Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field
Management Plan
2005 – 2010

This document was produced with assistance from the
Friends of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field
Foreword

This application for Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is the third submission from the London Borough of Merton for the Green Flag Award.

Central Government, the Greater London Authority and partner agencies are placing an increasing emphasis on the role of open spaces in creating safe, healthy and sustainable communities in the 21st century. The London Borough of Merton has been committed to investing in our open spaces and related facilities through the implementation of our Merton Open Space Strategy. We are striving to ensure we are responsive to our communities and provide the highest quality of service. The Green Flag Award is recognised as the quality benchmark for our open spaces.

The Members of Merton Council and the Friends of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field are pleased to submit this application, and believe that the Green Flag Award criteria offer an excellent model for providing and measuring good parks management consistently across the United Kingdom. This application is submitted with the full support of the Council.

Should you require any further information with regards to this application please contact Ruth Hutton our Green Spaces Development Manager on 020 8545 3658 or ruth.hutton@merton.gov.uk.

Councillor Tariq Ahmad
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Traffic Management
Vision

“To encourage healthier lifestyles, strong inclusive communities and an appreciation of nature through the provision of an attractive, high quality space with facilities that are modern, safe, clean, sustainable and accessible to all”.

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1 Introduction

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is one of the London Borough of Merton’s 13 Elite Sports Grounds. Situated in Motspur Park, off Marina Avenue, in the ward of West Barnes on the southwest border between the London Borough of Merton and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The 12.75-hectare recreation ground provides mainly for organised sports and games. The Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood, located in the open space, is site of Borough (Grade II) importance for nature conservation.

The Playing Field land and adjacent Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Woodland, were acquired by the Urban District of Merton and Morden and conveyed to the District Council in 1935. The site was named after the local benefactor, Member of Parliament and ex-Mayor of Wimbledon, Sir Joseph Hood.

The playing fields are an important community and biodiversity asset and form part of the wider structural open space network of Greater London. The site is designated in the London Plan as Metropolitan Open Land. This level of protection confirms the importance of developing and maintaining this multi function open space. LB Merton recognises that our open spaces are an important community asset. They contribute to healthier lifestyles, social cohesion and safer communities.

The existing 2ha woodland, which is over 140 years old, supports a variety of indigenous flora and fauna. In 1999 the “Millennium Woodland” was planted with trees grown from acorns collected from the original woodland as part of Merton Tree Week. In the summer of 2000, following the planting of the Millennium Wood, the mowing regime relaxed at the southern end of the open space, encouraging the development of a diverse grassland environment.

The park provides for a variety of active and passive leisure activities and organised sports. The space is popular and highly valued by local residents.

This document summarises the present condition of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field and its importance to the local community and the species that live in the woods. The aims and objectives for the sustainable management and future development of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field are structured around the eight key criteria set by the Civic Trust and Cabe Space for the Green Flag Award:

1. Creating a Welcoming Space
2. Providing a Park that is Healthy, Safe and Secure
3. A Park that is Clean and Well Maintained
4. Sustainable Management of Resources
5. Appropriate Management of Conservation and Heritage Features
6. Encouraging Community Involvement
7. Marketing the Facility Effectively
8. Implementation of Effective Management Strategies
Action Plan Progress Summary

Progress against the action plan projects in Section 6 of this Management Plan is summarised below. Projects are added to this list upon completion or on placement of an order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New shrub borders at Marina Ave Entrance and outside Pavilion.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>S106</td>
<td>£3K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New gates for pavilion garden, to cemetery.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>S106</td>
<td>£5K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Replace chainlink fencing along boundary between car park and tennis courts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>S106</td>
<td>£9K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tarmac works, main pathways.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>S106</td>
<td>£9K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New interpretive signage and rearrangement of existing signage to improve views from the entrance.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>£1.5K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Directional signage in surrounding neighbourhood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tarmac works responding to tree root damage.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>£40K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Car park extended and disabled bays marked out.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>£10K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Toilets redeveloped to make accessible for people with disabilities and children.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>£57.5K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Extra seating provided throughout the park.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>£2K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trim trail and signage.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Norlands Foundation</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Refurbishment of 4 tennis courts.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Marathon Trust and Capital</td>
<td>£45K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Decontamination of old bowling green. Crazy golf area developed.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>£40K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Installation of basketball goals.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>£10K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Installation of new cycle route through parks cycle racks.</td>
<td>2007/8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transport for London</td>
<td>£50K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Install planet and new seat in crazy golf area.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>£1K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hold Green Flag event in Park</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>£1K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Install new handrails and disabled access to woods.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>DDA funding</td>
<td>£1K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Installation of Zaun fencing around basketball area.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marathon Trust Fund Grant</td>
<td>£25K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tree pruning on squirrel damaged trees.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>£3K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Strategic Context

