

A photograph of a park with a paved path, trees, and a person walking. The path is on the right, leading into a grassy area with several trees. A person is walking away from the camera on the path. The background shows more trees and a building.

Dukes Meadows

Executive summary

OCTOBER 2016



London Borough
of Hounslow

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Dukes Meadows comprises 75.5 ha (187 acres) of parkland located in the London Borough of Hounslow, adjacent to the River Thames and downstream of Barnes Bridge. It is one of the largest public open spaces in London, straddling the railway line between Barnes and Chiswick and offering open access to the Thames. Its northern border is marked by the Great Chertsey Arterial Road.

Dukes Meadows is defined as Metropolitan Open Land and is in the Thames Policy Area and in Flood Zone 3b. The allocation in LBH local plan outlines the wish to enhance sporting provision in the area, while protecting the nature of the open land.

Site provision



Chiswick Boat House

Dukes Meadows features a mix of public and private sports clubs and playing fields. More than 75% of the site is used for formal recreation, making it one of the largest centres for sport in West London, including facilities for cricket, rowing, tennis, rugby, hockey, golf, bowls and football. An estimated one million-plus visits are made to the park each year, playing a key role in enhancing the health and wellbeing of local people. Owing to the large number of teams that play at Dukes Meadows, the FA has designated it a site of high priority for football and it has the potential to be a Parklife hub site. The site is complex, with a wide range of facilities and a diverse visitor base. Provision is spread across a large number of leaseholders and other stakeholders, including the Dukes Meadows Trust (DMT) which manages part of the park.

The riverside location provides plentiful opportunities for rowing and other water sports and the Dukes Meadows stretch of the river is included in a number of important rowing events including the Head of the River Races and the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. One of LB Hounslow's aspirations is to develop a more comprehensive water sports offer to include sailing and canoeing on the underused Chiswick Boathouse site, making the river more accessible to young people in the Borough.

Alongside the sporting facilities are three well-used allotments comprising 472 plots, Dukes Hollow nature reserve which is designated a SINC site, a significant water meadow and a range of buildings contributing to the landscape character of the park. The main public offer is located to the east of the site managed by the DMT, comprising a café, pavilion and artist's studios with public toilets. The Trust has also introduced a successful farmers market and has invested in facilities for children that include an adventure playground, water play area and sandpit. The nearby Grade I listed Chiswick House and gardens are a significant local heritage asset and there is potential to upgrade access from the house to Dukes Meadows to encourage a two-way flow of visitors.





Strategic context

An initial review was undertaken of relevant policies, strategies and previous studies and documents relating to Dukes Meadows. The site is included in four open space and green infrastructure strategies:

- All London Grid (ALGG)
- Thames Strategy, Kew-Chelsea (Atkins 2002)
- The Thames Path National trail, Dukes Meadows feasibility study (Atkins 2007)
- Natural Capital, Investing in Green Infrastructure for a Future London

LB Hounslow's Leisure and Cultural Strategy 2016-2020 underpins the value that is placed on the recreational and sporting offer provided by Dukes Meadows. The objectives of the strategy are to

1. Enhance the network of parks and green spaces for diverse needs.
2. Support residents to be more active
3. Celebrate Hounslow's people, places, local history, heritage and culture.

A key aspect of the strategy is the integration between leisure, culture and health, with emphasis placed on leisure and cultural



services as an important resource for improving public health and wellbeing. Service provision encourages healthy lifestyles by enabling participation in physical activity and sport and facilitating access to and use of green space. This plays a vital role in preventing ill-health, which in turn has an impact on reducing costs within the wider economy, the council and the NHS.

Hounslow's Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2020 sits alongside this document and critically evaluates the current quantity, type, quality and distribution of outdoor sports and recreational facilities within the study area, quantifies current and potential future demand. This document provides the strategic evidence and need required by funders and National Governing Bodies of sport like football, rugby and hockey to justify support and investment.

The 2009 Dukes Meadows Transport and Access Strategy, in tandem with the 2012 Road Network Feasibility Study for Upgrade to Adoptable Standards identified a range of access and transport issues that need to be addressed if Dukes Meadows is to reach its full potential. These include:

1. Tackling informal parking and inconsistent pedestrian access
2. Better management of transport flows and speed limits
3. Better maintenance of highways, paths and existing parking facilities

Dukes Meadows is easily accessed by public transport but many of the footpaths and unadopted roads are in poor repair and act as a barrier to safe use by joggers, walkers and cyclists. One of the key objectives is also to restore the tow path to restore the connectivity along the Thames path.

The Borough's Local Plan 2015-2030 also includes four objectives and a range of planning policies relevant to Dukes Meadows.

Both local and broader regional plans and policies all support the development, protection and enhancement of Dukes Meadows, demonstrating that the site needs to be viewed holistically. The opportunities afforded by improvements to the Thames Path and the landscape character of the site all need to be developed in line with planned enhancements to the sporting facilities available so that they complement one another.

Identifying a shared vision



In February 2016, Around the Block and associates MTW Leisure Consultants and J&L Gibbons were commissioned to undertake a background review and stakeholder strategy for Dukes Meadows. The aim of the review was to focus on priorities common to all stakeholders and to identify issues that can be resolved in the short term to enhance the user experience for local people. This involved defining the current and potential audience; engagement with leaseholders and stakeholders to identify common issues and develop a shared vision for the site and ultimately, to develop a set of recommendations for better site management and governance.

Next steps

It is clear from the review of all relevant strategies and policies, as well as the SWOT analysis and stakeholder consultation that improvements can only be made at Dukes Meadows via an integrated approach to public and private land on the site that is supported by stakeholders. The final report demonstrates clearly that areas of focus for any future vision for Dukes Meadows are to:

- Restore, enhance and protect the landscape character of the site.
- Improve the formal sports offer and informal opportunities to improve health and wellbeing and access to sport.
- Realise the potential of Dukes Meadows and in particular the Chiswick boathouse as a catalyst for a centre for water sports excellence.
- Revisit The Dukes Meadows Transport and Access Strategy, with particular reference to improving access via the Thames Path.
- Improve public access and enhance the community value of the site.
- Conserve natural assets through protection and enhancement of existing assets.



Our vision for Dukes Meadows:

To conserve and enhance sustainably, for the enjoyment of this and future generations, the landscape character, biodiversity and sporting excellence of Dukes Meadows.