

# Kensington Meadows Improvement Project



## Proposal

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# 1. About the Project

The Council's Parks and Green Spaces Department is working with the community to develop a plan for how Kensington Meadows can be improved and maintained in the future.

To kick-start the process the green space has been allocated £55,000 of Section 106 developer contributions to spend on priority improvements. Further improvements will be subject to securing additional funding.

## What has happened so far?

- A community consultation survey has been carried out to find out who uses the green space, how it is used and what can be done to improve it. The survey received over 170 responses.
- Members of the Council's Parks and Green Spaces team spent time at Kensington Meadows speaking to users.
- The results of the survey have been reviewed to draw conclusions about what should happen next.



# 2. What did the consultation survey tell us?

- Kensington Meadows is a much-loved green space which attracts users of all ages. Most visitors are from within the local area but the site also attracts some visitors from further afield. Most people walk to the site and spend up to an hour on a typical visit. The green space is valued as a semi-natural/wild place where people can escape the busy city, enjoy peace and tranquillity and get close to nature.
- The most likely reason for people visiting Kensington Meadows is as a cut through on-foot. Responses demonstrate that the site is a very significant 'green route' which people use to avoid the busy London Road both on-foot and by bike. Other main reasons for visiting the site are to enjoy peace and tranquillity, get close to nature and to walk dogs.
- Survey responses show that poor access into the green space is a key issue. Many commented that the entrance points become muddy following wet weather and that there are too few access points. There were a significant number of comments requesting access points along the northern edge of the site where it borders Ringswell Gardens.

- The riverside walk is considered the best quality feature of the site at present. However, comments show that users would like to see improvements including more regular control of vegetation, improved access points and an opening up of the trees to create better views of the river. Seating is considered the lowest quality feature of the site with many requesting more seating – particularly on the north of the site and the along the riverside walk.
- Wildlife enhancements and tree planting are considered to be the highest priority improvements for the site. The survey responses show clear support for extending areas of meadow grassland and planting trees for shade and to improve the local environment. Other improvements considered a priority are more and better located seating and better routes/pathways through the site.
- The topic of a surfaced path featured fairly regularly in comments. Some were in favour of an accessible surfaced path for the many people who walk and cycle through the site. A small minority are against a surfaced path and would prefer the site to stay more natural.
- Kensington Meadows is a social place but there is some conflict caused by a minority of visitors who behave irresponsibly. There were notable concerns around dog fouling and out of control dogs. Littering is also a common concern, particularly during the summer months when the site is more heavily used and some visitors bring disposable barbeques.
- According to responses, improved play facilities are not considered a high priority - even though a quarter of people said that play was a main reason for visiting. Comments suggest that play for younger children would be welcomed. The initial consultation did not specifically consult with young people and the age profile of respondents shows that young people's opinions have not been captured to any great extent. Additional consultation is required to understand the views and opinions of young people in the area.
- Responses suggest that there is an appetite amongst users to become more involved in the site – through one-off volunteering and events. The project should continue to consult with local people and facilitate community involvement in improving the Kensington Meadows for everyone.

**The full consultation results are available to download from the project web page at:  
[www.bathnes.gov.uk/kensingtonmeadows](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/kensingtonmeadows)**

# 3. Proposed Improvements

A series of improvements, listed on the following pages, are now being proposed for Kensington Meadows. The proposed improvements have been informed by:

- Public feedback from the consultation process
- The Kensington Meadows Management Plan
- Other relevant projects, studies and strategies including the Waterspace Project, Bathscape, Avon Frome Partnership, B&NES Green Space Strategy 2015-2029 and the Strategic Cycle Network Review (2014)
- Site visits with Avon Wildlife Trust, B&NES Council Ecologists and B&NES Events Team

The proposals fall into one of two categories:

### Priority Improvements

are the works that are considered most pressing and which it is estimated can be achieved with the available Section 106 funding

### Longer Term Improvements

will be subject to securing the necessary additional funding

All of the proposed improvements are summarised on page 14.

**The proposals in this document should be considered alongside the Proposed Scheme Site Plan which can also be downloaded from the project web page.**



## 3.1 ENTRANCES

Entrance points play an important role in making green spaces visible, safe and welcoming.

Access into Kensington Meadows was widely raised as an issue during the initial consultation phase. Muddy entrance points and a lack of access from Ringswell Gardens were mentioned frequently.

Currently there are only 3 entrances into Kensington Meadows - very few considering its size and the number of visitors it attracts.

Some local residents, despite living in properties bordering Kensington Meadows, currently have to walk up to 450 metres to access the green space.