2.1 Introduction

This Management Plan articulates the vision for the improvement and management of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field and provides detailed objectives and action plans to direct Merton Property and Leisure to achieve this vision over the next 5 years. The objectives of the management plan are aligned to the criteria for the Green Flag Award administered by the Civic Trust.

Significantly, the objectives for all of the Management Plans for LB Merton’s open spaces have been developed with the wider strategic objectives across the borough in mind. These objectives are defined in the Merton Community and Business Plans.

2.2 Merton’s Community and Business Plans

Merton’s Community Plan 2006 - 2015, has been developed and implemented by the Merton Partnership, which sets out what will happen over the next 9 years to improve the quality of life for everyone in Merton. It covers a range of issues about living and working in Merton, such as housing, the environment, the economy, transport, safety, health, culture and the needs of particular groups like carers, disabled people, older people, children and young people. The key themes of the community plan are:

- Sustainable Communities;
- Safer and Stronger Merton;
- Healthier Communities;
- Older People;
- Children and Young People.

For further information go to: http://www.merton.gov.uk/community/communityplan

The Merton Business Plan 2006 - 2009, developed following consultation with residents, aims to make “Merton – a great place to live, work and learn” by directing the overall improvement of local services. The council’s ambition is: “To be excellent in the delivery of the services that matter most to our residents, and to provide leadership to the community through effective citizen engagement and partnership working”. The 5 key priorities for the business plan reflect the themes of the Community Plan. The day-to-day work of the council and the key targets for services are addressed in the separate service plans of all council departments.

For further information go to http://www.merton.gov.uk/community/businessplan

2.3 Cultural Strategy

Our parks and open spaces are central to the variety of cultural activities offered by the Council. Merton’s Cultural Strategy 2007 – 2010, will support and direct the Merton Partnership on the value of culture in achieving the objectives of the Community Plan as well as being a key driver in ensuring a range of local cultural aims and ambitions are delivered.

For further information go to http://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/culturalstrategy.htm

2.4 Merton Open Space Strategy (MOSS)

Below the Community and Business Plans and the Cultural Strategy, under the “sustainable communities” theme, sits the Merton Open Space Strategy (MOSS). The range of sub-strategies can be viewed in Figure 2.1 below. The MOSS was developed from detailed studies of the borough’s open spaces and consultation of residents. Released in 2004, the MOSS identifies the key open space issues and defines a vision for the future. The vision is translated into objectives and principles with a detailed action
plan that describes the key projects and improvements required to achieve the vision by 2010. Allotments play a major role in delivering the outcomes of the MOSS.

For further information go to
http://www.merton.gov.uk/living/environment/openspaces/moss.htm

2.5 Significance of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is an important feature of the overall Merton Open Space network and has an essential and individual role in meeting the Council’s wider strategic objectives. Merton’s Community and Business Plans articulate the key social, environmental and economic themes around which Merton Council is trying to improve the quality of life for our residents.

The table below illustrates how SJHMPF contributes to Merton’s wider strategic objectives.

