

Bradbourne Lakes, Sevenoaks. Guidance notes for improving accessibility and inclusion in the park.

Context

This is a summary report of the online discussion, 25.06.25 between Helen Rosevear ST, with Lina Madson, Sevenoaks District Council, and Melissa, LUC, to explore how the landscape design proposals and community approach to restoring and developing Bradbourne lakes and park can enhance the accessibility and inclusive ambitions of the park.

The background information provided was :

General Arrangement Plan 13362, rev WIP, (LUC)

Draft community engagement and inclusion plan 2025 (Sevenoaks District Council)

Draft activity plan 25.06.25 (Sevenoaks District Council)



Bradbourne Re-bourne: Bringing Back Blue Nature



Community Engagement and Inclusion Plan Engaging Harder to Reach Groups

Main Report

November 2025



Activity	Location	Time	Facilities	Accessibility	Inclusion	Notes
1	Bradbourne Lakes	10.00-11.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
2	Bradbourne Lakes	11.00-12.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
3	Bradbourne Lakes	12.00-13.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
4	Bradbourne Lakes	13.00-14.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
5	Bradbourne Lakes	14.00-15.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
6	Bradbourne Lakes	15.00-16.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
7	Bradbourne Lakes	16.00-17.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
8	Bradbourne Lakes	17.00-18.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
9	Bradbourne Lakes	18.00-19.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
10	Bradbourne Lakes	19.00-20.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
11	Bradbourne Lakes	20.00-21.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community
12	Bradbourne Lakes	21.00-22.00	Seating, picnic tables	Wheelchair accessible	Interpretive panels	Engage with local community

Key aspects to consider and priorities to improve inclusion when restoring and developing the park.

1. Pre information, arrival and parking
2. Paths, accessibility and equality of experience
3. Features and facilities
4. Information and signage on and offsite
5. Engagement with local communities
6. KPIs

1. Pre information, arrival and parking.

Bradbourne Lakes park is situated in a residential area of Sevenoaks and is split into approximately two equally sized areas by Betenson Avenue, forming a northern and southern park.

Both parks have pedestrian access from Betenson Avenue. The northern park has a single path leading to Bradbourne Vale Road (A25), and the southern park has a main path leading to Lambarde Road on the eastern side, with secondary paths within the park.

- The choice of entrances to the park is beneficial as it provides options of routes within the park and length of stay for visitors.

Parking is available at the Bradbourne Avenue entrance and at the Lambarde road entrance.

- Consideration is advised to designate part of the parking areas to Accessible Parking bays with the associated accessible design and surfaces. The availability of accessible parking can be promoted to encourage people requiring close-by accessible parking to visit the park.
- Consideration to designated 'drop off' areas are suggested as these may be useful for visiting groups who use taxis or minibuses.

There is a bus route along Bradbourne Vale road that stops near the northern entrance to the park.

- It is suggested that exploring a safe and accessible route from the bus stops to the northern entrance is explored further to widen the accessibility of the park to non-car users and reduce pressure on the parking areas.

Many visitors, including disabled people are strongly influenced by their understanding of the locations accessibility and facilities available when deciding whether to visit. Studies have shown that key factors include information about the availability of accessible parking and public transport routes and drop off areas and the distances from these to the main attraction.

- Factual information is most useful (eg Bus route No X stops 100m from an accessible park entrance located on XX street, two accessible parking bays are available at the X Road entrance), rather than predetermined general judgement statements eg. entrance X is not suitable for disabled people.

2. Paths, accessibility and equality of experience.

An accessible path network is essential to creating an inclusive park experience for visitors. The park upgrade has identified the need to refurbish the existing path network and has proposed various surface finishes. Gradients gentler than 1:60 and bound non-slip surfaces are the most accessible, with minimal cambers (no more than 1:50, 1:80 preferred), and widths that respond to the numbers of people using them, refer to the OAG sections Path Dimensions and Path Surfaces for further information.

Inclusivity aims to allow everyone to have an equality of experience, which may not be the same experience but ensures that no one must settle for second best experiences. Consideration to the accessibility of the various experiences within the park and identification of the key or unique experiences is essential, and detailed assessments are recommended to review how accessible these are and will be.