**Entrances become very muddy during the winter months**

The existing entrances are used intensively - causing the ground to become muddy during the winter months and making access difficult. Additional access point would help reduce the intensity of footfall on existing entrances.

Existing entrance points should be improved to make them more visible, accessible and welcoming to visitors.

### Strengthen surfaces adjacent to entrances **Priority Improvement**

- Install drainage/ground protection measures around the most heavily used entrance points at Grosvenor Bridge Road and Morrisons supermarket to improve ground conditions in winter.
- The council's maintenance team has typically spread wood chip to improve the situation but this is only partially effective and is not a long term solution.
- Ground protection measures should be porous and, as much as possible, be visually unobtrusive so as not to detract from the natural character of the site.
- Options such as cellular grass matting, grasscrete or the installation of a free-draining substrate should be considered.

### Improve entrance at Meadows Lane **Priority Improvement**

- Remove chain-link fencing and vehicular access gates and replace with wooden bollards to give a more open and welcoming feel to the green space. Wooden bollards are a low cost and easily maintainable option in keeping with the semi-natural character of the green space.
- Install new 'Welcome to Kensington Meadows' signage.



Existing entrance at Meadows Lane



Existing entrance at Morrisons supermarket

**Improve entrance at Morrisons supermarket** **Priority Improvement**

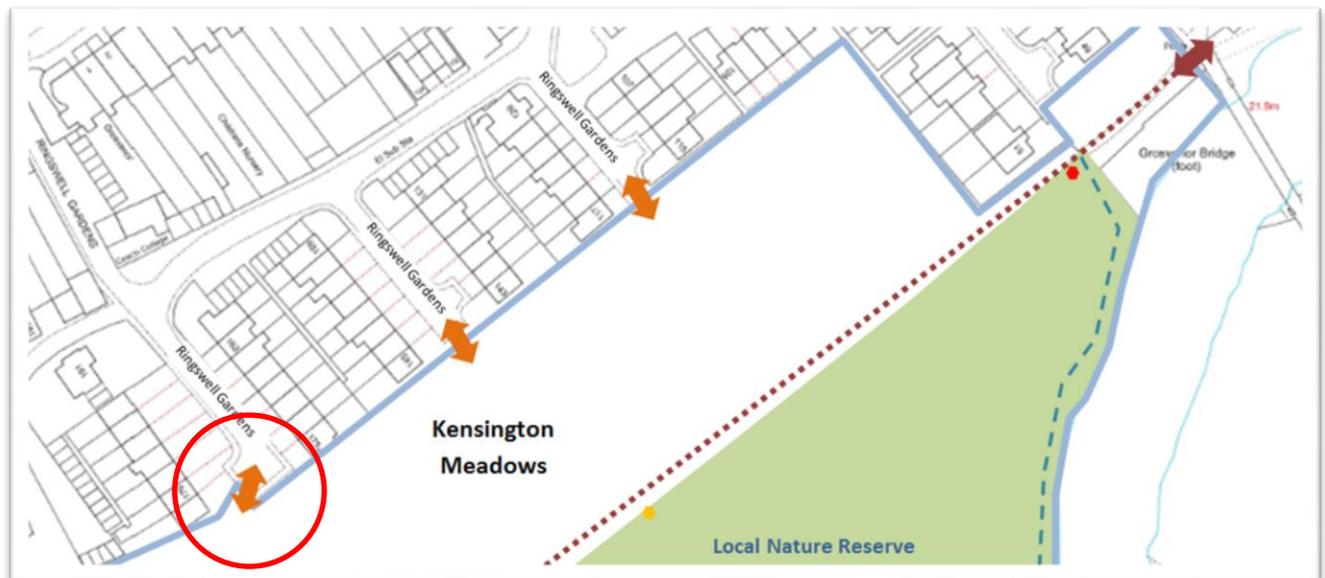
- Remove some vegetation to make the entrance more visible and inviting.
- Create views into the green space

**Create a new pedestrian entrance from Ringswell Gardens** **Priority Improvement**

- There are very few access points into the green space – particularly given its size and the number of visitors it attracts
- It is proposed that the existing vehicular access point adjacent to 175 and 177 Ringswell Gardens (circled in red on the diagram below) should be reconfigured to become a pedestrian entrance as a priority.
- Remove vehicular gates, cut back vegetation and replace with removable wooden bollards to prevent unauthorised vehicles gaining access. Install a bin at this new access point.



Existing locked entrance at Ringswell Gardens



**Open up further access points** **Longer Term Improvement**

- In time, further pedestrian entrances should also be considered at the other two points where Ringswell Gardens joins Kensington Meadows.