Table 2.1 Sir Joseph Hood and Merton’s Strategic Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainable Communities</th>
<th>Safer, Stronger Merton</th>
<th>Healthier Communities</th>
<th>Older People</th>
<th>Children &amp; Young People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass and Woodlands improving local water, soil and air quality.</td>
<td>Accessible facilities for people living with disabilities.</td>
<td>Sports facilities including: Tennis, basketball and football facilities.</td>
<td>Accessible Car Parking</td>
<td>Paddling pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting, enhancing and promoting local biodiversity.</td>
<td>Inspected and well-maintained facilities.</td>
<td>Good quality toilets</td>
<td>Plan to upgrade all paths for safe access</td>
<td>Pavilion Cheeky Monkeys play group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting local urban amenity.</td>
<td>Good policies and facilities for safe dog walking.</td>
<td>Good pedestrian access to all parts of the site.</td>
<td>Good quality site furniture</td>
<td>Crazy Golf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good links to adjacent private open spaces.</td>
<td>Staff members on site.</td>
<td>Trim Trail</td>
<td>Handrails on bridge access to woods.</td>
<td>Organised education activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active, enthusiastic Friends Group and other Stakeholders.</td>
<td>Engagement with the local community.</td>
<td>Organised Healthy Walks.</td>
<td>Seating and plant beds in crazy golf area.</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of new cycle route through park.</td>
<td>Installation of fencing and upgrading tarmac footpaths.</td>
<td>New Cycle route</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field

3.1 Site Details

Name: Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field

Address: Marina Avenue, Motspur Park, West Barnes.

Contacts:
- General enquiries: 020 8545 3677 or leisure@merton.gov.uk
- Friends Group:
  - Caroline Ventom 020 8942 5605 or ventcaroli@aol.com
  - Sophie Cabral 020 8404 8346 or cabralsophie@yahoo.co.uk

Web: www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/parks

Grid Reference: Easting and Northing 522750,167250

Designation:
- Metropolitan Open Land
- Local Nature Reserve
- Site of Borough Grade II Importance for Nature Conservation.

Ownership: Leisure Services, London Borough of Merton

Size: 12.75 hectares

Type: Elite Sports Ground

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood designated Metropolitan Open Land.

Legal Interest: Transferred by way of a Conveyance 24th October 1935.

Byelaws: See Appendix 6

Access:
- Opening hours:
  - Monday – Friday: 0800 to dusk
  - Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays: 0900 to dusk

Local Facilities:
- Sports Pitches
- Playground and Paddling Pool
- Tennis Courts
- Multisports area (to include basketball)
- Pavilion
- Café in Summer
- Woodlands and Meadow
- Neighbourhood Recycling

Transport:
- Train: Motspur Park Station (3 minutes walk)
- Buses: K5

Parking:
- Unmarked parking for 100 vehicles adjacent to main entrance.
- (0 dedicated disabled spaces).
4  Description

4.1  Location

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field (SJH) is located off Marina Avenue, Motspur Park in West Barnes Ward on the southwest border of the London Borough of Merton and the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames. The main entrance to the Playing Field is to the north of the site off Marina Avenue. There are two pedestrian entrances on the eastern boundary of the playing fields toward the Morden Crematorium and Cemetery and one on the southern boundary.

Figure 4.1 Location of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field

4.2  Soils

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is located on London Clay with unclassified terrace material near the Beverley Brook. Topsoil above the clay is up to 5cm deep with an acidity level of pH 5.

4.3  Hydrology

The site is level with a drainage ditch that flows into the Beverley Brook demarcating its terrestrial boundaries. As a result of the underlying geology and topography of the site the Playing Field, Memorial Wood and surrounding land are all subject to impeded drainage that can result in water logging during wet weather.
4.4 Flora

Aside from the intensively managed football pitches, there are a number of areas of horticultural interest in the Playing Field. The old rose beds in front of the pavilion were replaced by two new shrub beds in 2005. A new border was planted in 2006 adjacent to the car park. The Friends planted daffodil bulbs and the 22 Wimbledon Beaver Cub Scouts planted wild flower seeds on the eastern boundary in 2006.

The Memorial Wood has a dense shrub layer predominantly consisting of elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, ash, field maple, field rose, yew, alder, privet, cherry, holly and bramble. Midland hawthorn, ramsons, wood sedge and small-leaved lime here are usually suggestive of ancient woodland but the history of this wood indicates otherwise (LEU 1998).

The ground flora is generally sparse with much ivy, although on either side of the main footpath, which runs from north to south for the length of the site, can be found hedge woundwort, herb-Robert, hedge bedstraw, cleavers, wood dock and cow parsley. Elsewhere within the wood are Lords-and-Ladies, wood meadow grass and false brome. There is a glade to the west of the main path where butterflies may be seen in the summer (LEU 1998).