Recommendations

The northern park has one main path from north to south with a proposed refurbishment using a macadam finish at 1.5m wide. There is a secondary path that loops around the play area and a short spur that accesses the proposed composting toilet, both have a self-binding gravel surface proposed and 1.2m wide. There are two bridge crossing over the waterway associated with the play area, only one bridge has a macadam finish, and all routes are understood to be step free .

1.5m wide main path is sufficient for a wheelchair user and ambulant person to pass, however 1.8m is required for two wheelchair users to pass comfortably and increases to 2.5m for two adaptive bikes to pass.

- It is recommended that frequent wider passing bays are created along the main path, each bay a minimum 2.5m wide and 2m long , and at every 50m or more frequently where sightlines are lost.
- Note that the widths given are the minimum usable widths so it is important that the widths are designed and maintained to be free of vegetation growth or other obstructions such as seating , signage, bins.
- The secondary path around the play area is a primary attraction of the park and the use of self-binding gravel will reduce its accessibility for some users. It is recommended that a bound or macadam surface finish is used rather than the self-binding finish proposed (erosion and loose surface material likely over time will render the surface more difficult to use) .

- The path to the toilets needs to be fully accessible so a bound or macadam surface is recommended.
- Stepping stones – explore an additional similar experience for those who cannot use the stepping stones.

The southern park has a direct route from north to east, with a proposed refurbishment using a macadam finish at 1.5m wide, and two optional loops around lake four and three. The optional loop around lake four has a macadam finish at 1.5m wide (LUC please confirm) and the secondary path around lake three has a proposed self-binding gravel surface at 1.2m wide. There is a bridge over lake three, and all routes are understood to be step free or have a nearby ramped alternative.

1.5m wide macadam paths are sufficient for a wheelchair user and ambulant person to pass, however 1.8m is required for two wheelchair users to pass comfortably and increases to 2.5m for two adaptive bikes to pass.

- It is recommended that frequent wider passing bays are created along the main path and the macadam secondary path around lake four, each bay a minimum 2.5m wide and 2m long, and at every 50m or more frequently where sightlines are lost.
- The self-binding gravel secondary path around lake 3 could be considered a similar experience to lake four and therefore not unique, and so the use of the less accessible self-binding finish is reasonable. However as with the other paths it is recommended that frequent wider passing bays are created along the main path and the macadam secondary path around lake four, minimum 2.5m wide, 2m long, and every 50m or more frequently where sightlines are lost.
- New ramp alternative to steps. Where steps and ramps are used in the park, it is recommended to follow best practice guidelines to improve accessibility (see OAG for further details).

3. Features and facilities

The primary experience of the park is the freshwater lakes and their associated amenity and wildlife, and the proposals includes new or refurbished amenity features, including a large play area, improved picnic opportunity, additional seating, bridges over the water and a remote-controlled boat launching jetty. The park currently has no toilet facility, and a fully accessible composting toilet is proposed.

Recommendations

Seating

- Explore the most accessible locations for visitors to engage and observe the wildlife. Ensure that accessible seating is available at these locations and sufficient path surface to allow people to pause or sit without blocking pathways.
- Accessible seating has back supports and arm rests and a seat height of 450mm. Create a space adjacent to the seats (generally 1400 x 900mm) for wheelchair users to 'park'.
- More seating options are recommended throughout the park that vary in height (380 -480mm seat height), including informal 'perches' (such as tree trunks) but always ensure these are well maintained and immovable.
- Provide wheelchair accessible picnic benches in accessible areas.

Play

- Explore accessible and nature-based sensory rich 'quiet' play options that are integrated with less accessible play structures. Ensure that play areas have accessible surfaces to allow disabled carers and parents to be close to the play features. Provide plentiful seating and shelter close to the play areas.
- Where a key feature is not fully accessible, such as stepping stone, explore options for alternative features that provide a similar but more accessible experience.