## 3.2 MEADOW CREATION AND TREE PLANTING

The consultation showed that there is strong support for tree planting and wildlife enhancements at Kensington Meadows. Extending wild meadow areas and planting trees whilst retaining areas of open space will add structure, colour and interest to the meadows area.

### Increase wild meadow areas **Priority Improvement**

- The large extent of intensely cut grass offers very little value for wildlife or people. Creating meadow areas (like the one already established) and greatly reducing the mowing regime will allow native plant species to thrive.
- Creating a traditional wildflower meadow can take a long time, but in the three years since we created one at Kensington Meadows, we've already seen the return of some rare and interesting wildflowers like yellow rattle, wild geranium and meadow buttercup.
- In-line with wider council cost saving commitments - the Parks and Green Spaces Department has a significantly reduced budget for maintaining green spaces in the district. Intensive mowing of amenity grassland is expensive. The maintenance of wild meadow areas is less intensive and so directly helps the council to meet its cost saving commitments.
- Large meadow areas would be created following well-recognised best practice methods. This is likely to involve scarifying areas of the meadow and sowing with a native wildflower seed mix. It may be possible to use seed harvested from other wild meadows within the area.
- Meadow creation work is likely to be carried out in partnership with Bathscape – a Heritage Lottery Fund supported project aimed at reconnecting people with the natural landscape surrounding Bath.
- Areas of open space/short mown grass will be retained to ensure that there is space for informal sports/games and small-scale events.
- Paths would be mown through the meadow areas following popular routes around the site.
- There would be short grass buffer zones between meadow areas and neighbouring gardens.



An example of colourful, species-rich wild meadow



## Tree Planting **Priority Improvement**

- It is proposed that some tree planting takes place at Kensington Meadows. Trees will help add structure and seasonal colour and will provide shade and shelter for visitors.
- Trees in urban areas deliver a wide range of benefits; they provide much-needed space for wildlife, absorb pollution and can boost people's health and well-being for generations.
- Comments in the consultation suggested a preference for some fruit trees such as cherry and apple. A species list would be carefully selected by the Council's Tree Manager taking into account comments from the consultation along with factors such as soil conditions, planting locations and the eventual size of trees once fully grown.
- The location of trees would need to be chosen carefully so as not to affect the important views or cast shade on neighbouring gardens.
- Tree planting and meadow creation are great activities for volunteers to get involved with.



Trees planted in 2017 are establishing well



Trees will help add structure and seasonal colour

## 3.3 SEATING

There are currently six benches at Kensington Meadows located in clearings along the meadows. The survey results show that the availability of seating at Kensington Meadows is considered very poor and providing more opportunities to sit is a high priority.

### Install more seating **Priority Improvement**

- It is proposed that new seating is installed - particularly along the north of the site and along the Riverside Walk.
- As well as benches it is proposed that some social seating areas are created. Seating in green spaces can take many forms – from traditional benches through to bespoke seating which makes use of the landscape and also provides opportunities for play.

An oak bench overlooking the River Avon in the Avon Valley Woodland



Seating can also provide opportunities for play



#### Install picnic / barbeque Facilities

Priority Improvement

- People like to picnic and barbeque at Kensington Meadows but there are limited facilities for this. The ground and benches are often scorched with disposable barbeques in the summer months and litter left behind.
- It is proposed that picnic areas are created with picnic benches containing barbeque stands. A BBQ bin would be installed to cater for BBQ waste/hot ash.

### 3.4 LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Part of Kensington Meadows is designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – recognising the value of the area for wildlife. The area is composed of a narrow strip of woodland encompassing a range of species including Sycamore, Alder and Willow. There are some old willow pollards on site. The LNR then widens out into an area of wet woodland and fen which used to flood regularly and still has wetland characteristics.

Due to less frequent flooding the LNR is drying up and beginning to become dominated by scrub. There is currently no formal access through this area apart from the riverside walk which skirts around one side.

#### Undertake an ecological survey of the Local Nature Reserve and create a management plan outlining how the site should best be managed

Longer Term Improvement

- The most effective way to improve wetland habitats in the local nature reserve area would require some significant engineering works – digging out scrapes and channels and allowing for some seasonal flooding – for which there is currently no funding. However, there may be scope to improve habitats through the active management of vegetation in the Local Nature Reserve (mainly scrub clearance), but this will depend upon regular and consistent volunteer involvement.

#### Create access through the Local Nature Reserve

Longer Term Improvement

- Creating access through the nature reserve will allow visitors to enjoy this part of the site. This could be achieved by opening up a footpath or installing a boardwalk.