At the same time the Millennium Wood (see 3.6 trees) was planted, some of the amenity grassland areas next to the wood and Southern Boundary were allowed to develop into meadow. These areas are now important nature conservation areas encouraging greater species diversity.

4.5 Fauna

A range of birds can be seen in the Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood. Great spotted woodpecker, blackcap, chiffchaff, tree creeper and nuthatch are among those that breed in the wood while stock doves are sometimes present on the fields; the kestrels seen possibly breed on the nearby gasholders. There is a large jackdaw roost in the wood. As the wood is some distance from any major roads, the bird song can be enjoyed in peace and quiet, with the only disturbance from the occasional passing train (LEU 1998).

4.6 Trees

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood.

The Memorial Wood covers approximately two hectares and is situated along the western edge of the site bounded by Beverley Brook. It is designated as a Local Nature Reserve in the LB Merton Unitary Development Plan 2000. It is also listed as a Site of Borough Grade II Importance for Nature Conservation.

The Memorial Wood is the only remaining woodland in the area. It originated as a plantation forest in the 1860s, then a very popular land use. It is comprised of regularly spaced mature oaks of approximately 145 years old with some semi-mature oaks. The open under storey consists of a mixture of elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, ash, field maple, holly and privet. Ground cover includes patches of lords and ladies, ivy and bramble. A small glade is located within the wood.

The woodland has areas of standing dead timber and large gaps have opened in the canopy. The cause of this decline is possibly due to water logging in the past. However, aerial photographs from 1979 show no die back, suggesting the decline is recent. The woodland floor has a plentiful supply of dead wood. Over the past ten years, a substantial number of young native trees have been planted along the length of the boundary fence. This has resulted in a dense hedge up to five meters wide in places.

Until 1990, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood was closed to the public as it was designated as a bird reserve. As the fencing was being breached regularly it was decided to allow pedestrian access by the children’s play area. An additional access path
and small railway sleeper bridge was installed in 2005 in the southern end of the playing fields. This now allows for circular access around the woodland.

Although small, the Memorial Wood supports a number of common woodland herbs.

**Millennium Wood**

Local residents, community groups and school children throughout LB Merton celebrated the new Millennium with the creation of the Millennium Wood. LB Merton was joined by Railtrack, Trees for London and the Friends of the Stout Hall Environmental Education Centre in Wales in supporting the project. A commemorative plaque is located at the southern access point to the two woodlands welcoming visitors to the natural habitat.

A new oak woodland of approximately 0.8 hectares (up to 120m at widest point) was planted in 1999. Situated to the West of the Playing Field, Millennium Wood is separated from the Memorial Wood by a managed meadowland. The new woodland has increased the area of woodland at the site. The new woodland and adjacent meadow have created an important habitat for wildlife but have yet to be designated for nature conservation protection.

### 4.7 Facilities and Features

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field provides a range of facilities and services for formal and informal play, sport, recreation and educational opportunities for all ages.

**Car Park**

A tarmac car park has been provided off Marina Avenue inside the front entrance to the site and will take 100 vehicles. The parking bays are currently unmarked.

**Recycling**

A Neighbourhood Recycling Site is situated on the far Eastern edge of the visitor car park for the collection of glass, metal, plastic and paper waste.

**Public Telephone**

A public telephone box is located on West Barnes Lane a few minutes walk from the entrance to the Playing Field.

**Toilets**

Toilets are located outside and inside the Pavilion building. The Friends Group opens them during the football season and in the summer when the paddling pool is in operation. This includes disabled access toilets.

### 4.8 Youth Facilities

In addition to the informal sports pitches, Raynes Park Little League provide for 7 – 13 year olds on a Saturday morning. Links football club cater for older children on a Sunday morning.

Four upgraded tennis courts were completed in summer 2006. Two courts are designated for multi-sports use including basketball. The Friends are in consultation with Tennis for Free to provide free tennis coaching for young people. In 2007 new basketball goals were introduced, this was funded by revenue and raised by the friends group. In December 2007 the Marathon Trust (£25K) funding was approved for the installation of new heavy duty fencing around the basketball facility.