Water's edge

- Where experience take visitors close to the waters edge ensure that edges are safe and consider if rails or upstands are required. Pay particular attention to the camber of the paths and ensure paths are highly non-slip and are wide enough to allow people to pass a comfortable distance away from the water's edge if desired.
- It is recommended that the proposed remote control boat launch jetty and other jetties for wildlife observations should be fully accessible (the jetty and approach) to wheelchair users and large enough to accommodate groups of people involved in boat launching such as a family or an activity group. Basic safety standards require 150mm edge upstands and minimum sizes of 1.8 x1.8m to allow wheelchair turning. Detailed consideration to the

approach and the jetty size and design is recommended. The British Disabled Angling Association has helpful design guides for accessible platforms

Calm areas

It is recommended that the park design identifies calm areas that are accessible but away from activity areas. Some neurodivergent people may prefer calmer and quieter areas to experience the park. Quieter areas should offer options in seating arrangements, both multiple and dual, and particular consideration given to the planting design in these areas to provide additional sensory and wildlife experiences.

Sensory engagement

People experience landscape in multisensory ways. It is recommended that when developing the visitor experience of the park, aim to provide at least 2 sensory experiences for each feature.

Sensory trails are an engaging way to direct people towards the sensory experiences of the park. This can be developed overtime with the input of local groups, creating a sensory map of the park and then developing trail maps.

Plant enrichment.

Where additional planting is done consider the sensory value of the plants and their seasonality. Aim to increase the sensory diversity of planting schemes, for example looking to widen the seasonal colour, and soundscapes by using grasses for example, and scent (however take care to only offer strongly scented areas next to paths and seating areas as a choice to experience, as many people have sensitivity to strongly scented plants)

4. Information and signage

Pre information about the accessibility of the park and the experiences within it is very helpful for disabled people when deciding to visit.

Recommendations

Online accessible information is developed to give information about transport to the park, arrival, parking options, routes, amenities and facilities with the park. Techniques to communicate this information should be developed that ensure websites follow Web Content Accessibility Guidance (WCAG) Easy English is used, and seek to use diverse techniques to communicate information such as video walk-throughs, soundscapes and pictorial symbols such as Widgit.

If this information is made available to print or download can be very helpful for disabled visitors.

Inclusive onsite wayfinding and information communication

Recommendations

Wayfinding should be clear and indicate path hierarchy if relevant. Distances to seating, amenities and facilities is helpful and visual images are helpful such as landmarks and features. Have a clear visual language of wayfinding and signage and where paths split and to important facilities such as toilets, ensure wayfinding is clear and accessible.

5. Engagement with local communities for the long term

Establishing opportunities for disabled people to use the park for amenity, activities and volunteering is strongly recommended.

The project has already carried out considerable engagement with the local community including mental health and dementia charities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that communication is continued and explored with other groups that enable disabled people to access outdoor spaces, including people who are blind and partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing, neurodivergent, and

organisations such as care homes, special schools and groups that promote access to wildlife for disabled people such as Birding for all.

The redevelopment project is exploring how volunteers will assist in maintaining the park. Exploring how this can include disabled people is strongly recommended. These groups and people with lived experiences may be able to assist in providing content for pre-visitor information, sensory trails, and comment on proposed detail content for the park.

6. Key Performance indicators.

It is recommended that the project establishes accessible and inclusive performance indicators for different aspects of the park development, including

- Park design, including accessibility of transport and arrival, path network, park features and amenities.
- Communication and provision of information both off and onsite.
- Community engagement and volunteer programmes.

Appendix

We provide consultancy on improving accessibility and inclusion on specific aspects of projects including landscape design, planting, visitor communication and information, community engagement techniques and training for professionals and volunteers.

Sensory Trust has a number of resources and guidance available online. Please look at our Resources and Guidance sections.

Outdoor Accessibility Guidance. Designed to help make our outdoor places and spaces, routes and facilities more accessible, and outdoor experiences more inclusive, so they can be enjoyed by everyone.

By All Reasonable Means. Developed by Sensory Trust for Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, this introduces the approach of least restrictive access to take account of more physically challenging sites.

Easy Access to Historic Landscapes. Developed through a collaboration between Historic England, Sensory Trust, Heritage Lottery and National Trust, this guide provides recommendations and standards.

Other ST resources

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/designing-with-plain-language>

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/inclusive-play>

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/using-widgit-and-symbol-languages>

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/sensory-mapping>

Other sources of information

[Birding For All](#) [Widgit Online](#)

[BDAA | Download Area](#) (British disabled angling association)