### 3.5 PLAY

A quarter of consultation respondents said that play was a main reason for visiting Kensington Meadows but the play offer is limited – especially as some of the play equipment has recently reached end-of-life and had to be removed.

Whilst play improvements are desirable, responses to the survey show that other improvements are considered higher priority. Some play improvements are being proposed as a priority but any significant extension of the play facilities will require additional funding and more focused consultation.

#### Fence the existing play area **Priority Improvement**

- Feedback from families suggests that the play area would be improved and better used if dogs were excluded. Younger children, in particular, can be easily intimidated by dogs and there is a concern around dog fouling in or near the play area.
- It is proposed that rather than traditional fencing, natural materials are used to create a barrier – within which self-closing gates can be accommodated. This would be a lower cost and easily maintainable option which is in-keeping with the semi-natural character of the green space.



Dead hedges can be used to make natural screening

#### Extend play provision with a focus on natural play **Longer Term Improvement**

- The Council's green space strategy recognises that a range of different play facilities should be provided across the district and that the emphasis in play area management is shifting away from straightforward and formal equipment such as slides and swings towards natural play. The location and setting of Kensington Meadows make it an ideal place for natural play.
- Natural play encourages children to explore their natural surroundings, learn about wildlife and play imaginatively using natural materials. It helps children to learn about managing risk in a natural environment.



Fallen tree trunks and logs for climbing

- The range of play equipment at Kensington Meadows could be extended with new natural play opportunities located across a wider area. This would encourage children and families to explore more of the site.
- New play opportunities could make use of landscape features such as woodland, planting and the embankment and materials such as logs, gravels and boulders.

### 3. 6 VIEWS OF THE RIVER AND THE RIVERSIDE WALK

Survey results highlighted that riverside walk is a highly valued feature of the site because it is peaceful and provides a rare opportunity to get close to a natural section of the River Avon near the city.

The riverside walk would be better used if there were more access points and provision of seating. Access onto the riverside path from the east of the site is difficult and the river is not visible from the upper field.

An **Angling Improvement Project** was carried out in 2017-18. The project, which was led by The Avon Frome Partnership and B&NES Council and funded by the Angling Trust, included new entrance signage, finger posts to encourage people to explore the hidden riverside path and five new angling points. A new map of the site was also produced.

#### Improve access **Priority Improvement**

- The steps down to the riverside walk should be repaired and a hand rail installed to make the path more accessible to those with restricted mobility.

#### Install seating **Priority Improvement**

- Installing benches along the riverside path will help make it more accessible and enable visitors to stop and enjoy the setting. Benches should be in a style which fits the character of the River.

#### More visible access points **Priority Improvement**

- There is an access point to the riverside walk near the play area which should be signposted and made more visible by reducing vegetation.

#### Open up views of the river **Longer Term Improvement**

- The riverside walk has recently been made more prominent with the addition of signposts and angling points – through the Avon Frome partnership. However, feedback in the survey shows that the meadow and riverside areas still feel very disconnected. It is possible to visit Kensington Meadows and catch no glimpse of the river.
- Views of the river from the upper meadow area should be opened up in places to make the two parts of the green space feel more connected.
- Selective tree thinning and scrub management would help to achieve this.

### 3.7 IMPROVING THE GREEN ROUTE

#### Install a surfaced path through the site **Longer Term Improvement**

Consultation responses demonstrate the most likely reason for people visiting Kensington Meadows is as a cut through – both on-foot and by bicycle.

It is clear that the route from Grosvenor Bridge Road to Morrisons supermarket is particularly well used throughout the year and forms a significant “green route” within the city.

Given the significance of this route, the high amount of use that it attracts and the need for Bath to encourage more sustainable forms of travel – consideration should be given to surfacing this path so that it becomes more accessible and useable in all weathers.

This particular route through Kensington Meadows was identified as a proposed route in the Council’s Strategic Cycle Network Review carried out in 2014. An extended path network was also proposed in the WaterSpace Study.



This topic of a surfaced path was not consulted on specifically but it featured regularly in consultation comments. Most comments were in favour of an accessible surfaced path for the many people who walk and cycle through the site. A small minority are against a surfaced path and would prefer the site to stay more natural. There is also a concern that a surfaced path would bring a significant increase in the amount and speed of bicycle traffic passing through the site. These concerns would need to be mitigated as much as possible in the design of any surfaced path.

There is not currently any funding for this work to be carried out and it would be subject to further community consultation.