### 4.9 Children’s Facilities

There is a grassed and fenced children’s playground situated in the northwestern corner of the site. The play area provides a variety of play equipment for 0 – 14 year olds. Children under seven must have parental supervision. The equipment is installed on tiled, wet-pour and bark safety surfacing. All equipment is purchased, installed and maintained to the European Safety Standard for play equipment. The play equipment is inspected on a daily basis by the Park Ranger and by
an annual independent inspection undertaken by the Royal Society for the prevention of Accidents or similar.

The play equipment currently includes:

• Ausplay four bay cradle swing unit;
• Five small Komplan toddler play units;
• Two spring animals;
• Ausplay four bay flat swing units;
• Large Ausplay multi-play unit with slide;
• Small multi-play unit with slide;
• SMP log cabin slide;
• SMP slide;
• Steel engine frame unit;
• Old tractor frame unit in a bark pit;
• Brick built square shallow paddling pool with paved surrounds;
• Three ground games painted on playground pathway;
• 3 picnic tables with benches, 1 close to toddler play area and suitable for wheelchair access;
• 7 benches (5 wooden, 2 metal);
• 4 litter bins (3 frog bins, 1 other);
• Shade trees.

The play area and paddling pool are in good condition but some items of equipment will soon require replacement.

4.10 Sports Facilities

The public health benefits of participating in sport and physical activity are well known and form an important of the Merton Community Plan 2006 - 2015. Sports facilities at SJHMPF are of excellent quality and are promoted to the wider community through Merton’s Sport and Leisure Development Team. The variety of organised and casual activities available to local residents and visitors encourages people to participate in healthy active lifestyles and to enjoy interacting with other members of the community.

Tennis Courts

In 2006 the Friends Groups were awarded £30000 from London Marathon Charitable Trust to upgrade the tennis courts. Match-funding from Merton Council has enabled 4 courts to be upgraded and re-fenced. Following public consultation the remaining 2 upgraded courts will be available for multi-sports use.

The fee schedule for the tennis courts is currently under review following concerns expressed by the Friends and other users that the charging regime is too complex and enforced inconsistently.

Playing Fields

The Playing Field has a total of nine sports pitches situated on an amenity grassland area in the center of the site. There are:

• Three “Little League” football pitches;
• Three full size football pitches; and
• Three pitches that can be used for either Adult or little league football.
A trim trail was installed around the perimeter of the park in 2005 funded by a grant from the Norlands Foundation. The trim trail is 1km.

**Pavilion**

The pavilion is situated on the northern boundary of the playing fields site. Built in the 1930s it consists of a single storey construction of varying height with rendered and painted brick walls under a felted flat roof.

The facilities inside include a main hall with capacity for up to 60 people. The hall leads out the front of the pavilion to an attractive fenced grassed area. This space is often used as an informal play area for young children. The building also has 4 changing rooms, showers, ladies and men's toilets and a kitchen adjoining the main hall. An additional small kitchen annex is used for a café during the summer. Half of the café income is reinvested into the playing field facilities. There are also male and female toilets outside the pavilion. Currently there are no accessible toilets for disabled users. Accommodation is situated at the rear of the building.

**4.11 History of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field**

Sir Joseph Hood, after whom the Playing Field and the adjacent Woodland (and the recreation ground near Cannon Hill Common) are named, was a local benefactor, Member of Parliament and Mayor of Wimbledon.

At the time of the Reformation, the whole area, consisting of woods, arable and pasture land, belonged to the Priory of Merton. From the early 16th Century, and probably long before, an area between the Beverley Brook and the village of lower Morden formed Hobald’s Farm. It was bought by the Garths, lords of the Manor of Morden, before 1611.

At some time during the 1860s, Richard Garth planted some land to the west of the farm with oak trees and it survives today as Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Wood. The wood contains more than one ancient woodland indicator species, which presumably were surviving here in hedgerows before the wood was planted. As Garth had nearby dog kennels, he probably intended it as a hunting covert. Eventually, in 1931, the Urban District of Merton and Morden acquired the part of the estate now known as The Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field, including the wood.

