



**TOWN AND COUNTRY
PLANNING ACT 1990**

**Proposed Modifications to the
Kettering Borough Council
Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan
Publication Plan**

**Land at Wicksteed Park
Kettering
(Policy KET10)**

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**Response on behalf of
Wicksteed Charitable Trust**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this Statement is to support the Council's Proposed Modifications to Policy KET10 of the Publication Draft SSP2. In February 2020, on behalf of Wicksteed Charitable Trust, we made representations on the Kettering Borough Council Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan (Publication Plan Consultation) in respect of their land interests in Kettering. This submission reflected their views on the emerging policy document and followed consultation with the Council's planning officers. It sought support for changes to Policy KET10 necessary in order to achieve the policy and to ensure the future of Wicksteed Park.
- 1.2 In our previous representations, we set out details on the importance of Wicksteed Park and the significant contribution it makes to Kettering Borough and surrounding parts of the County and region. It remains important that we emphasise this in response to the Proposed Modifications.
- 1.3 Wicksteed Charitable Trust oversee Wicksteed Park, a Grade II Listed Park and Garden. The Trust also owns a number of land parcels beyond the Park which amount to 147 acres. The Trust was set up in 1916 to continue the work of Charles Wicksteed, and to this day has provided access to open space and activities to the public in order to improve social welfare and encourage physical exercise. The Park now offers community, education and heritage activities, expanding the earlier tourism experience for visitors. Forming the largest green space in Kettering, it represents an important and unique facility for the area. The Park boasts a sizable lake, nature trails and habitat/ecological spaces, gardens, tree plantations, a narrow gauge railway, water park, sports and outdoor pursuit facilities, children's play areas, a fairground, farm animals, conference facilities and food outlets in the Listed Building, plus a campsite and lodges. This offers a wide range of attractions and opportunities for learning and activities for all groups of the community, with the Park ethics based around preservation of the natural environment. Recent improvements to Wicksteed Park total some £8 million on visible and invisible investments, including circa £3 million investment to the great lake in the centre of the Park. A further £1.8 million (plus match funding) from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been secured for the '@ Play Project' to deliver the following:
1. To develop the current playground that is free to the general public by bringing back old or reproduced historic equipment such as the world famous "witch's hat". Any equipment that is too dangerous will be replaced virtually.
 2. To restore The Captains Lounge situated above the pavilion for training, social and community use and to exploit the fantastic views of the parkland that have been recently restored.
 3. To remove the road in front of the pavilion and restore the water fountain.
 4. To replace the crumbling retaining wall that forms the terrace to the rose garden, open up the historic views further and reinstate the famous rose towers.
 5. An activity plan which:
 - a. provides wind up sound recorders scattered around the Park; these will set out the Park's history and link to the Wicksteed Park website
 - b. brings together over 300 local volunteers to help underpin the above and export it nationally
- 1.4 Recent investments underpin the intentions to continue delivery of cultural, community, educational, recreational and economic contributions to the community. Wicksteed Park also acts as an important employer to the area, with over 400 full-time, part-time and seasonal

workers. It acts as an important bridge to work for the younger generation. The impact of Covid 19 has been significant and for the future of the Park to be secure, the changes to the policy and the support for a larger development is essential.

- 1.5 Wicksteed Charitable Trust has engaged with Kettering Borough Council throughout the Local Plan process, securing an allocation on a small proportion of land under their ownership. This would allow some degree of reinvestment in enhancing and expanding existing facilities and ecological areas within the rest of Wicksteed Park/the Trust's Estate. The proposed amendments to the wording of the policy offers greater flexibility and the potential for significant additional enhancements to be captured for enhancing Wicksteed Park and the wider Trust land.
- 1.6 The Local Plan, with the Proposed Modifications and text, provides a major opportunity and support for a significant package of planning gains and community benefits for Wicksteed Park and the public, maximising the ability to capture these gains provided within the Local Plan.

2 PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

- 2.1 There are three Proposed Modifications set out by the Council in response to representations on the Publication Plan. MM20 adds a new paragraph after paragraph 9.31 in the document in response to representations from Anglian Water adding Criteria q) to Policy KET10 to safeguard suitable access for maintenance of foul and surface water drainage infrastructure.
- 2.2 MM21 addresses our representations made in February 2020 and seeks to amend Criteria f) to indicate that development is supported by a Transport Statement that will inform the proposal to ensure; i) it addresses access into the site utilising the Patrick Road junction with Pytchley Road, and ii) it includes suitable measures to mitigate impact of additional traffic (with particular reference to capacity constraints on Pytchley Road).
- 2.3 MM21 also proposes a new paragraph following paragraph 9.31 which confirms that the Council is aware that there are aspirations for a larger area of land coming forward in this location. Any planning application for an area larger than the allocation will be dealt with on its merits and subject to compliance with criteria a) to p) of Policy KET10 and delivery of additional open space enhancements and compensatory measures commensurate to the scale of development proposed.
- 2.4 MM21 also proposed to amend criteria k) to indicate that development will be supported by a scheme to deliver improved access, habitat restoration, educational and recreational opportunities to the 4.4ha farm land extension (strategically located at the south-east part of the Park to mitigate loss of open space to residential development) and, for a larger scheme, associated underused landscape areas.
- 2.5 Finally, MM22 amends criteria m) to ensure no unacceptable risks to human health and the natural environment. While this seems somewhat vague, it is supported.

3. RESPONSE TO PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

- 3.1 We set out the importance of a larger area for development in terms of the ability to meet with Policy KET10 and achievement of the additional enhancements and benefits. I do not intend to repeat these points only to confirm support for the Proposed Modifications reflecting the support of officers and the Local Plan in relation to a larger area of development. The Proposed Modifications are essential to provide the necessary flexibility in the Local Plan for the Trust. The development of a larger area will increase in overall scale without any harm to the historic core of the Park. It would however offer significantly higher reinvestment opportunities for the Park. This would benefit the whole of the parkland, proposed rejuvenation works and ecological and biodiversity enhancements for parts of the retained land and links to the green corridor/ecological areas to the south.
- 3.2 The final form of this enlarged area is still to be considered and there has been further correspondence and discussions with the officers following the representations on the Local Plan made in February. Details are still being considered before presentation to the Council. It is important that the Proposed Modifications are accepted and form part of the adopted plan if the benefits associated with Policy KET10 are to be achieved and the long-term future of the Park ensured.
- 3.3 The current allocation is seeking to incorporate and enhance the ecological value of the 4.4 hectares of land. Whilst this would clearly offer considerable benefits to the quantity and quality of open space and habitats provided by creating an enhanced wetland area, it would be marginalised within the context of the Park as a whole. In contrast, by allowing a larger development site, it would offer the ability to bring into play a greater opportunity. The Proposed Modifications allow for the benefits to materialise as set out in our representation in February.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Wicksteed Charitable Trust consider the Kettering Borough Site Specific Policies Part 2 Local Plan document to be sound. Following our representations in February, the Council published Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan to address our representations. The Trust supports these modifications emphasising the importance of introducing flexibility into the plan and supporting a larger area of development in this location. This is essential to ensure the future of Wicksteed Park and the ability to achieve the benefits that could be made to Wicksteed Park and the associated public benefits through enhancement and connectivity of the parkland and new ecological and wetland areas to the south. Further discussions have been held and it is hoped that the Proposed Modifications, and the resultant benefits to the community, are supported by the Inspector at the Examination.