#### Improve way marking / directional signage **Longer Term Improvement**

- Install signage at strategic locations on the local footpath network to highlight connections to and from Kensington Meadows. Links to the canal towpath could be highlighted.
- This would increase awareness of the green space and encourage more people to visit.

# 4. Summary of Proposed Improvements

## Priority Improvements

### Entrances

- Strengthen surfaces adjacent to main entrances
- Improve entrance at Meadows Lane
- Improve entrance at Morrisons supermarket
- Create a new pedestrian entrance from Ringswell Gardens

### Meadow Creation and Tree Planting

- Increase wild meadow areas
- Tree Planting

## Longer Term Improvements

### Entrances

- Open up further access points

### Play

- Extend play provision with a focus on natural play

### Improving the Green Route

- Install a surfaced path through the site
- Improve way marking / directional signage

### Seating

- Install more seating
- Install picnic / barbeque facilities

### Play

- Fence the existing play area

### Views of the River and the Riverside Walk

- Improve access
- Install seating
- More visible access points

### Local Nature Reserve

- Undertake an ecological survey of the Local Nature Reserve and create a management plan outlining how the site should best be managed
- Create access through the Local Nature Reserve

### Views of the River and the Riverside Walk

- Open up views of the River

## 5. Have Your Say

We really want to hear the opinions of the people who use Kensington Meadows and have local knowledge of the area.

Once you have reviewed the proposal and the proposed scheme site plan (downloadable from the Kensington Meadows web page) you can feed back support for the proposals or raise any concerns in one of the following ways:

- Complete the feedback form at the end of this proposal
- Email your feedback to the Parks and Green Spaces Department [parks@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:parks@bathnes.gov.uk)
- Write to The Parks and Green Spaces Department at Bath and North East Somerset Council, RVP Nursery, Marlborough Lane. Bath. BA1 2LZ.

We encourage everyone to respond to the proposal – even if you fully support the suggested improvements and don't have any further comments to make.

**Feedback must be received by 31st December 2018**

## 6. What Happens Next?

**By the end of November 2018**

- Consultation report and improvement proposal published on the Kensington Meadows web page.

**By the end of December 2018**

- Feedback/comments on the improvement proposal to be received.

**By the end of March 2019**

- Significant issues/concerns to be addressed through detailed design.
- Priority works tendered and scheduled by the Parks and Green Spaces Department. Volunteering activities to be identified

**April – August 2019**

- Priority improvements carried out. Volunteering activities identified as part of the work programme
- Parts of the site may be unavailable for periods of time during this period but advance notice will be given.

## 7. Keeping You Updated on the Project

Regular updates, including advance notice of any disruption caused by improvement works, will be available:

- at [www.bathnes.gov.uk/kensingtonmeadows](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/kensingtonmeadows)
- on posters displayed at Kensington Meadows
- by email to those who have subscribed to the project mailing list. You can subscribe to the mailing list on the Kensington Meadows web page or leave your email address on the feedback form

## 8. Volunteering

- Over the years, volunteers have played a very active role in managing Kensington Meadows – undertaking activities such as tree planting, managing marginal vegetation and organising a varied programme of events.
- The Friends of Kensington Meadows (FoKM) has existed since 1990 and has worked with the Council to preserve, improve and promote the green space. In recent years the FoKM steering group has operated as a sub-group of the London Road & Snow Hill Partnership.
- Whilst still taking a keen interest in the site FoKM has become less active in recent years and would welcome new members to help re-invigorate the group. The Council supports the ongoing involvement of a Friends group.
- The recent consultation survey shows that there is an appetite amongst users to become more involved in the site – through one-off volunteering and events. Tree planting, extending and maintaining areas of wild meadow and managing the local nature reserve present great opportunities for volunteering.
- When planning improvements the Council will identify volunteering opportunities and work with the local community to promote and facilitate them.



**Volunteer tree planting event**

## Kensington Meadows Proposed Improvements - Feedback Form

Once you have reviewed the proposal and the proposed scheme site plan please feedback your support for the proposed scheme or raise any concerns.

**Feedback must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018**

**Q1) Do you support the proposed scheme? (Please choose one)**



I fully support the proposed scheme



I would support the scheme if some things were changed



I do not support the proposed scheme

**Please give reason(s) for your choice of answer above:**

**Q2) The best thing about the proposed scheme is...**

**Q3) The proposed scheme could be made better if...**

**Q4) Any other comments:**

**Your Postcode:**

(This is collected for monitoring purposes only)

I want sign up for email updates and my email address is:

I'm interested in being part of a Friends of Kensington Meadows group