**The Park and Recreation Ground**

The Playing Field was developed as a community facility in the 1930s. Tennis courts, a bowling green, children's play, and the paddling pool made this a very popular facility over the years. Following funding cuts in the 1980s and 90s the condition of facilities declined and levels of use followed. These are now being revived with active community involvement.

**Archaeology**

No archaeological finds have been recorded at Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field in the Greater London Sites and Monuments Records.

**4.12 Present Use**

The Playing Field is very popular with parents and children during the summer months. During weekends the playing fields are busy with football matches and people enjoying the open space and woodlands. During the week the facilities are widely used by parents with young children and walkers and keep fit enthusiasts.

The pavilion is available for hire on a regular or casual basis for a range of activities including playgroups, child and adult parties, community groups, sports groups and meetings according to Merton’s conditions of hire. Hire charges are variable according to the nature, time and regularity of use.
The **Cheeky Monkeys** children’s playgroup, providing soft play facilities for children between the ages of 0-5, commenced regular use of the pavilion in December 2004. The group uses the building Monday to Thursday, 9.30am to 4.30pm for a total of 35 hours a week. The group is charged an hourly playgroup rate by LB Merton.

A second playgroup, **Pavilion Playtime**, has been using the pavilion on Fridays each week for two hours 15:45 to 17:45.

**Raynes Park Little League** football club for boys between the ages of 7 and 12 use the Playing Field’s Little League football pitches and the pavilion’s kitchen and changing rooms on Saturday mornings during the football season, usually mid-September to mid-March.

**Links Football Club** uses the pitches and annex café on Sunday mornings during the football season.
4.13 Management

The Leisure and Greenspaces team located in the Civic Centre, Morden, coordinate the management of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field. The Service was restructured in late 2006 to improve service delivery across the open space network.

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field has two distinct management regimes. Firstly the site is an Elite Sports Ground and is managed accordingly. Secondly the Memorial Wood and Millennium Woodland and Meadow are managed according to the Conservation Management Plan 2006 – 2012 (this document is available from Leisure Services Office London Borough of Merton). See http://www.merton.gov.uk/living/environment/naturereserves.htm for further information on LB Merton’s nature reserves.

The Leisure and Culture Greenspaces Manager is the head of service and oversees the ongoing development and maintenance of the Playing Field. Area Park Managers are responsible for the park staff that undertake routine maintenance, lock and unlock the park, litter pick, empty bins and ensure the site is kept in a clean and safe condition.

The Greenspaces Development Manager directs the overall development of open spaces across the borough working with the Design and Delivery Manager, Arboriculture Manager and the Parks Community Manager.

The day-to-day management and maintenance of Sir Joseph Hood MPF is straightforward and is generally carried out by the same dedicated work group. The Area Parks Managers oversee the workforce that provides the security, litter picking and patrol element to the Playing Field and they place particular emphasis on the interface between LB Merton and the community. This team also provides the horticultural maintenance of the Recreation Ground and other parks and open spaces in the Morden Area as necessary.

The deployment of staff across the Borough’s parks and open spaces operates on a locality basis (the service is split into Wimbledon, Morden and Mitcham Parks Management Areas) in a flexible way ensures an efficient use of limited resources to address the peaks and troughs of the Playing Field’s annual workload. The flexible workforce also ensures that all work associated with a particular area is dealt with on a cross-Borough basis rather than a single geographical or local basis. This approach can introduce economies of scale and efficiencies across the Borough as well as contribute to the equitable provision across the borough of high quality parks and open spaces.

4.14 Stakeholders

LB Merton works collaboratively with a wide range of partners and stakeholders in the development, improvement, maintenance and management of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field including: the Friends of Sir Joseph Hood; National, Regional and Local Environmental Agencies; and various Funding Agencies.

The Friends of Sir Joseph Hood has been involved in the development, improvement, maintenance and management of the Playing Field in consultation with Merton since their formation in 2003. This involvement has included:

- Working with LB Merton to develop priorities for playing field improvements;
- Completing funding applications with LB Merton officers;
- Organising local fundraising for improvements;
- Regular park management and maintenance (graffiti removal, opening toilets);
- Participating with volunteers in various activities (replanting playground, clearing tennis courts and organising events);
- Maintaining the notice board and liaising with the local community
- Running summer café while paddling pool is open (50% of profits reinvested in playing field improvements)

4.15 Activities and Events

Regular tree walks and the Merton Tree Wardens and the Arboricultural Manager run educational talks in the Memorial Wood.

