10. Is there a good standard of arboriculture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R	<p>A very complex site in terms of its tree cover and diversity. The style and management of tree and hedge maintenance is good, and is focused on keeping key entry and access points/routes open and safe, and preventing encroachment of trees onto sensitive open habitat, e.g. heathland (Figure 10).</p>
		X			
11. Are buildings and infrastructure such as walls, paths, steps and structures in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Generally the management and maintenance of key facilities, including paths, bridges, walls and steps is good. However, some steps and pond banks will need repair or replacement (Figures 5 and 8), so these should be prioritised for action and resolution if possible.</p>
		X			
12. Is equipment used by the public and staff in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Most equipment in use by the public are in good condition. However, one or two wooden benches show signs of BBQ and/or fire damage (Figure 11) so these need monitoring and/or repair or replacement if they get damaged further.</p> <p>There were some exposed old water hydrant or valve housings near steps to the eastern side of the upper pond, which need removing or covering over/reinstatement as these are a growing public safety risk (Figure 11).</p>
		X			
Environmental Management					
13. Is there evidence that the site is managed to have a positive impact on the environment?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Excellent approach to the protection, retention and management of key wildlife habitats on the Common, especially the restored areas of open heathland, meadows and acidic grassland (Figure 12).</p> <p>Plenty of evidence that greenwaste from conservation operations is recycled on site and used as mulch or to provide dead hedges or wildlife ground cover.</p>
		X			

Landscape and Heritage					
14. Are heritage and/or landscape features in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	<p>The management plan recognises the need to protect and conserve a number of important landscape and heritage features; it was evident that these priorities are being delivered on site, e.g. restoration of Caesar's Well and hidden archaeological features.</p> <p>However, the Well would welcome some appropriate interpretation signage beside it, to help explain it and its recent restoration.</p> <p>Management of key habitat compartments is also protecting important landscapes, especially open views into and across meadows and open grassland.</p>
		X			
Community Involvement					
15. Is there evidence of community involvement and engagement?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Although Covid-19 has impacted upon community and corporate volunteering numbers and frequency, it was clear that the site has benefited enormously from past volunteering contributions. It was evident that the Common is well embedded in the local community and they are involved and fully engaged with the site and its overall management.</p>
		X			
16. Is user feedback positive?	NG	G	A	R	
	X				
Marketing and Communication					
17. Is there evidence of marketing and promotion, including events? e.g. notice boards, in buildings, website & social media.	NG	G	A	R	<p>Noticeboards at main entrances and at the main car park contain plenty of relevant and up to date information as to the Common, its management and responsible use. Other signage across the site is relevant and focused.</p>
		X			
18. Is the correct year flag flying and certificate on display?	NG	G	A	R	<p>There was a current flag flying beside the entrance off Fishponds Road, and there were certificates on the main noticeboards beside the car park.</p>
		X			
Overall Result (✓)	<p><b>Is the site of Green Flag Award Standard?</b></p> <p>Green <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">X</span> Amber <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"></span> Red <span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"></span></p>				
<p>Additional comments:</p> <p>A very complex and densely vegetated site, but one where there is a sensitive and appropriate balance between protecting its high biodiversity and heritage value, and ensuring safe public access and use.</p> <p>The recent bouts of heavy rainfall haven't been kind to some paths and edges of the pond complex, but with appropriate management and intervention these should be quickly addressed and overcome. It may be necessary to temporarily exclude the public from key routes and paths to allow them to fully reinstate, and appropriate signage and barriers might be required. Don't be afraid to take action as this can only help secure the site's safety and sustainable future.</p>					





**Figure 1. Views of Keston Common showing open views into key or more popular areas of site, with open and welcoming views and access to surrounding roads and paths.**



**Figure 2. Examples of entrance signs and notice boards on Keston Common, with relevant information, well located and in good condition.**



**Figure 3. Examples of other signage on Keston Common, that may require some repairs, cleaning and eventual replacement or upgrading.**





**Figure 4. Examples of good accessibility to key areas on Keston Common, with well graded and level paths or appropriate views and entrances.**



**Figure 5. Degrading wooden steps on part of Keston Common, which pose a growing accessibility issue for less abled users.**





**Figure 6. Sections of natural surfaced paths around edges of ponds on Keston Common, which although due to the recent prolonged wet weather, will need careful monitoring and attention.**



**Figure 7. Examples of infrastructure on Keston Common, which are heavily used by the public and are being well maintained.**





**Figure 8. Sections of path alongside the western side of the upper pond, which is suffering from continual erosion and progressive bank collapse into the pond.**



**Figure 9. Ageing wooden litter bins on Keston Common, which may need replacement and or relocation depending on changes in how the public use the site or further deterioration.**





**Figure 10. Examples of appropriate standards of horticultural maintenance on Keston Common, which is focused on protecting and improving a range of natural habitats and landscapes.**



**Figure 11. Furniture or features used by or accessible to the public that may need repair or removal/replacement, including fire-damage bench and exposed hydrant cover near steps.**



**Figure 12. Views of progressive, appropriate and sensitive wildlife habitat management on Keston Common, including heathland, scrub, grassland and meadows.**



**Figure 13. Views of the restored Caesar's Well spring, a key heritage feature, with central gravel bed and surrounding brickwork.**