The Millennium Woodland Tree Planting in 1999 has created opportunity for an ongoing educational programme to be developed.

The Playing Field is a regular host to Sports Tournaments.

4.16 Leases and Covenants

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is owned and managed by the Leisure Services Division at Merton Council.

The property was transferred by way of a Conveyance dated 24th October 1935 between Dame Roney and the Urban District Council of Merton and Morden. The land transferred is shown on the plan attached to the Conveyance dated 28th January 1935.

The land was transferred with the full right for the Council and its successors in title and people authorized by it to have access to the land. The Conveyance is subject to a number of covenants. The most important being:

- The Council will maintain the property as a playing field and recreation ground.

The property also has the benefit of a Deed of Grant dated 18th February 1935, which was assigned to the Council by Dame Roney by way of a Conveyance and Assignment dated October 1935. The London Borough of Merton holds all plans and additional information.

The property is not registered and is not affected by a caution against first registration of any priority notice.

There are no entries in the Register of Common Land.

There are no entries in the Register of Town and Village Greens.

Photograph: Friends of Sir Joseph Hood (June 2006)
5 Vision for Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field

The Vision for Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is:

“To encourage healthier lifestyles, strong inclusive communities and an appreciation of nature through the provision of an attractive, high quality space with facilities that are modern, safe, clean, sustainable and accessible to all”.

Photograph: Bug Hunt at the Millennium Woodland (June 2006)

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is an important space for the local community to realise its aspirations through physical activity, social interactions and a relationship to the natural world in an urban environment. The vision for the Playing Field is focused on promoting this functional open space as a community asset where people can learn about Merton’s natural environmental heritage and connect with other members of the community in a space that is fun, inclusive, safe and sustainable.

The Playing Field’s unique setting in the wider London green network also contributes to encouraging healthy lifestyles through the provision of quality sporting facilities that meet the diverse needs of surrounding community. Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is an excellent example of a high quality space that balances relaxation and recreation through innovative design and a mixture of facilities for all ages.
The usage of the Playing Field has declined since the mid-1990s due to the impact of budget cutbacks and staff reductions on the quality of the Playing Field and built facilities. However, since the formation of the Friends of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field in 2003 and additional investment from new funding sources, there has been a gradual increase in people using the Playing Field and visiting the Woodlands. LB Merton values the imagination, enthusiasm and actions of the Friends who have encouraged community involvement and volunteer activities including the café, raised funds for new play equipment and sporting facilities and negotiated for new and responsive management practices.

Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field is an excellent example of a community park. The existing responsive management arrangements encourage an active interest and involvement from the local community. Working relationships with our stakeholders including the Friends of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field ensure enthusiastic participation in fundraising, management, and restoration of park features. Our community partners have been involved in horticulture, species protection and heritage restoration projects and directly involved in promoting this unique place to other members of the community.
6 Aims, Objectives and Management Actions

This section presents the aims and objectives for Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field from 2005 – 2010. The format is closely aligned to the key criteria set by the Civic Trust and Cabe Space for the Green Flag Award. The current status of the Park, measured against the Green Flag criteria highlights current condition, recent development and areas for improvement. Objectives have been developed based on our assessment of the current status of the park. They define our intentions for achieving the vision for the park.

Photograph: Little League Trials in SJHMPF (May 2006)

The management actions that follow the objectives describe how we will allocate funding and resources and monitor our progress toward achieving our vision.

The Key Green Flag Criteria are:

1. Creating a Welcoming Space
2. Ensuring the Park is Healthy, Safe and Secure
3. Keeping the Park Clean and Well Maintained
4. Sustainable Management of Resources
5. Appropriate Management of Conservation and Heritage Features
6. Encouraging Community Involvement
7. Marketing the Facility Effectively
8. Implementation of Effective Management Strategies

The vision and objectives for the Playing Field are aligned with and may be in addition to the Merton Partnership’s Community Plan, the Council’s corporate objectives and the 2005 Merton Open Space Strategy vision and desired outcomes.